

TheMennonite

The Holy Spirit comes

MennoCon19 in stories and photos

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Sex, Bible, peace, justice and more

The untamable Spirit

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TheMennonite

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ON THE COVER: Marisa Smucker (left) and Kara Janzen embrace during a worship service at MennoCon19. Photo by Vada Snider

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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 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.

Rethinking MCC

As a former Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) volunteer and active "Mennonite," it seems to me we need to take a fresh look at the "service" we do as Mennonites and have been so famous for for so long. Helping others is at the core of our Anabaptist interpretation of the priority given us by the words and acts of Jesus Christ.

Mennonite Disaster Service (MDS) is a good example of a successful model of a short-range emergency effort. The same thing for Mennonite Economic Development Associates (MEDA) as a longer-range emergency effort.

What about MCC? Its roots seem to be in the short-range emergency category—North American Mennonites helping their brothers and sisters in Russia through a revolution and famine, helping with post-World War II cleanup in Europe.

In recent years, MCC has responded to emergency needs in other countries. What I see (as a businessman and outsider) is a lack of focus and a buildup of overhead expenses in administration. Maybe what MCC is now doing would fit better into MDS or MEDA?

—Richard Penner, Saskatoon,
Saskatchewan

Forbearance

Each morning at the delegate sessions at MennoCon19, Tom Yoder Neufeld examined unity and forbearance from the book of Ephesians. This was good. But his response to one question muddied the waters around MC USA's efforts toward forbearance. A delegate noted that in Ephesians, Christians are exhorted to have nothing to do with a list of "vices." He asked, "How does forbearance work in light of this kind of exhortation?"

Neufeld said we are more ready to call out the vices of others and minimize the vices we are more comfortable with. He mentioned greed and gossip as examples. But we confess this and struggle with our hypocrisy. No groups in MC USA are advocating that Christians affirm greed or gossip as faithful discipleship. But some affirm same-sex unions as faithful discipleship. And some do not confidently affirm even loving, committed same-sex unions as faithful discipleship. We are exploring whether there can be forbearance between people's heartfelt convictions as to what is faithful discipleship.

Forbearance needs to be in both directions, as expressed by one African-American delegate. This means concrete gestures of respect (accommodations) toward both viewpoints.

—Darrel Miller, Danvers, Ill.

Corrections

The first sentence of the second column on page 11 of "God's Word and God's Breath" by David C. Cramer (July), should read, "The New Testament undercuts [not shows] a sharp distinction between Word and Spirit."

We regret the error.

Also, the photo on p. 16 in the July issue is by Kiron Mateti.

—Editor

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14.9%

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23%

1-2

18.4%

3-4

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Total number of responses: 87

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IN THIS ISSUE

MennoCon19, the Mennonite Church USA biennial convention in Kansas City, Mo., was held July 2-6, and our staff was there. As you'll notice in the feature articles, we shared stories with staff from *Mennonite World Review*. You may also read on page 29 that the merger of MWR, Inc., and The Mennonite, Inc., is now official. Plans are for a new organization and a new magazine to be in place no later than September 2020.

Sheldon C. Good, Tim Huber of *MWR* and I write about the worship services at MennoCon19, beginning on page 10. This was the first MC USA convention to combine youth and adults in all the worship services. Paul Schrag of *MWR* reports on the Delegate Assembly (page 16), which included Bible study and the approval of youth as voting delegates. The group also passed a resolution denouncing the treatment of migrant children at the U.S.-Mexico border. Good and I offer brief reports on a few of the hundreds of seminars presented at MennoCon19 (page 21). Laurie Oswald Robinson (page 25) writes about some of the service projects done in Kansas City during the convention. These involved more than 1,300 people, most of them youth. The editorial (page 40) discusses the "untamable" Holy Spirit, a frequent topic at MennoCon19, and asks, Do we want to be transformed by the Holy Spirit?

You can find more stories (and longer versions of those here) at www.themennonite.org.—*Editor*

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News Briefs

COMPILED BY
GORDON HOUSER

AMBS alum says man sexually assaulted her in 2009

Hilary Scarsella has come forward with an account saying a man sexually assaulted her in 2009, when they were students at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS), Elkhart, Ind.

Scarsella, a 2012 AMBS alum, describes the events surrounding the sexual assault in detail in a piece published June 11 at ourstoriesuntold.com. "An eternity of confusing and terrifying moments happened in an instant," she says. "He raped me." She goes on to say, "I lost consciousness while it was

happening. But in that first moment, before my mind went dark, I died. That's the only way I can explain it. Whatever I was before that night died when I felt—physically, viscerally—that my body was no longer my own."

Scarsella is now director of theological integrity for Into Account, director of Our Stories Untold and visiting assistant professor of theology and ethics at Memphis Theological Seminary.

In March 2018, Scarsella requested that AMBS leadership review the seminary's 2010 administrative response, which she says was "mishandled" and "unacceptable."

For the past year, Scarsella and AMBS representatives, led by President Sara Wenger Shenk, have engaged in a review process that culminated in early June in an on-campus meeting of Scarsella, Wenger Shenk and others. The review process did not review the sexual assault itself.

In a June 12 email to staff of The Mennonite, Inc., Scarsella wrote: "Examples of institutions successfully taking responsibility for mishandling survivors' reports of sexual violence are few and far between. I think the Mennonite world's resources for engaging sexual violence with ethical and theological integrity can be supported by learning from this example at AMBS."

—Sheldon C. Good for TMail

Stanley Green, executive director of Mennonite Mission Network, to retire

Stanley W. Green, who has served 19 years as leader of Mennonite Mission Network, will retire at the end of July 2020. The Mennonite Mission Network board of directors announced Green's decision at its July 1 meeting in Kansas City, Mo.

Green became Mission Network's executive director in 2000, after serving as president of Mennonite Board of Missions (a predecessor agency) for seven years.

Green, 64, gave key leadership in securing an office facility for Mennonite Church USA in Elkhart, Ind. He also shepherded the agency in its transition to a more intentional networking and partnership approach in mission based on mutuality and respect with partners. Green's leadership extended beyond North American mission; he played a key role in nurturing the vision for and securing the resources that made it possible for convening a global mission gathering in Guatemala. This became a predecessor to the Global Mission Fellowship and Mission Commission of Mennonite World Conference, which he now chairs.

—Mennonite Mission Network



Laurie Oswald Robinson

Journey Forward: Peacemaking

Jamie Rye, of Millersburg, Ohio, shares ideas with Melissa Florer-Bixler, of Raleigh, N.C., during a churchwide gathering, Journey Forward: Peacemaking, July 2 in Kansas City, Mo., immediately preceding MennoCon2019. Jason Boone, minister for peace and justice for Mennonite Mission Network, said 21st-century peacemaking is about people in the "trenches" of daily life creating new ways to wage peace together. Sue Park-Hur, denominational minister for leadership development and transformative peacemaking for Mennonite Church USA, said she hopes the gathering sparks future, ongoing conversations. The gathering drew 50 participants.—Laurie Oswald Robinson

AMBS Presidential Search Committee extends work

Since announcing David W. Boshart as the candidate of choice (see July, page 6), the presidential search committee for Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical

Seminary in Elkhart, Ind., has entered “a time of extended discernment,” the search committee announced July 4.

On June 10, the search committee announced their selection of David W. Boshart, Ph.D., as the candidate of choice, which search committee chair Mim Book said July 17 was a unanimous selection by the search committee.

Boshart visited the AMBS campus June 17–18 to participate in meetings with administrative and teaching faculty members, staff and students.

In December 2018, the AMBS Board of Directors appointed a committee to search for a new president for AMBS after Sara Wenger Shenk announced her plans to retire on June 30, at the end of the 2018–19 academic year.

After gathering feedback from listening sessions and a stakeholder survey, the search committee developed a presidential profile in February to introduce the AMBS community to the prospective candidates and outline the desired skills, qualifications and characteristics of the next president.

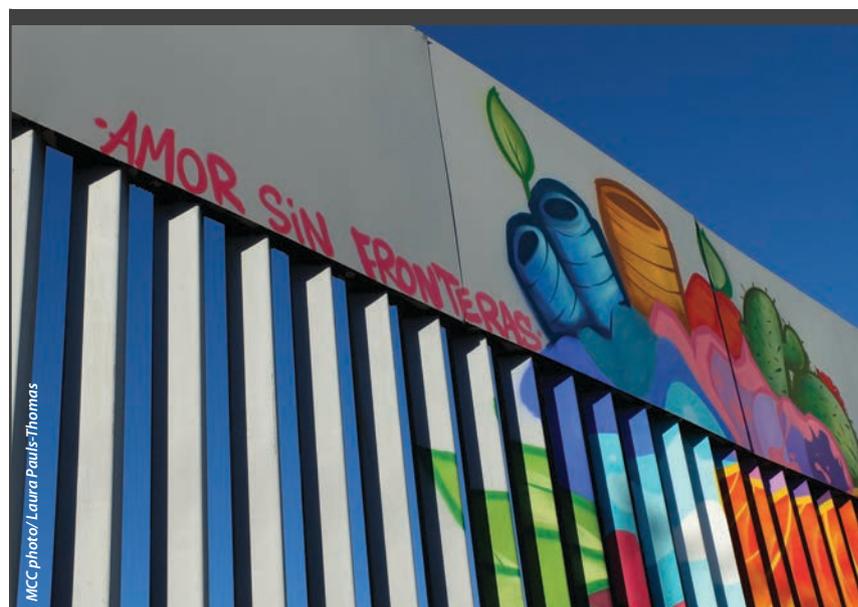
—AMBS Presidential Search Committee

SEMILLA leader brings biblical peace witness from Guatemala to Kansas

When SEMILLA (Latin American Anabaptist Seminary) director Willi Hugo Pérez spoke at Hesston (Kan.) College this spring, his encouragement to be biblically grounded in good Anabaptist peace theology was well received, yet there was something even more inspiring.

He shared how he struggled with hate after his late father, Marco Tulio Pérez, was assassinated, says Michele Hershberger, Bible professor at Hesston College, who introduced Pérez. After his mother, Rebeca Lemus, told him he was becoming what he hated, he said he did much soul searching, which led to a transformation that brought him to his current role.

In his role at SEMILLA, a partner of Mennonite Mission Network, he now



Show compassion to asylum seekers, says MCC

The Mexican side of the 20-foot tall pedestrian Mexico-U.S. border wall in Agua Prieta, Sonora, features artistic displays that emphasize love, brother- and sisterhood and the hope of finding a better life. “Amor sin fronteras,” as one artist painted, translates to “Love without borders.” As the number of asylum seekers at the U.S.-Mexico border increases, and children and adults are being held in unsanitary conditions in overcrowded, temporary shelters, Mennonite Central Committee encourages people to pray and to seek ways to show compassion.—MCC

has an impact on the lives of many students who use what they learn to work for holistic justice and peace in their churches and communities.

Hesston College was only one of Pérez’s stops during his weeklong Kansas trip, guided by Linda Shelly, Mission Network’s director for Latin America. He also shared at Bethel (North Newton) and Tabor (Hillsboro) colleges, four churches and Mission Network’s offices in Newton and Mennonite Central Committee Central States in North Newton.

—Mennonite Mission Network

MCC boards approve five-year strategic plan

Mennonite Central Committee has a loyal constituency, but its leaders don’t take the support for granted.

To stand above the competition — and

to safeguard MCC’s special place in the hearts of many Anabaptists — agency leaders on June 20 decided to give more attention to increasing engagement with people “across the full range of Anabaptist churches and beyond.”

This goal is part of a four-point strategic plan for 2020 to 2025 that the U.S. and Canadian MCC boards approved during joint meetings while on a learning tour in Ukraine.

The plan calls for renewing MCC’s identity and mission and deepening its spiritual grounding as a witness to God’s love as the agency begins its second century.

—Paul Schrag for Mennonite World Review



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

Miscellany

COMPILED BY
GORDON HOUSER

The heart has its reasons, and those reasons have been most searchingly explored not by romantic comedies, snuffling weepies or the phantasmagoria of Marvel but by the exploits of a battery-powered spaceman and a cowboy with a pull string in his back.

—Anthony Lane, from a review of *Toy Story 4* in the *New Yorker*

-\$3 billion

Charitable giving by individual Americans in 2018 suffered its biggest drop since the Great Recession of 2008-09, in part because of Republican-backed changes in tax policy, according to the latest comprehensive report on Americans' giving patterns. The Giving USA report, released Tuesday, said individual giving fell by 1.1%, from \$295 billion in 2017 to \$292 billion last year. It ended a four-year streak of increases, and was the largest decline since a 6.1% drop in 2009.

—Religion News Service

Most persecuted religion

Christianity is the most persecuted world religion, according to the Pew Research Center. Many Westerners are silent about this reality. Some secular people think Christians have it coming to them, given the church's history of oppressing others. Some American Christians confuse the situation by characterizing legal battles over baking a wedding cake for a gay couple as persecution. "We generally care more about the fire in a famous cathedral than we do about those people who have their bodies blown to bits in architecturally less significant place of worship," writes Church of England priest Giles Fraser.

—*Christian Century*


\$400

Despite good economic figures, 40% of American adults said they couldn't scrape together \$400 to cover an unexpected expense. Almost a quarter said they skipped some form of medical care this past year because they couldn't afford it. "Another year of economic expansion and the low national unemployment rates did little to narrow the persistent economic disparities by race, education and geography," say the authors of a report from the Federal Reserve System.

—*Christian Century*



7.1 billion tons

The planet's 1.5 billion farm ruminants (cud chewers such as cattle and sheep) emit methane equivalent to 7.1 billion tons of carbon dioxide a year in its heat-trapping effects. That's nearly 15% of human-made CO₂ emissions—as much as we put into the atmosphere from burning fuel for transportation. Scientists have discovered that feeding cattle or sheep a little seaweed can reduce methane emissions considerably. Cows eating a diet that is just 1% seaweed produce 50% less methane, and the reduction is immediate. And it doesn't affect the taste of the milk.

—*The Atlantic*

Percentage by which a person detained for a crime is more likely to be convicted if they cannot make bail:

14

Amount in bail for which a woman in Texas was being held this year on a felony theft charge:

\$12,000

Amount that she was accused of stealing:

\$2

—*Harper's*

LOAVES AND FISHSTICKS BY STEVE EDWARDS



Scenes from MennoCon19

Kansas City, Mo.

1. Tori Keener (left) and Kayleena Shantz (right) from James Street Mennonite Church in Lancaster, Pa., participate in an interactive exercise during the Thursday morning Green Squad Pep Rally.
2. Lena Burkholder of Warden, Wash., plays in a pool of plastic balls.
3. Youth play Ga-ga ball in the recreation hall.
4. Alicia Manning of Hampton, Va., takes part in the Zumba exercises held each morning.

Photos by Vada Snider



BY GORDON HOUSER,
SHELDON C. GOOD
AND TIM HUBER

THE HOLY SPIRIT COMES

Worship at MennoCon19
focuses on the Holy Spirit



Unless noted, all photos on pages 10-27 are by Vada Snider

Rather than name a specific theme for MennoCon19, the Mennonite Church USA biennial convention held July 2-6 in Kansas City, Mo., planners chose John 20:19-22 as its focus. This passage tells of the Resurrected Jesus appearing to his disciples, offering peace, breathing on them and saying, "Receive the Holy Spirit."

TUESDAY EVENING: A family reunion

At the opening worship, leaders from Kansas City-area Mennonite congregations—Hanna Aganya, co-pastor of Eden Life Church; Sandeep Thomas, pastor of Argentine Mennonite Church; and Ruth Harder, pastor of Rainbow Mennonite Church—welcomed the 2,500-some people gathered for worship. Harder introduced two daughters of Glenda Campbell, a member of her congregation for 50 years, Aimee Kraus and Jill McLain Custer, who are of the Iowa tribe, and acknowledged that the meeting was being held on land that had belonged to the Kaw, Osage, Shawnee and Wyandotte peoples, among others.

Worship leaders Vikki Pruitte-Sorrells from Cleveland, Madalyn Metzger from Goshen, Ind., and Chris Cox from Hampton, Va., introduced Glen Guyton, who is executive director of Mennonite Church USA.

MennoCon19 is the first MC USA convention to combine adults and youth in all the worship sessions. Guyton acknowledged the various generations represented. He said he hoped "we are unified in our desire to seek healing and hope for our world." He called this



Dustin Galyon

gathering "the official Mennonite family reunion."

Pruitte-Sorrells said it is God's intention to draw us together and discern the Spirit of God among us. She read John 20:19-22 and said, "We may feel overwhelmed by how many people are here or overjoyed by meeting old friends, but I encourage each of you to experience the Holy Spirit."

—Gordon Houser, editor of *The Mennonite*

WEDNESDAY MORNING:

Don't be afraid, be in community

Citing Christ's resurrection and victory over death, fear and sin, Dustin Galyon called on MC USA participants to break free of being trapped by fear.

Galyon, men's basketball coach at Hesston (Kan.) College, said, "Fear fears community, and mentorship, and accountability and convention. 'Sin wants to isolate you and get you all alone, and in the gospel, with Jesus, we know fear fears community.'"

Sin wants to isolate you and get you all alone, and in the gospel, with Jesus, we know fear fears community.

—Dustin Galyon

Galyon looked back on his own prideful youth as evidence that some of the biggest fears people have are about past sins. "I spent seven years fearing 'inferiority,'" he said as an old social media photo of him in a shirtless bodybuilder pose appeared on large screens, soon replaced with a wedding photo. "Now my Facebook pictures aren't of me but of [my family], and we are in community."

Galyon pointed to Jesus appearing among the disciples after the tomb was empty and saying, "Peace be with you." He didn't even knock. He stood in their midst and said, "Don't be afraid."

"Maybe, just maybe, we can look at the fears in our own lives, hidden behind locked doors," Galyon prayed. "And Lord, maybe we can believe in the risen Jesus and we can call on you and realize you will stand in our midst."

—Tim Huber,
associate editor of *Mennonite World Review*

WEDNESDAY EVENING:

Is peace even possible?

What drew Sue Park-Hur and her husband, Hyun Hur, to the Mennonite church was the reputation Mennonites have for being a faithful peace witness as followers of Jesus.



Sue Park-Hur

We, too, can be fully present. We can be with-ness.

—Sue Park-Hur

“We heard about a small group of folks who for over 500 years have tried to follow Jesus, the Prince of Peace,” said Park-Hur, Mennonite Church USA denominational minister for leadership development, who spoke at the evening worship July 3. She is also co-director of ReconciliAsian, a peace center in Los Angeles specializing in conflict transformation and restorative justice for immigrant churches.

Park-Hur shared part of her family’s history. They migrated 40 years ago from South Korea to California. “We were born in a place where civil war had ravaged a country, its people, its land, our very heart and soul,” she said.

“What is the role of the church in a world where violence seems to increase power all the time and peace seems hopelessly idealistic?” Park-Hur asked. “Is peace even possible?”

She told a story of her husband, Hyun, traveling to North Korea and offering a blessing at a church there: “Mountain View Mennonite Church, in the name of Jesus, sends their greeting, and they want to bless you.” The church in North Korea responded, “Amen.”

John 20 shows that peace begins with being present, she said. Jesus stood among disciples who were traumatized and fearful, as he did with Mary Magdalene at the tomb.

“We, too, can be fully present. We can be with-ness,” she said.

Shifting to the experience of the MC USA constituency, she acknowledged that many within the denomination are fearful. “We have experienced loss and confusion and may want to move on,” Park-Hur said. “Let us pause, sigh, breathe and cry out to truly see Jesus standing among us.”

—Sheldon C. Good,
executive director of The Mennonite, Inc.

THURSDAY MORNING:

Stories of transformation

Three people shared stories in morning worship July 4 about how they experienced transformation when they encountered God at work in their lives.

When John Murray went to India to help start a medical clinic while pastoring a congregation in Indiana, he experienced culture shock on many levels, but most profoundly with the beggars. Gaunt mothers with malnourished children tugged on sleeves.

Murray, now dean of global engagement at Hesston (Kan.) College, recalled how he assumed they considered him a rich

American. He began to resent them for what he assumed they were thinking, and he avoided them. “My fear and resentment of the beggars began to be accompanied by shame, and the problem with shame is that it doesn’t transform fear and resentment, it feeds it,” he said.

But while visiting the proposed medical clinic’s village, his group encountered a paralyzed man, and he as a pastor was asked to pray for him.

He knelt. “And for the first time in India, I looked directly into the eyes of someone asking something of me,” he said. “I was amazed by what I saw. I didn’t see someone asking something from a rich American, I saw someone created in the image of God. I saw the Lord. And I was overwhelmed that he could also see that I was a beloved child of God. That was a truth that my wealth and fear and privilege had erased from my own awareness and self-understanding.”

The problem with shame is that it doesn’t transform fear and resentment, it feeds it.

—John Murray



John Murray



Abby King, a student at Goshen (Ind.) College, didn't need to travel around the world to be transformed by God; she just went to class.

Struggling with her relationship to religion and spirituality in spite of a lifetime in Mennonite schools and churches, King said young adult Bible studies left her feeling hungry with shallow stories. She thought perhaps she would continue going to church as a social obligation, but she wanted more.

Then she took a course on liberation theology, which emphasizes political, social and economic freedom from oppression. "I found communities that actually practice faith actively and fight for the oppressed and view that as salvation," she said.

Today she realizes that for



My faith is based on following Jesus and fighting for justice.

—Abby King

her, being a Christian is more than attending church, prayer or repentance. "My faith is based on treating others with love and respect. My faith is based on following Jesus and fighting for justice," King said.

God's voice touched Marisa Smucker with two words in 2013 in her Costa Rican apartment. She had been connecting with the country of her birth for more than six years after being adopted and growing up in Indiana.

God said, "It's time."

She knew it was time to return to the United States and her family but didn't know how she would be able to pursue her desire to use the Spanish she worked so hard to learn, be near family and work with Latinos like herself.

Four and a half years later, she works in advancement for Mennonite Mission Network and is able to connect with her cultural roots through friendships with people in Iglesia Menonita Hispana.

"Today I am more alert in seeing God in the places I go and the people I meet," she said. "I have been on a journey that has taken me deeper in a commitment

Today I am more alert in seeing God in the places I go and the people I meet.

—Marissa Smucker

to God's way of working in the world....I get to hear the stories firsthand of how God is working in our denomination with people who say, 'Here I am, God, use me.'

—Tim Huber

FRIDAY MORNING:

By the breath of God

Meghan Good challenged worshipers the morning of July 5 to be powered not by their own breath but by the much more powerful wind of God.

The teaching pastor at Trinity Mennonite Church in Glendale, Ariz., said the breath that gave life to Adam in the Garden of Eden was not a singular act but a regular connection.

Some point to a loss of life in church decline and identify things like cultural shift or religious hypocrisy, but Good said Christians don't just lose

Jesus Christ is here right now, every bit as present as he was in that locked room with the disciples.

—Meghan Good



their breath for negative reasons. Sometimes people of faith get busy doing important things—and still the wounds develop faster than the healers, the questions multiply faster than the answers.

“Mennonites have a bigger problem here than other Christians because of our strengths,” she said. “We are a people of action, so we’re always doing stuff and we need community to sustain us in that action. But the trouble is we cannot survive as people of action if we only breathe other peoples’ exhalations. We need the fresh breath of God.”

“The most fundamental truth I know is that we are beings that live based on someone else’s air,” she said. It’s no coincidence that the first thing Jesus does after he is resurrected is to stand among the disciples and breathe on them. And the Gospel’s good news means every day since then is also resurrection day, if the people of God simply pause to take a breath.

“Jesus Christ is here right now, every bit as present as he was in that locked room with the disciples,” she said. “He is here and he is breathing, saying, ‘Receive my life.’ Breathe him in.”

—Tim Huber

FRIDAY EVENING:

The Spirit comes suddenly

For Leonard Dow, Friday evening’s speaker, the Spirit doesn’t wait to come but comes “suddenly.”

Dow, who served as pastor at Oxford Circle Mennonite Church in Philadelphia for almost 20 years and now is a stewardship and development specialist for Everence, asked, “Why did the

disciples stay together, ready and willing to receive the Holy Spirit?” They had nowhere else to go.

The disciples also could have tried to make an idol of the Holy Spirit in that place. Dow said, “You are not only to receive the Holy Spirit here this evening but to take it back with you.”

The disciples could have chosen to ignore the fresh breath of the Holy Spirit, he went on. They could have said, No thanks. But they didn’t.

Dow said he’s heard some Mennonites say, I don’t like all that emotion. That’s not my tradition. I’m more comfortable with things I can control. If the Spirit moves me in ways I can’t control, what can I do?

The disciples, however, realized they needed Jesus more than ever. They could not depend on themselves.

The disciples did not implode or make an idol or ignore the

We’re gonna make it. This is not the end. Because the Spirit of God comes suddenly.

—Leonard Dow

prompting of the Holy Spirit. They allowed themselves to be interrupted by the Spirit. Jesus appeared “suddenly” and invited them to receive what was in Christ to be in them.

In Scripture, the Holy Spirit often comes suddenly, he said. The world is so bad, and we shrug and say, It is what it is. We just accept it. But when the Holy Spirit shows up, things can change suddenly. It may have taken years for things to develop, but the Holy Spirit can come upon us suddenly. And it may make us uncomfortable.

“Receive the Holy Spirit,” Dow said. “Do not be overwhelmed by the enormity of the world’s grief....The same Spirit that came to the disciples and changed their lives is here today.”

“We’re gonna make it,” he said. “We’re gonna make it. This is not the end. Because the Spirit of God comes suddenly.”

He closed by inviting people to receive anointing from people at the front and the sides of the auditorium, and hundreds did.

—Gordon Houser

SATURDAY MORNING:

Come as you are

It was time for the sermon when the lights dimmed at the closing worship service July 6. The





Only the power of the Holy Spirit will transform this church.

—Glen Guyton

Church USA, that we are one,” he said. “None of us is too good to get down on our knees to wash each other’s feet—no matter how they identify themselves, how big their bank account is or their physical limitations—we are all children of God.”

“Only the power of the Holy Spirit will transform this church,” Guyton said. “Only the power of God will transform this church for the places it needs to go.”

Recalling the lyric “I don’t have a gun” in the Nirvana song, Guyton promised amazing things will happen if the Holy Spirit is given the chance. “Twenty-six years ago, I became part of this church. I was a military officer, and now I’m a leader,” he said. “Tell me that transformation is not possible.”

—Tim Huber

opening guitar notes to Nirvana’s “Come As You Are” were joined by a singer who grabbed the mic. MC USA executive director Glen Guyton stalked the stage with commitment to something greater than karaoke.

“Come, as you are, as you were, as I want you to be,” Guyton sang. “As a friend, as a friend, as a known enemy. Take your time, hurry up, the choice is yours, don’t be late. Take a rest, as a friend, as an old memory.”

In a service sending MC USA back to its congregations and outside those church buildings’ walls, Guyton said God will do the hard work of transformation. The people need only send a clear message of welcome, and they in turn will be blessed by the people they encounter—just as they are.

“I know we have ideas about who’s in and who’s out, but we need to go into this world disarmed,” he said. “Sometimes we need to lay aside our doctrines and degrees and our understandings in order to go out and reach people who need God.”

Referring to Luke 10:2-5, Guyton encouraged the denomination to authentically let other people know God has a place at the table for them, just as they are.

“That’s the message I want us to send back as Mennonite



BENEDICTION FOR JULY 3 EVENING WORSHIP

Peace be with you, sons and daughters of God, for whom creation groans, we are made manifest.

May we again and again experience the power that resurrected Jesus from the dead.

I declare grace and peace be multiplied to you all from ravaged lands or bounty-filled pantries on the terrestrial globe.

Let God’s shalom that surpasses all understanding, by the power of the Holy Spirit, overwhelm us past all isms.

I declare the excellence of the very peace proclaimed by the angels on that night divine, to propel us to radical love with benevolent abandon, setting our hearts on fire for neighbor as self, the stranger, the poor, widowed, orphaned, the hungry, the thirsty, the broken, imprisoned and the creation, turning gun to plowshare and pipelines to solar panels.

Tonight, let our hearts burn with zeal as our faith with works causes God’s kingdom to prevail in this generation and beyond.

Go on now. Go in God’s peace. Go and change the world with him and through him. Go and leave no one behind—from A to Z, America to Zimbabwe.

The Bride and Spirit cry, Come, Lord Jesus. The tables are turned over.

Peace be with you. Amen.

—Sibonokuhle Ncube



Gordon Houser is editor of *The Mennonite*.



Sheldon C. Good is executive director of The Mennonite, Inc.



Tim Huber is associate editor of *Mennonite World Review*.

BY PAUL SCHRAG



A Spanish-speaking delegate table group

Thankful for a messy church

**Delegates study Bible, approve youth delegates,
speak against treatment of migrant children**

On July 3, the first day of the Mennonite Church USA delegate assembly, delegates started a Bible study on themes of unity in Ephesians and heard a state-of-the-church message from executive director Glen Guyton.

Tom Yoder Neufeld, professor emeritus of religious studies at Conrad Grebel University College in Waterloo, Ontario, described the theme of his presentations as “Gathered into One.” He said, “This is a oneness that defies our imagination. It is nothing less than participating in the unity of God.”

He focused on the “peace poem” of Ephesians 2:14-16. Because God is a successful gatherer, God’s unity is full of diversity. “It takes every ounce of skill, patience and especially love to cope with the success of God’s gathering,” Yoder Neufeld said. “Unity is hard work. Blame it on God.”

Though “our world is torn by fear of what or who is strange or different,” he said, “let’s not point the finger too quickly at the world”—because Anabaptists also participate in a culture of suspicion, shaming or shunning those whose views or behaviors we disdain.

“Mennonites have got separation down,” Yoder Neufeld said. Noting that we recognize injustices like sexism and racism, “maybe we add schism to the isms that are problems for us....Let’s put the ceaseless struggle for unity at the core of our understanding of discipleship.”



Tom Yoder Neufeld

Returning to the theme of God’s problem-creating success as a gatherer of diverse people, he said, “The church is a mess,” and the delegates responded, “Thanks be to God.”

The state of the church

Guyton addressed delegates on the state of the church.

“The church is changing—not just Mennonite Church USA but the body of Christ,” he said. “The world’s view of us is changing, and the question is, How will we respond? Will we remain relevant, or will internal politics distract us from our vision of healing and hope?”

Guyton said he sees a lot of hope, “even in our disagreements.”

“I see trust building,” he said. “I get a renewed sense that people want to be connected to our historic peace church.”

He listed several things the denomination needs, including more resources of volunteers and money. He said the denomination needs less structure—to move away from mechanical authority and toward relational authority. The denomination needs to embrace the gifts of all generations and develop the next generation of leaders.

Unity of the Spirit

On July 4, delegates studied the biblical vision for “unity of the Spirit” and offered ideas for the denomination’s peace witness.

Yoder Neufeld’s Bible study focused on Ephesians 4:3: “Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.” Emphasizing the definitions of spirit as “wind” and “breath,” he described God as bringing “unsettling, wind-driven” unity—the primal energy of creation—to the church.



Delegates vote to allow youth as voting delegates.

“What if we thought of the church as the children of the wind?” he asked. “One thing you can’t do with wind is control it.”

Future of peace witness

In the afternoon, delegates met in table groups discussing, What one part of our peace witness do we want to work on together for the next biennium?

Summarizing their table groups’ ideas, several said responding to the immigration crisis at the U.S.-Mexico border should be a priority. Creation care as it relates to climate change was often mentioned.

Matt Lehman Wiens of Wichita, Kan., suggested practicing radical hospitality, “breaking bread with people we disagree with.”

Jill Schmidt of Denver suggested “creating a tangible action plan for how to mend

relationships with churches that have left” the denomination.

Other ideas included practicing welcome toward LGBTQ people, responding to gun violence and helping congregations offer sanctuary to undocumented immigrants.

Youth involvement expanded

Youth gained a larger voice in Mennonite Church USA decisions July 5 as delegates approved a bylaw change allowing more 16- to 21-year-olds as voting delegates. Congregations may now appoint one youth in addition to their regular number of delegates. Conferences and racial-ethnic groups may appoint two.

Eighteen youth already serving as nonvoting delegates in the Step-Up program exchanged high-fives after being called to the stage as the assembly applauded the decision. The bylaw change

passed with six dissenting votes out of 495 delegates registered.

The Step-Up participants said the older delegates had welcomed them. “When I was brave enough to say something, they listened by my opinions,” said Graciella Odelia of Philadelphia.

Alyssa Nolt of Shickley, Neb., said, “The delegates at my table have shown a positive response to including me and respecting me as an individual and hearing my thoughts.”

Aubrey McClanahan of Crawfordsvile, Iowa, said, “I’m thankful to the people at my table for being patient with me and to Central Plains Conference for supporting me and preparing me to be a part of the bigger church.”

Membership Guidelines

Michael Danner, associate executive director for church vitality and engagement for MC USA, gave an update on discernment about the Membership Guidelines, which have been a point of contention due to their regulations on same-sex marriage.

Delegates were asked to discuss at their tables and respond in writing whether their constituents considered it important to have “a two-year biblical discernment process, culminating in a delegate decision on the status of the MC USA Membership Guidelines in 2021” and whether the constituents would give time and energy to that process.

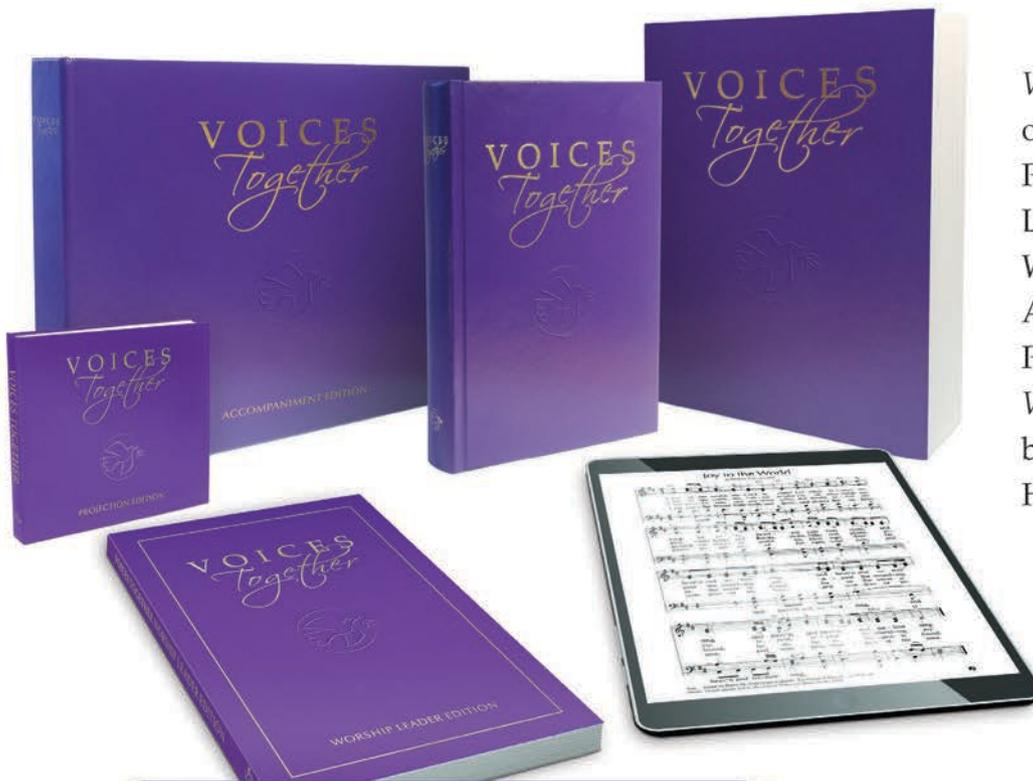
A plan for a two-year discernment process is being drafted, with input from LGBTQ advocacy groups, Danner said.



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Child migrants resolution

On July 5 leaders announced a resolution, “Churchwide Statement on the Abuse of Child Migrants,” developed by delegates during the convention. On July 6, delegates passed the resolution with two dissenting votes out of 495 delegates registered.

The resolution condemns “the treatment of immigrant families and children at the border, as well as around the nation, [as] a horrific violation of the Image of God and God-given human rights.”

“We stand against the traumatic separation of families, the deprivation of basic human needs and the detention of

migrants,” the resolution states. It calls the denomination to “stand alongside the undocumented members of our denomination” and to “seek connections with immigrant communities in our contexts and to support those in sanctuary and the thousands of families whose loved ones have been deported.”

Guadalupe Aguilar of Brownsville, Texas, said he was not content with the resolution’s wording because he believed the church should name the separation of children from their families for what it is—kidnapping. “How committed are we?” he asked. “Are we committed to sending more learning tours [to the U.S.-Mexico border]? We are past that. I suggest we go back to

our congregations and ask what we can do. Don’t come to learn, come to help. We have to commit ourselves to helping these people.”

Others expressed support for the resolution and said they hoped people and congregations would find ways to take concrete action.

David Boshart, the MC USA moderator, reminded the delegates that the Mennonite Central Committee Central States office in North Newton, Kan., is collecting aid kits for migrant detainees who are released.



Paul Schrag is editor of *Mennonite World Review*



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Melody Pannell



Al Motely Jr.

Sex, Bible, peace, justice and more

Seminars address a plethora of topics

BY GORDON HOUSER
AND SHELDON C. GOOD

MennoCon19 included hundreds of seminars on a plethora of topics. The seminars served various purposes and addressed various audiences, labeled as Adult, Intergenerational, Young Adult and Youth. Some were more practical, some more idea oriented. Choosing which to attend was a challenge. What follows are brief reports from some of those we attended.

On July 3, Jerrell and Jane Ross Richer and Sarah Augustine led the seminar “Speaking to the Systems and Walking with Indigenous People.” The Ross Richers work half the year with the Cofán people of Ecuador, and in the other half Jerrell teaches at Goshen (Ind.) College, while Jane homeschools their four children. Augustine co-founded the Suriname Indigenous Health Fund and the Dismantling the Doctrine of Discovery Coalition.



Sarah Augustine (left), Jane and Jerrell Ross Richer discuss “Speaking to the Systems and Walking with Indigenous People.”

Jane Ross Richer told the story of Ruben, a Cofán boy who illustrates the struggles of this group in the face of the incursions of Western capitalism. He went away to a high school where graduates gain about a third-grade education and Indigenous people are often mistreated. Walking with Ruben eventually led him to going to live with foster parents who are Quichua and provide a loving environment.

Jerrell Ross Richer offered a broader context to their work, describing the many changes that have come to the small village of Zabalo in the Amazon rainforest. Oil companies and rubber tappers have brought in new, Western technologies and products that have changed the Cofán people’s way of life.

Augustine spoke about the impact of gold mining in Suriname, which has contaminated the river with mercury and cyanide. Mercury, she said, attacks the nervous system and has caused deformities in many children of the Indigenous people there who depend on the river for their food.

The Indigenous people there have no rights, and corporations

take their land. And according to the Doctrine of Discovery, Christians have the right to take land from Indigenous people.

This issue occurs throughout the world, Augustine said. “The immigration issue in the United States is directly connected to land loss from resource extraction” in Central America. These people seek repair from the harm done to them.

Unfortunately, she noted, many church bodies, including Everence, the stewardship agency of Mennonite Church USA, support resource extraction in their retirement funds.

In “Listening for God’s Voice at Every Age and Stage” on July 4, Karla Minter organized her presentation into three sections: your story, prayer and the biblical story.

In reflecting on experiences, Minter said, you should first practice ordinary awareness, i.e., observing what is going on around you. Then you should consider a more spiritual awareness, i.e., what is the meaning of what’s happening around you. Finally, she said, pay attention to those times when you experience a kind of union with God.

She used the biblical story of Samuel’s call and his interaction with Eli to illustrate the awareness of the ordinary and the spiritual.

Practicing this awareness regularly can draw us into a closer relationship with God, she said.

In “Postmodern Worship That Crosses Barriers,” Joshua and Alisha Garber, Mennonite Mission Network workers in Spain, related their experience of introducing new worship styles, particularly with music, into different situations, including Mennonite congregations and the chapel services at a university in Lithuania.

Alisha Garber noted that postmodernism emphasizes that people perceive things from their own contexts, and reaching them requires paying attention to those contexts. That may mean doing worship in new and different ways in order to reach people turned off by church or religion.

Joshua Garber said that creativity and risk are important in making worship that connects with people from different perspectives. He called postmodern worship “guerrilla warfare” that requires being able

to adapt and evolve.

Meghan Good, teaching pastor at Trinity Mennonite Church in Glendale, Ariz., and author of *The Bible Unwrapped: Making Sense of Scripture Today*, led “Reading the Bible’s Toughest Texts.”

She noted that every story has a purpose, but not every story has a moral. Many of the stories we read in the Bible do not necessarily have a moral beyond showing the evil in the world.

She suggested looking at stories in the Bible with hospitality, listening before making a judgment about it. Ask what concerns the story reflects and what questions it is trying to answer.

Next, Good suggested reading backward from Jesus. The early church, she said, saw Jesus as providing the key to many of the stories in the Old Testament, and she provided examples from Exodus 12 and Joshua 6.

In “Putting Jesus on the Ballot,” Scott Peterson, who is also a pastor at Trinity Mennonite Church in Glendale, addressed the political tensions in our country and called people to follow Jesus rather than partisan politics. At the same time, he did not call for abandoning political engagement.

He noted that everyone has political opinions they think are right, but when we apply Christ to politics, we are wildly inconsistent. “We have dueling Jesuses in churches,” he said. “Social media is filled with Jesus bombs” as people try to use Jesus as a weapon.

While governments often have good ends in mind, their means are always violent, coercive. The means of Christ, therefore, are incompatible with the means of government. Anabaptist

We have dueling Jesuses in churches.

—Scott Peterson

Christianity, he said, is means-based, not ends-based. It is nonviolent, noncoercive and Jesus-centered.

Our involvement is to hold government to its God-ordained role, which is to minimize evil.

—Gordon Houser

“UnCovering Meanings of Our Practices” seminar on July 4, led by Melody Pannell and Sarah Bixler, examined the women’s head covering as a case study, exploring its meaning and how use of it has changed and declined.

Citing Deuteronomy 6, Bixler explained how “in the Jewish tradition there is a sense of passing on of practices and their meanings. As Mennonites we are standing in a long tradition of transmission of practices that have meaning.” Bixler said, “Women’s bodies were to be a distinctive long after men’s, who wore plain coats.”

Bixler is a Ph.D. candidate in practical theology from Princeton (N.J.) Theological Seminary. Pannell has an M.Div. from Virginia Union University in Richmond, Va.

Pannell shared about the experience of her mother, Ethel, with the head covering. The pastor’s wife from Seventh Avenue Mennonite Church in the 1960s told Ethel to consider not wearing her head covering “because it could be a barrier to reaching out to local residents of Harlem,” Pannell recalled. Ethel eventually stopped wearing it, Pannell said, and started cutting

her hair, which had been down her back. Some African-American and white women in the Seventh Avenue congregation continue to wear head coverings on Sundays. “It is seen as sacred,” she said.

Pannell left seminar participants with a reflection question: How can we encourage practices that are empowering and provide people with options?

Jane and James Mast, who are married, led the seminar “Understanding Sex, Gender and Sexuality: Three Distinct Areas of Human Development” on July 5. James said a key reason for their interest in leading the seminar was because “we’ve found that in our conversations [on these topics] things get overly simplistic, and people are complex.”

Jane is an advanced sciences teacher and department chair at Dock Mennonite Academy in Lansdale, Pa. James is a licensed psychotherapist at Penn Foundation in Sellersville, Pa.

The couple noted several myths that research shows to be false: same-sex couples harm children or hinder normal child development, issues involving sexual orientation and gender are new realities, being gay or transgender is a choice, spending time with LGBTQ people will make you more likely to become LGBTQ yourself, welcoming LGBTQ people is a slippery slope to pedophilia or bestiality.

Showing an image of a “Genderbread Person,” the couple described the complexities of persons’ gender identity, gender expression, sex assigned at birth and sexual and romantic attraction.

“Sometimes your biological makeup and the way your mind perceives yourself line up and sometimes they do not,” Jane said.

They noted several ways the LGBTQ community “is a group under pressure”: LGBTQ youth are twice as likely as their peers to report they have been physically assaulted, they are more likely to develop an anxiety or depression disorder (James clarified this because of an increased likelihood of experiencing external stressors like discrimination, not because of something that is “wrong” with them), they are more at risk for homelessness and rejection by family and friends, and they have one of the highest suicide rates among demographic groups.

The Masts said they believe if Jesus were here today, he would very likely want to spend time with the LGBTQ community, as he sought people pushed to the edges of society.

Al Motley Jr. grew up a pastor’s

kid in Lancaster (Pa.) Mennonite Conference. “Everything in me was rebel, desperately craving attention,” he said in his seminar on July 5.

Now, as his seminar title said, he’s a “Juvenile Probation Officer by Day and Unashamedly Rap Artist by Night.” As a Christian rapper he goes by the name Iz-Real.

Using the story of Jesus curing a blind man in Mark 8, Motley told seminar participants, “Jesus wants to restore you.”

“Satan was removed from his position, but he wasn’t stripped of his ability,” Motley said. “The enemy has found a way to use airwaves to share an agenda.”

He asked participants, How do we be in the world but not of it when it comes to music, including hip-hop?

“You’re full of purpose. You’re not an accident, and neither are your passions. The enemy’s greatest job is to make you feel isolated,” Motley said. “God has uniquely, intricately built you so that you can be used by God.... What is your passion that God is burning in you?”

—Sheldon C. Good



Gordon Houser
is editor of *The Mennonite*.



Sheldon C. Good is executive director of The Mennonite, Inc.



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TAKING THE LEAP



BY LAURIE OSWALD ROBINSON

From left, Chris Becker, Lucas Wiebe and Zeke Becker help beautify Whitmore Playground, part of the community ministry of Rainbow Mennonite Church, on July 3 during MennoCon19.

Photo by Laurie Oswald Robinson



CARE FOR THE COMMUNITY

Over 1,300 volunteer for servant projects



Sophia Gott (left), Grace Paquin and Ellie Nickel from Bluffton, Ohio, clean chairs at Holy Family Catholic Church. Photo by Vada Snider

As they cleaned and priced shoes at Adelante Thrift, participants from three youth groups during a Servant Project on July 5 chatted as if they had known each other all their lives.

At the thrift store, youth group members from Eicher Emmanuel Mennonite Church (Wayland, Iowa), Milwaukee (Wis.) Mennonite Church and Zion Mennonite Church (Archbold, Ohio) hung clothes, priced housewares and sorted toys.

Doing God's work in the community is the driving force behind Servant Projects, which began at the Mennonite convention in St. Louis in 1999, said Arloa Bontrager, Servant Project coordinator and Mennonite Mission Network's director of SOOP and Youth Venture.

According to Lori Blair, Mission Network assistant for Christian Service, 1,301 participants—including 110 church groups and 48 other adults—served 25 agencies in Greater Kansas City July 2-5 at MennoCon19. Fourteen convention volunteers led the groups. They guided participants onto school buses that transported

workers to various sites, ranging from parks to thrift stores to food programs.

The labor happened in high heat and humidity as well as pouring rain. Some volunteers, including Brady Woods of the Berlin (Ohio) Mennonite Church youth group, worked inside air-conditioned spaces, including NourishKC.

This nonprofit is building a food-secure region in the Greater Kansas City area. It provides noon meals—often rich in locally grown fruits and vegetables—to local residents and workers. It hopes to empower people to move beyond the barriers of poverty with dignity, i.e., the “fine dining” experience of choosing from a menu and being served by a waiter.

Woods took orders for the day's menu: sesame chicken or pulled pork along with salad and fruit. Other of his peers washed dishes, greeted patrons, got drinks and bussed tables.

The patrons received a hot meal and a warm welcome from the Berlin youth. Linda Aguilar, coordinator for NourishKC, helped orient the group. “Don't assume everyone who comes

in those doors is in the same category, because they're not,” Aguilar said. “Not everyone who comes here is homeless, though they may be. Sometimes, you have police officers and even medical personnel who come in from the heat from the mobile unit they run outside. ... We don't distinguish between who is who. We simply treat them all like kings and queens.”

Children were the beneficiaries of work done July 3 at Rainbow Mennonite Church by volunteers from Mennonite Community Church, Fresno, Calif., and Emmanuel Mennonite Church, St. Paul, Minn. They helped beautify Whitmore Playground, a green space shared by the congregation and the surrounding Rosedale community.

Recent high school graduate Kent Enomoto of Fresno dug holes in sweltering prairie heat. “This project is having a direct impact on the children of this community, and that makes me feel good,” Enomoto said.

Many of the Servant Project volunteers kept care for community at the heart of their service, including Lori Schmidt, of Salina (Kan.) Mennonite Church. “I have been to Kansas City many times, and I have often visited my aunt, but she lives in a totally different area,” Schmidt said. “I wanted to serve Christ in some way as well as see another part of KC I had not seen before, ... where another part of the heart and the soul of the city lives.”



Laurie Oswald Robinson is an editor for Mennonite Mission Network.



Youth at worship



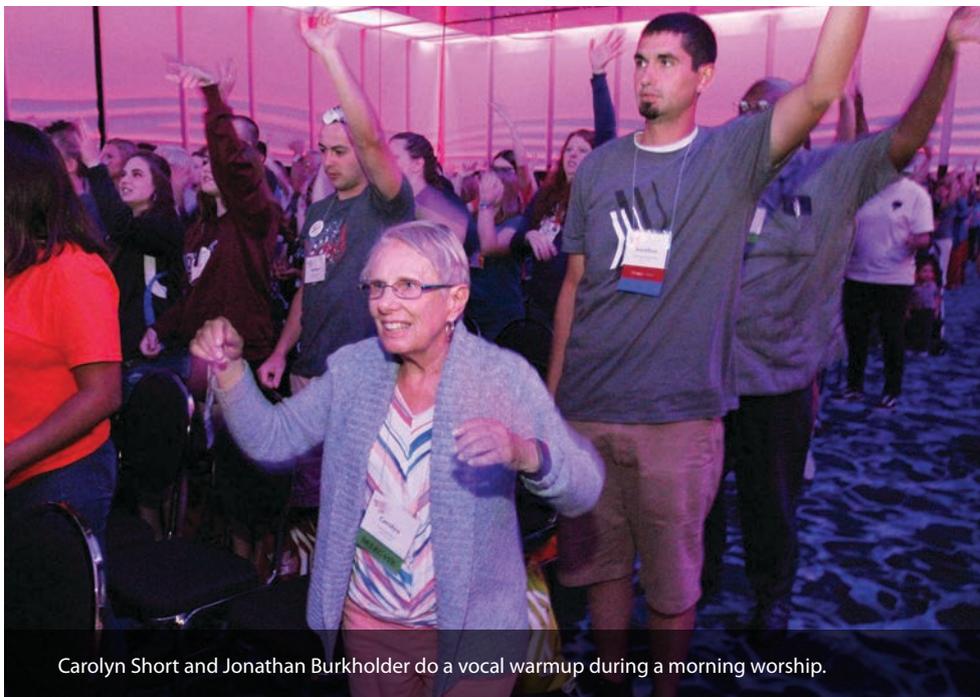
Alex Jantzen of Rainbow Mennonite Church does Bible study with junior youth.



Children play at the Family Bounce.



Children dance during worship



Carolyn Short and Jonathan Burkholder do a vocal warmup during a morning worship.



Sylas Aschliman-Wallace (left), Harold DeBerg and Josiah Shue walk back from singing to hotel staff.



Youth at worship

From 'Red Island' to 'Peace Island'

A Korean village's pursuit of forgiveness serves as a model at annual northeast Asia reconciliation forum

ABOUT 80 MILES OFF the southern tip of the Korean peninsula lies the beautiful island of Jeju. Jeju Island is well-known for breathtaking coastlines, the highest point in South Korea (Mount Halla at 6,400 feet), and some of the world's largest lava tubes. Now a popular holiday destination, Jeju holds a painful history of suffering and struggle that has ignited a passionate pursuit of peace and reconciliation.

That passion made the island a perfect host for the sixth annual Christian Forum for Reconciliation in Northeast Asia, held May 27-June 1. The forum is a joint initiative of Duke Divinity School's Center for Reconciliation and Mennonite Central Committee. Nearly 100 participants gathered at Saint Isadore Retreat Center for a weeklong journey that featured worship sessions, lectures, reflections and a pilgrimage of lament across the island, concluding at the Jeju 4.3 Peace Park.

The numbers 4.3 designate the date April 3, 1948, when an armed civilian uprising stormed several police stations on Jeju in response to police brutality. The island had long held a strong



A labyrinth on the campus of Saint Isadore Retreat Center on Jeju, Korea.

belief of social cohesion, rejecting the idea of a divided Korea. Therefore, when it was announced that the election designed by the United Nations only applied to Korea south of the 38th parallel of latitude, large groups of people on Jeju boycotted it. Tragically, their resistance was miscast as sympathetic to the communists, and ultimately Jeju was labeled by the media as a "Red Island." This led to the oppression of dissenters and the killing of anyone under suspicion. Between 1947 and 1954, about 30,000 island residents were killed by South Korean troops, police and volunteer anticommunist groups under the auspices of the occupying military government.

In 2000, the government of Korea launched an investigation into this period and published the first report of its findings in 2003. This was followed by an official apology by President Roh Moo-hyun for human rights abuses perpetrated by the state. In 2018, President Moon Jae-in offered a second apology, promising to continue the quest for truth and healing. These apologies, along with tangible actions, including

compensation to bereaved families and peace education for the public, were essential steps in the struggle to recover from deep generational pain. In order to truly break free of the captivity to anger and grief, the Jeju village of Hagwi took the additional step of forgiving the perpetrators of the violence.

The people of Hagwi embarked on a journey of forgiveness by first embracing their pain as a village rather than as separate families or individuals. They also reframed their pain within the broader historical context of human suffering, helping them see both victims and perpetrators as victims of systemic violence and unjust powers. Gradually, the village embraced a new identity: no longer a powerless victim but an empowered herald of reconciliation. Through celebrating stories like this, the Christian Forum for Reconciliation continues to engage the call to strengthen the ministry of reconciliation in northeast Asia.

Mike Sherrill for Mennonite Mission Network

TheMennonite

Mennonite World Review

Merger to proceed

The Mennonite, Inc., and Mennonite World Review, Inc., to merge by September 2020

TWO LEADING Mennonite publishers plan to merge by Sept. 1, 2020, creating an independent media organization with a vision for a flagship Anabaptist communications hub in print and online.

The Mennonite, Inc. (TMI), and Mennonite World Review, Inc., completed their merger exploration June 28, when members of the MWR, Inc., corporation approved the plan by a vote of 69-1.

Earlier this year, TMI reached an agreement with the Mennonite Church USA Executive Board, which released TMI to move forward with the merger.

TMI publishes the MC USA monthly magazine but is incorporated separately from the denomination. MWR, Inc., a nonprofit organization based in Newton, Kan., publishes an independent biweekly newspaper. Both manage growing digital platforms.

The plan calls for the new

organization to unveil new products, including a merged magazine along with a new website, by September 2020.

The journalistic vision for the new organization as endorsed by the boards of TMI and MWR, Inc., calls for producing content that “explores the intersection of faith, life and culture through an Anabaptist lens.”

Since the formation of a merger task force in May 2017, plans have developed to combine the existing organizations’ strengths and carry forward their missions while adapting to changes in the ways people use digital and print media in the 21st century.

Like MWR, Inc., the new organization will not be affiliated with any denomination or conference. And like TMI, it will give priority to serving the members of MC USA, who are also MWR, Inc.’s largest constituency.

The vision continues MWR, Inc.’s mission of “serving the global Anabaptist movement” and fulfills TMI’s goal of being “a forum for Mennonite voices.”

The name of the new organization and title of the magazine have not been decided.

Sheldon C. Good, executive director of TMI, will be the executive director. Paul Schrag, editor and publisher of MWR, Inc., will be the editor.

Our historical presence, collective efforts and innovative ideas have helped get us here and will continue to propel us forward.

—Melody Pannell

For John Longhurst, board president of MWR, Inc., the approval by corporation members brings to an end a productive, engaging and energizing period of dreaming and discussion by the boards of MWR, Inc., and TMI. “It’s great to now be in a place where we can start making the merger a practical reality so we can better serve our readers and the wider church,” he says.

Melody Pannell, the TMI board chair, says: “This is a significant moment, a *kairos* moment. Our historical presence, collective efforts and innovative ideas have helped get us here and will continue to propel us forward. We look forward to forming this new ministry and to serving the Anabaptist movement for generations to come.”

The Mennonite, Inc., and Mennonite World Review, Inc.



WHAT I'M
WATCHING
THIS MONTH



Toy Story 4

Directed by Josh Cooley

This outstanding sequel is as good or better than the earlier films in the series. The hilarious and moving story of Woody and his friends and their human includes Christian themes of self-sacrifice, love of enemy, and redemption.



When They See Us

Directed by Ava DuVernay

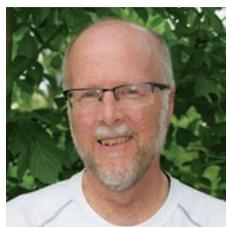
This four-episode Netflix miniseries dramatizes the case of the Central Park Five, when five teenagers—four African-American and one Hispanic—were convicted of attacking a woman and sent to prison, only to be found innocent years later.



The Edge of Democracy

Directed by Petra Costa

This documentary on Netflix is a personal and political look at Brazilian governance. The title indicates that the country reached the edge of being a democracy but fell short. It's a tragic story that's being played out across the globe.



Mary Magdalene's Journey: a Blues Gospel

BLUES IS A PERFECT genre for telling the story of Mary Magdalene, one of Jesus' closest disciples and the first to see the Risen Jesus. Little is said about her in the Gospels, other than that Jesus freed her from seven demons. (And no, nowhere does it say she was a prostitute.) It's a musical genre concerned about injustice and employing lament.

Mary Sprunger-Froese, artist-in-residence for RAWtools in Colorado Springs, Colo., plays Mary in this one-woman musical performed at MennoCon19, while Bryan Miller plays sax and recorder, and Vern Rempel plays keyboard. Miller is from Colorado Springs, and Rempel is pastor of Beloved Community Mennonite Church in Littleton, Colo. Sprunger-Froese and Rempel collaborated on many of the songs, which reflect a mixture of styles but are influenced by the blues.

Sprunger-Froese movingly portrays the captivity Mary feels with her physical and mental disabilities, while facing scorn from fellow villagers and abuse from the uncle she works for. This extrabiblical section, a riff, as it were, off the statement that she had seven demons, is the most effective part of the musical, and the music here is based on a song by Muddy Waters.

After Mary meets Jesus, she retells familiar stories from the Gospels, though they get a feminist twist that reminds us



From left: Vern Rempel, Mary Sprunger-Froese, Bryan Miller

just how radical Jesus was in his welcoming actions toward women. The narration becomes didactic in places but also offers interesting insights, such as the cultural meaning of turning the other cheek.

Early on, Mary points out that seven represents wholeness rather than a specific number, then sings a song that names her seven demons, one at a time.

Sprunger-Froese ably shows Mary's anguish and struggle but also her joy when she learns that Jesus is risen. It's a heartfelt performance. And the music is simple yet superb. The play ends with the song "Rain Down" (from *Sing the Journey*), with the audience joining in on the chorus. Rempel and Sprunger-Froese added some new verses.

Gordon Houser is editor of *The Mennonite*.



QUOTABLE

“We argue, laugh, agree and pull away sometimes, but those of us who are committed will keep coming back to these reunions year after year after year. And for this, I am grateful.”

—**Joanne Gallardo**,
pastor of faith formation at Berkey Avenue
Mennonite Fellowship in Goshen, Ind.



MOST-READ ARTICLES ONLINE

2.3K
AMBS alum says man sexually assaulted her in 2009
by Sheldon C. Good

1.6K
Snapshots from Day 1 of MennoCon19
by Vada Snider

1.6K
Evening worship, Day 1: A family reunion
by Gordon Houser

FROM THE ARCHIVES



The second joint meeting of MC and GCMC delegates

Delegates and attendees gather at a large group session at Normal, Ill., in 1989. Normal '89 was the second joint meeting between the Mennonite Church and the General Conference Mennonite Church and resulted in a formal recommendation to explore the integration of both denominations. After an extended process of discernment, delegates from both denominations voted in favor of unification in 1995 and, after several more years of planning, the merger became official in February 2002.

Citation: Mennonite Publishing House (Scottsdale, Pa.) Photographs and Audiovisuals, 1910-1977. Normal, IL, 1989, Photographs. VI-10-1 Drawer 3, Folder 25. Mennonite Church USA Archives. Elkhart, Ind.

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RECIPE OF THE MONTH | Watermelon limeade
You can find the recipe on our website at themennonite.org/hungryhounds

PERSPECTIVES FROM READERS

The church is a mess, thanks be to God

THE CHURCH IS A MESS, thanks be to God. This was a refrain repeated time and again in the delegate session by Tom Yoder Neufeld. It was a call and response reminder of the tension and hope that is reverberating within Mennonite Church USA. It also served as a reminder of the tension and hope within me.

Though I've either worked for or attended a Mennonite church for the last six years, I have been hesitant to consider

The energy passed back and forth between me and those I was anointing as effortlessly as my own cycle of breath.

myself a Mennonite. Frankly, I wasn't sure I belonged. Due to my identity as a black, biracial man as well as my history of abuse and neglect, the question of belonging looms large for me. Though I have always felt loved and appreciated in Mennonite circles, I haven't always felt understood or included. I don't understand the love of quilts, the necessity of the Mennonite Game or the blinding speed of Dutch Blitz. Culturally, I have never felt like a Mennonite, and likely never will, so how can I honestly identify with this denomination? These are some of the thoughts and questions I held ahead of convention, and they

were answered.

I attended MennoCon19 as a Step-Up volunteer, and from the first night with our participants, I knew it was going to be a good week. Each of these youth brought a unique energy and insight into the process. They were passionate about the church, eager to be heard and willing to sacrifice their time in order to participate in denominational business. Moreover their enthusiasm was contagious, and as I saw each of them smile as they officially put on their delegate badges, I felt invigorated for the first time in a long time. They reminded me that working with youth and young adults gives me a unique sense of joy and fulfillment. I'm not yet sure why, but I know I needed that reminder.

The delegate sessions were also enriching. While the historic votes were wonderful, it was actually the table conversations that filled me. We discussed our vision for the church, theologies of incarnation and shared memories of our most intimate pain and joy. These moments of vulnerable connection were holy, and they reminded me that the Spirit is universal and ever present. We need only be open and attentive to her.

All of this culminated in the anointing service on Friday evening (July 5), which was a beautiful exchange of the embodied divine energy. I was one of several people offering anointing, and every time I made the sign of the cross on someone's forehead, I felt the Spirit move within me. My entire body felt a

strong current of life flow into every open space. It was as if the very river of God had been poured into me and was swirling around endlessly. The energy passed back and forth between me and those I was anointing as effortlessly as my own cycle of breath.

These experiences at MennoCon19 demonstrated two fundamental truths. I'm part of the body of Christ, and I have a place and voice within this particular family. There is still much to be sorted out within MC USA, and I'm certain I will feel excluded or out-of-place from time to time, but what I'm now confident of is that I can be myself and be Mennonite. It is the Spirit that has connected us and the Spirit that will keep us.

My week in Kansas City illuminated the heart of MC USA for me—a heart that can be sensitive to the Spirit when it wants, a heart that beats for the outcast and marginalized, a heart that brings peace, justice and healing wherever it travels.

I don't know how I'll be involved with MC USA in the future, but I left MennoCon19 full of hope for all that is possible. I'll leave it to the Spirit to manifest what is necessary. The church is a mess, thanks be to God.



Benjamin Tapper is co-founder of The Hear Me Project and host of the Invisible Truths blog.

BY AND ABOUT YOUNG ADULTS

A list of things to inspire creativity

IT'S HARD TO FIND inspiration when you're feeling uninspired. So many things are going on that can make you feel down and uninspired.

Maxine Hong Kingston writes: "In times of destruction, create something: a poem, a parade, a community, a school, a vow, a moral principle, one peaceful moment."

So I decided to put together a list of potential inspiration. I hope it inspires you to create something bigger than ourselves. Create something liberating for all.

Humans seeking asylum and safety are being detained in concentration camps.

- Please make sure to stay up to date on this.
- Follow RAICES and other reputable sources on how to help.
- Make sure you're helping in effective ways.
- And contact your representatives.

Representation in media, jobs, etc.

- Halle Bailey playing Ariel in *The Little Mermaid*
- Disney's upcoming *Mulan*, *The Lion King*

How we describe and frame atrocities

- Underage woman vs. children
- Equality and fair treatment
- Abortion and women's rights across the country
- Pride Month, LGBTQIA+ community
- U.S. Women's Soccer team win and equal pay
- Racism and bigotry: two stories I've read about lately about the

Central Park Five and Glenelg High School

Mennonite USA convention

- We don't have to agree with one another to be kind to one another

Climate change and the environment

Homelessness

Student loans and debt

Some things to do

- Be out in nature
- Spend some time alone: see a movie, eat dinner alone, hike
- Attend a spoken word or open-mic event
- Walk in an art museum, gallery

In times of destruction, create something.

—Maxine Hong Kingston

Read

- *Watch Us Rise* by Ellen Hagan and Renee Watson
- *I'm Still Here: Black Dignity in a World Made for Whiteness* by Austin Channing Brown
- Sandra Cisneros
- Michelle Obama
- *Waking Up White* by Debby Irving
- Cleo Wade
- Find a read around the world challenge

Listen to a podcast

- Armchair expert
- Still Processing

Meditate

Join a group outside of your comfort zone

Journal, write, discuss

- Reflect on your own biases, what is buried deep. How does it affect your interactions with others? (If your answer is, I have none, you need to ponder this longer.)
- How do I work to reverse these biases in myself and in others?

Protest

Inspiring Quotes

- "Feet, what do I need you for when I have wings to fly?"—Frida Kahlo
- "Your silence will not protect you."—Audre Lorde
- "I've put up with too much, too long. And now I'm just too intelligent, too powerful, too beautiful, too sure of who I am finally to deserve anything less."—Sandra Cisneros
- "The kind of beauty I want most is the hard-to-get that comes from within—strength, courage, dignity."—Ruby Dee
- "Put your ear down close to your soul and listen hard."—Anne Sexton
- "I'm going to use everything that shows up in my life, even the most challenging stuff, to help me to grow and further my ability to love."—maryam hasnaa
- "Use our creativity to mend what's broken."—Tom Yoder Neufeld

I hope this inspires you to add to the list. I hope this inspires you to create something beautiful and some change.



Erin Bradley is pursuing a graduate degree in social work at the University of Kansas in Lawrence.



FROM MENNONITE CHURCH USA

Justice, mercy, humility

AT THE END OF SERVICE on the Dock Mennonite Academy Board of Trustees, each departing trustee receives a *fraktur* with a favorite Bible verse. Following my term, I was asked which verse I wanted on my *fraktur*, and I requested

Practice being in difficult conversations with others.

Micah 6:8: “What does the Lord require of you? To act justly, and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.”

Leadership requires much ongoing personal development, and Mennonite values of justice, mercy and humility are ones to incorporate into daily life. Authentic servanthood leadership is something to aspire to, but it takes perseverance, practice and resilience.

As the new moderator of Mennonite Church USA, I am looking forward to learning and growing as I serve in the church. I want to act justly, love mercifully and walk humbly with my God over the next two years. This is easier said than done, and all leaders in the church need grace for when they fail. Sometimes people with the best leadership potential say no to church leadership positions, afraid of failure and ultimately of criticism. We are missing out on the sharing of significant leadership gifts in

the church.

Tom Yoder Neufeld, our speaker for the Bible studies during the Delegate Assembly at MennoCon19, proclaimed that “the church is a mess,” to which we replied, “Thanks be to God.” Messiness is part of any leadership journey and has the wonderful possibility to lead to new beginnings.

Even in the midst of our church messiness, I believe there is hope for the future. If we practice listening more than talking, if we continue to mentor our youth into leadership roles, and if we lead with a transparent spirit, our beloved Mennonite church will grow and thrive. Our words and actions as leaders matter a whole lot. Please provide prayerful and other kinds of support to our MC USA Executive Board staff, conference and constituency leaders, pastors and others who provide important leadership to our denomination.

My hope for the church is that the Spirit of God will continue to move in our midst as we all lead, grow and pray together. Practice listening more than talking. Practice being in difficult conversations with others. Practice hospitality and practice washing or spraying each other’s feet. Together our leadership can make a difference in MC USA.

Joy Sutter is moderator of Mennonite Church USA.

UPDATES

EMU ANNOUNCES NEW DEAN OF STUDENTS

Eastern Mennonite University, Harrisonburg, Va., has appointed Shannon W. Dycus as dean of students. Dycus, most recently co-pastor of First Mennonite Church in Indianapolis, brings experience in the pastorate, higher education and K-12 education. She begins Aug. 1.

MAPLE SCHOLARS EXPLORE SCIENCES, ARTS AND MORE

The eight-week Maple Scholars research program gives students the unique opportunity to work alongside Goshen (Ind.) College professors to take part in meaningful research on campus. This year, 14 students dedicated their summers to working on projects within the music, biology, history, mathematics, education, theater, and sustainability departments. Participants, however, ranged beyond these selected disciplines.

SISTER CARE BRINGS TOOLS FOR HEALING TO UKRAINE

Carolyn Heggen, a psychotherapist specializing in trauma healing, and Rhoda Keener, Sister Care International Director for Mennonite Women USA, led two Sister Care leadership training seminars in eastern Ukraine, May 16-18 in Dnipro and May 25-27 in Zaporizhzhia, 135 miles west of the conflict on the border between Ukraine and Russia.

A WORD FROM PASTORS

On prayer

IN MATTHEW 6, Jesus gives us a prayer guide, including a call for a whole new world: “Your kingdom come...on earth as it is in heaven.” That’s a prayer for the transformation of all things, for “this earthly life to swing up into heaven,” as Thomas Müntzer, the 16th-century radical reformer, put it, for our lives “to be totally transfigured” into heavenly life.

The prayer also has to do with basic things, like food. “Give us this day our daily bread,” like the story of manna in the wilderness, when God provided food for the Israelites. To pray for our daily bread is to recognize that every meal is like manna.

This prayer is also about economics and politics, the stuff of our personal and public lives, like money and property. “Forgive us our debts, as we have forgiven our debtors,” like a mortgage, a school loan, credit cards or health-care debt. You could turn this into a spiritual metaphor, but the literal meaning is about money, debt forgiveness, interest rates and investment strategies—the whole economic life of money, from our bank accounts to global financial markets.

Jesus is reminding people of God’s law: “Every seventh year you shall grant a remission of debts; every creditor shall remit the claim that is held against a neighbor” (Deuteronomy 15). To enact this prayer would overturn economic systems built on the long histories of exploitation of land and people, the wealth amassed by means of the legacies of coercive debt.

The same goes for trespasses:

“to forgive others their trespasses.” This is about crossing into territory without authorization, entering a piece of land without permission. To live out this prayer would make a lot of people happy

God doesn’t need our half-hearted, pious prayers.

and a lot of people angry because our world is founded on property lines marking one home from another, what’s mine from what’s yours, not to mention the borders that establish countries, the invisible lines stretching across the desert sands. In 1986, President Ronald Reagan signed into law an immigration bill that forgave trespasses, like this prayer talks about—almost 3 million people were granted amnesty, people who had entered the United States without official permission.

This prayer in Matthew 6 has to do with our lives, all of who we are, our struggles and hopes, our wants and needs.

That’s why distractions are the most interesting parts, when we pray—the thoughts that interrupt us when we’re trying to focus on holy things. Victor White, a Dominican friar, used to say the distractions are revelations because they confront us with what we really care about. The interruptions should be our focus. That’s where the important stuff happens. Distractions show us we are praying for the wrong things because we’re trying to ignore what we really care about—not the pious things that we think we

should care about but the central concerns of our lives.

God doesn’t need our prayers, especially our half-hearted, pious prayers. “When you are praying, do not heap up empty phrases,” Jesus says. People who do such things “think that they will be heard because of their many words.” That’s just a waste of your own time because God “knows what you need before you ask.”

If God already knows what we need, why ask? Prayer is how we come to recognize our dependence on God. All we have is a gift from the Creator of all things. Prayer lets us feel our way into our dependency on God—to know ourselves as sustained by God’s care, to rest into our neediness before God.

Think of prayer as an act of patience before a mystery, the enigma of yourself before the gentle silence we call God, the peace that passes understanding, the great cloud of unknowing, the radiance of God’s darkness. Prayer invites that kind of aimless exploration of God’s interest in the messiness of our desires, the confusion of our wants, the thoughts we’ve convinced ourselves we shouldn’t have while we pray.

This piece is indebted to two of Herbert McCabe’s sermons: “Prayer” in *God, Christ, and Us* (Continuum, 2003) and “Prayer” in *God Matters* (Continuum, 1987).



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

For the record

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

BIRTHS

Eshleman, Gabriela Matute, was born June 14 to Soila Matute Cárcamo and Jeff Eshleman, Lancaster, Pa.

Johnston, Lillian Grace, was born May 30 to Cassandra Steiner Johnston and Mark Johnston, Dalton, Ohio.

DEATHS

Burkey, Phyllis L. Bowen, 95, Milford, Neb., died June 16. Spouse: Arnold Burkey (deceased). Parents: Milo and Violet Snodgrass Bowen. Children: Tim Burkey, Sid Burkey; six grandchildren. Funeral: June 25 at Bellwood Mennonite Church, Milford.

Christophel, Virginia K. Swartzendruber, 74, Kalona, Iowa, died June 23. Spouse: Levon Christophel. Parents: Morris and Alta Miller Swartzendruber. Children: Todd Christophel, Craig Christophel; four grandchildren. Funeral: June 29 at Kalona Mennonite Church.

Duerksen, Sylvia, 91, Springfield, Va., passed away peacefully after a brief illness on June 5. Sylvia found her calling in life while taking art lessons at the age of 9 from a neighbor, Flossie Ruhl. Sylvia described Flossie as a superb teacher who taught her "everything she needed to know" to succeed as an artist. Sylvia went on to study at the Corcoran School of Art and George Washington University, obtaining her undergraduate degree. Sylvia enjoyed a distinguished career



as an artist at the U.S. Department of Agriculture, illustrating countless educational publications. Her retirement certificate sums up her career as follows: "...44 years of dedicated and outstanding service to the U.S. Government as an artist and designer. (Her) artwork has appeared in an untold number of publications that disperse information worldwide. (Her) many drawings of Smokey the Bear and Woodsy Owl have inspired millions of people to preserve and protect our fragile environment." Sylvia was devoted to her family and extended family. She lived most of her life in her cherished family home in North East Washington, D.C., and cared for her parents and her sister Vera in their later years. In her retirement, Sylvia traveled the world, always with a sketchbook under her arm. In recent years, Sylvia resided at the Greenspring Retirement Community in Springfield, where she made new friends and continued to produce art to share with her community and family. Sylvia is survived by her niece, Christine Saalbach, nephews Fred Saalbach and William Saalbach, and great-nephews and nieces Timothy, Jason, Julia, Rebecca, Mark, Elizabeth and Katherine, all of whom will miss her. Funeral: June 28 at The Chapel at Greenspring Retirement Community, Springfield.

Glick, Daniel Leroy, 85, Bird-in-Hand, Pa., died June 7. Spouse: Anna Eleanor Dussinger Glick. Children: Gary D. Glick, Dean M. Glick, Teresa J. Glick; four grandchildren; five great-grandchildren. Funeral: June 12 at Forest Hills Mennonite Church, Leola, Pa.

Hahn, Lois Marks, 93, Wakarusa, Ind., died June 25. Spouse: Willis Hahn (deceased). Parents: William and Edith Hunsberger Marks. Stepchildren: Phyllis Miller Martin, Miriam Shaffer, Maynard L. Hahn; six step-grandchildren; four step-great-grandchildren. Funeral: June 28 at Olive Mennonite Church, Elkhart, Ind.

Helmuth, Ronald James, 67, Bethlehem, Pa., died April 14 of lymphoma. Spouse: Elena Horst Helmuth. Parents: Elvon and Bertha Yoder Helmuth. Children: Christopher Helmuth, Michael Helmuth, Theo Baer, Jason and Michele Axford; two grandchildren. Funeral: May 1 at First Presbyterian Church of Bethlehem.

Hostetler, Richard, 90, Goshen, Ind., died June 3. Spouse: Helen King Hostetler. Parents: Atlee and Nettie Hostetler. Children: Marilyn Jantzi, Jim Hostetler, Dave Hostetler, Mike Hostetler, Bob Hostetler; 23 grandchildren; eight great-grandchildren. Funeral: July 12 at The Meeting House, Greencroft Healthcare, Goshen.

Kaufman, Dr. LeRoy James, 75, Freeman, S.D., died June 2, of a heart attack. Spouse: Dr. Dawn Crocker Kaufman (deceased). Parents: Sollie and Nellie Preheim Kaufman. Children: Erik Kaufman, David Kaufman. Funeral: June 10 at Salem-Zion Mennonite Church, Freeman.

Martin, Flora Jean Hostetler, 93, Orrville, Ohio, died May 31. Spouse: John J. Martin (deceased). James and Gladys Stoltzfus Hostetler. Children: Ron Martin, Wendell Martin, Sharon

Martin Ressler, Janis Martin Steigauf; 11 grandchildren; 13 great-grandchildren. Funeral: June 8 at Sonnenberg Mennonite Church, Kidron, Ohio.

Newcomer, Arthur L., 81, Bellefontaine, Ohio, died June 15. Spouse: Mary Rosenberger Newcomer. Parents: Norman and Ida Leaman Newcomer. Children: Maria Gleason, Sam Newcomer; four grandchildren. Memorial service: June 23 at Bethel Mennonite Church, West Liberty, Ohio.

Noftsier, Rita L. Rassi, 67, Goshen, Ind., died June 17. Parents: Lloyd and Dorothy Haines Rassi. Child: Romeyn A. Noftsier; one grandchild. Funeral: June 28 at Archbishop Noll Memorial Chapel, Huntington, Ind.

Smoker, Esther M. Friesen, 88, Lititz, Pa. and Gap, Pa., died June 28. Spouse: Abner Smoker (deceased). Parents: Henry A. and Margaret L.

Friesen. Children: Darrell L. Smoker, LeVon R. Smoker, Darla J. Benner; three grandchildren. Funeral: July 3 at Forest Hills Mennonite Church, Leola, Pa.

Sommerfeld, Shirley Ann Diller, 77, Orrville, Ohio, died May 14, of cancer. Spouse: Keith Sommerfeld. Parents: Ira and Buelah Brenner Diller. Children: Daryl Sommerfeld, Lisa Sommerfeld Zuercher; two grandchildren. Funeral: May 18 at Sonnenberg Mennonite Church, Kidron, Ohio.

Sutter, Lela V., 97, Goshen, Ind. and Elmhurst, Ill., died June 11. Parents: Levi and Alma Nafziger Sutter. Funeral: July 26 at College Mennonite Church, Goshen.

Swartz, Jon Charles "Chuck," 78, West Liberty, Ohio, died June 6. Spouse: Jeanie Davis Swartz. Parents: Samuel C. and Eleanor Reist Swartz. Children: Mark Swartz, Jeremy Swartz,

Heidi Swartz; three grandchildren. Celebration of Life: Aug. 3 at Bethel Mennonite Church, West Liberty.

Thomas, Maynard Wayne, 90, Kidron, Ohio, died March 13. Spouse: Twila Catherine Yoder Thomas (deceased). Parents: Elmer Franklin Thomas and Elda Elizabeth Livingston Thomas. Child: Esther Tafoya; two grandchildren; four great-grandchildren. Funeral: March 13 at Sonnenberg Mennonite Church, Kidron.

Woolschlager, Dorothy M. Lehman, 85, Glenfield, N.Y., died June 30. Spouse: Lowaine A. Woolschlager (deceased). Mother: Mildred Lehman Zehr. Children: Sandra Woolschlager, Scott Woolschlager, Suzette Cole; three grandchildren; four great-grandchildren. Funeral: July 3 at First Mennonite Church, New Bremen, N.Y.

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CLASSIFIEDS

Southern Hills Mennonite Church, Topeka, Kan., seeks **full-time pastor** to lead urban congregation forward in relationship with God through Jesus and in relationship with others in our community and world. Pastoral gifts of preaching and administration will support a congregation already committed to mercy and justice ministries. We aspire to create a safe and welcoming space that attracts a diverse congregation, including young adults and families. Email dougpen@sbcglobal.net, search committee chair, website: southernhillsmc.org

Bethesda Mennonite Church, located in Henderson, Neb., is seeking a **pastor of pastoral care and worship**. The full-time minister is part of a multipastoral team and through a shared ministry approach will play an active role with Bethesda's congregation. The candidate should have a strong commitment to Anabaptist values and theology, a strong passion for congregational care, strong communication skills and the ability to connect with multiple generations. An M.Div. degree with pastoral experience is desired but not required. The Bethesda congregation, located in south central Nebraska, is a member of the Central Plains Conference and Mennonite Church USA. Interested persons should contact Susan Janzen at 319-610-1007 or sejanzen@msn.com.

MennoMedia seeks a **skilled development director** to join our team in connecting the story and mission of MennoMedia with people who want to make a difference. This individual is responsible for establishing a fund-raising strategy and achieving fund-raising objectives. The development director

is responsible for identifying and cultivating relationships with current and prospective gift donors and planned giving donors, researching and developing effective solicitation strategies, as well as stewarding donors throughout the giving process. Send resume, cover letter, references to Amy Gingerich at AmyG@MennoMedia.org.

Belmont Mennonite Church, Elkhart, Ind., is seeking to fill a **full-time pastoral position**. The person hired will be a visionary leader who excels at preaching, teaching and relating to all ages. They will be firmly rooted in Anabaptist-Mennonite belief and practice, preferably holding an M.Div. or equivalent, and have training in two of the following areas: mission, faith formation, worship or community life. BMC is a vibrant, multiage congregation with an average attendance of 150. We are serious about worship, yet we welcome new ideas. We are engaged in our community, but we wonder if there is more we could be doing. We are passionate about caring for each other, and we are always looking for new ways to create community. We are a member of Indiana-Michigan Conference. Contact Sharon Witmer Yoder, 574-304-9418, cplt@im.mennonite.net with inquiries.

Zion Mennonite Church in southeastern Pennsylvania seeks **pastor**. www.zionmennonite.com. The 75 active worshipers welcome inquiries via the search committee chair, John Rush, 610-763-8998 or rushjoes@aol.com. Zion, part of Atlantic Coast Conference, is in Berks County, just south of the city of Reading. Full- or part-time will be considered.

Associate pastor: Plains Mennonite Church in Hatfield

Pa., is inviting applicants to join the pastoral team as a part-time (.5 to .75 FTE) associate pastor. The successful candidate will nurture young families and young adults, rethink spiritual formation alongside the congregation, participate in worship planning and foster community connections. More information on the congregation at plainsmennonitechurch.org. Please send inquiries to Emily Ralph Servant at eralphservant@franconiaconference.org.

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



Explore: A Theological Program for High School Youth allows young people (grades 10 to 12) to engage their faith questions and test their leadership gifts.

The program includes:

- 16-day group experience in Elkhart, Indiana, in July
- 100-hour congregational experience with a mentoring pastor

FIND OUT MORE:
Visit amsb.edu/explore

STORIES FROM THE GLOBAL MENNONITE CHURCH

Let's listen to our stories

IN JUNE, some 30 historians, archivists and church leaders from 12 countries gathered at Goshen (Ind.) College to discuss the current state of Anabaptist-Mennonite history from the perspective of the global church. Twenty years earlier, a similar gathering at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, Ind., helped launch the Global Mennonite History Project, a remarkable initiative that has resulted in five volumes—each focused on a different region—written by local historians and storytellers from their own context.

But two decades later, as participants in the recent “Power and Preservation” symposium acknowledged, many challenges remain. Despite the fact that the Global Mennonite History series is now available in English, French and Spanish, the books are not well-known or widely distributed. Church leaders around the world tend to be strongly oriented to the present and the future, assuming history is an impediment to missions or irrelevant to the pressing concerns of the moment. Few of our churches are ready to invest time, energy or financial resources in the preservation of historical sources. In some settings, access to sources is jealously guarded. And for several groups, a history of conflict means that any attempt to narrate the past is almost certain to resurrect tensions that have gone dormant.

Yet the people of God ignore the past at their peril. From Genesis to Revelation,

the Scriptures are filled with admonitions to remember those who have gone before. Like our Jewish cousins, Christians are a story-shaped people. Our identity and our witness are anchored in a deep narrative.

To be sure, that narrative has always found expression in a remarkable range of cultural contexts, filled with complex subplots, painful mistakes and beautiful surprises. But there is an overall coherence to the

Our identity and our witness is anchored in a deep narrative.

story. And if we don't tell our stories with commitment and intention, other narratives—usually unacknowledged and unrecognized—will fill the vacuum.

In a statement formulated at the “Power and Preservation” symposium, participants reaffirmed their commitment to work collaboratively as custodians of the global Anabaptist-Mennonite story. Among other things, this will entail a new enthusiasm for preserving the sources vital for historical memory and ensuring that all groups have equal access to those sources. In the West we have traditionally thought of archival sources in the form of paper. Yet in many settings, historical memory is preserved orally. “When an elderly person dies,” according to a traditional African proverb, “a library burns to the ground.”

What strategies for the future can ensure that these libraries of knowledge do not disappear?

In other contexts, sources are accessible primarily in digital format. How can modern technologies help preserve digital records and, beyond that, provide greater access to a wide variety of other sources?

In all our settings, historical sources and narratives are closely linked to power. How can we ensure that diverse narratives are well-researched, well-sourced and justly told? Can we tell complex stories—filled with nuance and the reality of human frailty and failure—that nonetheless inspire hope in future generations?

Healthy, mature, growing churches in the global Anabaptist-Mennonite family must be attentive to their history if they are going to be rooted in the gospel. Every community has its storytellers. If our churches are going to thrive, church leaders will need to recognize the spiritual gifts of the storytellers in our midst and ensure that historical sources will be accessible to future storytellers, whose task it will be to rewrite that history for their own generation.

What is your congregation doing to ensure that our story will go forward?



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FROM THE EDITOR

The untamable Spirit

PARTICIPANTS at MennoCon19, the Mennonite Church USA convention held July 2-6 in Kansas City, Mo., heard a lot about the Holy Spirit. And it wasn't always easy to hear.

We heard different terms for the Holy Spirit: breath, wind. At the delegate assembly, Tom Yoder Neufeld said the Spirit, like wind, cannot be controlled. He called the unity of the Spirit a "turbulent storm within God's embrace."

Ruach, the Hebrew word for Spirit or wind "commonly refers to the strong wind of the storm, the raging blast from the desert, like the one that divided the Red Sea at the Exodus," writes Alasdair Heron.

In his book *Creator Spirit: The Holy Spirit and the Art of Becoming Human*, Steven R. Guthrie calls the Spirit Boundary-Breaker, Plan-Disrupter and Surprise-Bringer.

This untamable Spirit doesn't always feel comfortable to us. We like to have more control over our

lives. We want to make plans, set goals and work on doing good.

But the Spirit is unpredictable. As Leonard Dow said at the July 5 worship, the Spirit often comes suddenly, not only according to our schedule.

The question we must answer is, Do we want to be transformed?

This wild Spirit can make us uncomfortable, even feel scary. But the same Spirit is also the breath that sustains us. The Bible also calls the Spirit "comforter" and "helper."

Jürgen Moltmann writes that for the Apostle Paul, *pneuma* (the Greek word for Spirit) "does not mean spirituality or inwardness; it means vital energy."

The Holy Spirit animates us and energizes us—not just as individuals but as communities.

As Dustin Galyon said at the July 3 morning worship, "Fear fears community." When we are afraid and want to isolate ourselves or set up boundaries to protect ourselves from "the other," we need the Holy Spirit, the breath and wind of God. And we need each other.

The worship speakers at MennoCon19 called on listeners to trust in God's presence and to practice that presence. Sue Park-Hur called this "with-ness"; Glen Guyton said to welcome people as they are.

Guyton also reminded us that "only the power of the Holy Spirit will transform this church."

The questions we must answer are, Do we want to be transformed? Do we want to give ourselves to the untamable Holy Spirit? Can we welcome that risk?


Gordon Houser,
Editor of The Mennonite

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