

TheMennonite

Resilient HOPE

INSIDE

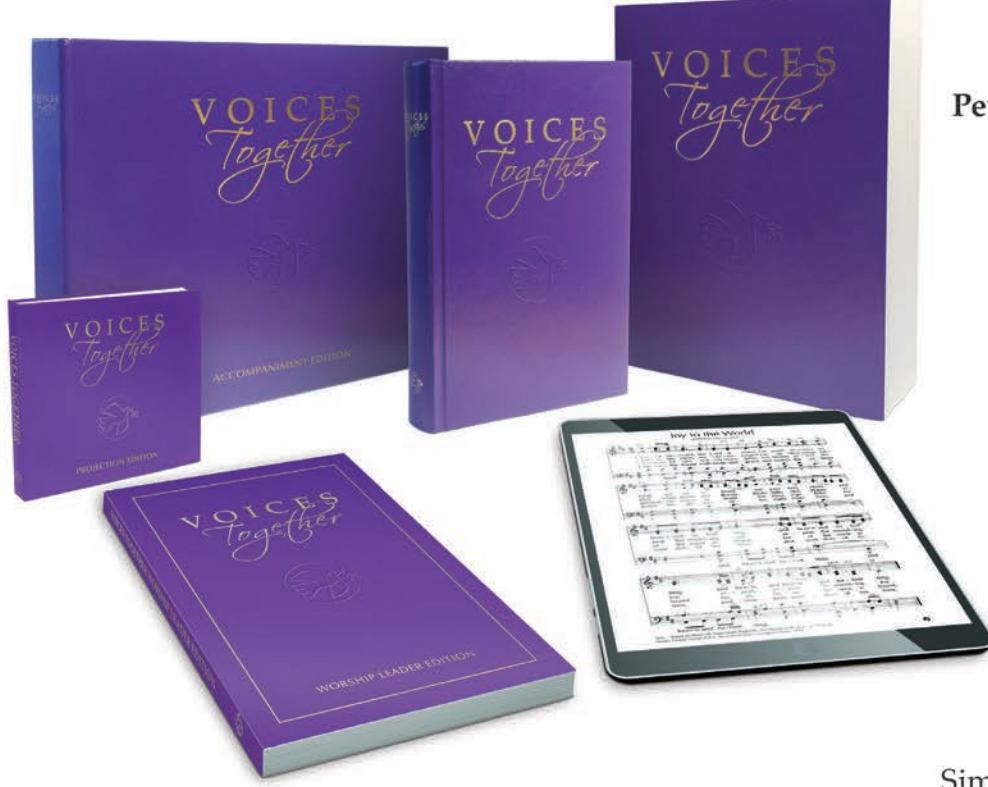
There will be times

Street dogs and
heirloom seeds

Faith and powerlifting

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TheMennonite

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ON THE COVER: Lydia Heatwole (right) and her sister Vivia run in Camden, N.J. Photo provided by Timothy H. Heatwole Shenk

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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.

Over the years, the denomination has experienced the loss of conferences, congregations and nearly half its members as scriptural authority and 3,500 years of Judeo-Christian teaching have been set aside, most notably in the push for full inclusion of (noncelibate) LGBTQ people into church life. The LGBTQ community and its supporters appear to have failed to appreciate the nuance of Christ's approach to sinners (i.e., every one of us) in which he demonstrated respect for the individual while still challenging their sin, most notably in the story of the woman caught in adultery (John 7:53-8:11).

For Mennonite Church USA to adopt the panel's recommendations would surely lead to the further loss of conferences, congregations and members, leaving those supportive of full LGBTQ inclusion with a denomination that is an irrelevant remnant of its former self, as the Anabaptist-Mennonite vision is carried forward by others.

—Don R. Martin, Harrisonburg, Va.

Correction

The stained-glass artwork on page 17 of the March issue should have been credited to Zachary Nafziger. We regret this oversight.

—Editor

Theological balance

When Mennonite Church USA was created (2002), the liberals kept check on the conservatives, and the conservatives kept check on the liberals. However, the conservatives have left the denomination. Currently the liberals are poised to take MC USA to an extreme. Our hope now is that the moderates will arise and put a check on the liberals. We must keep our theological balance.

—Brent A. Koehn, Elkhart, Ind.

Open letter: A call to offer welcome, refuge

You mentioned about urging members of Congress. What about prayer? Doesn't anyone pray anymore? Pray to God with your problems. He is much higher than Congress.

—Carla Nafziger Graydus, Facebook

Does not the Bible ask us to obey the laws of the land? Obama and the Democrats built detention centers because they were following the existing laws. Even in Bible times, there were borders, and they were enforced.

—Margie Smith Welch, Facebook

What are you and your church doing to create legal and just pathways to migration? Are you working with local and national immigrant communities to create this? Are you lobbying your government representatives? Are you educating yourselves?

—Frank Schofield Nellessen, Facebook

Membership guidelines

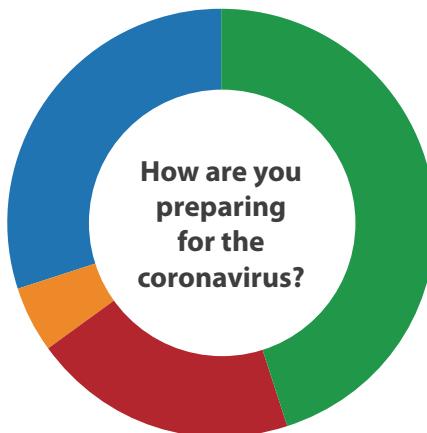
It was with disappointment that I read (February) that the Mennonite Church USA Membership Guidelines Advisory Group has recommended "retiring" the denomination's Membership Guidelines in order that "sexual identity, gender orientation or marital status" should not restrict a person's full participation in denominational ministries.

IN THIS ISSUE

Living in hope requires resilience. The stories in this issue offer examples of such resilient hope.

Timothy H. Heatwole Shenk (page 10) writes a letter to his 10-year-old daughter out of the context of their intentional community in Camden, N.J. Melody M. Pannell (page 14) describes finding resilience out of sorrow and loss, including the death of her mother. Joetta Handrich Schlabach (page 17) testifies to the persistence of hope she witnessed in Guatemala. Calenthia S. Dowdy (page 20) reflects on Luke 24 and how Jesus' disappearance invited his followers to create something new. Wilma Ann Bailey (page 24) tells how Christians in Sri Lanka bring hope among Hindus and Buddhists. Sara Fretz-Goering (page 26) writes about the witness of the International Guest House.—Editor

READERS' POLL



45%
I wash my hands more

20%
I limit being in public

5%
I look out for others

30%
I don't do much differently

Total number of responses: 40

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

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News Briefs

COMPILED BY
GORDON HOUSER

Illinois pastors allowed to officiate same-sex marriages

After a same-sex wedding tested the limits of ambiguity in Illinois Mennonite Conference (IMC) policies, delegates voted to allow pastors to officiate such weddings at the conference's annual business meeting Feb. 15 at Menno Haven Camp and Retreat Center in Tiskilwa, Ill.

Delegates did not go so far as to approve ministerial credentialing of people in same-sex marriages, leaving one individual's status in limbo.

According to a policy statement proposed by IMC's Congregational Life Team and passed by a majority of delegates, the distinction between

the two stances seeks "to demonstrate mutual accommodation and mutual forbearance between conflicting convictions among IMC churches in relation to same-sex marriage." The Congregational Life Team reviews pastoral candidates for licensing and ordination.

IMC's action seeks to offer clarity after Michael Crosby, pastor of First Mennonite Church of Champaign-Urbana, Ill., officiated a same-sex wedding a year ago involving First Mennonite member Laura Brenneman, who had been credentialed for chaplaincy with both Illinois Mennonite Conference and Central District Conference, each part of Mennonite Church USA.

IMC informed the congregation after the ceremony last year that Brenneman's credentials would be suspended and Crosby's reviewed, but never actually carried out either action.

—Tim Huber, Mennonite World Review

Court withdraws deportation order for woman in sanctuary in North Carolina

In a unanimous ruling, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit has permanently withdrawn the deportation order for Rosa Ortez-Cruz, who has been living in sanctuary for nearly two years at the Church of Reconciliation in Chapel Hill, N.C., also the meeting site of Chapel Hill Mennonite Fellowship (CHMF). The two congregations offered Ortez-Cruz sanctuary to protect her from deportation by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE).

CHMF is part of Central District Conference of Mennonite Church USA. Church of Reconciliation is part of Presbyterian Church USA.

Ortez-Cruz, who is a Honduran national and longtime resident of Greensboro, N.C., in April 2018 was the first person to be welcomed into public church sanctuary in Chapel Hill. She came to the United States from Honduras in 2002, fleeing extreme domestic violence. She was stabbed multiple times by a former partner, spending over a month in the hospital at age 19 and does not want to return to Honduras for fear that her abuser will hurt or kill her. She is the mother of four children, three of whom are U.S. citizens.

Following the Feb. 26 court ruling, the nonprofit Siembra NC's Facebook page posted a statement from Ortez-Cruz, translated to English as: "I'm happy. I'm shaking with happiness! Thank you all! I am so grateful for all the support, for all the prayers. My freedom has been ensured, but I remember all my friends [in sanctuary] still fighting for their freedom."

—Sheldon C. Good



AMBS launches online degree in global Anabaptism

Henok Mekonin of Nazareth, Oromiya, Ethiopia, an MA: Theology and Peace Studies student, talks with M.Div. Connect student Josh Landis of Souderton, Pa., at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, Ind. Mekonin is the Ethiopia assistant for a fully online Master of Arts: Theology and Global Anabaptism, which makes Anabaptist theological education accessible to people anywhere in the world with a high-speed internet connection. The program was launched a year ago.—AMBS

MC USA committee begins developing MennoCon21 theme, worship experience

In anticipation of the 2021 Mennonite Church USA convention, MennoCon21, a group of MC USA pastors, leaders and

youth gathered in January to begin developing the theme and worship experience, to be built around the theme #BringThePeace.

#BringThePeace is MC USA's call to action for individuals and congregations to extend peace in their communities. It is grounded in MC USA's Renewed Commitments, which says, "We are called to extend God's holistic peace, proclaiming Christ's redemption for the world with our lives."

The committee gathered Jan. 16-18 in Cincinnati. MennoCon21 will take place July 6-10, 2021, at the Duke Energy Convention Center in Cincinnati.

—MC USA

Mennonite educators unleash curiosity, ignite hope

At the 2020 Mennonite Educators Conference entitled "Unleashing Curiosity, Igniting Hope," participants demonstrated the impact that an Anabaptist Mennonite education has on children, churches and the broader community.

More than 350 Anabaptist-Mennonite educators from the United States and Canada participated in the event held Feb. 6-8 at the National Conference Center in Leesburg, Va.

The conference is a biennial professional development and networking event hosted by Mennonite Education Agency and the Mennonite Schools Council, a network of 25 Mennonite schools serving students from early childhood through grade 12.

—MEA

Pacific Southwest Conference names next executive conference minister

The Pacific Southwest Mennonite Conference (PSMC) board has selected Stanley W. Green to be executive conference minister effective Sept. 1.

Green is completing 19 years as executive director of Mennonite



Painting brings more 'life' to honored artist

An oil painting by Milford E. Greer Jr., "Untitled (Taos Mountain)," and one of his palettes have hung outside the Regier Art Gallery in Bethel College's Luyken Fine Arts Center in North Newton, Kan., since late last year. The painting is a gift of the estate of Lou Criss. A visiting artist endowment named in Greer's honor has been active at Bethel since 1979.—Bethel College

Mission Network and is retiring from that position this summer. Born and reared in South Africa, Green was part of the student movement that helped dismantle the legal apartheid system. Prior to taking the helm at Mission Network, Green served as pastor, conference minister and mission executive in South Africa, Jamaica and the United States.

Clare Ann Ruth-Heffelbower, the current executive conference minister, will work through August before retiring.

—PSMC

Goshen College broadcasting students bring home five national first-place awards

Goshen (Ind.) College broadcasting students won five national first-place awards from 19 nominations at this year's Intercollegiate Broadcasting System's (IBS) Multimedia Conference on March 7 in New York City. The five

first-place awards were the most by any college at this year's competition.

Students from 91.1 The Globe, Goshen College Communication Department's student-run radio and television co-curricular, earned 19 nominations in this year's national competition including Best College Radio Station in the Nation (under 10,000 enrollment).

Eleven Goshen College students were finalists in 19 different categories, including the prestigious "Best College Station in the Nation" award for the tenth consecutive year. Goshen College's entries were some of the over 3,000 entries representing a diverse group of schools, from large NCAA Division I universities to other small liberal arts colleges. Those who were nominated represent the top five percent of the students who entered the competition.

—Goshen College



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

Miscellany

COMPILED BY
GORDON HOUSER

If it helps people, it costs money. If it murders them, it's free. Those are the rules.

— Jamelle Bouis, noting that members of Congress rarely question the amount of money spent on military defense but routinely question the amount of spending on social programs, in Columbia Journalism Review

White supremacist propaganda doubled

White supremacist groups doubled down on colleges and universities across the country in 2019, blanketing campuses and off-campus haunts with propaganda, according to a new report from the Anti-Defamation League's Center on Extremism. The report found a total of 2,713 cases of leafleting on and off campus—an average of more than seven per day nationwide, compared with 1,214 in 2018. That's the highest year on record for such activity in the United States. Instead of overtly targeting Jews, Muslims, blacks and other ethnic groups, the largest of the groups are using patriotic slogans such as "Defend America" superimposed on the U.S. flag to veil their messaging.

— Religion News Service

LOAVES AND FISHSTICKS BY STEVE EDWARDS



1.5 million

U.S. public school students experienced homelessness in the 2018-19 school year, the highest in more than a dozen years.

—New York Times

495

According to a UNESCO report released in November 2019, a total of 495 journalists were killed between 2014 and 2018, an 18% increase compared with the previous five-year period.

—cjr.org

Health-care costs

Over a third of health-care costs in the United States go to the administrative expenses of insurance companies. In 2017, the cost of health-care administration was almost \$2,500 per person, which is more than four times what it is in Canada's single-payer system. Insurer overhead alone accounts for \$844 per person in the United States compared with \$146 in Canada. The United States could save an estimated \$628 billion if its health-care bureaucracy were as effective as Canada's.

—Christian Century

24%

The portion of people attending multicultural congregations increased from 18% in 2012 to 24% in 2019. (Multicultural congregations are defined as those in which no racial group constitutes more than 80% of the congregants.) Today, 18% of multicultural congregations are led by black clergy, compared with 5% in 2007.

—Christian Century

\$4,500

Women who have health insurance pay an average of \$4,500 for the delivery of a baby, according to a study of 657,000 women by the University of Michigan researchers. Those costs are largely the result of higher deductibles, as employers shift the soaring expense of health care onto employees.

—The Week

Rank of SUVs among contributors to the increase in carbon emissions over the past decade:

2

Rank of the power industry:

1

Average percentage of their fortunes that the 20 richest Americans gave to charity in 2018:

0.8

—Harper's

Deep Run Mennonite Church West

Perkasie, Pa.

1. Children's Church meets twice a month during the worship service.
2. Participants make paper lanterns at Christmas Community Night.
3. Attendance at Vacation Bible School grew after moving it to a local park.
4. Celebrating Thanksgiving eve with Deep Run Mennonite Church East (which meets across the street). The two churches split 170 years ago.

Photos by Cami Dager





There will be times

BY TIMOTHY H. HEATWOLE SHENK

The author's children (from left):
Lydia, Mateo and Vivia.

Photos provided by the author

A letter to my 10-year-old daughter

There will be times when people say, *You live in Camden? and they turn up their nose as if they smell a stench, and you will remember the smell of sewage from the county's treatment plant or the smell like burnt peanuts from the licorice root factory or the chemical smell and diesel fumes from the industries that surround us. And you will remember, as well, how it feels to inhale deeply the fresh salty air blowing in our car windows, to laugh and tremble with giddiness as your hair waves and dances as we drive over the bay for a weekend retreat in Ocean City.*

There will be times when people say, *Isn't it dangerous there?* and you will remember how you feel when you hear loud bangs and ask nervously, *Daddy, was that gunshots?* and I say, *It was fireworks*

There will be times when people say, Isn't it dangerous there?

and my glance tells you, *We'll talk later, keep playing with your younger siblings, I'll be back in a few minutes,* and you will remember telling your little sister, *Watch out for*

needles as you hop over driftwood by the fishing pier. And you will remember, as well, how it feels to run barefoot with no glass on the sidewalks of the shore town Brigantine, past big houses, and only the waves roar in the distance, or how it feels to roll and wrestle in the green grass at grandparents' houses in the Shenandoah Valley.

There will be times when you're on the sidewalk and ahead of you a woman shuffles slowly, hunched, pauses with knees slightly bent and drops her coins, then stoops to gather them like she's picking flowers, and she says to you as you

pass, Thank you for not laughing at me, and you will wonder why people with sunken faces wander the streets looking dazed and lost and you will remember Teddy and Mindy and Ms. Pam, and you will remember how you felt when people came around behind the abandoned house to pee or defecate while you were in our backyard and you stopped swinging on the trapeze and came inside. And you will remember, as well, how you feel by North River in Bridgewater, free to explore the paths great-granddaddy made and venture over rocks and fallen trees



The author (left), Councilwoman Shaneka Boucher, Stephanie Peoples, Cheryl Heatwole Shenk, Judy Maldonado, Terrica Wheeler. The children are Vivia (left) and Malia. Photo provided by the author

There will be times when you wonder, Why does our neighborhood have so much pollution and broken glass?

through the sloping wilderness of woods and wade in the cool currents and spy on your cousins.

There will be times when you wonder, *Why does our neighborhood have so much pollution and broken glass?* And, *Why are there so many homeless people?* and you will wonder, *Why do we live in Camden?* And, *What if we lived in the Shenandoah Valley or Ocean City or a suburban town?*

When you have these doubts and questions, you will feel a variety of feelings and think a variety of thoughts. That's OK.

And you will also remember how you feel when you stand with your friends, the whole school watching as you dance, slow and confident, rhythmic and powerful, lift your voices and sing, *Can you hear freedom calling? Calling me to answer, gonna keep on keepin' on*, evoking the memory of Harriet Tubman—courage, vision, the struggle to be free, and you will remember how you walk, proud and independent, all by yourself across the street and through the alley each morning to school, ready to hold preschoolers' hands and read them books before joining your classmates upstairs.

And you will remember how you feel as we take a family walk, skip stones at the Delaware, pick a bouquet of wildflowers as our dog romps through the sea of brilliant colors, and we run and hide on the nature trail we made



Lydia Heatwole (center) with Tina (left) and Nyonna and the flowers they picked at a nearby park. Photo provided by the author

in our neighborhood park as the groundhog dives headlong into its hole, and how you spotted a soaring bald eagle, and we stalked a shy flitting goldfinch and we were swallowed up in love of birds and trees and everything.

And you will remember how you made cucumber ranch on little round pieces of baguette and shared it with our neighbor Ms. Stephanie, and she said, *I love you, you're the best!* And you will remember how you feel on the humid summer evenings after the scorching sun falls behind the houses when the kids on the block come out and run and play Shark and ride scooters 'til your parents make you come in and shower off because you got sweaty and dirty from all the running and gardening and playing and swinging and you smell like smoke from the fire pit where you made hot dogs and corn on the cob and s'mores.

And you will remember...

*This letter to my 10-year-old daughter is based on actual experiences and conversations, and the style of the letter is inspired by Jacqueline Woodson's book *The Day You Begin*. In Camden, N.J., we find ourselves in awe of the beautiful rainbow of hope—in friendships, in the neighborhood school and park, in community-building—even as the swollen gray clouds of racism, ecological injustice and social inequality crowd the skies and flood the streets. This letter is my attempt to name some of the complexities that my daughter already sees and to highlight our faith: that we discover the riches of God as we cling to hope in a place many see as hopeless and see beauty in a place many don't think is beautiful.*



Timothy H. Heatwole
Shenk, Cheryl, his wife, and three children are part of an intentional community in Camden, N.J.

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BY MELODY M. PANNELL

Whispers of hope



Photo by Bio Steak from Pixabay

Finding resilience in the face of loss and sorrow

In the stillness of the quiet, if we listen, we can hear the whisper of the heart giving strength to weakness, courage to fear, hope to despair.

—Howard Thurman

On Dec. 29, 2019, I turned 50. As I gathered with family and friends to acknowledge this milestone, I was filled with lament and hope. It was not the ecstatic moment I dreamed it would be. This was not where I had expected to be in life. I had not achieved or accomplished all the personal and professional goals I had envisioned. In fact, I was just getting started when I had the wind knocked out of me. I even considered not celebrating my birthday. I was still grieving, grasping for whispers of hope from God. I felt a deep sense of loss and profound sorrow. Yet when the clock struck midnight ushering in my own new decade, tears filled my eyes as I whispered, “I made it.” In that moment I experienced perhaps the most important and crucial characteristics we can have in life: resilience and hope.

Resilience has been defined as “the ability to bounce back from adversity, frustration and misfortune...” (Janet Ledesma), “the developable capacity to rebound or bounce back from

adversity, conflict and failure or even positive events, progress, and increased responsibility” (Fred Luthans), “a stable trajectory of healthy functioning after a highly adverse event” (George Bonanno) and “the capacity of a dynamic system to adapt successfully” (Ann Masten).

As I turned 50, I was “hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed” (2 Corinthians 4:8-9, NIV).

Somewhat there was still hope.

I gave myself permission to celebrate that I had made it through 50 years of trials, tribulations and tests as a biracial woman born and raised in New York City. I recognized I had endured one of the most painful, debilitating and humiliating years of my life with grace, tenacity and agency. I spent years as a social worker, mentor, professor and minister. I built my ministry theology, counseling philosophy and educational pedagogy around the concepts of resilience and hope. But now I wondered how I could continue to muster the strength to model resilience and hope to my students, clients and mentees.

I would be given a test of my faith that “suffering produces

perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not put us to shame” (Romans 5:1-5, NIV).

On Jan. 15, 2019, on the birthday of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., I was informed that my tenure-track contract as assistant professor of social work at Eastern Mennonite University

I recognized that I had endured one of the most painful, debilitating and humiliating years of my life with grace, tenacity and agency.

in Harrisonburg, Va., my beloved alma mater, would end on May 15, 2019. I struggled to maintain my dignity, agency and resolve concerning my purpose, passion and path. Less than a month later, while walking along the Slave Trail in Richmond, Va., on the morning of June 6, my brother shared the shocking news that my beloved mother, Ethel Miriam Zeager Pannell, had unexpectedly departed from this earth. My mother was the wind beneath my wings, and my institution was the foundation of my higher education



The author's mother.

Photos provided by the author

To experience these life-changing circumstances almost simultaneously shook the core of my faith, identity and security.

journey that gave me the building blocks to reach greater heights in my ministerial calling and chosen profession. To experience these life-changing circumstances almost simultaneously shook the core of my faith, identity and security. As much as I mourned, I could not change those circumstances. I felt like my life no longer had meaning. I prayed to God for healing and listened for whispers of hope to strengthen my spirit. In my efforts to recall how to embody resilience, I turned to my scholarship, my faith, my Harlem community and the exemplary life and faithful witness of my mother.

I remembered reading in Viktor Frankl's *Man's Search for Meaning*

that "we must never forget that we may also find meaning in life even when confronted with a hopeless situation, when facing a fate that cannot be changed."

I recalled the words of Paulo Freire that "it is imperative that we maintain hope, even when the harshness of reality may suggest the opposite....Hopelessness is but hope that has lost its bearings."

I remembered that I came from a resilient community of people who have survived and thrived through layers of social disparities, shattered dreams and personal loss. I could hear Ms. Pope, one of the "mothers" of Seventh Avenue Mennonite Church in Harlem, encourage me to "keep on keeping on." And my elementary school teacher, Mrs. Williams, said with resolve that "where there is a will, there is a way."

Above all, I heard my mother's sweet smiling voice full of faith and fortitude saying, "God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble" (Psalm 46:1). And I recalled her life. She was the epitome of resilience and hope.

In their article "The Impact of Hope and Resilience on Multiple Factors in Neurosurgical Patients," researchers Devika Duggal, Amanda Sacks-Zimmerman and Taylor Liberta write: "Hope and resilience are both stable, psychological traits that can act as protective factors against adversity. Hope is an optimistic attitude of mind based on an expectation of positive outcomes."

My mother overcame countless obstacles and tribulations. She carried the gospel of Jesus Christ across cultural barriers and created bridges from Elizabethtown, Pa., to Washington, D.C., to Harlem, N.Y. She created a path of light and hope wherever she went. One of her favorite quotes was, "It is better to light a candle than curse the darkness."

My mother was a woman of deep faith, and so am I. Parker Palmer states that "the deeper our faith, the more doubt we must endure; the deeper our hope, the more prone we are to despair; the deeper our love, the more pain its loss will bring: these are a few of the paradoxes we must hold as human beings. If we refuse to hold them in the hopes of living without doubt, despair and pain, we also find ourselves living without faith, hope and love." As I continue my healing process, I will keep listening for whispers of hope, recalling resilience and striving to create an optimistic path of purpose wherever I go.



Melody M. Pannell is founder and CEO of the Destiny's Daughters Leadership Institute LLC and serves as chair of the board of The Mennonite, Inc.



BY JOETTA HANDRICH SCHLABACH

STREET DOGS AND HEIRLOOM SEEDS

Photo provided by the author

Persistent hope in Guatemala

During the orientation session on the first evening that our group¹ arrived in San Lucas Tolimán, a Mayan community on the southeast shore of Lake Atitlán, Guatemala, our host said, “Do not feed the street dogs.” Neither were we to touch them. But one could not walk a block in this town without seeing at least one, if not a group, of skinny, scrappy dogs whose eyes look longingly for any trace of food. In the evening, their chorus of barking blended with the songs of the frogs coming from the lake.

For three weeks we lived among Kaqchikel- and Tz’utuhil-speaking Mayans. These are but two of the 23 Indigenous languages spoken in Guatemala. The survival of these languages attests to the tenacity of a people and culture that withstood the Spanish conquest of the 16th century, followed by successive centuries of land theft by foreign (including U.S.) companies and local *ladinos*,² and a 36-year civil war that was especially brutal toward the Indigenous population. None of these historical forces has been able to fully assimilate or eliminate the Maya.

The Guatemalan civil war officially ended in 1996 with the historic signing of peace accords. Sadly, many elements of the accords—those addressing the historic disparities that caused

the uprising that led to the war—have not been implemented or fulfilled. Throughout the country and especially in rural areas, discrimination against the majority Mayan population perpetuates conditions of poverty and violence, particularly against women.

From the earliest incidence of Christian encounter with the Mayan cosmovision,³ their relationship has been fraught with complexity and Christian abuse of power. While Spanish priests moderated some of the worst violence of the conquest, they arrived and ministered within the framework of the Doctrine of Discovery,⁴ imposing (rather than proposing) a new religion upon the Indigenous people of the Americas. Successive generations of Catholic religious, followed in the late 19th and 20th century by Protestant missionaries, never fully challenged the racial discrimination and unjust land distribution that were at the root of the poverty experienced by the Maya. New patterns of mission emerged in the 1960s and following. Catholic missionaries inspired by the Second Vatican Council’s call for a “preferential option for the poor,” sought to empower the rural poor. Protestant groups, including Mennonite Central Committee volunteers and Mennonite missionaries, joined this work alongside Guatemalan Christians. Paradoxically, the most infamous persecutor of the poor, and the ministers who stood with

Throughout the country and especially in rural areas, discrimination against the majority Mayan population perpetuates conditions of poverty and violence, particularly against women.

him, was evangelical Christian general and president Efraim Rios Montt, who ruled in the mid-1980s.

And still the Mayan people were not completely vanquished.

Fast-forward to today. Globalization in its many forms—economic, mass media and religious—seems to pose an insurmountable threat to the traditional ways of the Maya. Yet a new generation is returning to the old ways. A renewed interest among young Indigenous leaders in the Mayan cosmovision is spawning experiments that search for answers to the threats of global warming and international agribusiness.

Our group spent a morning visiting IMAP, the Mesoamerican Permaculture Institute.⁵ We heard and saw the Mayan cosmovision taking form on land reclaimed from a former plantation for export



A street dog in Guatemala and jars of heirloom seeds. Photos provided by the author

crops. We witnessed different aspects of sustainability, from composting latrines to recycled building materials. Demonstration plots displayed a variety of designs for intensive gardening with a minimum of watering. We saw compost used to enrich the soil and

Heirloom seeds, carrying centuries-old DNA, emerge as cornstalks on steep hillsides and in the corners of small urban lots.

to remove the contaminants from gray water. We visited an heirloom seed bank where they collect and share multiple strains of corn and a wide variety of vegetables and herbs used for nutrition and medicine.

Our IMAP guide told us that heirloom seeds are the “street dogs” of Mayan agriculture. “Street dogs,” he said, “manage to survive on the streets in ways that pure breeds cannot.” The multiple strains of corn passed down generationally in Mayan families have survived

diverse climatic and topographical conditions for centuries and are thus suited to the current vagaries of climate change. GMO seeds,⁶ recently introduced in Guatemala, may initially provide higher yields, but they require costly inputs; farmers must buy new seeds each year in addition to fertilizer and pesticides. They lack the resilience of the multiple strains of traditional corn.

Heirloom seeds, carrying centuries-old DNA, emerge as cornstalks on steep hillsides and in the corners of small urban lots. “Wherever there are just a few inches of land,” we heard, “the Maya will plant corn.” And wherever there is corn, there will be a people. The seeds show a resilience similar to that of the Mayan people themselves.

The visit to IMAP was the most inspiring and hope-filled aspect of our group’s month-long stay in Guatemala. We saw dedicated young Mayans reclaiming the beliefs and traditions of their ancestors and demonstrating the ways these offer life to their community and to the land. Unexpectedly, we gained a new appreciation for street dogs.

1. I was privileged to accompany 15 students from the University of St. Thomas, St. Paul, Minn., led in a class on “The Church in Latin America” by professors Gerald Schlabach and Deborah Organ.
2. Ladino refers to those with mixed blood: Spanish and Indigenous. Over time it has become a highly racist construct in which a *ladino* denies their Indigenous roots and wields social, political and economic power over the Indigenous population.
3. The traditional worldview of the Maya, handed down over centuries, views humans as made of corn and one with not just the natural world but the entire cosmos. Life and death are an unending cycle. All activities, from planting and harvesting to hunting and gathering, are viewed as sacred acts and undertaken with prayerful rituals.
4. “Papal Bulls of the 15th century gave Christian explorers the right to claim lands they ‘discovered’ and lay claim to those lands for their Christian Monarchs. Any land that was not inhabited by Christians was available to be ‘discovered’, claimed, and exploited” (doctrineofdiscovery.org).
5. Instituto Mesoamericano de Permacultura. Imapermacultura.org
6. Genetically modified organism.



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BY CALENTHIA S. DOWDY

DISRUPTION AND HOPE

Photo by Amit Lahav from Unsplash

Jesus' disappearance invites his followers to create something new

Luke 24 is an excellent passage in which a resurrected Jesus appears and walks alongside two people en route to Emmaus. Jesus joins them on their journey, greeting them, "Hey, wus up?" The two downcast travelers didn't even look up to see the person talking to them. They responded, "Are you the only person around here who hasn't heard about what's been happening in Jerusalem lately?" Jesus responded, "Yeah, tell me about it," then listened as they told him about this man who was a prophet, powerful in word and deed, but the chief priests and rulers sentenced him to death, and he was crucified. The sad travelers continued, "This is the third day, and there has been no sighting of the dead prophet." They told Jesus they had really hoped the prophet was the one.

The two men appeared to have lost hope already. Jesus, still unrecognizable to them, continued walking alongside them, offering words of encouragement. As the day was ending, the three of them arrived at Emmaus. They invited Jesus to rest for the night before continuing his journey. He accepted and had a meal with them that evening. When Jesus was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and gave it to them. At that moment the eyes of the men were opened, and they recognized Jesus, and at that moment, he disappeared.

The men looked at each other and exclaimed, "Whoa, didn't our hearts burn within us as he spoke to us on the road?"

I love this story. It demonstrates a playful side to Jesus. It also reminds me that to look is not to see. Even when the men finally looked at Jesus, they didn't see him. Finally, the story highlights the disruptive act of disappearance as a possible hope. After the crucifixion, followers of Jesus had likely lost all hope. Jesus was gone and life was probably going to return to normal, which didn't bode well for them. Some had decided that Jesus wasn't the one. In response to that hopeless posture, Jesus not only showed up but walked with them on their journey, their hearts burning with embers of knowing and anticipation the entire time. Jesus entered their home, broke bread with them, blessed them and, just as they became excited, he created a disruption. He vanished before their eyes. Affirmation that what they had hoped was sure? Those travelers and other followers of Jesus would move forward in his physical absence and create something new: the church. It's as if disruption inspired them to create something new in spite of what was happening in a bleak world around them.

Hopeful organizations like churches talk about a future hope. They invite and attempt to implement change as hope, but change rarely happens, especially at systemic levels. The powerful

persist in their power, and the powerless remain disenfranchised. Nothing changes. However, organizations often create the illusion of change. Several studies followed up on the creation of diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) officer positions sprouting everywhere and found that in spite of those positions, nothing changes in these organizations. I once thought that if organizations created these positions it meant they really wanted to disrupt the norms of their organizations to transform them in becoming

At an organizational level, if an organization really changes, it is because there has been an upheaval or interruption of some sort.

systemically diverse, equitable and inclusive. But the research says no. These positions are created simply as window dressing; the organizations want to look like they are changing but don't really want to change. The chief DEI officers, always people of color, are ones whose hands are tied at every level because the organizations don't really want the systemic change they publicly say they want. Change feels too unsteady. Change requires discomfort. No

disruption, no change.

Disruption theory teaches that people only change when there is disturbance or a break. At an organizational level, if an organization really changes, it is because there has been an upheaval or interruption of some sort. People come together to create something new after there has been disintegration. An organization I know had clear optics of white leadership. Ninety percent of the people in middle and upper management were white, while lower level staff positions were filled with people of color. Someone said the organization resembled a southern plantation. Disruptions and agitation followed until there was upheaval. The response to the upheaval was to make intentional attempts to diversify management within the company. Today

leadership is about 45% white.

Jesus seemed to act out of this type of knowledge by creating the disruption of disappearance. Jesus showed his resurrected self to lots of people before ascending to the heavens. Was this one of his responses to cultural stagnancy, resistance of the powerful and hopelessness of the alienated?

Our world is filled with depression, anxiety and despair. The wealthy gain more wealth, while the poor lose more ground, and no one seems to care. Politics are not the answer. Over and over, Christians, mostly white, fail people who are on the fringes of society. Fear reigns. There isn't always evidence of hope. Yet, miraculously, there are still those who share stories of times when Jesus showed up, walked with them, encouraged them, broke bread with them, then

The disruptive act of vanishing just when we begin to see him is an invitation to look up, look around and create something new with others where we are.

disappeared. The disruptive act of vanishing just when we begin to see him is an invitation to look up, look around and create something new with others where we are. There is mystery behind why Jesus disappeared when he did, but on a personal level, sometimes Jesus feels so near and clear, my heart burns with a knowing flame and I feel affirmed. Yet at other times Jesus feels absent, far away, and I feel doubt. The ebbs and flows of feeling God's presence and God's seeming disappearance are real. But when God shows up, it is enough to renew my hope, until God shows up again. God's disappearance seems disruptive of hope, but perhaps it is actually the thing that can renew hope and compel us to rebuild. The great hope is in gentle active persistence with others in community.

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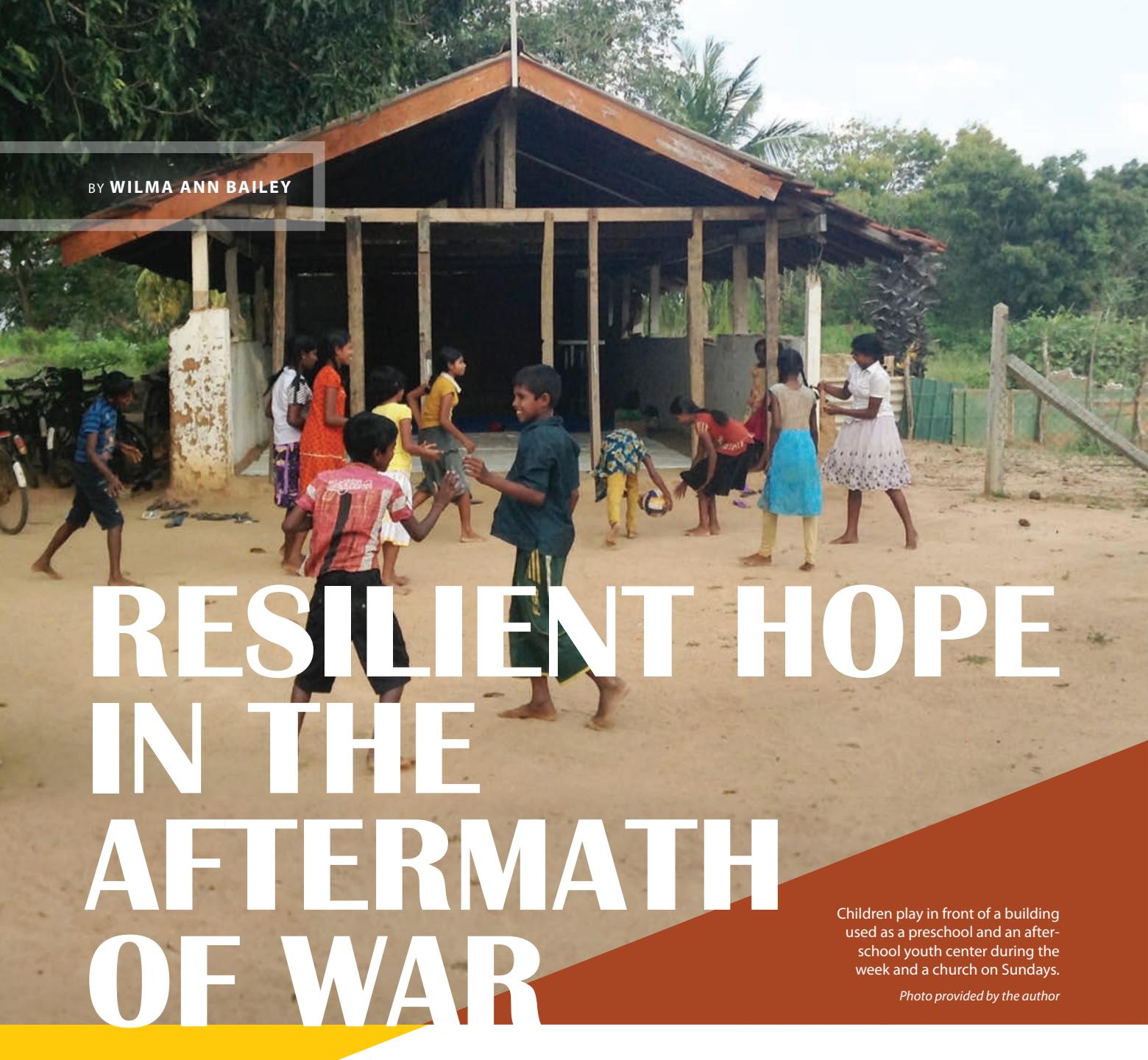
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A photograph showing a group of approximately ten children of various ages playing in a dirt yard. They are dressed in casual clothing. In the background, there is a simple wooden building with a dark, gabled roof and several vertical wooden posts supporting the eaves. Some bicycles are parked near the building. The scene is set outdoors with trees and foliage visible in the distance.

BY WILMA ANN BAILEY

RESILIENT HOPE IN THE AFTERMATH OF WAR

Christians in Sri Lanka bring hope among Hindus and Buddhists

Six years ago, I had the privilege of teaching four courses at Christian Theological Seminary in Chunnakam, a village in Jaffna, the northern peninsula of Sri Lanka. The school is an institution of the American Ceylon Mission Church. The nearly 26-year war between the Tamil Tigers and the government had ended just five years earlier. Signs of war were still evident

in the bombed-out buildings some people still lived in, the bombed-out train lines, military checkpoints, the lack of paved roads and other infrastructure and, most of all, the traumatized survivors. The Tamils occupy the northern peninsula in Sri Lanka. The Sinhalese are the dominant ethnic group in the south. Most Tamils are Hindu, but a significant minority are Christian.

Children play in front of a building used as a preschool and an after-school youth center during the week and a church on Sundays.

Photo provided by the author

When I arrived, I was instructed to never walk along the outside walls of the seminary buildings because the area had been heavily mined during the war and had not been cleared.

When I arrived, I was instructed to never walk along the outside walls of the seminary buildings because the area had been heavily mined during the war and had not been cleared. I also should never cross an open area or even a farmed field. Stick to roads or well-traveled paths, they advised.

Nearly everyone in the north had been affected by the war.

One of my students told me how his family, who had fished for a living along the coast, was forced to flee to a forest, where they had no resources and no skills to survive. Years of hunger and misery followed. As a 6-year-old, he often went without food for four or five days at a time. When the government allowed the family to return to their native area, their house was gone. They rebuilt. Two years later, they were forced to flee again when Sri Lanka was hit by a violent tsunami. Again the family house was destroyed. A Christian group helped the family rebuild. My student was amazed to discover he could live for days without food. It gave him hope for the future. Bad times are survivable.

Another student told me that when he was a child he had been placed in a Christian children's home. All of the children were

"converted" in the home, but the conversion meant nothing to him until he repeatedly experienced the grace of God. He believed God protected him many times because he came through the war without being killed or even injured. When the military came around and forced children to become soldiers, he told me God made him "invisible." He was right there with all the other children, but every time he was overlooked.

Friends were eager to show me a couple of Hindu and Buddhist shrines that were on an island off the coast. That required a boat ride. When I saw that boat, I decided I did not need to see those shrines. It was rickety and looked unsafe. But in the end I went. When I told a friend about the trip, she reminisced about her time during the war. To protect her children, she had fled the northern peninsula after the family was nearly killed by a sudden outbreak of shelling from planes overhead. She was hired by a Christian agency to monitor what was happening in Jaffna. Many times she had to sneak past checkpoints and cross streams on rickety boats at night to avoid detection. She did not like it, but she did it because it was critical to getting aid where it was needed and letting people know they had not been forgotten.

One Sunday, a friend took me to a church service held in a refugee camp. The younger adults in the congregation had been raised there. The participants led worship and Sunday school. My friend had come to preach as they did not have a regular pastor. One woman prayed a pastoral prayer. I asked my friend to translate. She said the woman had thanked God that she and her family were able to eat three meals that day. She broke down in tears as she

prayed for families that remained separated, parents not knowing where their children were and children not knowing where their parents were. She prayed for people with mental illness. She prayed for a child that had been injured while playing and needed surgery. She prayed for the day laborers who toiled outside in the heat of the sun. She ended the prayer in the name of Christ. All the attendees in the church were Hindus, yet they found comfort and hope in the teachings of Jesus and the support of their neighbors and friends.

Toward the end of my time in Sri Lanka, a friend pointed out to me a freshly painted house, a rare sight. Most houses in the north had not been painted in more than 30 years because nearly everyone had been forced to flee from their homes multiple times during the war. No one was willing to improve a house when they did not know when they might be forced to leave again. Who would have thought that the simple act of painting a house would be a sign of hope that peace would hold and the future would be brighter.

Although the vast majority of Tamils are Hindu and the vast majority of Sinhalese are Buddhist, one of my students said one small hope for reconciliation in the country may lie with Christians because there are Christians in both communities. If Christians can come together in peace, maybe they could give hope to others.



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BY SARA FRETZ-GOERING

The stuff of miracles

The International Guest House in Washington, D.C.
Photo provided by the author

The International Guest House has practiced radical hospitality for 50 years

I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me... whatever you did for one of the least of these, you did for me.

—Matthew 25:35-40

For more than 50 years, the International Guest House (IGH) in Washington, D.C., has welcomed and given comfort to the stranger, serving as a

concrete Christian expression of radical hospitality. IGH, which is under the auspices of Allegheny Mennonite Conference, has persevered through five decades of burdensome city housing regulations, flooding and plumbing disasters, and major structural renovations to maintain a safe, welcoming environment for guests from all over the world.

From outside, the house appears to be just another Georgian-style

brick home in one of Washington's older neighborhoods, but a string of prayer flags and a small humble sign by the front door indicates that something unique is happening inside. This cross between a hostel and a bed-and-breakfast is a place where comfort meets community, with robust conversations over evening tea or homemade muffins and coffee in the mornings. A brief devotional reading before breakfast often

provides an opening for guests to inquire about Mennonites and share their own beliefs or experiences.

Sharon Ressler, a former host, expressed the mission of IGH this way: "Jesus practiced radical hospitality. He invited people into his world by building bridges rather than walls. His most radical bridge was coming to earth to walk among us, inviting us to know and follow him, welcoming us into a new way of living. At IGH it means opening our doors to the unknown. Inviting people into our space, sitting to eat with them, sharing experiences, sharing messages of Christian faith, cooking and cleaning for them, and listening to their stories as a ministry of radical hospitality in the name of Jesus."

Guests come from near and far, traveling in groups, as families or alone, representing many different cultures and religions. An Afghan family of five stayed five nights after their exodus to the United States, sharing apprehensions of where they might be settled but thankful for the kindness found at IGH. A group from Panama scraped money together to travel to D.C. and stayed at IGH while meeting with international agencies to speak for the rights of Indigenous people. Student teachers from California came to work for a week in one of D.C.'s charter schools, creating lesson plans and sharing behavior-management ideas together every evening. A Muslim family from Pakistan stayed for almost a week, showing such generosity and kindness that the volunteers broke the rule of no guests in the kitchen, permitting the family to cook and share its gift of food.

Stories of brokenness and redemption are played out as well.

A mother traveled by bus from North Carolina, arriving on the IGH porch in the early morning hours. She waited until 7 a.m., when the house opened, to ask for shelter as she hunted for her son, who had become estranged and left home several years earlier. After three days of searching, she found him; he had become CEO of a company in the area. He initially sent her away, claiming he did not want her in his life, but that evening he showed up at IGH. After a long conversation, they reconciled enough that he decided to invite her into his home.

When a young man went out celebrating at the end of his two weeks of study, he came back to IGH, having broken two rules: he was intoxicated and had stayed out two hours beyond the 10 p.m. closing time. The host responded quickly to the doorbell ringing repeatedly in the middle of the night and helped the unruly guest to the bathroom and then to his room. The next morning, this young man appeared sheepishly at breakfast, freshly showered and dressed in clean shirt and trousers. Clearing his throat in front of a tableful of guests he addressed the host who had helped him. "I apologize for my boorish behavior last night. I acted very badly. Thank you for not judging me. You have shown me the spirit of Jesus here."

The term "welcome table" is put into practice at IGH. It's not unusual for those with conservative religious views to sit across the table from others with liberal or unorthodox perspectives. In 2017, on the weekend of President Trump's inauguration, a group with MAGA T-shirts shared breakfast with guests who'd come to D.C. for the massive women's rally to protest some

of the potential policies of the new administration. The tone of respectful listening is modeled by our volunteers, and most guests follow this example. As someone wrote in the guest book: "I am reminded that God's love can bind us in ways no societal differences can break."

In 2016, at the celebration of the 50th anniversary of the guest house, Judy Nord, a former board member, wrote: "Fifty years of operation is a significant milestone. When you plug in the added detail...with staffing consisting entirely of volunteers...you are coming mighty close to the stuff of miracles. And indeed, IGH is a place of many small daily miracles, where the hard work of hospitality goes hand in hand with listening, love and grace. Peace is very real in the atmosphere of IGH. It is not utopia, but a kind of petri dish where a deep sense of God's presence within and among us produces an outliving of peace in our otherwise broken world."

The guest house has been an object lesson of resiliency and a quiet beacon of hope. Despite the many challenges of keeping such a household operating and functioning smoothly, it is an ongoing spiritual community of faith in God at work. The sharing of stories between strangers-become-friends that happens daily around meals and other routine interactions, rooted in ages-old oral traditions, will continue to be central to the mission of IGH as it begins its next 50 years.



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Good tidings

Hispanic peace church invigorates established congregation

LAST SUMMER, Naun Cerrato, a participant in Mennonite Mission Network's Sent Network church-planting training, was primed to launch Iglesia Menonita Piedra Vida (Living Stone Mennonite Church), a new Hispanic peace congregation in Elkhart, Ind. But where? They had no rental finances.

About the same time, Sunnyside Mennonite Church, established in 1947 in Elkhart by a group of Goshen (Ind.) College students, was seeking deeper engagement within the community. But how? Many members no longer lived in the church's neighborhood.

Longtime friends Cerrato and Charles Geiser, part of a three-person pastoral team at Sunnyside, wondered, Do we need each other to make our dreams come true?

Geiser took Cerrato's dream back to his congregation, which led to its inviting Piedra Vida to have a rent-free home. During joint worship Jan. 12, the groups celebrated Piedra's launch Sunday. For the fledgling congregation, this welcome seemed to reverse the "no room in the inn" nativity drama. The infant church's presence within the established congregation has reinvigorated Sunnyside.

"They welcomed us, whether we succeeded or not, and extended grace to us right from the beginning," Cerrato says. "We so deeply value our relationship and want to provide what we can to support their dreams, too. We



Mariela Sanchez (right) leads singing at Piedra Vida Mennonite Church, accompanied by Ramón Tapia (center) and Mauricio Chavez (left). Photo by David Fast

have no money to give, but we generously give our prayers and friendship."

The blessings flow both ways, says Peter Gruber, Sunnyside's elder board chair. Piedra Vida's passion for forging peaceful relationships in Jesus throughout community has revived the congregation's original purpose—to be an outreach to the neighborhood. Currently, Sunday morning attendance is about 90.

Piedra Vida is providing some of that outreach. About 20 people meet for Spanish worship on Sunday afternoons. The church plant is drawing longtime churched Hispanics, new seekers and even immigrants within Elkhart city and the wider county.

"We felt that our recently renewed vision statement meshed well with Piedra Vida's passion for becoming a strongly Anabaptist peace witness," Gruber says. "The new church has deep commitment, and good things are going to happen. I feel grateful that we can be a little part of what they are doing."

To help Cerrato as a bivocational pastor nurture the

new church plant, Sent Network has paired him with Sharon Norton, a church planting coach and Mennonite Mission Network's co-director for Africa and Europe.

"It is a rough road to start a new church," Norton says. "The beginning of a church plant is a vulnerable time that stretches a leader to trust God during the ups and downs of the journey."

Even amid its struggles to launch, Piedra Vida is infusing Sunnyside's journey with new vistas, says Terri Geiser, on Sunnyside's pastoral team with her husband, Charles, and Amy Kratzer.

"I think it is so easy to get insulated...but that is not what Jesus calls us to," she says. "Sunnyside is seeking a broader vision of open hands in which we give and receive from each other and reach across divides and barriers to be community. Partnering with Piedra Vida is a concrete way of doing that."

Laurie Oswald Robinson for Mennonite Mission Network

Merger to create Anabaptist World

The Mennonite, Mennonite World Review announce name of new multiplatform journalistic ministry

THE MENNONITE and Mennonite World Review are announcing the name of the independent, multiplatform journalistic ministry they are creating: Anabaptist World.

The new ministry's platforms will include a new print magazine and website, to launch in September, building on the successful legacies of their predecessors.

Anabaptist World will use the tagline "Mennonite news, inspiring stories." It will seek to reach members of all Mennonite groups, especially Mennonite Church USA, the largest constituency of both predecessors. More broadly, it will appeal to anyone interested in Anabaptism, both within and outside Anabaptist denominations.

For longtime readers of The Mennonite and Mennonite World

Review, the launch of Anabaptist World will bring a fresh look and feel (in both print and online versions), an increased emphasis on timely news and commentary, a renewed focus on outstanding imagery and visual design in the print periodical, and an updated, easy-to-use digital reading experience.

Anabaptist World magazine will be published every three weeks, 16 times per year. It will include a mix of news, features and commentary. Paid circulation is estimated to be nearly 9,000 at launch.

Subscribers of *The Mennonite* and *Mennonite World Review* will have the time left on their subscriptions added to their subscription of *Anabaptist World*.

Anabaptistworld.org will be the digital home for timely articles, podcasts and other multimedia. Digital readership will build on the predecessor platforms' reach, which stretches into the tens of thousands monthly.

The merger of The Mennonite, Inc., and Mennonite World Review, Inc., will create a new nonprofit, Anabaptist World, Inc. Its purpose statement says, "Anabaptist World, Inc., is an independent journalistic ministry serving the global Anabaptist movement. We seek to inform, inspire and provide a forum where Mennonites and anyone interested in Anabaptism can explore faith and culture."

Everence, Mennonite Central Committee U.S., Mennonite Disaster Service and The Schowalter Foundation of North Newton, Kan., have contributed financially toward development of Anabaptist World. Likewise, readers of *The Mennonite* and *Mennonite World Review* have contributed significant gifts in recent months.

An independent journalistic ministry serving the global Anabaptist movement

Hannah Gerig Meyer of Goshen, Ind., is leading multiplatform branding and magazine design efforts.

"The visual identity for the Anabaptist World platforms is simple, timeless, newsy and prestigious, with both a modern and historic feel," says Sheldon C. Good, TMI executive director. "The color palette is bold, eye-catching and urgent. These features amplify the nature of the compelling content that is to come from Anabaptist World."

Paul Schrag, *MWR* editor and *MWR*, Inc., publisher, says: "Exciting progress is happening as we prepare to launch a new era in Mennonite publishing. I believe readers will appreciate the merging of these legacy publications. We're adapting to the challenges of a changing media world while expanding our vision to serve the widest possible Anabaptist audience with high-quality independent journalism."



A joint release of TheMennonite, Inc., and Mennonite World Review, Inc.



WHAT I'M WATCHING THIS MONTH



A Hidden Life

Directed by Terrence Malick

This beautiful film tells the story of Franz Jägerstätter, an Austrian farmer who was killed for refusing to swear an oath to Hitler during World War II, and Franziska, his wife, who suffered the abuse of their small Alpine village. It sparks reflection.



63 Up

Directed by Michael Apted

In 1964, Apted made *7 Up*, looking at the lives of 14 British children from various backgrounds. Every seven years, he has returned to catch up with them as they age. The films lead viewers to reflect over the span of their lives and the encroachment of mortality.



The Work

Directed by Jairus McLeary

This powerful documentary from 2017 follows three men as they join inmates at Folsom State Prison in taking turns to delve deeply into their past wounds and confront hurts often related to having absent or abusive fathers.



The need for healthy masculinity

MANY OF US are familiar with “toxic masculinity,” and we live with the ill effects of patriarchy, yet do we pay attention to the roots of those problems by offering to boys better models of masculinity?

In her article “The Miseducation of the American Boy” (*The Atlantic*, January/February), Peggy Orenstein offers notes from her interviews over two years with more than 100 boys across America between the ages of 16 and 21.

What she learns is both disturbing and sad.

The article, adapted from her book *Boys & Sex*, refers to a 2018 survey of more than 1,000 10- to 19-year-olds found that while young women believed there were many ways to be a girl, young men described just one narrow way to be masculine. “One-third said they felt compelled to suppress their feelings,” writes Orenstein, “to ‘suck it up’ or ‘be a man’ when they were sad or scared, and more than 40% said that when they were angry, society expected them to be combative.”

Boys learn this from an early age. Studies show that mothers talk more to their girls and employ a broader, richer emotional vocabulary with them, while with their sons they tend to linger on anger. Fathers, meanwhile, speak with less emotional nuance than mothers, writes Orenstein.

Despite this, “little boys have a keen understanding of emotions and a desire for close

relationships,” she writes. But by age 5 or 6, they’ve learned to disconnect from feelings of weakness, reject friendships with girls and become more hierarchical in their behavior.

By adolescence, she reports, “boys become ‘shame-phobic,’ convinced that peers will lose respect for them if they discuss their personal problems.”

Orenstein’s interviews bear this out, as her subjects speak honestly about the pressures they feel to be tough, engage in misogynistic behavior and never, ever cry.

“When asked what traits society values most in boys,” Orenstein writes, “only 2% of male survey respondents said honesty and morality.”

The article discusses “bro culture,” including the pressure to brag about sexual conquest. Such toxic masculinity has become pervasive and harms many.

To change this kind of behavior, writes Orenstein, “will require models of manhood that are neither ashamed nor regressive and that emphasize emotional flexibility—a hallmark of mental health.”

We shouldn’t underestimate the effects of our culture on adolescent boys, Orenstein writes. “Real change will require a sustained, collective effort on the part of fathers, mothers, teachers, coaches.”

Gordon Houser is editor of *The Mennonite*.



QUOTABLE

"Prayer is a partnership. In the partnership model, I do not merely bring my requests to God, but God and I pray together."

—Lucinda J. Kinsinger,
from *Oakland, Md., author of Anything But Simple: My Life as a Mennonite*



RECIPE OF THE MONTH | Teriyaki steak soba noodles with mushrooms
You can find the recipe on our website at themennonite.org/hungryhounds



tM

MOST-READ ARTICLES ONLINE

1.1K
Support for couple is part of Illinois congregation's journey toward greater LGBTQ inclusion
by Hannah Heinzekehr

1.1K
Court withdraws deportation order for woman in sanctuary in North Carolina
by Sheldon C. Good

FROM THE ARCHIVES



A lynching tree in Mulberry, Fla.

Civilian Public Service No. 27 served in Mulberry, Fla., 1943-46. Its main project was building sanitation units (outhouses) to control the spread of hookworm. On the back of the photo above, someone wrote, "The Mulberry, tree of many lynchings, after which our town was named. Its spirit is the kind we hope to counteract with service and help given in the spirit of love. The small orange and brown R.R. station with 'colored' waiting room sign is typical."

Source: Mennonite Library and Archives, Bethel College, North Newton, Kan.

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PERSPECTIVES FROM READERS

Who cares about climate change?

OVER THE Jan. 31-Feb. 2 weekend, I gathered in Los Angeles with 27 other California Anabaptist pastors and church leaders to broaden our understanding of the church's witness to include a response to climate change. Representatives from Mennonite Brethren and Mennonite Church USA congregations were present, including immigrant church leaders from Congo, Nigeria, Indonesia, South Korea and Belize. Sessions included learning

When shared with a community, space for faithful action opens up.

about the impacts of climate change and resulting sea level rise in the Los Angeles region where we gathered.

I attended the retreat with Sara Gurulé, a young leader from Wild Church, a congregation I'm planting and tending in Fresno, Calif. We led three outdoor contemplative worship times and joined in the praise and lament of the Los Angeles watershed where we worshiped with the paved-over Los Angeles River, Canada geese in Echo Park Lake, the San Gabriel mountains and the urban garden where we met for worship.

The Spirit/world divide is a major block to many in becoming politically and ecologically engaged. I felt encouraged to see how this retreat bridged this divide through worship, Bible study and theology.

We considered research on the emotions surrounding climate denial, including "psychic numbing" and the refusal to act despite knowing the extent of the problem. Other sessions reflected on biblical and theological resources for caring about climate change and drew from passages from Isaiah, John 1, Hebrews 1, and Colossians 1.

One of the sessions focused on climate justice and included participant sharing about emerging nonviolent movements, such as the Sunrise Movement and Extinction Rebellion. Both are highlighting the planetary emergency we're in as a result of limitless-growth capitalism. We also heard stories from the Global South about how climate change is intensifying global inequalities, such as in sub-Saharan Africa, where communities are suffering as a result of unpredictable rainfall and food and water shortages.

At the end of our time together, participants shared our next steps and commitments, which included preaching more often about climate change and creation care, creating liturgies that incorporate God's care for all creation, sharing ecologically friendly practices as congregations, putting up solar panels as part of a church's witness and doing a climate activism training in collaboration with other churches.

I found the opportunity to talk and think about the heavy theme of climate change with others to be surprisingly life-giving. Facing the realities of climate chaos can feel isolating, overwhelming and depressing, yet when shared with

a community, space for faithful action opens up. Lynn Park-Hur, the youngest person present, summed up some of the longing for community she feels among her high school peers, saying, "A lot of people in my generation are really lonely and isolated.... It's hard to find a literal place of community since a lot is online these days. We don't know how to do community and talk about climate change at the same time." She said the church can provide this space with and for young people to the extent we are able to connect issues of climate change with faith.

Bill McKibben, founder of 350.org and a Methodist Sunday school teacher, once said, "Climate change is an opportunity for which the church was born." This reframing of climate change from denial and despair to a call to deepened discipleship was at the heart of our retreat. I left wrestling with the meaning of the word "hope" as different from optimism that things will get better. At the same time, I felt a resurgence of hope that the church can witness to the broader gospel of God's love in Christ for the whole earth in the midst of climate change.



Read a longer version of this article at themennonite.org.



Katerina Friesen
lives on traditional Yokuts land in Fresno, Calif., and works with the Insight Garden Program.

BY AND ABOUT YOUNG ADULTS

Why do justice?

IN HIS SPEECH “Struggle and Hopelessness: Responding To Oppression and Embracing Hopelessness” at the Biola University Center for Christian Thought, Miguel De La Torre poses this question: “Do you do justice because you think you’re going to win? Or do you do justice for the sake of justice?” It is definitely a 20-minute video worth watching.

In this speech, De La Torre highlights his theories on embracing hopelessness, acting justly and doing radical works.

He says: “So when I say, Embrace hopelessness, I am saying, Be cognizant of the desperation and do something radical. Because as long as I have hope, I won’t cross the desert. As long as I have hope and have something to lose, I won’t do anything.”

This quote comes from a similar speech at the Center for Prophetic Imagination’s 2018 conference.

The call for submissions for this month quoted from De La Torre’s works. I had never heard him speak or read his books. But the short quote from his book about hopelessness and oppression stood out to me, a social work graduate student: “...as long as hope exists, the world’s wretched have something to lose and thus will not risk all to change the social structures.”

We thrive on hope in social service professions: of something better, of changing the world. Yet the idea that the foundation of your calling is founded in oppression is jarring. So I went looking for more of an explanation.

I do not have time in my schedule to read through De La Torre’s book (though it is now on my summer reading list). But I found videos of him breaking down this idea of hope vs. hopelessness.

And it made sense.

I will act justly and radically because it's essential to my humanity and my life.

He poses questions that align with my beliefs and challenge me to strengthen my resolve.

I ask myself: What type of social worker do I want to be? Where do I see myself being most influential? Who do I want to work on behalf of? What are my motivations for doing this work?

As we’ve discussed personal and professional values in class, it’s become clear that one of the values of a social worker is to work for social justice.

That’s why I like De La Torre’s questions: “Do you do justice because you think you’re going to win? Or do you do justice for the sake of justice?”

And as he elaborates, he specifically addresses, Do you do the work you do because you think you’re going to change the world? Because chances are, you’re not. And that’s why we burn out.

We think the work we need to be doing will change the world. We have hope. So we burn out because the work we are doing isn’t

changing the world.

Gradually over the years I have come to understand that I am not going to change the world. But I thought I’ll change the world for one person. But De La Torre even pushes back against that.

He flips the story of the girl and the starfish. Saying he can’t focus on just saving one, because he is choking on the stench of all the dead on the beach.

Justice lies in the midst of all this. We won’t change the world or win. But to live in radical solidarity with marginalized communities, we must work in ways that disrupt systems. “If we follow the rules, the rules created by the very structures that are designed to keep us oppressed, nothing’s going to change,” De La Torre says.

We act for justice not because we believe justice will ever be served but because it is an essential part of our humanity. And by acting for justice, we can begin to force systems to change.

I encourage you to watch his speeches. They have helped me frame my work and motivations in a new way. They have helped me begin to define what type of social worker I will be.

I will not act with the hopes of winning because there is no win. I will act justly and radically because it’s essential to my humanity and my life.



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



FROM MENNONITE CHURCH USA

Resiliency in Chicago

RESILIENCY IS ONE of the core messages in the gospel. This has been evident in Latin@ churches in the Chicago Area. As a conference minister, I meet with pastors from

The suffering one endures must not destroy hope for a better life.

different areas in Chicago. Each church has its own culture and its own way of doing ministry. I will say that each church is meeting the needs of the surrounding Latin@ community, addressing issues of poverty, immigration, gangs and violence. Walking alongside these churches is transformational in how we understand the mission and service of the church. Personally it has challenged me to view the kingdom of God outside my perspective.

As I walk with these congregations, I would say they understand the complexity that comes with being in Chicago. Issues with immigration have limited people's ability to financially improve their lives. Some of the congregations have empowered undocumented immigrants to start their own businesses. This has been successful.

The pastor plays the role of encourager and life coach. Therefore the message in these congregations is significantly

different from our traditional Mennonite churches. Many traditional Mennonite churches view the sermon as a sacrament. In most of our Chicago Latin@ churches the sermon is testimonial, a time to speak of hope.

The message is that what happens to you (suffering, poverty) does not define you. The suffering one endures must not destroy hope for a better and more hopeful life. The leadership is testimonial.

In one church I visited, a pastor stood up and said, "If I was able to stop being an alcoholic, by the grace of God, it's possible to stop." Although each person's personality is different, the pastor's words resonated that change is possible.

My assumption before taking on a leadership role as an associate conference minister was that churches that held an eschatological hope of a second coming of Christ did not engage in social change. I was completely wrong.

Latin@ churches in Chicago hold different theological beliefs from what I hold. But although the orthodoxy is different, the orthopraxis is the same. It's an action of bringing the hope of the kingdom of God here on earth, a kingdom of justice and empowerment to walk in hope.

Martin Navarro is associate conference minister for Illinois Mennonite Conference.

UPDATES

SANGMIN LEE RECEIVES AMNESTY

Korean conscientious objector Sangmin Lee, who early in 2014 was sentenced to 18 months in prison for refusing, on the basis of his faith, to complete his mandatory military service, was pardoned at the end of 2019. This removes his criminal record for refusing to participate in military service, which made it impossible for him to find employment at many businesses and in government-related offices.

FORMER NAACP CEO SPEAKS AT EASTERN MENNONITE UNIVERSITY

The Rev. Dr. Cornell William Brooks, former president and CEO of the NAACP from 2014-17 and a visiting professor at Harvard Divinity School for the last two years, spoke twice at Eastern Mennonite University, Harrisonburg, Va., to commemorate Black History Month.

BLUFFTON CELEBRATES 75 YEARS OF SOCIAL WORK

On March 17, Bluffton (Ohio) University Forum presentation honored Bluffton's 75th anniversary of the social work program. Since being established as a major in 1944, nearly 700 alumni have graduated from Bluffton with a social work degree.

A WORD FROM PASTORS

Breakfast (John 21:1-19)

RESURRECTION IS supposed to mean a new world. Easter is supposed to mark a new beginning, a new creation, the old passing away as all things are reborn. However, the resurrected Christ appeared to Mary Magdalene at the empty tomb, Jesus came to the disciples, who had locked themselves in a room, and he showed up again in that same room when Thomas returned. After all this—the shock, the bewilderment, a shift in the cosmos—in John 21 we find the disciples back to their usual work, back to their normal lives.

The resurrection should have changed the world, a fundamental transformation of life. That Jesus returns from the dead must mean the beginning of a whole new world, a revolution in the laws that govern life. Everything must change, everything has changed. Yet here they are, out at sea, the sea of Tiberias, fishing.

Many Christians over the ages have talked about Jesus' death and resurrection as a story of victory—“Christus victor,” Christ the victor over death and violence, over the powers of sin and destruction. That's not a bad way to think about the death and resurrection of Jesus.

Usually victories make a real difference; victories have obvious effects. Your army invades, you conquer your enemy, and then you set up a new kingdom, the birth of a new society. The day after your victory, the world is different. You are in charge. The enemies are vanquished and your forces are busy setting up a new government.

But that's not how it goes in the story that John tells about Jesus.

It's hard to see a decisive shift. Life goes on the way it did before. What kind of victory is going on here, with Jesus eating breakfast on the shore, lounging around with his friends after a night of work, counting fish, 153 of them?

The Christian story is a love story about God, the God revealed in Jesus.

That's my favorite detail of John's story—that someone somehow takes time to count the fish, and the storyteller thinks it's important to tell us exactly how many there were. This is verse 11: “So Simon Peter...hauled the net ashore, full of large fish, 153 of them.” Not “about a hundred,” or even—if he wanted to be more exact—“around 150 fish.” The exact count mattered for some reason. Every last fish.

What's so strange about this Easter appearance is that it is not strange at all. The scene is so mundane: the disciples are at work, Jesus shows up, they bring their catch to the shore, count the fish and eat breakfast with Jesus.

But maybe that's the point, that Jesus conquers death so he can return to his disciples to enjoy another meal, fellowship around the fire and linger with his friends for as long as he can, because that's what God has wanted from eternity: to be with us.

After Easter we go back to our daily labor, to our lives, but we return with the good news that Jesus returned from the dead

to be with us because he loved us, wanted another meal with his disciples, just fish around a charcoal fire.

The Christian story is a love story about God, the God revealed in Jesus. The Gospel of John begins with a declaration that Jesus is the love of God made flesh. His love proclaims the truth of the gospel, the truth about us—that we are the beloved of God and that in Christ the eternal love of God strains toward reunion with us, reaching beyond the grave, breaking every barrier, because we are the delight of God: you and I and our ordinary lives, our important and trivial concerns, our heartbreaking longings and our petty frustrations. God holds all of it, all of us, all of you.

This resurrection story returns us to the truth about this world: that there will be labor, struggle, loss and trauma, agony and grief, heartache and sorrow. And in the midst of it all, there will be the consolation of fellowship, the comfort of friendship, the joy of communion and the strength of God's love—a mysterious love, silent and steady, now as the pulse of our lives together as we do what we can for each other, for our neighbors, as we await God's redemption, a redemption that has perhaps already begun, starting there around a charcoal fire.



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

Bugden, Analee Grace, was born Feb. 8 to Drew and Natalie Showalter Bugden, Waynesboro, Va.

DEATHS

Bender, Julianna Bontrager, 71, Middlebury, Ind., died Feb. 13. Spouse: Phillip Bender. Parents: Tobias Mennonite and Erma Eash Bontrager. Funeral: Feb. 20 at College Mennonite Church, Goshen, Ind.

Clemens, Edith Schmell, 100, Souderton, Pa., died Dec. 1, 2019. Spouse: Franklin W. Clemens (deceased). Parents: George S. and Katie Kulp Schmell. Children: Diane C. Leland, Mary G. Clemens; two grandchildren; two great-grandchildren. Funeral: Deep Run East, Perkasie, Pa.

De Jong, Siegelinde Brunhilde Hinz, 86, Virgil, Ontario, died Feb. 11. Spouse: Hielke De Jong. Parents: Herbert and Kaethe van Bergen Hinz. Children: Walter De Jong, Werner De Jong, Margaret De Jong; five grandchildren. Funeral: Feb. 15 at Bethany Mennonite Church, Virgil.

Ebersole, Debbie Lynn, 80, Sterling, Ill., died Feb. 14. Parents: Donald E. and Marjorie E. Alshouse Ebersole. Funeral: Feb. 22 at Science Ridge Mennonite Church, Sterling.

Hostetler, Stanley Eugene, 80, Stuarts Draft, Va., died Jan. 30, of cancer. Spouse: Alice Hartzler Hostetler. Parents: Amos and Irene Mast Hostetler. Children: Marie Showalter, Steven Hostetler; six grandchildren; three great-grandchildren. Funeral: Feb. 3 at Springdale Mennonite Church, Waynesboro, Va.

Kennel, Lola Stauffer, 100, Strang, Neb., died Nov. 16, 2019. Spouse: Lester Kennel (deceased). Parents: Jacob C. and Lavina Miller Stauffer. Children: Ronald Kennel, Cecil Kennel, Debra Jaberg; five grandchildren; eight great-grandchildren. Funeral: Nov. 19 at Salem Mennonite Church, Shickley, Neb.

Kreider, Esther Nolt, 87, Gap, Pa., died Feb. 11. Spouse: Jacob Kreider (deceased). Parents: Samuel and Anna Nolt Martin. Children: Barry L. Kreider, Jacqueline B. Nelson; six grandchildren; four great-grandchildren. Funeral: Feb. 20 at Forest Hills Mennonite Church, Leola, Pa.

Miller, Eli, 85, Goshen, Ind., died Feb. 5. Spouse: Mary Sue Yoder Miller. Parents: Jake and Polly Helmuth Miller. Children: K. Erich Miller, Danielle Miller; two grandchildren. Funeral: Feb. 16 at Holdeman Mennonite Church, Wakarusa, Ind.

Minter, Donald L., 91, Goshen, Ind., died Feb. 20. Spouse: Martha Forsyth Minter. Parents: John Mennonite and Mabel Stover Minter. Children: Donna Minter, Ann Minter Fetter, William and Douglas Minter; eight grandchildren; three great-grandchildren. Funeral: March 7 at College Mennonite Church, Goshen.

Schrock, Herbert Francis, 94, Goshen, Ind., died March 1. Spouse: L. Eloise Miller Schrock. Parents: Harry J. and Hazel Marie Mishier Schrock. Children: Larry Schrock, Cheryl Dolson, Kathleen Hartzler; five grandchildren; five great-grandchildren; one great-great-grandchild. Funeral: March 6 at Waterford Mennonite Church, Goshen.

Voth, Arlo Lee, 87, Whitewater, Kan., died Jan. 20. Spouse: Ann Jost Voth. Parents: Leo and Sarah Kliewer Voth. Children: Lynn Voth, Vern Voth, Lori Kennell; two grandchildren. Funeral: Jan. 23 at Grace Hill Mennonite Church, Whitewater.

Yoder, Mildred L., 96, Goshen, Ind., died Feb. 20. Spouse: Wayne R. Yoder (deceased). Parents: Walter E. and Matilda Schertz Yoder. Child: Michael P. Yoder (deceased); five grandchildren; three great-grandchildren. Funeral: March 2 at College Mennonite Church, Goshen.



Explore: A Theological Program for High School Youth

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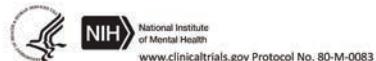
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CLASSIFIEDS

Rainbow Mennonite Church will host **Kansas City MVS Decommissioning Celebration**, May 9-10. More information: bit.ly/KCMVS

Full-time lead pastor—active, vibrant, growing, progressive, urban Mennonite congregation located 30 minutes from D.C. seeks to replace retiring pastor. We are looking for a candidate to help us grow and further develop the Anabaptist vision within our community. Skill in relating to young families advantageous. Salary package up to \$80K. Flexible starting time. Please send resumes or inquiries to glen.

denlinger@gmail.com. www.danielsrunpeacechurch.org

Zion Mennonite Church in Hubbard, Ore., seeks **senior pastor (full-time)**. For more information or to apply, please contact Katherine Jameson Pitts, PNMC Conference Minister, at KJPitts@pnmc.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

continued on page 38...

CLASSIFIEDS

continued from page 37

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.

Mennonite Healthcare

Fellowship (MHF) is seeking a **half-time executive director** to start between May and September 2020 who is committed to Anabaptist values and the mission of MHF, has proven skills in administration, communication and networking and has an intergenerationally compelling vision for MHF. Interested persons are invited to send a resume and statement of intent, including the broad strokes of your vision and thoughts about a strategic plan, to president@mennnohealth.org. More information at www.mennnohealth.org.

ReUzit on State in Ephrata, Pa. (an MCC Thrift shop), seeks an **executive director** to lead a management team that oversees 30 employees, 200 volunteers, a budget of \$2,000,000, in the newly merged divisions (Thrift, Furniture, Booksavers) now combined in one large new store. The successful candidate will combine effective

executive team leadership with business acumen, strategic planning and implementation, and resource development skills. Candidates must possess strong communication skills, an ability to engage a wide range of constituencies, and demonstrate an Anabaptist faith commitment. Candidates should provide a letter of intent and a resume. A job description and application will be sent to qualified candidates. Submit materials to gm@reuzit.org. Applications will be welcomed until the position is filled.

Covenant Mennonite

Fellowship, a growing and vibrant congregation located in Sarasota, Fla., is seeking **full-time pastoral leadership**. Our mission is to follow the way of Jesus in the Anabaptist peace tradition. The ideal candidate(s) will bring strong communication skills evidenced by engaging sermons and purposeful interaction with dedicated year-round and seasonal congregants as well as visitors. To better accommodate our growing congregation, we recently relocated to our own church property with exciting opportunities for expansion. An M.Div. or similar advanced degree is preferred. We value our connections to the local community, Central District Conference, Mennonite Church USA and the world beyond. For more information about who we are, visit www.covenantmennonite.com or contact the chair of our Search Committee at debraggerich@yahoo.com.

Emmanuel Mennonite Church in LaJunta, Colo., is seeking a **part-time pastor** to lead a rural congregation in their faith walk.

We are located in Southeastern Colorado and belong to Mountain States Mennonite Conference. We are looking for a pastor with strong Anabaptist values to lead a diverse congregation with a small group of children, young adults, families and seniors. Not all the congregation comes from a Mennonite background, which makes the congregation an actual church family that cares for each other. We are looking for a pastor who will lead us on Sunday mornings, be involved with the different church committees as well as visitations. We do have places that may have opportunities for additional part-time employment. Interested persons should contact Mike Shima, at shimamayor@aol.com or Merv Birky, our Regional Conference Minister, at mervb@mountainstatesmc.org.

Goshen College invites applications for a **full-time department chair of nursing** at the associate or full professor level to provide leadership to our four nursing programs and teach in the area of expertise. For further details and to apply go to www.goshen.edu/employment.

Seeking a **full-time associate pastor**: **Community Mennonite Church**, Harrisonburg, Va., lives generously in the name of Jesus as a peace church where everyone is welcome. We're an active, growing downtown congregation of 350+. For details, see www.cmcva.org.

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

STORIES FROM THE GLOBAL MENNONITE CHURCH

Christian witness ‘betwixt and between’

IN HIS CONTROVERSIAL book *Jihad vs McWorld: How Globalism and Tribalism Are Reshaping the World* (1995), American political scientist Benjamin Barber presciently described a primal struggle unfolding in the modern world between the powerful forces of globalization—multinational corporations, for example, or various forms of mass media, which cut across political, ethnic and linguistic distinctions—and extreme expressions of nationalism or religious orthodoxy, on the other hand, that defend highly specific forms of local identity. The world, he argued, was simultaneously becoming more interconnected while also becoming more fragmented.

Barber was writing out of a concern for the future of democratic institutions—both extremes, he argued, threatened to destroy the fabric of civil society crucial to the health of participatory democracies.

Twenty-five years later, Barber’s analysis seems relevant for the church as well.

From the very beginning of the Christian movement, critics have been scandalized by the audacious claim of the gospel that the Creator of the universe entered human history in the person of Jesus, who ministered in a backwater province at the eastern edge of the Mediterranean Sea. In the 2,000 years since then, most Christians have understood the gospel to be a message of universal truth, transcending the ethnic, cultural, political, economic and linguistic divisions that divide humanity. But at the same time,

Christians have also claimed particular identities, sometimes even aligning themselves along national boundaries and fragmenting into thousands of competing groups.

In every part of our lives we find ourselves moving between the universal and the particular—

In the face of this global threat, the reflexive response is to retreat into intense localism.

shaped by global realities while also deeply embedded in local communities.

The recent concerns surrounding the coronavirus bring this tension into sharp relief. Like all pandemics, COVID-19 is a global phenomenon, moving rapidly across national, racial and ethnic boundaries. Viruses are no respecter of passports, status or wealth. In the face of this global threat, the reflexive response is to retreat into intense localism: to close borders, isolate affected communities and, ultimately, quarantine individuals.

I am grateful for the vigilance of health-care experts and respect the need for strong precautionary measures. But there is also a part of me that wants to resist our collective impulse to respond to all global threats with a fearful retreat into local isolation.

In the third century, as Christians were facing persecution under the emperor Decius, a

terrible plague—probably measles or smallpox—devastated the Roman Empire. Yet as numerous historians have noted, many Christians refused to flee to the countryside or to avoid contact with those who were sick and dying. Indeed, their public witness of caring for those most seriously affected—often at great risk to their own health—was an important factor in the rapid spread of the gospel. Candida Moss, a historian of the early church, notes that an “epidemic that seemed like the end of the world actually promoted the spread of Christianity.”

I’m not suggesting that Christians today should defy the wisdom of public health officials and relocate to the epicenters of the current pandemic. But we should resist the impulse to retreat out of fear.

Christians who embrace the mystery of the Incarnation—the “Word made flesh”—are called to live “betwixt and between,” to claim our identity within a local community while also affirming our membership in a church that transcends human boundaries.

When global political, economic or medical fears tempt us to turn inward, what would it look like for Christians to reclaim the risky space others are fleeing?



John D. Roth is professor of history at Goshen (Ind.) College, director of the Institute for the Study of Global Anabaptism and secretary of MWC’s Faith and Life Commission.



FROM THE MENNONITE

Faith and powerlifting

I'M A POWERLIFTER. When I tell people, they often look perplexed because an Arnold Schwarzenegger-ish visual pops into their mind, and that's not how I look. But we're out here, leagues of extraordinarily strong women lifting heavy weight to perfect the triple-threat moves: squat, bench press and deadlifts.

Over my two-year journey, I've noticed how much powerlifting training cycles parallel faith walks. I've learned so much about myself and have had divine epiphanies along the way. Here are just three musings.

Press toward personal

records (PR): What makes the powerlifting sport fun is that the main competition is you vs. you. Training to hit new PRs for each lift is paramount to caring about what the person beside you is lifting. You work your way along the path set before you. There may be a big leap in weight here, a setback from injury there, a learning curve here, a rest week there, but no matter the trial or

bend in the road, you fix your gaze on the goal ahead and keep moving forward on your own path to hit those PRs (Philippians 3:14; Proverbs 4:25-27).

I've learned so much about myself and had epiphanies.

Trust your trainer: You know how we sometimes think we know how to handle something better than God? That happens to me in powerlifting, too, but I have to trust my trainer. She has a wider view of the path ahead of me and helps direct me to my goals.

A big factor is building a relationship with my trainer. Because I've spent time with her, I know she wants to help women be healthy so they can be their best selves. I know she's honest and has my best interest in mind. Without the time we've spent building a connection, it would be difficult to trust her—especially when the

weight gets heavy (Proverbs 3:5-6; Jeremiah 29:11).

Those little tests are

perfecting you: Last year, I had to take a long break from lifting. There was no longer time in my schedule to devote to my training program. When I started again this year, I was disappointed with what I felt was a significant loss of strength. But I looked back at three videos of my squat over time, side by side. I was definitely lifting more weight than when I started. And my form, technique and physique had improved. Those incremental increases in weight at each session had strengthened my form. With form that has been tested, you can have faith you'll be able to withstand more weight in the future (Psalm 138:8; James 1:2-4, 12).

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