

A FORUM FOR MENNONITE VOICES

# The Mennonite

## *Transformation*

INSIDE

Sacred sorrow

The transformation  
of hope

Time is of the essence

FEBRUARY 2019  
VOL. 22 • NO. 2

# #MENNO CON19

July 2 - 6, 2019

Kansas City,  
Missouri



Early registration opens Feb. 6 and includes a convention t-shirt, lunches for three days and a servant project opportunity.

Late registration begins May 1.

As always, count on worship, exhibits, seminars, special events, and more!

## Kansas City Fun Facts:

- There are more barbeque restaurants per capita than in any other U.S. city.
- Jackie Robinson was a shortstop with the Kansas City Monarchs.
- Walt Disney opened his first animation studio here.
- Kansas City has more boulevards than Paris.

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# The Mennonite

FEBRUARY 2019  
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## FEATURES

- 10** **Sacred sorrow**  
Cindy Warner Baker
- 14** **The transformation of an organization**  
Cyneatha Millsaps
- 18** **Regrets transformed**  
Duane Beck
- 20** **The transformation of hope**  
Joanna Harader
- 22** **Transformed by God's Spirit of truth**  
Julie Hart

## DEPARTMENTS

- 04** Letters
- 06** News Briefs
- 08** Miscellany
- 09** Congregational Snapshot
- 28** News
- 30** Mediaculture
- 31** [themennonite.org](http://themennonite.org)
- 32** Opinion
- 33** New Voices
- 34** Leadership Field Notes
- 35** Grace and Truth
- 36** For the Record
- 38** Classifieds
- 39** Global Anabaptism
- 40** Editorial

ON THE COVER: Photo by Hannah Gerig Meyer

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# Letters

This publication welcomes your letters, either about our content or about issues facing 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](mailto: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.

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## Divine revelation

I was 90 when Martha, my wife, passed away, about three years ago. One evening in November 2016, I was in the living room and said to God: "It is lonesome down here. Are you really here with us as you say you are?" I went to bed. Soon a terrific sight appeared. A banner about eight inches high and four or five feet long in beautiful blue came through my bedroom door and went across the dresser. The banner was blank for some time and moved slowly. Suddenly a word appeared about an inch thick and four inches square in white. The word was "Theophany." I sat up and looked at that word as it went slowly by. I wanted to be sure I got the spelling right. I checked in the dictionary and my theological dictionary, which said, "the manifestation of a deity."

I was exposed to God in a new and affirming way. I have talked to many about it, witnessing to the presence of God. God is not dead but alive. He did not ask my name or address. The answer to my prayer came after only a few minutes had passed. God had not spoken to me in this way before. It was an affirmation of my ministry and life of service, a great joy in my life at the close of my ministry, an affirmation of God's blessing on my life and faith.

—A. Don Augsburg, Harrisonburg, Va.

## Military spending

Mayer Amschel Rothschild (1744-1812) said, "Give me control of a nation's money and I care not who makes the laws." If this quote is correct, what are U.S. taxpayers to make of the Pentagon's recently failed audit? While receiving 54 cents out of every dollar in federal appropriations—the government's largest discretionary cost center—the Department of Defense does not know where they're spending our tax dollars.

On Nov. 15, 2018, the accounting firm Ernst & Young and other private auditing firms announced they could not complete the independent audit of the Department of Defense Congress had ordered after the Pentagon failed for decades to audit itself. The firms concluded that the DoD's financial records were riddled with so many bookkeeping deficiencies, irregularities and errors that a reliable audit was impossible.

Why aren't our representatives up in arms about this? And why did they recently approve a FY2019 U.S. military budget of \$716 billion, more than half the \$1.3 trillion budget Congress allocates every year?

We could be doing so many other things with that money: address climate change, work on our crumbling infrastructure, institute Medicare for all, pay down the debt.

The military doesn't keep us safe. Our safety is challenged by the offense of the military, especially the military industrial complex, against anyone who might interfere with its profits.

—Harold A. Penner, Akron, Pa.

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## Addition to letter

In my letter "Addressing Past Trauma" (January), I wanted to note that since many Mennonites now living in North America have similar family stories, it may be of interest to know that a 2.5-hour video has been posted on YouTube that presents the highlights of the proceedings. The video is entitled "Dietrich Friesen Reunion 2018."

—Richard Penner,  
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan

## Addition to letter

Your quote of Jon Allsop (Mediaculture, January) resonated with me: “[W]hen it comes to burying the reality of climate change, the news media is still complicit.” Amen to that.

Here is an eight-minute talk by Noam Chomsky on Democracy Now! on Nov. 1, 2018, concerning the politics of climate change and the news reporting of climate change: [www.democracynow.org/2018/12/31/noam\\_chomsky\\_the\\_future\\_of\\_organized](http://www.democracynow.org/2018/12/31/noam_chomsky_the_future_of_organized)

Here are some quotes from Noam’s talk: “... the world has maybe a decade or two to basically end its reliance on fossil fuels if we are to have any hope of controlling global warming below the level of utter disaster.”

“There’s nothing like this in all of human history. There have been plenty of monsters in the past, plenty of them, but you can’t find one who was dedicated with passion to destroying the prospects for organized human life.”

I have no disagreement with anything Chomsky says. This is why I argue that the climate change story should be the lead story in the *New York Times* every day. And in *The Mennonite*. And in every newspaper.

—Jim Musselman, *San Francisco*

## New Anabaptist Bible curriculum available

As the word Mennonite slowly disappears from our vocabulary, we become the amorphous Anabaptist church.

—Leslie R. Minkler, *Facebook*

## Hopes for 2019 in six words

Relationship with Jesus, loving each other.

—Amy Z. Grimes, *Facebook*

The church taking climate change seriously.

—Benjamin Isaak-Krauss, *Facebook*

That the world knows Christ.

—Carla Nafziger Graydus, *Facebook*

I’m letting go and letting God.

—Marianne Unruh, *Facebook*

No judgment for all the stereotypes.

—Hannah Johnson, *Facebook*

More love, less bickering, more understanding.

—Denise Miller, *Facebook*

To passionately seek my Lord 2019.

—Juanita Gandaria, *Facebook*

Expanding connection with friends and enemies.

—Chris Barghout, *Facebook*

Deepening love for our common humanity.

—Eric Massanari, *Facebook*

Building a longer table every opportunity.

—Molly Beth, *Facebook*

God to come for his people.

—Debbie De Leon Thomas, *Facebook*

We learn to be good neighbors.

—Mary Biddle, *Facebook*

More like Jesus every minute.

—Deb Landis Godshall, *Facebook*

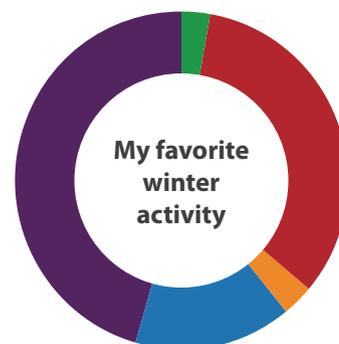
Wake up each day above ground.

—Jody Huxman, *Facebook*

Small steps toward the missing peace.

—James Juhnke, *Facebook*

## READERS’ POLL



3%

Ice skating

33.3%

Bingeing on Netflix

3%

Drinking hot chocolate

15.2%

Reading *The Mennonite*

45.5%

Other

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

## IN THIS ISSUE

This month we feature stories of transformation. Transformation can happen in many ways, as our feature articles indicate.

Cindy Warner Baker (page 10) writes about a harrowing experience that challenged her faith and how she eventually drew closer to God. Cyneatha Millsaps (page 14) tells how Mennonite Women USA has been transformed by previous generations of women. Duane Beck (page 18) presents lessons he learned upon entering retirement. Joanna Harader (page 20) tells how she found grace in the midst of despair after her father died. Julie Hart (page 22) offers lessons she’s learned from war veterans who have been transformed by God’s Spirit of truth.

May you experience God’s transforming power.—*Editor*

# News Briefs

COMPILED BY  
GORDON HOUSER

## Who and what is Mennonite Church USA?

In a blog posted on *TMail* on Jan. 14, Glen Guyton, executive director of Mennonite Church USA, responded to this question. He writes: "That is a question we must continually ask ourselves as we seek to fulfill our mission as a denomination. The answer is complex, and the answer you receive may vary, depending on who you ask."

He quotes from the bylaws of MC USA: "The area conference is the basic membership unit of Mennonite Church USA, and through which the member congregations of the area conference also are members of Mennonite Church USA. The area conference is an

affiliation of congregations that join together in common life and mission. In coming together, congregations recognize their interdependence and their need for mutual exhortation and admonition, and their strength to fulfill the church's mission in the world."

He notes that "conferences were at one point more regionally based—geographic conglomerations that could serve congregations in close proximity to one another" but that now, "with the rise of congregations joining conferences based on political or ideological affinity rather than geographic proximity, we may be losing a key strength in our denomination, regional diversity."

Guyton adds: "If we can't struggle and forebear regionally with those in close proximity to us, we will never be able to do so at the national level."

He points to a key strength of MC USA's structure: "our relationship with our program agencies. The task of the churchwide program agencies and other designated entities is to

arrange for the delivery of programs and services that carry out specific churchwide goals."

Guyton summarizes: "MC USA is a collective of people, programs, area conferences and other structural components offered by and through this denomination that serve as witness to our capacity to do more good together and ensure that the message of the gospel is effectively preached."

He points out that "MC USA has never been one person or group of people." Instead, it "works best when each part of the system works collaboratively to enhance the mission of the whole."

—Mennonite Church USA

## Everence expands its Pastoral Financial Wellness Program

Everence has expanded its Pastoral Financial Wellness Program to credentialed and active pastors from its more than 30 affiliated Anabaptist and like-minded denominations and church networks.

The expansion is made possible, in part, by a second grant of \$1 million from the Lilly Endowment, Inc., as part of its National Initiative to Address Economic Challenges Facing Pastoral Leaders. The initiative supports religious organizations across the United States to reduce or alleviate key financial pressures that impair effective pastoral leadership and improve financial wellness among pastors. Approximately half the \$1 million granted to Everence is available as matching funds to help pastors meet immediate financial burdens. The remainder is allocated for education programs and services to help pastors better manage their own finances.

The expanded Pastoral Financial Wellness Program will include three components:

- Direct financial assistance grants to help pastors alleviate debt burdens such as educational, medical and credit card debt.
- Financial education events focused on topics such as retirement



## Church members carol neighbors

On Dec. 16, 2018, about 25 people from Rainbow Mennonite Church in Kansas City, Kan., went caroling around the neighborhood of the church. Many of these folks had never walked the neighborhood. They met the squawking neighborhood parrot, got to witness the enthusiasm of the neighborhood children and Raymond and Cecilia who keep a good watch on the church and wave to pastor Ruth Harder every morning.—*Ruth Harder*

planning readiness, debt reduction, financial planning and clergy taxes.

- Financial planning subsidies toward the cost of a first-year Everence comprehensive financial plan.

Direct financial assistance grants and financial planning subsidies are available to pastors who have not previously received these benefits as part of the program.

—Everence

## New Anabaptist Bible curriculum for students available

The Mennonite Schools Council (MSC) of Mennonite Education Agency (MEA) has released a new prekindergarten through 12th grade Bible curriculum entitled *Encounter: An Anabaptist Faith Formation Curriculum*. It is available for purchase through Amazon.

“The Encounter curriculum invites students to find themselves in the story of Scripture and follow Jesus,” says Elaine Moyer, senior director at MEA and co-chair of the Encounter Steering Committee. “It’s about ongoing ways of encountering God in Scripture through an alternative approach to Christian education that is uniquely Anabaptist.”

Encounter seeks to emphasize holistic faith formation and create opportunities for students to encounter God, each other and creation. Using a narrative, biblical approach, Encounter highlights stories of God at work through people and emphasizes how the biblical story often comes through those at the margins of society. The curriculum encourages students to respond with wonder and questions in the early years, experiential learning in the middle years and a study of world religion and its role in society during the high school years.

It also includes Circle of Grace, a Christian curriculum for teaching appropriate physical, emotional, spiritual and sexual boundaries.

—MEA



## Quilter leaves lasting legacy of generosity

In 2018, Emma Jean Landis of Tunkhannock, Pa., and her daughters, Karen Alderfer, left, and Kathy Landis, right, pose for a picture. Emma Jean Landis, who died in November 2018, and Alderfer worked together to make 254 quilts to donate to Mennonite Central Committee relief sales.—MCC

## Ten Thousand Villages announces leadership transitions

On Jan. 10, the board of directors of Ten Thousand Villages announced the resignation of Carl Lundblad as Chief Executive Officer of Ten Thousand Villages and appointment as a member of the board. To ensure the continuation of its current strategy, the board appointed Llenay Ferretti as acting CEO until a permanent successor is named. Lundblad will remain on staff through Feb. 1 to assist with the transition.

Ferretti has been working in a consulting capacity, overseeing the organization’s transformational brand strategy during the last nine months. She has a long history with Ten Thousand Villages, including as an executive director and more recently

as a member of the board. She is the founder of Bhavana World Project, Inc., a social enterprise that specializes in trade development and skills training with a focus on the socioeconomic advancement of women through international trade.

Through a recently appointed search committee, the board will conduct a thorough national search for a successor CEO. Nominations are encouraged, and potential applicants and nominations should be directed to [jamie.trevino@tenthousandvillages.com](mailto:jamie.trevino@tenthousandvillages.com) to obtain additional information about the position and the application and selection process.

—Ten Thousand Villages



Read longer versions of these and other articles at [themennonite.org](http://themennonite.org).

# Miscellany

COMPILED BY  
**GORDON HOUSER**

**We need at this moment a Christian faith that can start to break our deep connection to whiteness by resisting its vision of maturity.**

— Willie James Jennings in *Christian Century*

## 77

**kilowatt hours are used to trade one Bitcoin. That's enough to power a large American house for a week.**

—Pacific Standard

### Diddy and the Amish

Hip-hop artist Diddy (Sean Combs) revealed on *Jimmy Kimmel Live!* last summer that one of the greatest times of his life was in his youth when he had a chance to live with an Amish family, learned to milk cows and rode in a horse-drawn buggy. His mother had enrolled him in the Fresh Air Fund, which provides a free vacation for low-income, urban children. Diddy says he hasn't kept up with the Amish family, and he doubts they know about his success as a musical artist. Forbes estimates he is worth \$825 million.

—Christian Century

## 30 seconds

In 2017, according to an Amnesty International report, female journalists and politicians were subjected to some kind of harassment or abuse on Twitter roughly every 30 seconds, and women of color experienced significantly higher levels of abuse: They were 84 percent more likely to be mentioned in abusive or harassing tweets.

—cjr.org

### Anti-Muslim discrimination linked with radicalization

A study, published in *Science Advances*, finds an association between anti-Muslim hate and susceptibility to Muslim radicalization in regions of the United States that are poorest and most homogeneous. And it suggests the ethnic diversity of the U.S. may protect against radicalization because people are less prone to pit one group against the other. The findings, collected between August 2014 and July 2016, suggest pro-ISIS sympathy is most prevalent in communities with high levels of anti-Muslim sentiment.

—Religion News Service

### Correction of the year?

**Vladimir Putin is president of Russia. An editing mistake erroneously identified him as Vladimir Trump.**

—Wall Street Journal

### Drought refugees

Add drought to violence and civil unrest as among the reasons Central Americans are joining the caravan that is moving north in Mexico and gathering on the southern U.S. border. A four-year drought has devastated crops. Farmers in what is known as the dry corridor have lost 60 to 80 percent of their crops, mostly corn and beans. El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras are the most severely affected. The United Nations says more than 2 million people are in danger of starvation.

—Christian Century

## 54%

**of people who committed suicide in the United States between 1999 and 2016 did not have a known mental-health condition.**

—Pacific Standard

Average amount a white American in the top 1 percent of earners will receive in tax cuts in 2018:

**\$52,400**

That a black American in the top 1 percent will:

**\$19,290**

—Harper's

### LOAVES AND FISHSTICKS BY STEVE EDWARDS



# Seattle Mennonite Church

1. Deb Smucker, Nancy Chupp, Jennifer Delanty and Lee Murray participate in March for Our Lives, organized by local youth. *Photo by Megan Ramer*
2. Greg Thiessen leads an inter-generational snowshoeing adventure at the annual Snow Camp at Camp Camrec in the Cascade Mountains. *Photo by Megan Ramer*
3. Jeanette Lim and daughter Kai Unruh enjoy sunset on the beach at the annual summer camping trip on Whidbey Island. *Photo by Megan Ramer*
4. Folks gather each day at God's Li'l Acre and can access laundry facilities, showers, community kitchen, internet and phone, resource referral, food closet, nursing care, personal storage, blankets, clothes and a safe place to just be. *Photo by Jim Bridges*





# SACRED SORROW

Gabriel Bauman-Baker with his son,  
Jonathan (Yoni) at Jonathan Noah's grave.

*Photo provided.*

BY CINDY WARNER BAKER

## Joining God in the broken place

**W**e had been married less than a month when the calls began: "This is so hard for me." "I love the girls, but I can't do this much longer." And finally, "Can you take them? How soon?" It was the grandfather of three young girls, sisters who had been in and out of foster care all their lives due to the mental illness and substance abuse their birth mother experienced, which often endangered them. He had taken the sisters into his home a few months earlier. But raising grandchildren on his own was proving an overwhelming task.

Doug, my husband, and I talked with our intentional community, Reba Place Fellowship in Evanston, Ill., about having them join our family. We



Angela, Theresa and Didi Baker, a few weeks after they joined the Bakers. *Photo provided.*

all knew having three young girls, ages 2, 3 and 5, would put a strain on a new marriage. But we felt called; we had helped care for them since before the youngest was born, and we wanted the sisters to stay together. With our community's support and affirmation, we made plans for them to join us at the end of the summer.

Soon, another challenge arose: I was pregnant, due in mid-November. What would it mean to be six months pregnant and caring for three young children? I was the oldest of eight children born within 10 years, so the idea of four didn't overwhelm me. As a long-term teacher in Reba's day-care ministry, Doug was also comfortable with the idea. We knew it would be difficult, but we felt called and ready to dive in.

On July 16, everything

changed. After a day of hiking while visiting family in Connecticut, I began hemorrhaging late at night. After a frantic, 45-minute drive through the mountains, we arrived at the nearest hospital, where personnel hurriedly assembled to assess and deal with the crisis unfolding in my womb: a ruptured placenta, violent hemorrhaging with loss of blood, and contractions trying to force my fragile child out too soon. At one point, it seemed the bleeding and contractions were subsiding, and a medivac helicopter was on its way to transport us to Yale/New Haven. The first glimmers of hope broke through my brain fog of panic and anguish, only to be quashed a few minutes later. The contractions began again, fiercer and faster than before, and I faded in and out of awareness as the physician



From left: Angela, Joshua, Theresa, Gabriel and Didi Baker. Photo provided.

yelled for the operating room to be readied. My last memory is of the elevator door closing on Doug as I was taken to surgery, sobbing that my baby was not ready and pleading for them to save my child.

When I woke, I was in a hospital bed, IV in arm, Doug at my side. Our son had been born, then died while I was still unconscious. A nurse brought him and handed him to me gently. I held him, my face wet with tears, and we named him. Jonathan Noah, named in honor of the deep friendship between David and Jonathan and the promise God made to Noah, was born July 17 at 3:07 a.m. and died at 4:02 a.m.

The next days and weeks were full of activity: the flight back to Chicago, a memorial

## Having to wake up each morning and care for our daughters saved me from attempting suicide; of this I have no doubt.

service at Reba and burial at Plow Creek Farm near Tiskilwa, Ill., a move to a house with room for children. All this happened while I recovered from the emergency C-section that had torn Jonathan from safety into death and left me unable to do much. Our Reba family surrounded us with love and practical care, and on Aug. 12, less than three weeks after

burying our son, our daughters arrived. Three beautiful, energetic and bewildered little girls who had spent their short lives moving from place to place and home to home, had to have wondered how long this one would last. Motherless children and childless mother, joined through grief and need.

Having to wake up each morning and care for our daughters saved me from attempting suicide; of this I have no doubt. I hated myself. It was my fault, my body's failure that had killed my son, and I did not deserve to live. Yet these little girls needed someone to wake them in the morning, teach them there are three meals in a day, that you can spill milk without fear of a beating, that knives are for cutting and forks for putting food in your mouth. They needed baths and stories and songs at bedtime and to learn that it's OK to be mad when you don't get your way. They needed me, and I needed them.

But I hated myself and was angry with God. I was to-the-core-of-my-being furious with God. I had been betrayed, tricked by a cosmic joke of the Almighty. We had agonized over whether we should say yes to these children. Should we say yes when we had just gotten married? Should we say yes when we were suddenly pregnant? We had said yes, but it seemed God had said no.

No promise of safety, no promise that if we did our best to love and follow Jesus all would be well. The words of so many songs sounded like lies: "When through the deep waters I cause thee to go, the rivers of sorrow shall not overflow"; "God his own

## God's love for me and for those I love does not guarantee safety from harm, or even from death.

doth tend and nourish, in his holy courts they flourish. From all evil things he spares them, in his mighty arms he bears them"; "God never gives you more than you can handle."

The rivers of sorrow were overflowing, my son had not been spared from harm, and God had most certainly given me more than I could handle.

I lived for months in a paralysis of fear. What would happen next? My body healed slowly, my heart more slowly still. Evenings were the worst, when the girls were in bed and I waited alone for Doug to get home from the night classes he was taking, wondering and worrying for his safe travel. It was a long and lonely year, as I still grieved and felt betrayed.

Yet in that place of sorrow, something new began, at first without my even noticing. It was as if my heart, torn open in grief, began to fill. Not with the reassurance that, having survived Jonathan's death and my near-death, God would make sure nothing bad happened for a time. Not with a lessening of grief or uncertainty. What God offered instead, and I began to understand, was the reality that God is God, and I am not. God's love for me and for those I love does not guarantee safety from harm, or even from death. It is not offered as a path to a good life but as an invitation to join

God's mission of restoration, a mission that is vast and cuts across time and space. The God who sacrificed his own son for this mission was offering me the same opportunity—whether through living or through dying—to add my little part to the healing of our broken world.

Sorrow has become a sacred space in my life, a thin place where heaven and earth are closest. Through it I can almost touch the heart of God, feel God's own sorrow for creation and know both deep pain and deepest joy.

In the years since Jonathan's birth and death, life has gone on; two more sons joined our family, our living children grew up, and we are now grandparents of nine. Through all the seasons of these

years, sorrow has remained the companion that draws me closest to the heart of God, the place in which I am known, loved and challenged most deeply.

I would not know this place if Jonathan had not lived and died. Thank you, Jonathan, for coming to us, to me, even for such a short time. Thank you, Lord, that in our sorrows we can join our broken hearts to yours, for the healing of your world.



**Cindy Warner Baker** is a therapeutic educator. She and Doug are members of Berkey Avenue Mennonite Fellowship in Goshen, Ind.

# Join a Peace-Building Holy Land Tour!



**Jordan, Palestine, Israel: A Journey of Hope**  
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# The transformation of an organization

◀ A women's group from College Mennonite Church in Goshen, Ind.

Photo provided.

BY CYNEATHA MILLSAPS

## Previous generations pave the way for Mennonite Women USA

**M**ennonite Women USA is a 104-year organization.

Many people today look at our organization and say not much has changed. It's the same old white-women gathering in quilting circles. They don't represent me. And from the outside it may look like not much has changed. But sometimes that is the beauty of transformation—changing within without changing much on the outside.

Without those “older white women” being consistent in their work, we would not even be here 100 years later. Transformation is best when we change aspects of ourselves without losing ourselves along the way. Every 10 years or so, we see women in the church taking on more leadership. We see not only the shifts within the church but in our families and communities as well. Teachers become principals, nurses

**Transformation is best when we change aspects of ourselves without losing ourselves along the way.**

become hospital administrators, stay-at-home mothers assume responsibilities for the finances and fellowship of the family. We are changing.

In the early years, women had no power in the church. We could not become leaders in any real capacity. We were relegated to ministries like Sunday school, hospitality and music—or we could become missionaries. Even though many women felt called by God to lead as pastors, elders or deacons, our doctrine kept us from our call. I had the pleasure of meeting one such woman several months ago.



**Edna Krueger Dyck** felt a call to ministry early in her life. She loved the Word of God and studied theology at Canadian Mennonite Bible College (now Canadian Mennonite University) in Winnipeg, Manitoba, when she was 21. But the church did not make room for her gift and call. Edna talked about how she pursued other careers—teaching, writing and copy editing—



A women's group from College Mennonite Church in Goshen, Ind. Photo provided.

because her first passion was hindered by tradition and culture. She wanted to do mission work overseas, where many women who had a call to ministry in those days were able to work out that call. But even that option did not work out. She married someone interested in studying medicine and psychiatry. There seemed to be no need for his field of study in mission work, so she got a job with the General Conference Mennonite Church creating curriculum materials and editing. Meanwhile, she took seminary courses in Newton, Kan., and Elkhart, Ind. It was some 40 years before Edna could practice her

craft and calling as a preacher/teacher in the church. At age 64, Edna was ordained and called as pastor at Shalom Mennonite Church in Newton.

While her male counterparts throughout the church were planning their retirements and walking away from declining churches, women like Edna were finally getting their chance to lead. When asked what she would say to women today, Edna said, "I would remind them, it's easy these days [to be a leader], so go for it. We need women pastors because women give congregations a perspective male pastors cannot offer."

I am six months into my new role as executive director of Mennonite Women USA and am concerned about our respect for the generations that came before us. We women leaders and pastors today must remind ourselves that if not for women like Edna and those women in quilting circles, meeting in church basements or gathering annually at church camps, we would not be in the positions we are today.

We are pastors, executive directors, professors and deans because they sat in uncomfortable spaces and supported one another until they saw openings. Their steadfastness and words of encouragement to their daughters gave us the courage to open doors. And now a generation of women has been raised with the power not only to walk through the door but to create a new building.

We must honor and respect our past. We must listen and learn from our mothers who are full of wisdom and love. I know many have said, "We tried to join, and they would not let us in." And I believe this is true. Our mothers must have been filled with a level of anxiety or a lack

## **We must listen and learn from our mothers who are full of wisdom and love.**

of vision for what was possible as the next generation came into power. But we cannot sit back any longer and wallow in their missteps. We must understand the fear of losing what they had worked so hard to create. Men in the church for years had preached

that only male leadership was biblical, yet these women created their own leadership structures alongside them and were doing well. In their structures the next few generations of women grew stronger and wiser.



Another great woman in leadership in our church I talked with is **Miriam Book**. A pastor and former Mennonite Church Women's Missionary Service Commission member, she talked with me about being supported by other women in leadership in those early years as well as being supported by women throughout the church that gathered in "circles" to support one another. She was one who found that the sewing circles did not speak to her passions and call. But instead of walking away from those women, she and others created a gathering space that met their needs. For some it was Business and Professional Women circles, for others it was "sowing" circles. These circles didn't focus on quilting or crafts but on leadership and friendship. While some young women grew frustrated with their mothers in sewing circles, others used what they had

to offer and stayed connected. They were not disrespectful to the women who came before them but looked to them for encouragement and support. The women in those sewing circles were not leading from up front. Many would not have considered themselves leaders at all, but without them, Miriam said, she would not have accepted her call.

One hundred years ago, we were relegated to a specific place in the church, family and community. These women were stronger than we give them credit for being. It's easy to walk when you can see the path or when it is light and no one is chasing you, which is the reality of women today in the West. But these women had no clue what was coming. They gathered in the dark and created sparks of light for one another. Those sparks became candles, then lanterns, then flashlights and now spotlights for us today.

Women today must seek to lead differently from our male counterparts of old. Miriam talked about looking to our sisters who grow up on farms. She said, "Women farmers understand collaboration; they work better together than most [people] because their livelihood depends on one another." Part of our continuing transformation is learning a new way of creating sisterhood. To do this we must honor our whole story, the good and the bad, so we can provide a sturdy foundation for our daughters as they come into their own power and leadership.

Mennonite Women USA has been transformed. We are different. We are strong because we have been evolving for over 100 years now. We are not just

another organization to join or not join but a spiritual base for support, leadership, guidance and, most of all, sisterhood. MW USA seeks to challenge our calls, move us out of our comfortable spaces, empower us to walk with others and celebrate what it means to be a woman made in the image of God.

We are changing yet remain the same. We need your voice, your leadership and your sisterhood.



**Cyneatha Millsaps** is executive director of Mennonite Women USA.



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BY DUANE BECK

Photo provided by the author.

# Regrets *transformed*

## Lessons upon entering retirement

**I** announced my retirement nine months ahead of the actual date. Immediately, I was blindsided by regrets, not regrets about retirement but regrets from 45 years of pastoral leadership in three Mennonite churches.

I remembered words I shouldn't have said and the times I didn't speak when I should have. I remembered things I wished I hadn't done and things I should have done but didn't. It was a long and tiring litany. I identified with

the Apostle Paul, who wrote: "I can will what is right, but I cannot do it. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do" (Romans 7:18b-19).

These mindless thoughts had a mind of their own. The regrets sabotaged my concentration, intruded into my prayer life. Centering prayer was a lost cause. My first thoughts upon waking were pushed aside by unruly regrets. They even popped into my consciousness when I was singing a hymn.

Early one April morning, two weeks after announcing my retirement date, I was sitting on our back porch. It is a wonderful place to sip a cup of tea, meditate on Scripture and center my prayer in the presence of Jesus. It was dark. The busy downtown traffic wasn't running yet. It was too early for the mockingbird to sing. But my mind was too noisy to hear the quiet. The litany of regrets had begun to assault my brain. I couldn't even read the biblical text, let alone listen to it.

My efforts to relax and release these mindless thoughts and pray were fruitless. But another message abruptly broke through:

*“Duane, Duane, all you ever had were five loaves and two fish. They were never enough. Even if you would have done everything right and said everything right, it still would not have been enough to feed the people. But you gave me what you had. I gave thanks for it, broke it, blessed it and gave it back to you to feed the people. Thank you.”*

Jesus said, “Thank you.” He thanked...me.

What words of grace! His words transformed me. Seldom do I dwell on past regrets anymore. When I become aware of them, I consciously give them over to Jesus. He again gratefully takes them, breaks and blesses them, then gives them back to me, transformed. Jesus is among us, “full of grace and truth,” and invites us to give him all we have, even regrets.

## **Jesus is among us, “full of grace and truth,” and invites us to give him all we have, even regrets.**

A day later I heard Jesus’ grace echoing in Leonard Cohen’s song “The Anthem”:

*The birds, they sang  
At the break of day  
Start again  
I heard them say  
Don’t dwell on what  
Has passed away  
Or what is yet to be...*

*(Refrain) Ring the bells that still can ring*

*Forget your perfect offering*

*There is a crack, a crack in everything*

*That’s how the light gets in*

*That’s how the light gets in.*

In her book *Thoughts Matter: The Practice of the Spiritual Life*, Mary Margaret Funk writes that thoughts thought about become intentions. Intentions constitute motivations and indicate where the heart resides. Our actions grow out of our heart. Actions can be either virtuous or sinful. Therefore, the first step to shape our actions is to become aware of our mindless thoughts. We consciously lay them aside and enter God’s presence and listen to God’s word.

The spiritual wisdom I have gleaned is that this attack of mindless regrets was necessary for my transformation. It was akin to what Jesus experienced after his baptism when “the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness” (Mark 1:12). I believe the Spirit drove me to deal with these 45 years of regrets in order to fully and freely embrace this new stage of life. Satan tempted Jesus to use self-serving methods to achieve God’s goals. I can easily imagine how untransformed regrets can subtly turn my efforts to be self-serving. If I tried to repress my regrets, I would become more critical and judgmental of others. If my regrets kept fermenting, I would likely overcompensate and work harder to seek more recognition. Moreover, and most regrettably, the noise of regrets could be too loud to hear how God has prepared me for this life-stage. Thankfully, though, I witnessed

## **The spiritual wisdom I have gleaned is that this attack of mindless regrets was necessary for my transformation.**

the gardener removing branches in me that bear no fruit and pruning fruitful branches to bear even more fruit (John 15).

Over the years, I have been aware of the ways Jesus showed up and took my little gifts, gave thanks, broke them open and blessed them, gave them back and accomplished abundantly more than I could ask or imagine. I know that Jesus works continually to transform my inner being, even into my retirement years. In that light, I share the prayer that closes my regular practice of centering prayer (from *Centering Prayers: A One-Year Daily Companion for Going Deeper into the Love of God* by Peter Traben Haas):

*Abba, Your presence underneath the noise of the demands of daily life fills my heart with peace. Your word cleanses negative emotions I don’t know how to stop on my own. Your grace works in my inner room of silent prayer, taking away jealousies, hatreds, vanities, pride and prejudices that hinder consciously chosen love. Thank you for your healing grace. Amen.*



Duane Beck is a member of Raleigh (N.C.) Mennonite Church.

BY JOANNA HARADER

# *The transformation* of **HOPE**

## **Grace in the midst of despair**

**I**n February 2013, when my dad went into the hospital, I was overwhelmed by the intense, unbearable hope that my dad be made well.

At first, this was hope for a diagnosis. I thought that if we could just name his disease, the doctors could make Dad better.

I was wrong.

When I got what I wanted, I didn't want it after all, because the diagnosis was aggressive killer-cell leukemia/lymphoma. It was a death sentence. And my deepest hope was for my dad to not die, for him to not be in the hospital with oxygen flowing into his nose through tubes, barely able to talk, having to call in a nurse to help every time he had to urinate.

If you have ever hoped for something impossible, you know how it feels. It's like your soul is banging itself against a brick wall,

**If you have  
ever hoped  
for something  
impossible, you  
know how it feels.**

and the wall doesn't give. And your soul won't stop. Every time it flings itself, it just hurts worse because it's already so battered and bruised.

Despair—that's probably what you'd call it—the shadow side of



David Harader in 2012.  
Photo provided by the author.

## VILLANELLE FOR DAD

March 11, 2013

You died the way you lived,  
with love and grace,  
The Hallelujah Chorus in the air,  
Our gazes fixed intently on  
your face.

Disease so sudden we could  
scarcely brace,  
Yet you accepted, took the load  
to bear.

You died the way you lived,  
with love and grace.

Unhinged we cried and  
questioned, wept and paced;  
Sustained somehow by holy  
words and prayer,

Our gazes fixed intently on  
your face.

They say that slow and steady  
wins the race.

We wish you'd gone more  
slowly toward death's glare.

You died the way you lived,  
with love and grace.

A pastor to the end, you made  
your case:

You said, "If you're in God, know  
I am there."

Our gazes fixed intently on  
your face.

And you, my dad, whose sacred  
life I trace,

I thank you for this final gift you  
share:

You died the way you lived,  
with love and grace,

Our gazes fixed intently on  
your face.

—Joanna Harader

hope, when hope slams you into a wall of impossibility and grief.

My tendency is to save myself from despair by moderating hope, by trying not to want anything too much. This is not a way to live life to the fullest, but it can work in staving off despair—until it doesn't.

We fall in love. We get sick. We watch someone we love waste away. And the hope sparks and burns into despair.

Then what?

In my dad's hospice room, there was a moment when he didn't have the energy to speak, when his breathing was labored, hollow, when we knew the disease was poisoning his whole body, when his children, wife and

grandchildren were gathered around him and the "Hallelujah Chorus" was playing. There was a moment when my deep hope shifted and I desired for him his release from that broken, breaking body.

A shift in hope. To hope for something we don't really want—something painful in its goodness, heart-wrenching in its holiness. Is that a form of grace?



Joanna Harader is pastor of Peace Mennonite Church in Lawrence, Kan. This originally appeared on her blog, SpaciousFaith.com.

BY JULIE HART

# TRANSFORMED BY GOD'S SPIRIT OF TRUTH

*Photo by Zhang H on Unsplash*



## Lessons from war veterans' transformations

**F**ollowing 10 years of research interviewing 114 pro-war veterans who over time transformed into passionate antiwar activists, I realized that the Bible and later theologians were describing this same transformation but calling it something else. They used phrases such as “the truth written on our hearts,” “the divine light within” and “our inner Christ or our true self.”

Consider Romans 12:1-2: “Present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewing of your minds so that you discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect.”

In John 14:6, Jesus says: “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” Catholic writer Richard Rohr interprets this as the Christ planted in each of us at birth. Paying close attention to our inner Christ consciousness is the way to be in touch with God’s truth, God’s way and God’s intended life for

each of us. In John 8:32, Jesus says, “you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.” This is what I found happening in the transformation of many of the veterans I interviewed, whether they were Christian or not.

The great theologian Thomas Aquinas also emphasized truth, concluding that we discern what is good and bad, true or not, through the divine light within us. He calls this a natural law because it is in all of us, whether or not we choose to listen to it. George Fox, the founder of the Quakers, also spoke of the light of Christ within our hearts, where God speaks directly to us. Jesuits tell us that when we pay attention to this light, we feel hope, courage

and at peace, even in hard times. When we listen to other voices, which they call false spirits, we feel alone, fearful and anxious.

## Many had become healers for others as pastors and counselors.

C.S. Lewis spends the first four chapters of *Mere Christianity* arguing that the best evidence for a God is that all great religions and even atheists share common moral truths. He claims everyone agrees we should not lie, steal or be selfish because this natural law is planted within us at birth,

and we know it as our conscience. When we listen, we grow in faith, hope and love. When we ignore this voice of conscience, it becomes easier to lie, steal and harm others without guilt.

As I examined my 114 interviews with antiwar veterans from World War II to Vietnam to Iraq, I sought to understand what caused such a significant change in their attitude from pro war to antiwar. They described major transformations in many areas of their lives, including their careers, politics, faith, perspectives on the LGBTQ community and environmental concerns. They also described finally feeling at peace with themselves, having a clean conscience, feeling whole again, truly free, even healed. Many had become healers for others as pastors and counselors.

This evidence of wholeness and serenity for the vets often followed years of emotional turmoil, addiction, divorce, suicide attempts, living with PTSD and, for some, guilt and shame for what they had done during their military careers. Many had sacrificed much to follow their new antiwar truth and life. A few were disowned by their fathers or divorced by their wives. Many were abandoned by their military buddies, felt rejected by their traditional political parties or churches and ridiculed when they expressed their opposition to the Iraq War or all wars.

Then I discovered identity theory, specifically moral identity, and this holistic transformation of the vets made more sense. Identity theory asserts that we all hold identities that guide our behavior. For these veterans, common



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identities at age 18 included soldier, Christian, Republican and protector. Humans are motivated to act in ways that confirm their identities. The need to verify our identities is so strong that when we do something that contradicts

## Humans are motivated to act in ways that confirm their identities.

an identity, we are driven to either change our behavior or to change our identities in order to live at peace with ourselves. This is what happened to the veterans in my study.

For example, when Jake was sent to Iraq, he was a career platoon sergeant in charge of infantry and snipers. He says, “I witnessed numerous violations of the Geneva Convention, which is our military Bible. I took part in the killing of innocent civilians—including older men, women and children....I was the second in charge of 45 Marines, and when I began to voice my opposition, I was quickly labeled a rogue. At that point, I didn’t care, because I knew what they were doing was wrong.”

For other veterans, many of whom did not experience combat, the disrupter of their pro-war moral identity came from betrayal. This arose from either discovering

a U.S. president or the military lied about a war or treated people unjustly. This betrayal of their trust so interfered with their conscience, many claimed they would never trust easily again.

Sam enlisted in the Army in 1963 and served in Alaska. He wanted out after three years. In 1967, he received a letter from an old friend who went to Vietnam. “The letter said the Vietnamese hated us,” Sam says. “I began to study the situation in the library. I read about the French in Vietnam and then the U.S. occupation....I was shocked, angry and confused to learn about the U.S. oppression.”

Another group of veterans returned from their military

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experience still supportive of war. They often attended college, and through a history book, a class or just the news they encountered a new perspective on history or politics. They simply decided they couldn't always believe what they heard from their parents, leaders or the military.

Adam served in Puerto Rico with the Navy. He recounts an event there in which a Marine pilot was dropping training rounds and killed a civilian contractor. Locals then protested the U.S. Naval base there. Adam says: "I lived in town and was hearing lots of racist attitudes against the Puerto Ricans from the Navy. The locals didn't want the Navy there." In 2004, he moved back home and his time at the community college changed him. "I began to see another perspective on U.S. foreign policy," he says. "My professor of deaf studies introduced me to systemic oppressions. She changed my life. I was a fundamentalist Christian and a conservative Republican. Today, I think very differently."

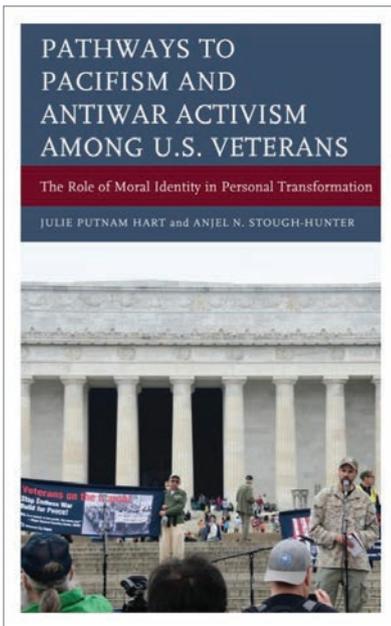
Another group of veterans held strong Christian identities at age 18, often conservative Baptist or Catholic. One veteran describes being sent off by his church to "kill commies for Christ." Others describe feeling called, post 9/11, by their faith to defend the United States against terrorists. These young men and women often discovered the war was not black and white, that the U.S. military sometimes treated innocent civilians horribly. When they studied the Bible from a peace tradition, many felt God was calling them to love their

enemies rather than kill them. They discovered nonviolent ways of resisting those who would harm others. A new understanding of Jesus altered their moral identity and led them to abandon their soldier identity. Fifteen of those in our study became conscientious objectors to war and found their way to the Mennonite church.

## A new understanding of Jesus altered their moral identity and led them to abandon their soldier identity.

Richard was a born-again Baptist and a career chaplain in the Army. He was sent to Duke University for a year to study pastoral psychology, and the professor introduced him to *The Politics of Jesus* by John Howard Yoder. He read it and said, "Oh my God, I'm not a weirdo; other people believe in nonviolence." He says: "It opened me up to the Mennonite world. I began to ask, What am I doing in the Army, even as a noncombatant? I could no longer bear to wear the cross on one collar and my rank on the other because in so doing I was validating the military's violence." Finally he and his wife worked it through. He got out and gave up his retirement benefits. "It was a real conversion experience," he says.

I offer three recommendations for the church that come straight from the veterans:



▲ *Pathways to Pacifism and Antiwar Activism Among U.S. Veterans* was published in 2017.

### 1. We can start with our kids

by reminding them to listen to and trust their inner voice of God, their heart, their conscience, and differentiate between this voice and their selfish voice. Our congregations can call on the inner light of Christ to guide all our decisions. This requires more time for silent centering and reflection within the service and in congregational meetings.

### 2. We must continue to educate our youth

about the reality of war and alternatives to military service. We should teach our youth not just pacifism but just war theory as well. One Catholic veteran writes: “I dream of a day when any Christian who thinks of enlisting sits down with church members, elders, a pastor perhaps, and discusses how Christ and church teachings impact their decisions about enlisting, about participating in war and about wars in which they would

participate. Such discussions and statements would be a huge step in preventing and ending war.”

**3. Churches should work with antiwar veterans groups** such as Veterans for Peace and Iraq Veterans Against the War to promote alternatives to war and military spending. Combining the resources of faith communities and antiwar veterans groups could result in a powerful movement. Veterans groups have great credibility with the public and lawmakers. Churches might also become sanctuaries of healing for veterans with PTSD and moral injury as they struggle with depression, flashbacks and suicide.

We all need to be open to

God’s transformative power through God’s indwelling spirit of truth, our conscience, the natural law written on our hearts, the inner light of Christ. This allows us to become a new creation and allow God’s healing and hope to flow through us to the world.



**Julie Hart** is associate professor of sociology and peace and justice at Ohio Dominican University in Columbus and author of *Pathways to Pacifism and Antiwar Activism among U.S. Veterans: the Role of Moral Identity in Personal Transformation*.

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# Life's mission questioned, transformed

**Steve Wiebe-Johnson's focus changed when he was 'cut to the heart' by a question early in his ministry.**

**AFTER I TOOK AN** African literature course, I had a 19-year-old's arrogance to think I could be of use in Africa. I went to Paris, France, for language study in preparation for a Mennonite Central Committee assignment in Chad. But then, war broke out.

I became acquainted with students at Foyer Grebel. This hostel for Africans studying in France was a ministry of Mennonite Board of Missions (MBM), a predecessor agency of Mennonite Mission Network. Instead of going to Chad, I worked at the hostel, where I felt humbled by these brilliant young men who spoke multiple languages. They succeeded under difficult conditions. I had the advantages of privilege as a white American. At the end of my assignment, my student friends encouraged me to go back to the United States and finish university and get some skills before I presumed I had anything to offer in the African context.

The Foyer Grebel experience taught me the importance of being relevant in mission, the value of invitation from local partners, to recognize that God is already at work preparing people in whatever context a mission worker may enter and that effective ministry



Steve Wiebe-Johnson converses with Théophane Boko in Cotonou, Benin. Boko, a church leader with Eglise Evangélique Universelle, helped lay the groundwork for Benin Bible Institute and has partnered with Mennonite Mission Network for more than three decades.

is grounded in understanding one's context. These students came from many different situations. There were many commonalities in their stories but not a "single narrative."

Following my time in Paris, I dedicated myself to study. I received degrees in philosophy and international development, a master's degree in divinity and did research on new religious movements. While these studies helped broaden my perspective, I still focused on what I had to offer.

In July 1989, two months before heading to Liberia to begin an assignment with MBM, I participated in a conference on "Ministry in Partnership with African Independent Churches" held in Kinshasa, Zaire (now Democratic Republic of Congo). I presented a modest paper about Mennonite objectives in Liberia.

After he listened to my paper, Charles Kudzerema, a pastor from Zimbabwe and a national leader in the Zion Apostolic Church of Jesus Christ, said he was already doing much of what we wanted to do in Liberia. Kudzerema acknowledged the benefit I had received from my extensive education. He said

his passion for teaching and leadership training would be more fruitful if he were given similar opportunities.

Kudzerema took issue with mission agencies pouring all kinds of resources into training people from outside Africa to work in Africa. He said, "Why not give the same opportunities to Africans?"

After a decade of awareness-raising that began with the Foyer Grebel students, I was "ripe" for Kudzerema's challenge. This epiphany helped ground the work I've done for the past 30 years in listening to African partners and their desires for training.

His words remind me I needed to take a back seat so that African leaders could fulfill their God-given calling. As Mission Network's Africa director, I hear Kudzerema's question each time I make a decision. "Are you willing to put the same kind of investment into African leaders as your organization has put into your education?"

---

**Steve Wiebe-Johnson** for Mennonite Mission Network

# Mennonite Church Nigeria turns 60

## A Renewal 2027 testimony: Anabaptists today

**BISHOP VICTOR UMOABASI** says: “People feel excited about the Word even as their problems vanish through prayers. Also, when they have physical need, we grant them welfare.” This is the legacy of Mennonite Church Nigeria, which celebrated its 60th anniversary November 2018.

The church began on Nov. 22, 1958, with pastor Francis Umana Ekerek sending an invitation letter to a mission board in the United States. As a result, S.J. and Ida Hostetler and Edwin and Irene Weaver worked alongside the Africa-initiated churches, which since then have grown by leaps and bounds.

**As [new Christians] were coming in streams, the major challenge was how to make them true disciples; the land and the buildings were not a problem because the manpower was there.**

—Bishop Victor UmoAbasi

“As [new Christians] were coming in streams, the major challenge was how to make them true disciples; the land and the

buildings were not a problem because the manpower was there,” says UmoAbasi.

### Church growth

The church now has 18,000 members in five dioceses. “Indeed, this is worth celebrating,” says UmoAbasi.

“We pray, preach and share the Word of God as well as interpret to the people,” says UmoAbasi. Churches meet Sundays for worship, Fridays for Bible studies and Wednesdays for prayers and deliverance.

### Peace work

“There will be no prosperity to the community that is not at peace. And where there is no peace, there will be no eternity with God,” says UmoAbasi. At the anniversary event, members and community leaders who pioneered peace work in their community or state will receive awards.

### Leader development

“Young people are the hope of the church,” says UmoAbasi. “Some of the youths I have seen [have] enormous talent and potential. If opportunities are given to them to showcase their worth at the international programs, it would be an amazing discovery.” Young people will display their abilities in a talent show at the anniversary event.

Some 50 percent of Mennonite Church Nigeria leaders are trained at Bible college; other leaders—men and women—are trained through seminars and summits every three months.

Skills acquisition and regular conferences also help people come into their destiny.

### Children’s ministry

In the aspect of education, the church has an orphanage, nursery

and primary school in about six centers in local government areas. The church has employed more than 40 staff with 400 children in these schools.

The children’s camp, held Aug. 13-19, 2018, for ages 3-12, included activities such as singing, talent hunt, football competition and Bible quizzing.

In addition to education, the church is working toward the skill-acquisition center for the vulnerable groups. “Being a custodian of moral consciousness, we raise them through training,” UmoAbasi says.

### Social enterprise

The church also has a purified water factory. It is managed by a seasoned investor, though owned by the church and overseen by a board of investment of the church. “This has also created employment for the people,” says UmoAbasi.

“The church has faced great and turbulent times, yet God has kept the church strong,” says UmoAbasi.

An event tagged Change for Dominion Conference at the national headquarters in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria, celebrated the 60th anniversary in November 2018.

“We need more understanding from the new leadership,...and we want to have collaboration... as an organization that is spreading the gospel of peace and also integrating people into international activities,” says Umo Abasi.

Over the next 60 years, Mennonite Church Nigeria will be “a formidable movement” that engages youth and the global church, says Umo Abasi.

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6. Happy as Lazzaro
7. If Beale Street Could Talk
8. Can You Ever Forgive Me?
9. Won't You Be My Neighbor?
10. Blindspotting



THE BEST BOOKS OF 2018



**Being Human: Bodies, Minds, Persons**  
by Rowan Williams

**Heartland: A Memoir of Working Hard and Being Broke in the Richest Country on Earth**  
by Sarah Smarsh

**He Held Radical Light: The Art of Faith, the Faith of Art**  
by Christian Wiman

**The Mars Room: A Novel**  
by Rachel Kushner

**There, There: A Novel**  
by Tommy Orange



# Imagination and empathy

**ACCORDING TO AN** October 2013 article in *Scientific American* by Julianne Chiaet, researchers at The New School in New York City “found evidence that literary fiction improves a reader’s capacity to understand what others are thinking and feeling.”

Participants in the study read excerpts from genre (or popular) fiction, literary fiction, nonfiction or nothing, then took a test that measured their ability to infer and understand other people’s thoughts and emotions. The difference was significant.

Literary fiction, writes Chiaet, “focuses more on the psychology of characters and their relationships.” It increases readers’ psychological awareness.

“Although literary fiction tends to be more realistic than popular fiction, the characters disrupt reader expectations, undermining prejudices and stereotypes,” writes Chiaet. “They support and teach us values about social behavior, such as the importance of understanding those who are different from ourselves.”

Reading genre fiction (romance, mystery, science fiction, among others) can be fun, but “the characters are internally consistent and predictable, which tends to affirm the reader’s expectations of others.”

Reading literary fiction, on the other hand, requires effort and may feel frustrating by being more ambiguous.

The two novels on my best of

2018 list (left) take readers into worlds that will feel new, even strange, to many of us.

*The Mars Room* by Rachel Kushner is set largely in a women’s maximum-security prison in California and tells the stories of various characters, focusing mainly on Romy Hall, who is serving two consecutive life terms for killing a man who threatened her. She is separated from her young son. Kushner presents her characters, including the man who was killed, with complexity and depth. She refrains from judgment or making political points and offers no sentimental ending.

*There, There*, a first novel by Cheyenne and Arapaho author Tommy Orange, presents an array of Native Americans living in the Oakland, Calif., area. These characters struggle with many challenges, and the book deals with themes of ethnic identity and being “ambiguously nonwhite.”

Films can also teach empathy by presenting other worlds in realistic, complex ways.

*Roma* (#1 at left) is set in a section of Mexico City in 1970-71 and presents a domestic drama in which the main character is Cleo, a Mixtec woman who keeps the household running. Beautifully shot, the film alludes to themes of colonialism yet refuses to speak for Cleo. It builds our empathy by presenting her life in its complexity.

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Gordon Houser is editor of *The Mennonite*.



QUOTABLE

**“If I could go back in my time machine and make one change to [Mennonite Church USA’s] bylaws, I would drop the terms agency and entity and insert the term ministry.”**

—Glen Guyton, executive director of Mennonite Church USA



**MOST-READ ARTICLES ONLINE**

**2.1K**  
Advent Manifesto: Does my soul still sing?  
*by John Paul Lederach*

**1.2K**  
‘The Midianite Hour’ and more false impressions about Mennonites  
*by MennoMedia*

**1.0K**  
Congolese army officer arrested in U.N. murders case  
*by Mennonite World Review staff*



**RECIPE OF THE MONTH | Chocolate custard cake**  
You can find the recipe on our website at [themennonite.org/hungryhounds](http://themennonite.org/hungryhounds)

**FROM THE ARCHIVES**



**Last General Conference Mennonite Church session, 1997**

The last separate session of the General Conference Mennonite Church before the creation of Mennonite Church USA took place in Winnipeg in 1997. The banner shows the conference theme, “Transformed in Christ,” based on 1 Thessalonians 1:2-5. The sculpture featured at the conference was by Gerald Loewen. Participants were invited to look at it and come up with their own interpretation of the work.

*Citation: used in the Aug. 12, 1997, issue of The Mennonite. Photo by Dave Linscheid*

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## PERSPECTIVES FROM READERS

# Is opposing same-sex activity unloving?

**SCOTT SPRUNGER'S** piece (Opinion, November 2018) helped me decide to add my name to the statement "Grace and Truth" (News Briefs, November 2018).

I am a white, male, heterosexual, senior, ordained minister in LMC (formerly Lancaster Mennonite Conference) and an active member of Oxford Circle Mennonite Church in Philadelphia. I have devoted most of my life to promoting justice and peace. I agree with the statement on sexuality in Mennonite Church USA's *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective*, although I know committed Christians who disagree.

## Awareness of our finitude should not immobilize us.

I like the Grace and Truth statement precisely because it is an effort to acknowledge and turn away from what has so often been a harsh, unloving attitude toward LGBTQ people. And it seeks to do that while affirming that biblical teaching supports sexual union only between a man and a woman. The statement seeks to model Jesus' overflowing love for the adulterous woman while recognizing that Jesus quietly concluded the encounter, "Don't sin anymore."

Grace and Truth welcomes covenanted same-sex partners into fellowship and seeks to be patient as over time the churches help them embrace what they believe is the biblical position. Sprunger

says that approach involves a "limited understanding of Jesus' love or God's peace." He also says those who embrace this position lack "moral clarity or basic decency to treat other human beings as human."

That seems to me to say that if one does not accept Sprunger's position, one is abandoning Jesus and human decency.

If the only way to genuinely welcome someone into the church (and demonstrate Jesus' love) is to accept their current behavior without seeking to help them change, then we dare not urge racists, sexists, militarists and adulterers to change their behavior. But that means abandoning the basic Anabaptist understanding of the church as a disciplined and disciplining community where we help people turn away from sin and become more like Christ.

Virginia Mennonite Conference has practiced this teaching on "Grace and Truth" toward soldiers. They have welcomed active members of the U.S. military into their congregations, then patiently taught that Jesus' way of peacemaking means they must leave the military.

Love does not trump truth. Jesus and Paul both call for church discipline that requires the church to condemn some behavior.

While the church has abandoned oppressive views about women and slaves found in the Bible, on both there is a clear trajectory toward a different understanding within the Bible. There is no hint of this trajectory

of change within the Bible on the issue of same-sex practice.

It is true Jesus said nothing explicit about same-sex relations. But we know from a variety of sources that first-century Jews (unlike many Greco-Romans) universally condemned all same-sex activity. There is no evidence at all that Jesus disagreed with this universal Jewish view.

Mennonites must continue the painful struggle to understand what biblical fidelity demands on the issue of covenanted same-sex relationships. We must do that recognizing there are deeply committed Christians on both sides of this issue. But I think it hinders genuine dialogue if we declare that those who embrace the historic Christian position fail to understand Jesus' love and peace and fail to treat other human beings as human.

I want to continue the dialogue, painfully aware that I "see through a glass darkly." But awareness of our finitude should not immobilize us or prevent individuals, congregations, conferences and denominations from declaring their conclusions on complicated issues. We must seek the best understanding of Scripture in dialogue with the whole body of Christ (both past and present) and then live our understanding with grace and truth.



**Ronald J. Sider** is author of *The Future of Our Faith*. Chapter 5 of that book includes a longer statement on this topic.

BY AND ABOUT YOUNG ADULTS

# Women in the pulpit matter

**RE-ENTERING ACADEMIA** has caused me to reflect more on women in ministry than I did in the midst of pastoral work. This is partially due to my studies last semester, but it's also an exercise in gratitude born of hindsight. Working on a project that examined a sermon preached by Ruth Brunk Stoltzfus, I became interested in the history of Mennonite women's preaching and pastoring, often connecting it with my own pastoral experiences.

A recent study published by Benjamin Knoll and Cammie Jo Bolin, *She Preached the Word*, concluded that women who grew up seeing a woman in the pulpit showed higher levels of self-esteem, education and employment. I identify with seeing a woman in the pulpit and being one, too. My mother attended seminary in the early 1980s, when the Mennonite Church debated women's ordination. From her I inherited stories of Mennonite women. Preaching at her retirement from pastoral ministry is a great joy in my life. I owe my opportunities to serve as a pastor to Ruth, my mother and other women who felt called to serve the church in ministry.

I carried this legacy into my own pastoring. I worked in congregations holding varying positions on women's ordination and leadership. However, in each setting, when I stood in the pulpit, I knew my presence in that space mattered. I got to serve with congregants and colleagues—male and female—who affirmed my gifts and supported my work. But I also realized that some things

haven't changed. Obstacles faced by earlier generations remain.

Though not contested to the extent they were in the past, the issues surrounding women's ordination are not all resolved. It exists today in society and the church, and we Christians have often done a poor job of addressing it. Double standards, toxic behaviors and sexual harassment/violence toward female clergy persist.

**More female pastors and men in traditionally female professions help normalize the presence of all people in these places.**

Female pastors defy the gendering of ministry and leadership roles. Pulpits, microphones and dress expectations can subtly reinforce pastoring and preaching as masculine. (See Dorothy Nickel Friesen's memoir, *The Pastor Wears a Skirt*.) A woman may get lost behind a bulky pulpit, so instead she preaches from the floor. Or—as I have done—she wears a scarf around her waist so she can clip on the lapel mic. I also know female pastors who carefully consider what they wear so that their attire doesn't warrant more comment than their sermon. Changes to these things may or may not come, but having more

women in the pulpit makes us mindful of how this space shows that it was constructed for males rather than females.

As a historian of education, I read how teaching moved from a male profession to one seen as female, and how schools shaped men and women—practically and morally—toward different types of work. Children notice gender roles. I've heard stories from female pastors whose young congregants were surprised to find, upon attending another church, that pastors could be men. More female pastors and men in traditionally female professions help normalize the presence of all people in these places.

So what can congregations do to cultivate spaces hospitable to female leadership? (1) Try crafting a worship service where most or all the people up front are women. An intentional effort to give women a prominent place in worship helps remedy our historical and sometimes unconscious practice of featuring men during services. (2) Go by this rule: If you wouldn't say or act that way toward a male pastor, don't say/do it to a female pastor. (3) Encourage and mentor young women who have gifts for pastoral ministry. I am thankful a way has been opened, and I know the empowerment that comes from a pastor wearing a skirt.



**Regina Wenger** is a doctoral student in history at Baylor University, Waco, Texas.



FROM MENNONITE CHURCH USA

## The body of Christ

**AS I WRITE THIS**, the Christmas tree is at the curb for recycling and candles are burned down. Christmas is over, yet the truth of the Incarnation remains: God's Word became flesh and dwelt among us. God continues to be present in human lives, and the church continues to be the body of Christ.

**The longer I serve the church, the more I am sobered by how the church is a broken and hurting body.**

Through my life and ministry, I have become more intimately acquainted with God's presence "in the body." Caring for infants, children, elderly family members and those who are dying reveals the fragility, resilience, delight and messiness of human bodies. Midlife brings new aches and more weariness to my own body. I know firsthand that physical well-being is tied to emotional, spiritual, mental and social health.

I have become more aware of the significance of embodied identity. The ethnicity, race, gender, sexual orientation, physical ability, age, geographic location and health of our bodies often impact other people's assumptions about us. Tragically, human society and the church have often valued some bodies

more than others and have abused, devalued or excluded certain bodies. This contradicts the will of God, in whose image we are all made.

As a pastoral leader, I also continue to gain understanding of the church as the body of Christ—a body with many members, the whole of which suffers if one part is in pain or cut off. The longer I serve the church, the more I am sobered by how the church is a broken and hurting body. I have observed how sin, violence and trauma have often left the church struggling to breathe, lacking in vitality, unable to function well. At times, I feel disillusioned with the church. How can this be the body of Christ, a visible example of God's presence?

I have also observed God's compassion, creativity, goodness and life within the church body, in the midst of struggle and stress. I am reminded that the Word became flesh not because human lives were perfect or well-prepared (they never are) but because God loves God's creation and loves us enough to enter our messy world, dwell there with us and offer wholeness in the midst of our chaos and pain.

May we embrace the Incarnation as a source of hope, honesty and courage to live together as the body of Christ.

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**Heidi Regier Kreider** is conference minister for Western District Conference of Mennonite Church USA.

### UPDATES

#### MC USA RELEASES VIDEO RESOURCES ON LEADERSHIP, POLITY

People across Mennonite Church USA are invited to take a closer look at the denomination's structure and healthy ways of functioning with a newly released video series featuring presentations by Michael Danner, associate executive director for church vitality and engagement; David Boshart, MC USA moderator; and Joy Sutter, MC USA moderator-elect.

#### OLLENBURGER RETIRES AFTER 31 YEARS OF SERVICE

Ben C. Ollenburger, Ph.D., retired from Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, Ind., on Dec. 31, 2018. Ollenburger taught Old Testament and biblical theology for 31 years at AMBS, also serving as director of Master of Arts programs since 1997.

#### MIM SHIRK LEAVES MHS, JOINS APG

Mim Shirk has accepted the position of president and CEO of Anabaptist Providers Group, effective Jan. 1. Shirk left her role as vice president of MHS, where she oversaw member services, Mennonite Health Assembly and MHS communication and corporate operations for 21 years. She will complete current projects at MHS and conclude her role as vice president on April 30.

## A WORD FROM PASTORS

# Peaceable interpretations

**AT AGE 9, I FELL IN LOVE** with the Apostle Paul. My home church adopted a learning-stations model for Bible school that summer. Our stations were Paul the Convert; Paul the Missionary; Paul the Pastor; Paul the Letter-Writer; Paul the Martyr. I was taken. And the love has never faded, though perhaps it's matured. I learned Philippians by heart, and it seems we've shared a long friendship over the years.

As a pastor, I have taught many children in Sunday school or Bible school. My congregation has opted for a Bible school weekend with a Friday evening and all-day Saturday program, followed by Sunday worship with Bible school themes and music. Last summer, I had the privilege of teaching the Peace Lab curriculum from MennoMedia. The station our pastoral intern Jordan Luther and I led related to Jonathan and his sister, Michal, peacemakers in the palace of King Saul. The story in 1 Samuel 18-20 is high in drama—spears, arrows, love, promises, deception and escape through a window. Jonathan and Michal, royal young adults, speak and act as peacemakers on behalf of David out of deep love and at their own peril.

We enjoyed learning the story and connecting to contemporary peacemaking situations children face. Jonathan speaks up to his father, King Saul, to protect his friend David from Saul's murderous rage. Michal, Jonathan's sister and David's wife, takes action through creative nonviolent deception, helping David escape. Neither Jonathan

nor Michal controls the story, but these minor characters make a difference. And what difference do they make? They save David. Thus David, a biblical character with mixed moral reviews, has the experience of being saved or rescued. Likewise, we Mennonite,

**We speak up and act as peacemakers, yet as minor characters, moved by love and friendship.**

peace-church Christians, neither control nor dominate the story of our society or the world. Nevertheless, like Michal and Jonathan, we make a difference. We can speak up and act as peacemakers, yet we do so as minor characters, moved by love and friendship.

Bible school got me thinking afresh about Mennonites and the Bible. We read Scripture and the world in light of Jesus Christ, the peacemaker. This penchant for peaceable interpretation in Mennonite Bible school curriculum, Sunday school curriculum, sermons and Bible studies is both faithful and strategic. Jesus insisted that his faith tradition was best understood through a peacemaking lens. He taught and practiced peacemaking.

Perhaps you don't need this column to convince you Jesus was a peacemaker or that we can act as peacemakers or even that peace is essential to the character of God.

Perhaps, like me, you're sometimes weary of all the peaceful ministries to which you're committed. Like David, we are far from perfect, caught up in a society distorted by violence. Yet we're deeply loved and have been saved. Like those who gathered Scripture, we trace our spiritual history through experiences of being loved, saved and rescued by the God of peace, who has promised us Shalom—peace, justice, well-being, salvation.

There is a political and spiritual rationale for these dramatic stories of rescue in the Bible. David's life was saved more than once. That bodily knowledge affected him such that David spared King Saul's life when he had the opportunity to retaliate. Though entangled in the logic and power of a violent kingdom, David's story and ours include windows in which we glimpse the coming kingdom of peace, justice and love.

As God's people, we're supposed to identify with David and later with Jesus, the Son of David. With storytelling patience, Christ the Word reveals the kingdom of peace. Through God's Word we know in our bodies and blood that we are saved, that we have escaped the logic of violence by the love of our peacemaking God. If you have an opportunity this summer, consider going back to Bible school.



**Jennifer Davis Sensenig** is pastor of Community Mennonite Church in Harrisonburg, Va.

# For the record

To submit births, marriages or deaths, log on to [themennonite.org](http://themennonite.org), use the "About Us" tab and select "Contact Us" from the drop-down menu. You may also use email, [editor@themennonite.org](mailto:editor@themennonite.org), or mail, 3145 Benham Ave., Suite 4, Elkhart, IN 46517.

## BIRTHS

**Spotts, Elizabeth Grace**, was born Oct. 14, 2018, to Andrew and Brittany Spotts, Archbold, Ohio.

**Stuckey, Ensley Tate**, was born Oct. 4, 2018, to Matthew and Bethany Stuckey, Archbold, Ohio.

**Waidelich, Coleman Gene**, was born Nov. 21, 2018, to Caleb and Joilyn Waidelich, Stryker, Ohio.

## DEATHS

**Blount, Deborah Jean Hecathorn**, 68, Auburn, Ind., died Nov. 13, 2018. Spouse: Kenneth Blount. Parents: Earl and Reva Utz Hecathorn. Children: Andrew Blount, Philip Blount, John Blount; three grandsons. Celebration of life: Nov. 26 at North Leo Mennonite Church, Leo, Ind.

**Book, Zelma Zigler**, 96, Sterling, Ill., died Dec. 19, 2018. Spouse: Orrin D. Book (deceased). Parents: John and Catherine Wulf Zigler. Children: Patricia McNinch, Judy Bailey; five grandchildren; 11 great-grandchildren; four great-great-grandchildren. Funeral: Dec. 28 at McDonald Funeral Home, Sterling.

**Brunk, Joseph "Joe" Daniel**, 83, Harrisonburg, Va., died Dec. 21, 2018. Spouse: Mary Louise Ours Brunk. Parents: Henry and Nora Kraus Brunk. Children: Craig L. Brunk, Cheri B. Shenk; six grandchildren; two great-grandchildren. Funeral: Dec. 29 at Harrisonburg Mennonite Church.

**Deter, Dorrine Jane Bos**, 88, Morrison, Ill., died Jan. 1. Spouse: Clayton Deter. Parents: Alvin and Jannette M. Zuidema Bos. Children: Rod Deter, Russ Deter, Rick Deter, Randy Deter; 11 grandchildren; three great-grandchildren. Funeral: Jan. 5 at Science Ridge Mennonite Church, Sterling, Ill.

**Detweiler, Esther Hunsberger**, 83, Dublin, Pa., died Sept. 16, 2018. Spouse: Marvin Detweiler. Parents: Walter N. and Clara Barndt Hunsberger. Children: Wesley Detweiler, David E. Detweiler, Corey J. Detweiler; two grandchildren. Funeral: Sept. 29 at Deep Run East Mennonite Church, Perkasia, Pa.

**Eby, Mildred Barkey**, 100, Mishawaka, Ind., died Dec. 15, 2018. Spouse: Charles E. Eby (deceased). Parents: Elmer and Dola Mast Barkey. Children: Donald Eby, Fred Eby, Margaret Yoder, Merlin Eby; 12 grandchildren; 26 great-grandchildren; 20 great-great-grandchildren. Funeral: Dec. 20 at Olive Mennonite Church, Elkhart, Ind.

**Frank, Neal R.**, 72, Perkasia, Pa., died June 29, 2018. Spouse: Janet Remetta Frank (deceased). Parents: Max and Viola Ollert Frank. Funeral: Aug. 3 at Blooming Glen Mennonite Church, Blooming Glen, Pa.

**Frey, Clara I. Stuckey**, 92, Wauseon, Ohio, died Oct. 30, 2018. Spouse: Warren Frey (deceased). Parents: Aaron and Sarah Eicher Stuckey. Children: Jerry Frey, Shirley Rychener, Kathy Poindexter, MaraBelle Schmucker, Allen Frey; 16 grandchildren; 17 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Nov. 5 at West Clinton Mennonite Church, Wauseon.

**Gattis, Homer**, 71, Hesston, Kan., died Dec. 13, 2018. Spouse: Jan Tapp Gattis. Parents: Thomas & Mary Hollingsworth Gattis. Children: Stephanie Smucker, Stacie Dundon, Brad Gattis; 5 grandchildren. Funeral: Dec. 20 at Hesston Mennonite Church.

**Gerber, Joan**, 87, Hesston, Kan., died Dec. 15, 2018. Spouse: Emory G. Gerber (deceased). Parents: Oren and Frances Ely. Children: Jerry and Lynn Gerber, Lucy Bontrager (deceased), Jana Heger; 9 grandchildren; 12 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Jan. 18 at Schowalter Villa, Hesston.

**Gingerich, Clydene**, 77, Hesston, Kan., died Dec. 15, 2018. Spouse: Kermit D. Gingerich. Parents: Clyde H. and Erma Mae Loucks Jantz. Children: Kim Brenneman, Craig Gingerich; four grandchildren. Funeral: Dec. 19 at Hesston Mennonite Church

**Glick, John L.**, 82, Smoketown, Pa., died Dec. 8, 2018, of a stroke. Spouse: Mary K. Byers Glick. Parents: Jacob A. Glick, Sr. and Katie Smoker Glick. Children: Cindy A. Blankenship, J. Scott Glick, Kirk E. Glick. Funeral: Dec. 13 at Forest Hills Mennonite Church, Leola, Pa.

**Goshow, Janet L. Swartley**, 74, Perkasia, Pa., died Aug. 1, 2018. Spouse: John M. Goshow. Parents: Williams and Valeria Landes Swartley. Children: Jeffrey M. Goshow, Jennifer G. Lacher, Jessica A. Shenk; 10 grandchildren; seven great-grandchildren. Funeral: Aug. 5 at Blooming Glen Mennonite Church, Blooming Glen, Pa.

**Grieser, Dorothy L. Burkholder**, 90, Archbold, Ohio, died Dec. 10, 2018. Spouse: Dale Grieser (deceased). Parents: Adam and Beulah Hooley Burkholder. Children: Kathleen Cipka, Cynthia Williams, Barbara Grieser, Sara Malone, D. Jonathan Grieser; two grandchildren; two great-grandchildren. Funeral: March 2019 at Fairlawn Chapel, Archbold.

**Hazlett, Beverly A. McElhaney**, 82, Naples, Fla., died June 27, 2018. Spouse: Joseph M. Hazlett (deceased). Children: Joseph Mark Hazlett II, James Michael Hazlett, John McFarland Hazlett, Mai Ann Hazlett, Jennifer Hazlett Kryzanowski; eight grandchildren; five great-grandchildren. A celebration of his life will be held at a later date in Frostburg, Pa.

**Hazlett, Joseph M.**, 87, Naples, Fla., died Aug. 21, 2018. Spouse: Beverly A. McElhane Hazlett (deceased). Parents: Mark "Mick" and Helen Hazlett. Children: Joseph Mark Hazlett II, James Michael Hazlett, John McFarland Hazlett, Mai Ann Hazlett, Jennifer Hazlett Kryzanowski; eight grandchildren; five great-grandchildren. A celebration of his life will be held at a later date in Frostburg, Pa.

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**Headings, Dorothy Jean Yoder**, 78, Harrisonburg, Va., died Dec. 27, 2018. Spouse: Richard Lee Headings (deceased). Parents: George Elrose Yoder and Ruth Kauffman Yoder. Children: Lauri Headings Whyte, Kevin Headings; five grandchildren. Funeral: Jan. 4 at Harrisonburg Mennonite Church.

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**Lais, Kenneth Franklin**, 68, Canby, Ore., died Aug. 30, 2018. Parents: Daniel Franklin "Frank," and Wanona Anna Conrad Lais. Children: Daniel Lais, Ericka Strausburg, Anna Lais; one granddaughter. Funeral: Sept. 10 at Zion Mennonite Church, Hubbard, Ore.

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**Landis, Beverly Ann Bishop**, 67, Middlebury Center, Pa., died July 29, 2018. Spouse: Larry H. Landis. Parents: Francis and Virginia Beer Bishop. Children: Bradley Landis, Amy Stefanowicz; three grandchildren. No funeral was planned.

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**Leatherman, Irene Rice**, 91, Sellersville, Pa., died Sept. 14, 2018. Spouse: Clarence Leatherman (deceased). Parents: Noah and Annie Swartz Rice. Children: Carolyn Leatherman, Bernice Doelp, Clyde Leatherman, Elaine Hooley, Rachel Schertz, Evelyn Zumfelde; 12 grandchildren; 22 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Sept. 23 at Deep Run Mennonite Church East, Perkasia, Pa.

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**Mark, Scott Joseph**, 52, Elkhart, Ind., died Nov. 9, 2018. Former spouse: Summer Mark. Parents: George and Arlene Mark. Children: Anne, John, Brian. A private service and burial will be held.

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**Martin, Allen S.**, M.D., 88, Shippshewana, Ind., died Dec. 9, 2018. Spouse: Ruth E. Nussbaum Martin (deceased). Parents: Joseph E. and Mary Shaum Martin. Children: Anita Martin Vernon, David Martin, Rebecca Martin Picht, Rachel Stutzman, Jerry Martin, Linda Martin Burkholder; 14 grandchildren; 25 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Dec. 22 at College Mennonite Church, Goshen, Ind.

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**Miller, LaVerne B.**, 93, Hesston, Kan., died Dec. 11, 2018. Spouse: Paul Joseph Miller (deceased). Parents: Merle and Josephine Swavey. Children: Robert Paul, William Edward, Jon Francis Miller and Mary Bellmore; 9 grandchildren; 4 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Dec. 17 at Schowalter Villa, Hesston.

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**Moyer, Verda Fay Good**, 93, Perkasia, Pa., died Dec. 3, 2018. Spouse: T. Carroll Moyer. Parents: Leroy and Leah Eichelberger Good. Child: Lon Moyer; one grandchild. Funeral: Dec. 9 at The Community of Rockhill, Sellersville, Pa.

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**Pancorbo, Humberto Pérez**, 85, Goshen, Ind., died Dec. 9, 2018. Spouse: Elizabeth Solano. Parents: Herman and Eudocia Pérez. Children: Marianela Pérez, Margaret Ramirez, Giovanni Pérez, Diana Pérez, Ivannia Graber; eight grandchildren. Funeral: Dec. 15 at College Mennonite Church, Goshen.

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**Reimer, Gerhard Johan**, 90, Goshen, Ind., died Jan. 2. Spouse: Rosemary Wyse Reimer. Spouse: Margaret "Marge" Lapp Reimer (deceased). Parents: David P. and Justina Brandt Reimer. Children: Paul Reimer, Julia Reimer Lund, Christine Reimer Collins; five grandchildren. Funeral: Jan. 5 at College Mennonite Church, Goshen.

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**Rolón, Samuel**, 83, Hatfield, Pa., died Oct. 19, 2018. Spouse: Dorcas Emma Yoder Rolón. Parents: Eugenio and Juana Rolón. Children: Juanita Emma Santiago, Nancy Rolón Wingfield, Pedro Samuel Rolón, Rosalie Rolón-Dow; 11 grandchildren. Funeral: Oct.

23 at Blooming Glen Mennonite Church, Blooming Glen, Pa.

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**Rush, Raymond F.**, 75, Perkasia, Pa., died July 28, 2018. Spouse: Shirley M. Rosenberger Rush (deceased). Parents: Elwyn Y. and Bertha Moyer Rush. Children: Dale Rush, Brenda Rush, Charlene Burke; four grandchildren. Funeral: Aug. 2 at Dock Woods Community Chapel, Lansdale, Pa.

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**Rush, Shirley M. Rosenberger**, 72, Perkasia, Pa., died Aug. 9, 2018. Spouse: Raymond F. Rush (deceased). Parents: Stanley Rosenberger and Alice Moyer Rosenberger Bolton. Children: Dale Rush, Brenda Rush, Charlene Burke; four grandchildren. Funeral: Aug. 12 at Blooming Glen Mennonite Church, Blooming Glen, Pa.

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**Short, Marjorie Ella Nofziger**, 94, Archbold, Ohio, died Dec. 5, 2018. Spouse: Calvin D. Short (deceased). Parents: William B. and Clara Beck Nofziger. Children: Lonnie Short, Pat Nafziger, Terry Short, Peg Rufenacht; eight grandchildren; nine great-grandchildren. Funeral: Dec. 10 at Lockport Mennonite Church, Stryker, Ohio.

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**Stuckey, Carol A. Wyse**, 76, West Unity, Ohio, died Nov. 25, 2018. Spouse: Paul Stuckey. Parents: Dan and Marjory Werder Wyse. Children: Pam Schroeder, Paula Sprow, Patsy Miller; six grandchildren; four great-grandchildren. Funeral: Nov. 27 at Lockport Mennonite Church, Stryker, Ohio.

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**Wilkins, Donna Elizabeth Peirce**, 54, Sellersville, Pa., died Oct. 14, 2018. Spouse: H. Jeffrey Wilkins. Parents: Joshua and Kay Riniker Peirce. Children: Samuel Wilkins, Eva Wilkins, Eliza Wilkins, Isaac Wilkins. Funeral: Nov. 10 at Blooming Glen Mennonite Church, Blooming Glen, Pa.

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## CLASSIFIEDS

**Assistant professor of biblical and theological studies.**

**Canadian Mennonite University** in Winnipeg, Manitoba, invites applications for this full-time, tenure-track faculty position. Interested candidates are invited to visit [www.cmu.ca/employment](http://www.cmu.ca/employment) for more information.

**Encounter Cuba** in an up close and personal people-to-people experience sponsored by the MEDA Sarasota Chapter. Explore this fascinating country that's been 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 Feb. 16-23, 2019. Scholarships available for full-time students and recent graduates. For further information contact MEDA. [Sarasota.Cuba@gmail.com](mailto:Sarasota.Cuba@gmail.com) or 574-849-2751.

**Mennonite Disaster Service**

is building our team and searching for qualified, motivated individuals who have a knowledge of and passion for the MDS mission, vision and values and a commitment to the Anabaptist church. Current position openings include: (1) **communications manager** in Lititz, Pa., (2) a **regional operations coordinator** in Region 4, in U.S. Western Region states, (3) a **volunteer training specialist**, home-based (U.S. resident) and (4) a **leadership volunteer interviewer**, home-based (U.S. resident). For more

information, visit our webpage at [www.mds.mennonite.net/who-we-are/employment](http://www.mds.mennonite.net/who-we-are/employment).

**Pigeon River Mennonite Church**

Pigeon, Mich., is seeking to fill a full-time position, with the primary role being the **director of youth ministry**. The person hired will lead youth gatherings, studies and outreach opportunities and provide vision and oversight for our youth programming. Other associate pastor duties will be assigned based on the skill set of the person hired. There is a possibility of increasing this by another half-time position if a couple would share this job. Pigeon River is a member of CMC, has an average weekly attendance of 180 and places a high priority on discipling and mentoring our youth. Please submit a résumé or request information to Dale Yoder at [dale.l.yoder@gmail.com](mailto:dale.l.yoder@gmail.com)

**North Newton Guest Housing—**

Serenity Silo, Barnview Cottage, Woodland Hideaway. Email or call for brochures: [vadasnider@cox.net](mailto:vadasnider@cox.net), 316-283-5231.

**Eastern Mennonite University**

seeks applicants for a **full-time dean of students**. The dean of students is the senior student life representative and a member of the president's cabinet and will report to the provost. The dean of students is responsible for the co-curricular aspects of learning and living at EMU and works collaboratively with students, faculty and staff to maintain a safe and healthy learning environment. The dean delegates responsibility and supervises nine

student-related departments. The dean has final responsibility for the university's student handbook and standards of conduct. Master's degree required. Ph.D. preferred. Minimum of five years of experience in higher education administration, student development, human development or related field. Knowledge of student-development theory and practice as well as clear understanding of the principles and purposes of student affairs administration preferred. Must support the philosophy, mission and learning goals of Eastern Mennonite University. For more information visit: [emu.edu/hr/openings](http://emu.edu/hr/openings). Submit application, résumé and names of three references to: [hr@emu.edu](mailto:hr@emu.edu). EMU is an equal opportunity employer, committed to enhancing diversity across the institution. EMU conducts criminal background investigations as part of the hiring process.

**Advertising space in *The Mennonite***

is available to congregations, conferences, businesses, churchwide boards and agencies and individuals of Mennonite Church USA. Cost for one-time classified placement is \$1.30 per word, minimum of \$30. Display space is also available. To place an ad in *The Mennonite*, contact Sheldon C. Good, [sheldong@themennonite.org](mailto:sheldong@themennonite.org) or 574-343-1332.

## STORIES FROM THE GLOBAL MENNONITE CHURCH

# Mission lessons from the global South

**ON DEC. 17, 1949**, Ralph and Genevieve Buckwalter arrived in Japan's Yokohama harbor to begin a term of missionary service that would extend over the next three decades. At the time, Japan was already host to more than 1,000 missionaries, invited by General Douglas MacArthur as part of the postwar effort to solidify Western culture and political control in the defeated country. From the outset, however, the Buckwalters were committed to a different vision of missionary presence. Instead of joining other Protestant missionaries in urban centers, they settled in the remote region of Kushiro, Hokkaido, where they immersed themselves in the local culture, opened their home to their neighbors, and lived a frugal lifestyle on par with those around them. Over the next 30 years, Ralph and Genevieve embodied a postcolonial missionary vision that nurtured local leadership, respected indigenous expressions of the gospel and focused on cultivating relationships more than on quantitative measures of church growth.

At almost the same time, Ralph's brother, Albert, and his wife, Lois, were following a similar pattern in the Argentinian Chaco. For more than 40 years, the Buckwalters walked alongside the Toba, Pilaga and Mocovi people, translating the Bible into indigenous languages and quietly supporting local leaders who formed churches whose worship style and character differed significantly from U.S. Mennonite congregations.

Meanwhile, in 1959, Edwin

and Irene Weaver arrived in southeastern Nigeria, where they quickly decided the region already had enough Protestant denominations. Instead of planting new Mennonite churches or establishing more institutions funded by Western donors, the couple devoted their gifts to support theological training among the rapidly growing movement of African Independent Churches and to encourage constructive

## The approach to mission is direct, verbal and openly conversionist.

relationships between these groups and the existing mission churches.

In each of these instances, the approach to missions began by respecting local culture. Moreover, the missionaries trusted local leadership and avoided creating institutions based on western models. They assumed the Holy Spirit was at work, even if the fruits of their labors did not always result in the creation of Mennonite congregations.

When I read the accounts of these and other Mennonite missionaries in the second half of the 20th century, I am impressed. Indeed, this humbler approach to Christian witness has become a model widely shared by many—though certainly not all—western mission agencies today.

Yet somewhere in the back of my mind I remain unsettled. Since 2001, a full 93 percent of the growth in our global

Anabaptist-Mennonite church has come from Latin America, Africa and Asia. And when I look closer at these churches, it seems clear many of them pursue mission in a style different from our own. In virtually all these growing churches, the approach to mission is direct, verbal and openly conversionist. No one in the global South denies the importance of relationships or the persuasive power of daily discipleship. But the church is growing because people talk openly and freely about their faith; they readily invite whoever they encounter—friends and strangers alike—to visit their churches; they are clear that Christian faith involves a choice; and they are unabashed in their testimonies and their joyful expressions of praise.

To be sure, those of us in North America are living in a different cultural context. But even as I honor the legacy of the Buckwalters and Weavers, I wonder whether an appropriate humility in our witness has encouraged an inappropriate hesitancy in speaking freely about our faith. Might we have something to learn from the more open and direct approach to missions of our brothers and sisters in the global South?



**John D. Roth** is professor of history at Goshen (Ind.) College, director of the Institute for the Study of Global Anabaptism and editor of *Mennonite Quarterly Review*.



FROM THE EDITOR

## Time is of the essence

**OVER THE PAST FEW WEEKS,** people have asked me, “What really happened with the proposed merger of *The Mennonite* and *Mennonite World Review*?”

I’ve served on the board of directors of The Mennonite, Inc., for nearly 12 years. During my tenure, I have recommended that TMI and Mennonite World Review, Inc., (MWR) consider consolidating certain activities. After all, we duplicate a lot of work, and our readership is much the same—primarily Mennonite Church USA members.

In a meeting in the spring of 2017 with MWR’s publisher, our organizations agreed to consider closer cooperation. We formed an exploratory task force, which led to a recommendation by the boards of both organizations to merge. This, we felt strongly, would best serve the readers and members of MC USA and ensure a more viable future for a multi-platform Mennonite publisher.

Unfortunately, it became clear that the MC USA Executive

Board did not fully support the merger. Without the EB’s support, the new organization would not have been successful. Thus, the TMI board withdrew from the merger negotiations.

Meanwhile, TMI and the EB have agreed to address governance

**This, it seems, is not the season for a formal merger of two publishing entities.**

questions that surfaced in recent months and are in need of clarity.

In reflection, Ecclesiastes 3:1 comes to mind: “For everything there is a season.” This, it seems, is not the season for a formal merger of two publishing entities. Nevertheless, both the TMI and MWR boards are committed to ongoing dialogue and to finding ways to collaborate. We remain convinced that our ability to serve MC USA and represent the denomination’s many voices

are best served by working more closely together. Our boards will meet jointly in March to continue exploring ways we might work together.

Time is of the essence. For 15 years, *The Mennonite* has seen a steady decline in subscriptions. This is the nature of print publications today, but the trend has been exacerbated by shrinking membership in MC USA. Unless something is done soon, *The Mennonite* could cease publication in the coming years. *Mennonite World Review* has experienced a similar trend in subscription losses. By combining forces, we can better preserve the legacy of publishing while expanding digital media options.

Thank you for your ongoing support as we pursue a sustainable future in service to the church.

**Barth Hague,**  
Chair of *The Mennonite, Inc.*, Board

TheMennonite

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