

# AW Anabaptist World

Mennonite news, inspiring stories

## *A force stronger than war*

20 years after 9/11, an American reflects on the power of friendship

Doug Hostetter in Afghanistan in 2002 with Abdul Hadi, whose home Mennonite Central Committee was helping to rebuild.

### **PLUS**

**CAN THE CHURCH BE PROPHETIC AND NONPARTISAN?**

BY RYAN AHLGRIM

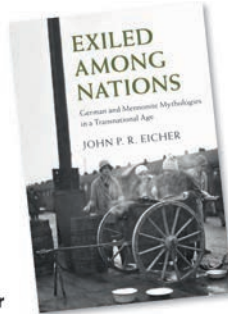
# 2021 DALE W. BROWN BOOK AWARD



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ON THE COVER: Abdul Hadi, pictured with Doug Hostetter in August 2002, returned to his home in Qala Kuja, Afghanistan, three years after it was destroyed in fighting between the Northern Alliance and the Taliban. Mennonite Central Committee and Church World Service helped him rebuild.

BY DANIELLE KLOTZ

# AW's first year: proving this works

IT HAS BEEN ALMOST A YEAR since we launched Anabaptist World Inc. last September. Perhaps some of you are wondering how this new independent media company is working out. I'm glad to report we have had an expectation-surpassing year.

When we began budgeting and planning, there were a lot of uncertainties. Our staff would be larger than either of our predecessors, and some of our expenses would be higher. But our subscription list would be larger, our digital presence more expansive and our fundraising more frequent.

Generally, I'm a cautiously optimistic person. Over the past year, I've become more confidently optimistic.

As editor Paul Schrag likes to say, "We're proving this works."

Here are some of the things we have learned this year:

- **Our donors are amazing.** You've heard me say this before, but it bears repeating: Subscriptions and advertising are not enough to maintain our work. We depend on faithful donors to keep the presses running and ink wells full. You have come through in a big way, and we are grateful.
- **Subscriptions have held strong.** We have about 8,100 print subscribers, very close to the number we started with. Our goal is to grow the subscription list, and even holding steady is good news at a time when many periodicals are declining in print.

■ **Our digital and print audiences are mostly different people.** Some of you receive the print issues and our email newsletters and follow us on social media. If you do, you are a rock star, and you should email me so I can get you some special AW swag. But mostly, print subscribers are not digital readers, and with this knowledge we are building our membership program, which consists of individuals who give \$5 or more a month to support the digital content they love.

■ **The work is just beginning.** We're still growing into our identity of *Anabaptist World* — as a staff, board and community of readers. When I feel overwhelmed with the work that remains, I remind myself that even when steps feel small or slow, movement is what counts.

**BEGINNING OUR SECOND** year, we hope we'll continue to hear from you. We love receiving your letters and connecting with you at events. It's encouraging to hear that you are using *AW* in Sunday schools and sharing print issues with families and friends.

Here's my confidently optimistic prediction: Anabaptist World Inc. has a great future. ●



Anabaptist World Inc. is an independent journalistic ministry serving the global Anabaptist movement. We seek to inform, inspire and provide a forum for Mennonites and anyone interested in Anabaptism to explore faith and culture.

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## STAFF

**Executive director:** Danielle Klotz  
[daniellek@anabaptistworld.org](mailto:daniellek@anabaptistworld.org)

**Editor:** Paul Schrag  
[editor@anabaptistworld.org](mailto:editor@anabaptistworld.org)

**Associate editor:** Tim Huber  
[timh@anabaptistworld.org](mailto:timh@anabaptistworld.org)

**Business manager:** Dana Neff  
[danan@anabaptistworld.org](mailto:danan@anabaptistworld.org)

**Digital strategist:** Juan Moya  
[juanm@anabaptistworld.org](mailto:juanm@anabaptistworld.org)

**Design:** Hannah Gerig Meyer

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Dawn Araujo-Hawkins	Duane Stoltzfus
Larry Guengerich	Marty Troyer
Hans Houshower	Karen Flores Vindel
Melody Pannell	Sheri Wenger
Marathana Prothro	

## EDITORIAL OFFICE

129 W. Sixth St., Newton, Kan.  
PO Box 568, Newton, KS 67114

Phone: 316-283-3670

Email: [editor@anabaptistworld.org](mailto:editor@anabaptistworld.org)

## SUBSCRIPTIONS

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Email: [danan@anabaptistworld.org](mailto:danan@anabaptistworld.org)  
PO Box 568, Newton, KS 67114

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Send address corrections to:  
PO Box 436, Congers, NY 10920-9819

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Amish farmers bale hay near Quarryville, Pa., in 2012. PHOTO: DALE D. GEHMAN

## A little breathing room

Ronnie the Belgian draft horse had a real pain in the neck. As the leader of the seven-horse plow team on an Amish farm near Clark, Mo., he struggled with a hole doctors put in his neck three years ago to help him breathe. The *Missourian* reported the hole would routinely get blocked by bugs, dirt and skin.

An equine veterinarian at the University of Missouri heard about the problem last summer and developed a high-tech solution. Working with students in the university's 3D printing club, Kevin Keegan created a first-of-its-kind flexible filter for Ronnie's windpipe. Now owner Menno Petersheim can clean and insert the filter, keeping his seven-horse team at full strength.

## With a new name, the battle against apostasy continues

The Fellowship of Concerned Mennonites has rebranded as the Anabaptist Council for Truth. Organized in 1984, FCM originally warned against the liberal "theological drift of the mainline Mennonite church," according to the group's newsletter. But "the church bureaucracy turned a deaf ear to these appeals," and "the battle to rescue the old Mennonite church from what we would consider apostasy was essentially lost." Since 1999, the Harrisonburg, Va.-based group has refocused its mission to "warn the alternative Anabaptist churches" by "expos[ing] theological drift in its initial stages rather than waiting until the bureaucracy of an organization has already set the course toward apostasy." The name change signals a wider mission that is not exclusively Mennonite.

**Anabaptist Council for Truth**  
 Volume XXXVI, No. 4 PO Box 106, Harrisonburg, VA 22803 July/August 2021



PHOTO: CANADIAN OLYMPIC COMMITTEE

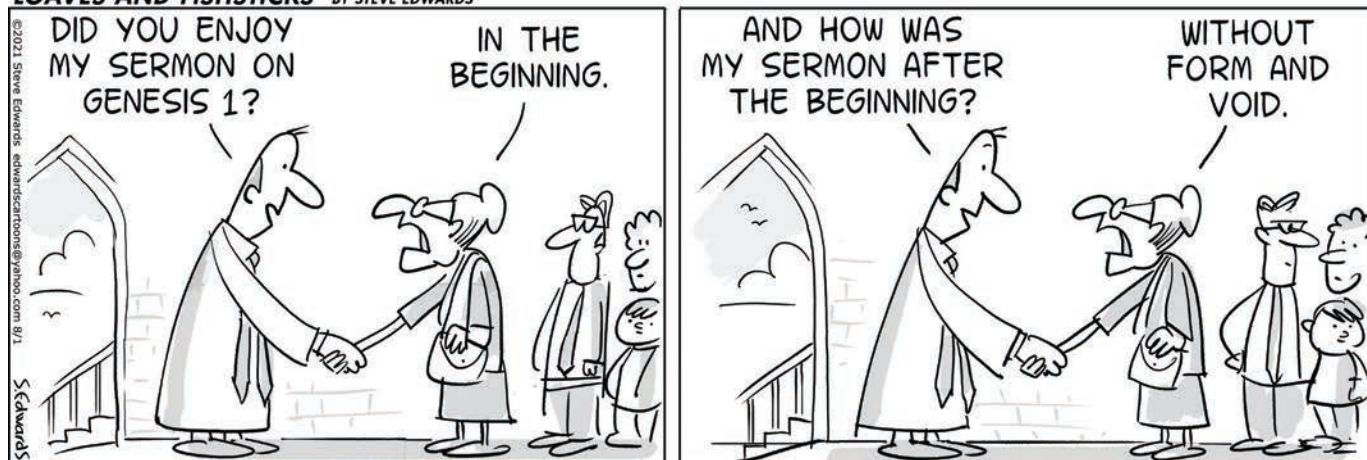
## Golden day for soccer in Canada

Canada has another Mennonite with an Olympic gold medal. Sophie Schmidt (standing, center) and the Canadian Women's Soccer Team won the country's first gold medal in women's soccer when they beat Sweden Aug. 6 in a shootout at the Summer Olympics in Tokyo. Schmidt is a member of King Road Mennonite Brethren Church in Abbotsford, B.C. This is her third Olympic medal after winning bronze in 2012 and 2016. Her first Olympic appearance came in 2008.

## Remembering the first degree of separation

Historian C. Henry Smith is widely remembered as the first Mennonite to earn a doctoral degree (in 1907). It has been generally forgotten that Bertha R. Leaman was likely the first Mennonite woman to do so. Lydia M. Nolt and Steven M. Nolt write in *Mennonite Quarterly Review* that Leaman's 1935 University of Chicago degree and lifelong study of French history were supplemented by advocacy for women and international students. "Leaman, a young Mennonite historian from Lancaster County, Pa., faced a double disadvantage as a female professional from a community that did not especially encourage higher education," they write. "And particularly not on the part of women." She joined the Quakers late in life, which may explain the muted response among Mennonites to her success.

### LOAVES AND FISHSTICKS BY STEVE EDWARDS



# Letters & Comments

Write to: [editor@anabaptistworld.org](mailto:editor@anabaptistworld.org)

## Little steps toward peace

Thank you for "In Pennsylvania or Palestine, Peacemaking Isn't Passive" (June 18). My wife and I are relatively new to the Mennonite experience. We are not new, however, to the Middle East experience. We assisted at Christian schools and summer camps in Gaza and the West Bank between 2005 and 2018.

Peacemaking in Pennsylvania and in the Palestinian territories is an interesting comparison. I don't think minorities in Pennsylvania are required to purchase a license plate identifying their ethnicity, see their homes destroyed, water shut off and farms confiscated, or jump through hoops to be accepted in a Pennsylvania hospital — or be subject to about 200 other laws limiting their human and civil rights.

There are 167 Islands of Palestinian land in the West Bank, most not connected to each other. Israeli settlers have made inroads into the West Bank and have taken over about 30% of the area. A country of Palestine seems improbable now.

Peacemakers are rare among evangelicals, who are often so enamored with Israel that they consider Palestinians obstacles to the fulfillment of biblical prophecy.

We met a Christian Peacemaker Team in Hebron. They were amazing. Little steps toward peace can add up.

**Stan George, Reedley, Calif.**

## Wrong kind of love

Jesus' command was to love everyone with divine love (*agape*), not homosexual love. Sex should be private. The homosexual issue split the Lutheran and Presbyterian denominations and is now splitting Mennonite Church USA. With the widespread circulation of *AW*, please don't promote gay/lesbian approval, as was done with two full pages about brothers meeting at a Pride parade (July 9).

**Don Klassen, Harrisburg, S.D.**

It is evident the authors and churches in "Finding pride in my brother" and "Finding my brother at Pride" do not embrace the long-held confession that the Bible is our word from God for faith and practice. The Bible addresses pride. It's mentioned nearly 100 times. Twice the New Testament

says, "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble" (James 4:6, 1 Peter 5:5). Isaiah declared, "Woe to those who call evil good and good evil" (5:20, New International Version). Instead of practicing what God resists, I found God's grace and freedom to live victoriously over the sins I inherited through the sin that infected the human race in Eden. I am disappointed to read endorsements of pride and sin in an Anabaptist magazine.

**Simon Schrock, Catlett, Va.**

## A vision that should grow

Thank you for "Tabor alumnus addresses South Texas housing challenges" (July 9). The work that Nick Mitchell-Bennett is doing is remarkable and inspiring. There is a huge need for this in many communities in our country. I would love to see this vision grow.

**Helen Horst Yoder, Wellman, Iowa**

## Peace Tax Fund ignored

I am disappointed that MennoCon21 didn't have a single seminar about the Church Peace Tax Fund. Does Mennonite Church USA understand the significance of what its members are contributing to the U.S. military with their tax dollars? Most are paying more to underwrite the U.S. military than they are giving to church budgets. How can we change that?

**Harold A. Penner, Akron, Pa.**

## More memoirs

I was delighted to see Dorothy Nickel Friesen's excellent review of James M. Lapp's *Remember Who You Are* (Aug. 6). For readers who want to know about other members of this family, all of whom have contributed much to our church and world, there are additional memoirs. Mary Lapp Swartley's *My Treasured Hopes: My Four Score Years+* is a moving account of her life; its difficulties as the daughter of a bishop; her support of her husband, Willard; and her achievements.

Memoirs of James' brothers John and Joseph can be found in two volumes of the Anabaptist Center for Religion and Society, available on amazon.com. John's "Remember Who You Are: Four Trajectories of My Life" is in *Continuing the Journey: The Geography of Our Faith, Mennonite Stories Integrating Faith and Life and the World of Thought*. Joseph's "Joining the Family Business: By Birthright, by Choice and by Divine Call" is in *Making a Difference in the Journey: The Geography of Our Faith, Brethren and Mennonite Stories Integrating Faith, Life and the World of Thought*.

**Nancy V. Lee, Madison, Wis.**

## Faith opposes science

In response to "Faith and Science Too" (Letters, Aug. 6): According to the Word of God, faith is in direct opposition to science. Science is studying things by observation. Faith is believing in things we can't see. The word for science in Greek is *gnosis*. The one place *gnosis* is translated as science in the Bible, it is with a negative connotation: "O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called: Which some professing have erred concerning the faith" (1 Timothy 6:20-21, King James Version). Some versions translate *gnosis* as knowledge instead of science. But science is just human knowledge. God's wisdom, which is infinite, is entirely different from human knowledge, which changes with new data. That's why one day Dr. Anthony Fauci can say we don't need masks and the next say the opposite.

**Kathryn Buskett, Fairhope, Ala.**

## Indigenous erasure

Thank you for Sarah Augustine's columns on the Doctrine of Discovery. Her challenges about the treatment of Indigenous people implicate much of our lives. That includes the idea of Christians being a special people and the idea of private ownership of land. Of the former evil we might be able to purge ourselves by education and reflection, but for the latter there isn't much hope — virtually all economic systems depend upon private ownership of land. It is clear we won't be returning the stolen lands.

However, there is an equivalent evil that could be stopped with rational behavior. That is the effort now going on in many predominantly Republican states, under the false pretense of large-scale voter fraud, to limit and suppress the right to vote and, in some cases, even to let Republican Party officials change election results they don't like. The intent is clear: to make it harder for Black people and other minorities, including Indigenous people, to vote, or to limit the effect of their votes through the gerrymandering of congressional districts. We should not continue to erase Indigenous people from the public arena. After all, they were here first.

**Donald E. Voth, Albuquerque, N.M.**

Join the conversation by writing to [editor@anabaptistworld.org](mailto:editor@anabaptistworld.org) or Anabaptist World, Box 568, Newton, KS 67114. Letters are edited; 250 words or fewer are preferred. Include your name and hometown.

# Not my will, but thine

## When seeking God's purpose, is it possible to disregard our own desires?

**AT THE SOUTH CENTRAL** Mennonite Conference annual meeting July 24 in Hesston, Kan., the chair gave instructions that raised a theological question.

Be indifferent to your own opinions, he said. Only seek God's will.

The matter at hand was whether to dissolve the conference. The rationale was to avoid winners and losers — to give every congregation a clean slate to decide whether to remain a part of Mennonite Church USA.

In the end, delegates decided not to dissolve the conference. In a separate vote, they decided not to withdraw from the denomination (*AW*, Aug. 6).

The instruction for delegates lingered in my mind because it was not just a passing comment but emphasized repeatedly: What you desire is not important. You need to find out what God wants.

Is this good advice for Christian discernment? Is it even possible?

It sounds good in some ways. We all want to do God's will. Perhaps the most admirable form of obedience is to submit humbly when our desires point in a different direction. God may indeed ask hard things of us. Jesus set the example: "Not my will, but thine" (Luke 22:42, King James Version).

Sometimes this is a good way to make a decision. But not always.

It implies there is only one right answer. But not every question has only one right answer.

Further, on some questions, it might not matter to God what we decide.

I believe "Should we be a part of MC USA?" is not a question we should expect God to answer.

It is a human organizational question — an important one, to be sure, but not one that is subject to a divine verdict.

**AS A RULE, DISCERNING** God's will is what the church should do. We search our hearts and try to purge selfish motives. We pray for wisdom, both divine

and human.

The search for God's will leans heavily upon the wisdom that comes from human minds and hearts shaped by the community of faith. Anabaptists believe that through prayer, studying Scripture together and listening to each other, human wisdom moves toward conformity with divine wisdom.

The advice to be indifferent to our own desires prompts a question: Is it possible God wants me to belong to a church in which I feel miserable or stuck in conflict?

I suppose it is possible. But it seems much more likely that God wants each

**Should I be a Methodist or a Mennonite? In or out of MC USA? God has faithful servants in all of these places.**

of us to belong to a church that gives us joy, a church whose people we love, whose mission inspires us.

These criteria involve judgments about our feelings, beliefs and opinions. These should be vital considerations, not matters of indifference, when discerning church affiliation.

Most of us congregate with like-minded people. Yet many also see benefits in theological diversity. Even in an era of polarization, some of us are moderate or hold opinions that don't fit neatly into an ideological box.

Some may be content to remain in churches that frustrate them, because they love the people. Others feel compelled to leave because disagreements have sucked the joy out of church life.

Each can find their place within God's purposes. All of us, with our flaws, make up the body of Christ. With our gifts, the whole becomes much more than the sum of the parts.

Though we seek unity, we should not be surprised or disturbed when people hear God saying different things.

The fact that South Central Conference delegates split almost 50-50 on whether to withdraw from MC USA doesn't mean half of them failed to discern God's will. Or that half selfishly failed to become indifferent to their own desires.

It means South Central is a faith community with a difficult, but not unique, challenge of sorting out its diversity.

**WE MIGHT COMPARE** the question "What church should I belong to?" to asking whether it is God's will to marry a certain person.

Many people have prayed this prayer. Few were indifferent to their own desires. And rightly so.

One can imagine God responding with questions in return: Do you love this person? Do you believe you will always love him or her? Do you want to be together for the rest of your life?

If the answers are yes, God might say you have answered the question for yourself.

"What denomination should I belong to?" seems like a similar question.

Should I be a Methodist or a Mennonite? In or out of MC USA? God has faithful servants in all of these places. Each of us should find the community of faith that we love. We should make our choice and follow Jesus there.

We should still pray about important decisions. Maybe we will hear God's voice clearly. Some of us are better than others at perceiving divine guidance.

Even if we don't pick up a clear signal, the very fact that we prayed, that we yearned to do God's will, can set us on a path toward God's preferred future.

Because, as Jeremiah 29:11 says, God has plans for us. Just not an exact blueprint. ●



# AFGHANISTAN ALTERNATIVE





20 years ago,  
as the U.S.  
went to war, a  
humanitarian  
mission showed  
the power  
of love

BY DOUG HOSTETTER

**W**HEN I ARRIVED in Afghanistan to deliver humanitarian aid seven weeks after 9/11, the first question an Afghan farmer asked me was, “Why is the U.S. attacking our country? Your government was so helpful when we were occupied by the Soviet Union. We thought America was our friend.”

Fumbling for a response, I said, “A group of militants, from an organization with headquarters in your country, destroyed two buildings a half kilometer tall in New York City, killing almost 3,000 people.”

He looked confused. This appeared to be new information. We were in Kunduz, a province with no electricity, running water or paved roads, where the tallest building was one story high.

Twenty years later, people still are

asking questions about the U.S. military response to the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001.

Many of these questions center on the impact of U.S. military action and the consequences of the 20-year war. Many Americans understand the U.S. did not win the war, and they question its high cost in blood and treasure. But they might not know what other choices their country might have made.

In Afghanistan, and earlier in Vietnam, I have seen the futility of war and the power of compassionate assistance to restore hope and build friendship.

My reflections on the 20th anniversary of 9/11 are informed by my convictions as an Anabaptist Christian, service with Mennonite Central Committee in Vietnam 50 years ago, conversations with Afghans 20 years ago and my role as MCC liaison to the United Nations from 2006 to 2018.

The U.S. invasion of Afghanistan, and the 20 years of war that followed, have had profound and disastrous effects on the U.S. and Afghanistan. By making war, the U.S. turned a country whose people thought Americans were their friends into an enemy.

**FOR MANY AMERICANS**, the logic of the Afghan war was clear: As the innocent victim of an unprovoked attack, the U.S. had to retaliate. On closer examination, things get a bit messier.

It is true Al-Qaeda militants based in Afghanistan hijacked the planes that destroyed the World Trade Center and struck the Pentagon. But the hijackers were all Arabs, mostly Saudis, with not a single Afghan among them. Given Al-Qaeda’s secrecy, it is highly unlikely the Taliban leadership of Afghanistan even knew the 9/11 attacks were going



A girl near a camp for displaced people in Khawja Badauddin, Kunduz Province, Afghanistan, November 2001.

PHOTO: DOUG HOSTETTER

to happen.

When it was determined that Al-Qaeda carried out the attacks, the U.S. government demanded Afghanistan immediately arrest or expel Al-Qaeda leaders.

The Afghan government requested a few weeks to organize a *Loya Jirga* (grand assembly of Afghan traditional

**I have seen the futility of war and the power of peaceful assistance to restore hope and build friendship.**

leaders) to make that decision. The U.S. refused and responded militarily with massive bombings followed by ground troops.

The war was a blatant violation of the United Nations Charter and international law. The U.S. chose not to bring the matter to the U.N. Security Council but instead to initiate a war with NATO allies.

The attacks of 9/11 were serious crimes that should have brought decisive responses from law enforce-

Top: Two girls near their home in Qala Kuja, Parwan Province, Afghanistan, August 2002.

Bottom: Crossing the Amu Darya River from Tajikistan to Afghanistan in November 2001. From left are Suraya Sadeed, director of Help the Afghan Children; Doug Hostetter; Randall Scerbo, documentary filmmaker, Oxygen Network; and Michael Alan Lerner, journalist, *Los Angeles Times Magazine*. PHOTOS: DOUG HOSTETTER



A boy plays soccer by the ruins of a Russian tank at the 19th-century mud-walled Kolola Pushta Fort in Kabul in July 2002.

PHOTO: DOUG HOSTETTER

**I asked Sadeed how she could work in Taliban-controlled Afghanistan. How was it possible to have a medical clinic for women and girls in Kabul?**

ment. Had the U.S. responded through INTERPOL, the international police organization, most nations would have given their support. Russia, China, the European Union, the United Nations and even most Muslim countries would have joined the effort to bring the 9/11 criminal plotters to justice.

Instead, the U.S. alienated the Muslim world, and many of our allies, by starting a war that resulted in more than 241,000 deaths, including 2,400 U.S. service members.

**AS THE MOST POWERFUL** country in the world was preparing to attack the poorest country in Asia, I contacted MCC and the American Friends Service Committee to ask if they would join with a previously planned October trip to deliver food to Afghanistan. A small Afghan American organization, Help the Afghan Children, had organized the trip.

MCC and the AFSC agreed. They asked if I would represent them and accompany the organization's director, Suraya Sadeed, to deliver food to displaced people in northern Afghanistan.

Sadeed played a key role in a story of compassionate ministry to Afghan

people who suffered great tragedy due to the U.S. war.

She and her husband had emigrated to the United States in the late 1970s as the Soviets invaded Afghanistan. A decade later, after the Soviet defeat, she returned to Afghanistan and discovered great need. She came back to the U.S., started a small charity and returned regularly to assist children.

I asked Sadeed how she could work in Taliban-controlled Afghanistan. How was it possible to have a medical clinic for women and girls in Kabul?

"There are good people in every country, every religion and even every political organization," she responded. "I found a Taliban leader I thought I could trust. I asked, 'What would you do if your wife or daughter had a difficult pregnancy?'"

He responded, "I would pray to God."

"Yes," Sadeed told him, "but there are professionals who can save lives in childbirth."

"We could never allow a doctor to see a woman during childbirth," he responded.

(All female doctors had been dismissed when the Taliban took over.)

When she promised to staff the clinic only with women, he agreed.

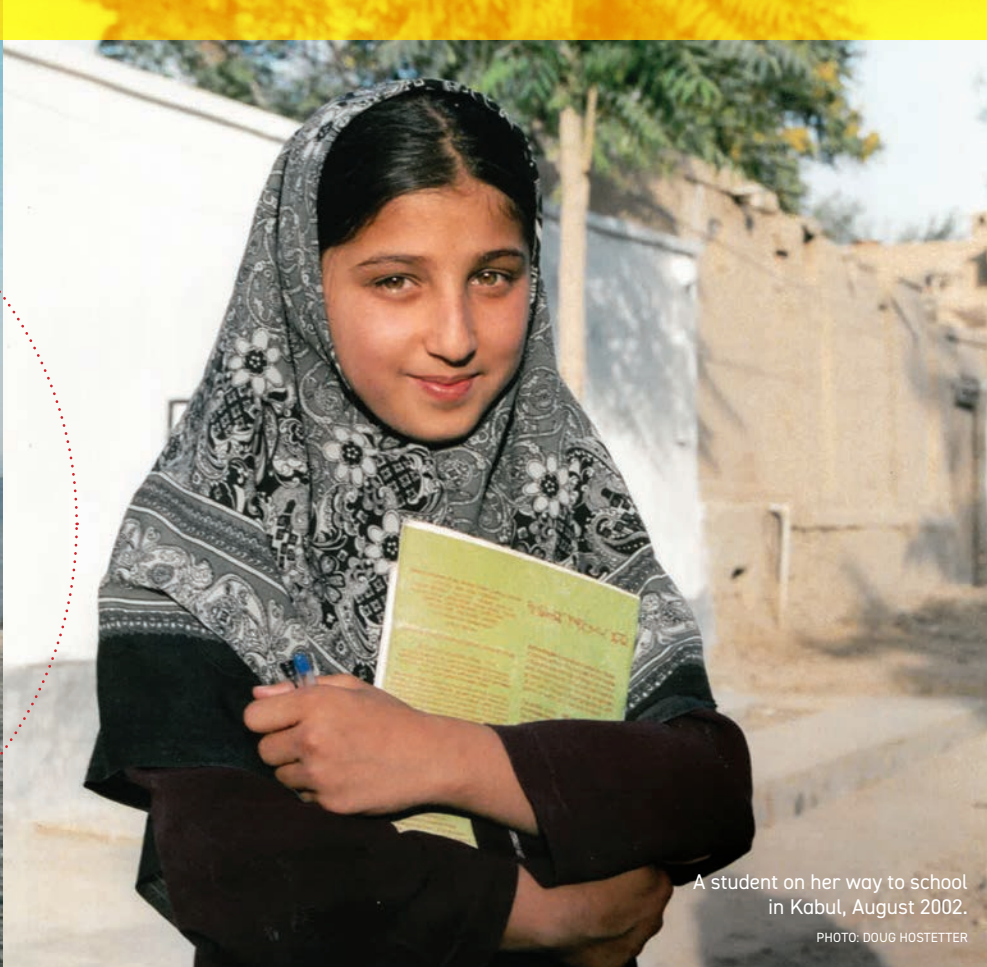
**THEN, IN AN INSTANT,** years of work was undone.

Just before we entered Afghanistan, Sadeed learned that chief pediatrician Dr. Belquis, internist Dr. Rahma and a registered nurse from the clinic were all killed in the U.S. bombing of Kabul.

American bombs had also killed four boys from the Help the Afghan Children Vocational Training Center in Jalabad.

Friendship and hope can be fostered through love and compassion — or destroyed in an instant by the weapons of war.

Positive change cannot be imposed by outsiders, but culturally sensitive assistance can make a difference. With funds from MCC, the AFSC and my family and friends, I was able to collect \$60,000. Together with \$70,000 that Help the Afghan Children collected, we were able to bring \$130,000 to neighboring Tajikistan. There a supplier would convert our funds into 239 tons of wheat, sugar and cooking oil, which was loaded on 19 trucks and brought across the northern border into Afghanistan.



A student on her way to school in Kabul, August 2002.

PHOTO: DOUG HOSTETTER

Sadeed and I traveled ahead. A few days later in Afghanistan, our supplies caught up with us. Afghans who had fled the U.S. bombing further south warmly welcomed us. We had enough supplies to feed 3,600 families of seven for one month.

**AS THE U.S. WITHDRAWS** its last combat troops, some will say the military must remain so Americans can build schools, modernize the country and protect Afghan girls.

Despite the rhetoric of politicians, wars are fought for material and strategic reasons, never for development, education or human rights.

From years of working in a war zone (I served three years with MCC in Vietnam at the height of that war), I have learned the military does not have the right equipment or training for nation building or the empowerment of women.

The U.S. has been in Afghanistan for 20 years. We have sacrificed the lives of thousands of U.S. service members and contractors and tens of thousands of Afghan civilians. Yet most Afghan people's lives are worse today than when the U.S. invaded two decades ago.

Change in Afghanistan will need to

be led by Afghans, not by foreigners whose weapons have caused great suffering and claimed many lives. Social change must be driven internally, not imposed through military occupation.

**EIGHT MONTHS LATER**, in 2002, when it was safe to travel to Kabul, MCC asked me to return to Afghanistan to visit a home-rebuilding project in Parwan Province. MCC was working with Church World Service to rebuild Afghan homes destroyed by war.

I met again with Afghans who had lost everything in the war. Once again, people welcomed me warmly as I brought a token of hope from people who believe love is stronger than vengeance and nonviolence a better choice than war. ●



**Doug Hostetter** served with MCC from 1966 to 1969 in Vietnam and October-November 2001 and July-August 2002 in Afghanistan. He directed MCC's United Nations office from 2006 to 2018.



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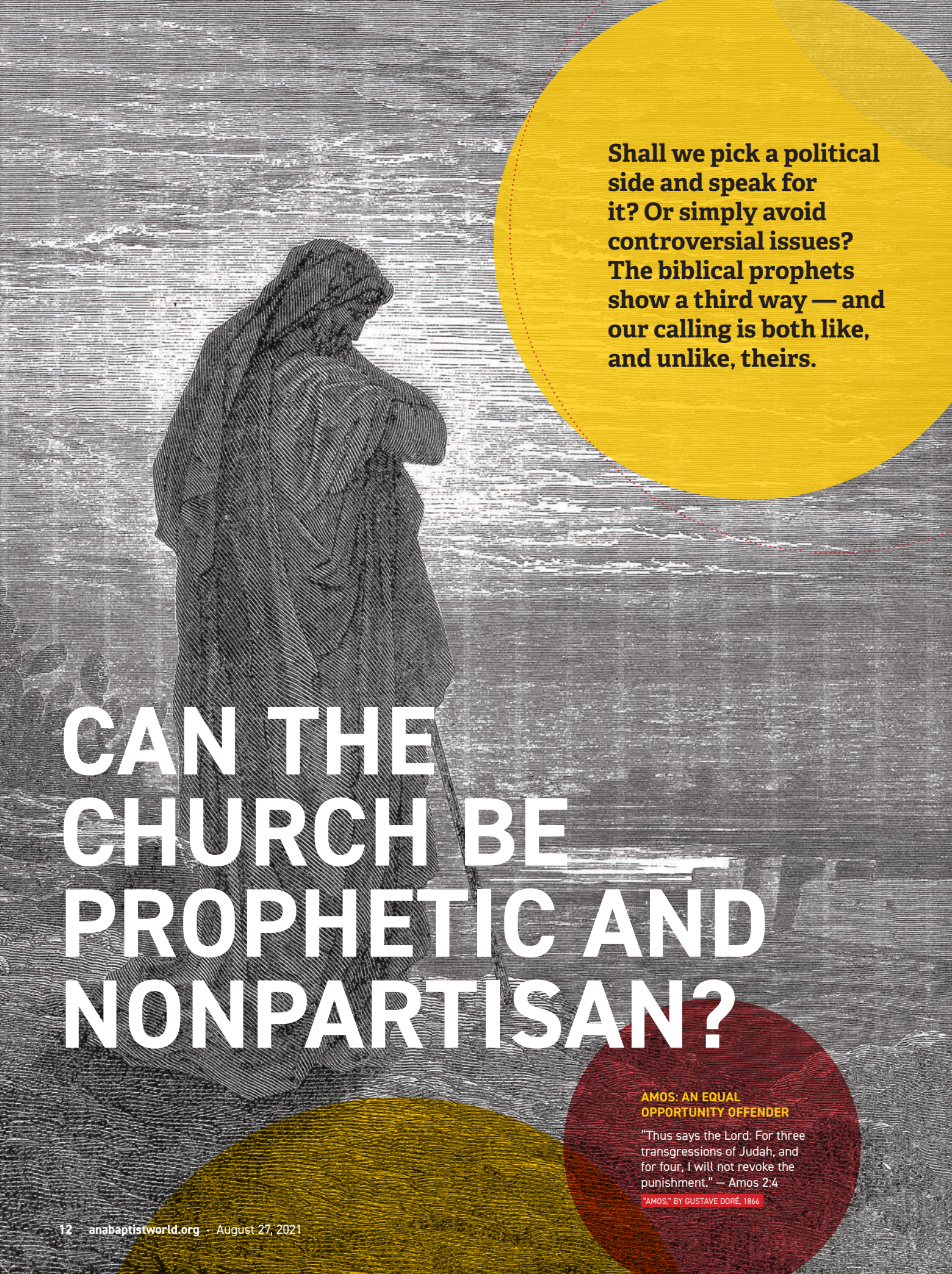
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**Shall we pick a political side and speak for it? Or simply avoid controversial issues? The biblical prophets show a third way — and our calling is both like, and unlike, theirs.**

# CAN THE CHURCH BE PROPHETIC AND NONPARTISAN?

**AMOS: AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY OFFENDER**

"Thus says the Lord: For three transgressions of Judah, and for four, I will not revoke the punishment." — Amos 2:4

"AMOS," BY GUSTAVE DORÉ, 1866

BY RYAN AHLGRIM

**IT HAS BECOME** difficult in the United States to preach and teach on controversial issues without giving the impression one is endorsing a political party. Every important social issue has been weaponized for political gain.

Whatever one says about abortion, the death penalty, war, policing, prisons, gun violence, racism, sexism, gender identity, sexuality, marriage, climate change, capitalism, poverty, immigration, drug use, protesting or boycotts, it will be interpreted as politically partisan.

Because each of the two dominant political parties demonizes the other, our Anabaptist congregations, conferences and denominations have splintered into politically like-minded groups.

In this divided reality, we appear to have only two choices: pick a side and speak from that perspective, or avoid controversial issues within the church walls. I reject this choice. The church can and must be both prophetic and nonpartisan.

By “prophetic” I do not mean predicting the future. I mean speaking for God, morally and spiritually, on the issues facing us today. Speaking prophetically is central to the biblical tradition. Nathan condemns David for adultery and murder. Elijah con-

demns Ahab for executing Naboth on false charges and stealing his vineyard. Hosea condemns Israel’s elite for idolatry and faithlessness. Micah condemns Judah’s rich for injustices against the poor. Sixteen books in the Old Testament are named after prophets who spoke out against the selfish use of privilege and power.

### A new kind of prophet

The prophetic tradition continues in the ministry of Jesus. He is often called a prophet, though he differs in his approach from those in the Old Testament. He does not address the kings of Israel or Judah, because those kings and nations no longer exist. Nor does he give much attention to Herod Antipas or Pontius Pilate and the Roman regime. His message does not seek to reform the government.

Instead, Jesus focuses on a new reality that is dawning: the kingdom of God. He goes to the common people, addressing their hunger and sick-

ness, poverty and worry, isolation and exclusion, inviting them to enter God’s emerging reality.

Although Jesus challenges the wealthy and confronts religious elites, for the most part he ignores the establishment and instead creates a new social-political-economic-spiritual reality from the ground up. This new reality — the government of God — is characterized by nonviolence, uplift for the vulnerable and poor, unconditional love and care for all, forgiveness and reconciliation, inclusion for as many as possible, leadership that serves others and complete trust in God.

But when it comes to specific proposals about how to run political institutions, Jesus is silent or vague. He offers no legislation for Herod to consider. He dodges the tricky question of taxes. Instead, Jesus identifies core moral principles and spiritual themes for expressing God’s will.

**If we align our churches with a political party, we risk losing our credibility. This is already happening.**

### Return to God?

As the church seeks to be prophetic today, we need to recognize how our political context differs from that of the biblical prophets. Unlike them, we do not live under a government that claims to be in a covenant with Yahweh. So, calling on the government to return to God is misplaced. And, unlike Jesus, we are not isolated from the political process. We live in a representative democracy that invites everyone to participate in shaping and maintaining the government. The church has a much greater opportu-

**As the church, we represent the kingdom of God — something no candidate, party or government is capable of.**

nity and responsibility to speak to the government than Jesus did.

Unlike the governments of the Bible, which were based on a particular religion, the U.S. government protects the free exercise of religion without establishing or giving preference to any single religion. The result is a society that must respect religious pluralism, overseen by a secular government. This has had the ill effect of privatizing religion, as if its expression doesn’t belong in the public sphere.

On the positive side, disconnecting religion from government has resulted in religion having much more credibility and vitality in the United States than in European nations with a history of supporting a particular church. If we now align our churches with a political party or government, we risk losing our credibility and independent vitality. This is already happening.

The primary reason the church must

**Our churches should be places of inclusion for political liberals, conservatives, libertarians, moderates and radicals.**



never endorse a political candidate or line up with a political party or government is because we represent the kingdom of God — something no candidate, party or government is capable of.

Like the Old Testament prophets, we call on our government to be just. In the United States, we call on it to live up to its own ideals: that all people are created equal and have the same intrinsic value and rights. But our primary ministry is to embody the reign of God through communities of faith.

### Politically inclusive?

Living out God's reign means addressing the issues of our day. I have three suggestions:

- Focus on the broad concerns of God's kingdom that the church must embody.
- Don't advocate for specific legislation from the pulpit.
- Avoid even the appearance of endorsing a political party or candidate.

An increasing number of Mennonite congregations claim to be welcoming and affirming. This usually refers to sexuality and gender identity. But how about political affiliation? Our churches should be places of inclusion for liberals, conservatives, libertarians, moderates and radicals. We must reject the demonization of political parties and the separation of faith communities on the basis of politics.

Mennonite Republicans and Mennonite Democrats have one crucial thing in common: All want to do good as followers of Jesus. They differ on how they think the good is best accomplished. Let us respect and honor the

good that both sides are seeking.

The early church was torn apart over whether it was permissible to eat food that had been offered to an idol. The Apostle Paul urged everyone to recognize that "those who eat, eat in honor of the Lord, since they give thanks to God; while those who abstain, abstain in honor of the Lord and give thanks to God" (Romans 14:6). He concludes, "Let us therefore no longer pass judgment on one another" (14:13).

Churches are not only prophetic. They are also pastoral. They must honor and feed all the sheep, not just some.

### Amos, our role model

Of all the Old Testament prophets, perhaps our best role model is Amos. Although he comes from Judah, he travels to Israel to preach. Before he criticizes Israel, he criticizes Damascus, Gaza, Tyre, Edom, Ammon, Moab and Judah. Not until he has passed judgment on all these countries — including his own — does he pass judgment on Israel.

Amos is an equal opportunity offender. It's easy to speak a prophetic word against groups we don't like. True prophets critique their own group first.

Amaziah, the priest of Israel's royal sanctuary, demands Amos go back to Judah: "Earn your bread there, and prophesy there" (Amos 7:12). But Amos replies, "I am no prophet, nor a prophet's son; but I am a herdsman, and a dresser of sycamore trees, and the Lord took me from following the flock, and the Lord said to me, 'Go prophesy to my people Israel'" (7:14-15).

Back then, prophets were professionals, paid by the government to give faith-based advice, a job often passed down in the family. But Amos isn't a professional prophet. He earns his livelihood through herding and by trimming trees. He has no political affiliation. He is beholden to no political interest group. He is independent, belonging only to God. That's what the church must be. ●



**Ryan Ahlgrim** is pastor of First Mennonite Church of Richmond, Va. This article is based on a seminar at the Mennonite Church USA convention in Cincinnati in July.



David Rohrer leads a Palm Sunday procession at Raleigh Mennonite Church in 2018.

PHOTO: CLAIRE UNRUH

# LIVING SANCTUARY

**The church's disciple-making mission takes many forms. For my congregation, being a place of safety comes first.**

BY MELISSA FLORER-BIXLER

**O** N A RECENT SUNDAY, we baptized Jo, upon her confession of faith, in the waters of the Eno River. Jo came to our congregation not long ago, but her story in the church stretches back to childhood. That story is heartbreaking. It traverses through being trafficked for sex before ending up homeless. Around that time, Catholic Social Services entered her life.

Jo shared her testimony with the congregation. As she took us through the harrowing early years of childhood, she said that the church — the physical



location of church buildings — became a place for her to be safe from everything that happened in the outside world. Churches were places to hide. Eventually, churches were people — people who would keep her safe.

The Catholic church wouldn't remain that way for Jo. As she came to understand her sexuality as a lesbian, she left for communities that would sustain and nurture her without exception, without asking her to be someone she was not.

**A sanctuary provides protection and safety from an external threat. It's the word that guides my life as a pastor.**

But God has always been with Jo, a constant comfort and care. Now, at 68, Jo is once again in a church that is safe — and now ready, as she told us, to give her heart to Jesus as part of Raleigh Mennonite Church in North Carolina.

**I THOUGHT ABOUT JO** as we prepared our worship space for our first in-person gathering in 16 months. We call that place a sanctuary. A sanctuary provides protection and safety from an external threat. It's the word that guides my life as a pastor.

Not all of my colleagues who lead churches agree with me. They see their

role as providing a place of unity for diverse people to be in conversation. Some think of their job as getting people in the door with a radical welcome and then letting relationships do the work of change. Others want to create an oasis, a place to stop by and be fed before returning to the grind of daily life and our intractable conflicts.

I can't share these visions of church. Jo, and people like her, are the reason why.

Sanctuary recognizes we come to the church with bodies and lives that participate, without our consent or will, in the power and destruction of the world around us. These powers work differently on us because of gender, class and race. My Black church members are significantly more likely to die in childbirth, to be pulled over by the police, to be suspended from school. Our LGBTQ members face harassment and discrimination. Our disabled members live in a world designed for their exclusion. A member of our church spent a month in Immigration and Customs Enforcement detention.

Church is a body of these people, gathered, who receive the words of Jesus: "Blessed are you." Over and over the story of Jesus' good news pulls people from lives of destructive social and economic violence into a new order alongside these who are blessed, alongside the vulnerable and the heartbroken. In our gathering, we become a new form of life that resists the principalities and powers Jesus defeated.

Members take part in an Easter service at Raleigh Mennonite Church in 2018.

PHOTO: STAN MARIN

**A DECADE OF PASTORAL MINISTRY** has cured me of idealism about this work. It is messy and complicated. Living out the gospel involves discernment, failure, repentance and trying again. We make space for conflict, and we disagree.

But what makes sanctuary possible is that the foundation of our life is Jesus Christ, and on it we construct beams of solidarity and care. We are here for one another. We are aware of the ways we fail at that solidarity.

This is a sanctuary that can hold our trials and our diversity because it is constructed with love. Not the façade of love, but the tough stuff. The kind of love that costs something. The kind of love that has changed us.

Making our life into that building, shaping ourselves around that foundation, isn't for everyone. But for our life, for our community, we've found the joy of the strong kind of love that turns us into a living, breathing body of good news for those Jesus has called blessed. ●



**Melissa Florer-Bixler** is pastor of Raleigh Mennonite Church in North Carolina.





James Miller, pastor of Oasis Community Church in Lexington, Ky., tells a children's story featuring a storm and the Apostle Paul's shipwreck at CMC's annual meeting. PHOTO: JANELL SHROCK/CMC

## CMC: a 'unique place' in Anabaptism

**CENTERING THE VALUE** of unity, commitment to being God's people together and having a kingdom identity, CMC, previously known as Conservative Mennonite Conference, met Aug. 6-8 in Goshen, Ind., for Multiply, its annual gathering.

The event, held at Clinton Christian School, drew 654 people, fewer than previous years.

Members celebrated their newly named conference pastor, Darren Peachey of Belleville, Pa.

Peachey opened the event with a word of hope, referencing Paul's experience on a storm-tossed ship from Acts 27.

"Where do we find ourselves in this story?" Peachey asked, acknowledging that the stormy year of pandemic has affected everyone.

Connecting the imagery of those left on the ship with Paul to a present-day group of believers, Peachey said, "All 276 people of this congregation stayed with the ship and went into the water. I see a picture of baptism here."

"As the church, we are his people,"

he said. "We choose to live by faith — faith only in Jesus, following Jesus, powered by the Spirit of Jesus to do life together and to invite others into the kingdom of Jesus. At CMC we call that maturing and multiplying churches locally and globally."

**BREAKOUT SESSIONS** covered topics of church-and-state relations, conflict resolution and church planting.

In a session on "Jesus and the Fox: Considering Church/State Relations," Roger Hazen, pastor of Pineview Mennonite Church in Vassar, Mich., reviewed Scripture concerning authorities and governments, early Anabaptist commitments to church-and-state separation and issues for Anabaptists today.

Questions from attendees included whether Anabaptists should vote, whether a nonresistant person can justify calling the police and what Jesus meant when he told Peter to buy a sword (Luke 22:36).

Hazen, who was born into the Catholic church and converted to Anabaptism, described why he's found a home

in CMC.

"I hear Jesus calling his people to a way of kingdom living which in many ways is quite contrary to the ways of living in the kingdoms of the world," he said. "I have found in CMC a people who have answered the calling to live in kingdom ways. That's why I'm here with all of you."

Hazen encouraged CMC to reject the belief that by gaining political or social influence they can bring in the kingdom of righteousness.

"That program has never worked, and it never can work, because it is not the program of Jesus Christ," Hazen said.

"In our practice, fellowship and scriptural understandings, I would say that we as CMC hold a unique place in the Anabaptist world, and I hope we will continue to hold that place as a refuge for those who want a faith and faith practice that they really can't find anywhere else."

CMC counts 13,500 members spread across 23 states. Next year's gathering is planned for July 22-24 in Grantsville, Md. ●

# MCC U.S. surpasses centennial goal

Donors give \$109.8 million over three years; health projects get funds during pandemic

**DESPITE THE ECONOMIC** upheaval of a global pandemic, donors gave \$109.8 million to the Mennonite Central Committee U.S. centennial fundraising campaign, surpassing the \$100 million goal.

“The outcome would be amazing even under regular circumstances,” said Phil Rush, director of MCC U.S. donor relations. “With the impacts of COVID-19 in the past year, the results are even more astounding.

“We asked people to help strengthen MCC’s mission and ministry as we enter our next 100 years and people responded — generously. Thanks be to God!”

The campaign included core giving of \$76.9 million, used over three years to support existing projects, campaign designated gifts of almost \$8.5 million and \$24.4 million of endowment gifts and estate commitments.

The three-year campaign, “New Hope in the Name of Christ,” culminated with the 2020 celebration of MCC’s 100-year anniversary. Giving surpassed the \$100 million centennial goal by the end of MCC’s 2020-21 fiscal year in March.

Because of the impact of COVID-19, MCC U.S. used some donations immediately to strengthen its international health work.

Many of MCC’s partners educated families about COVID-19 prevention in creative ways — using loudspeakers, texts, signs, T-shirts and masked conversations at handwashing stations — instead of group trainings. Food distributions helped relieve COVID-19’s economic impact.

In the U.S., MCC distributed canned meat through churches to people in increased need. Extra funds were given to churches and families that faced economic difficulties in cooperation with Everence and Mennonite Disaster Service.

In Syria, the Middle East Council of Churches used centennial giving to

MCC U.S. centennial campaign	Total	New Hope campaign goal	% of total goal received
Core MCC ministries	\$76,939,925	\$68,500,000	112.3%
Designated to campaign	\$8,469,678	\$6,500,000	130.3%
Endowment	\$24,369,271	\$25,000,000	97.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$109,778,874</b>	<b>\$100,000,000</b>	<b>109.8%</b>



With a grant from MCC U.S., Salam (real name is not being used for his security) was able to start a new business in a rented workshop after the house he shared with his siblings and his own workshop were destroyed in the Syrian war. PHOTO: MIDDLE EAST COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

teach new job skills to people suffering because of the 10-year war that devastated their country. Small grants helped people who didn’t have enough capital to start businesses.

**SALAM, A 49-YEAR-OLD** man from a Damascus suburb, had no funds to restart his furniture-finishing business, which was destroyed, along with the house he shared with his siblings. His family was forced to rent, and he worked for another business.

Through the training, Salam learned ways to improve his business practices.

With the grant, he purchased tools, rented a workshop and restarted his business. With the profit, he can help pay for his brother’s cancer treatment.

“I was able to achieve my dream that I thought would never be fulfilled,” said Salam, whose real name is not being used for his security. “My psychological well-being improved as well, and I am more optimistic, knowing that tomorrow will bring good things.”

Campaign-designated gifts are being used in the U.S. to help immigrants access legal assistance and immigration information. In addition, faith-

based partners and churches are giving practical support to people at risk of imprisonment, those who are incarcerated and people who are re-entering society.

**“ONE HUNDRED YEARS** ago, MCC grew out of people’s love and compassion for people in southern Russia [present-day Ukraine] who were displaced and were experiencing extreme hunger and war,” said Ann Graber Hershberger, MCC U.S. executive director. “Today, supporters are still living out Jesus’s call to love their neighbors through MCC. We are so grateful to work together in this ministry.”

To help ensure that MCC will continue to serve people in need for the next 100 years, donors made gifts and pledges of \$24 million. Interest from the endowment will help sustain MCC financially and help limit the impact of future economic crises.

A network of 32 volunteer fundraisers helped MCC U.S. donor relations staff raise money for the campaign. ●



MCC U.S. used centennial funds to support Venezuelan refugees in Ecuador, including the family of Gilchen Michele Garrido Davalillo, who is holding the baby. MCC’s partner, Quito Anabaptist Mennonite Christian Church, provides material, financial and psychosocial support to this family and many other refugees. PHOTO: ANNALEE GIESBRECHT/MCC

## MCC supports rebuilding in Beirut

**DURING THE YEAR SINCE** the Aug. 4, 2020, explosion of ammonium nitrate in Beirut, Lebanon, Mennonite Central Committee and its partners have been working to help people rebuild homes and businesses and provide food and trauma support.

The explosion killed about 200 people and destroyed or damaged buildings throughout the city.

“I was blasted away and ended up on the floor but luckily had no major injuries,” said Samir Menassa, a small business owner whose convenience store was severely damaged. Liquid from jars splattered everywhere. Most of the products were unsellable.

With only \$400 in his bank account, he looked for help to fix his store and his house, which also was damaged. Through his church, he was connected to the Forum for Development, Culture and Dialogue, a Lebanese nonprofit.

FDCD gave him money toward the repair of his house and helped him



Samir Menassa’s grocery store was devastated by the explosion at Beirut’s port in August 2020. PHOTO: FDCD

replace glass windows on his shop. A supermarket provided supplies so he could restock.

But he has only a few customers. Many people left the area after the explosion because their houses were damaged. Tourists stopped coming, and neighborhood violence increased, so he now closes his store every day at 4 p.m. He sells just enough to buy food

and medicine for him and his wife.

To make matters worse, Lebanon is in a financial crisis, causing the Lebanese pound to lose 80% of its value against the dollar in 2020.

MCC and FDCD have worked together to help repair 55 homes and 14 businesses with stipends of about \$1,000 each.

Other MCC partners have been distributing monthly food baskets and food vouchers to 1,000 families. They also have provided social and psychological support to children and adults who were traumatized.

“Even middle-class families in Lebanon are struggling just to buy basic necessities like food and medicine,” said Salam Houch, program coordinator for FDCD. “We have seen the passion and dedication of Lebanese people to help one another, as well as the continued support of international partners like MCC. This gives us hope that rebuilding is possible.” — MCC

# Eastern Canada conference pioneers accountability on abuse

MCEC has dealt with a flurry of historical cases of sexual misconduct in Ontario

OVER THE PAST SIX or so years, Mennonite Church Eastern Canada of Mennonite Church Canada has had to deal with accounts of sexual misconduct by former leaders — a process some have compared to how Mennonite Central Committee is confronting its complicity in hiding Nazis who committed crimes against Jews during the Second World War.

“There are interesting parallels happening between those two things right now,” said Carol Penner, associate professor of theological studies at Conrad Grebel University College in Waterloo, Ont.

And just as some are critical of this exploration of Mennonite complicity during the Holocaust, others don’t want to revisit abuse allegations.



Penner

“Just as some are asking what good it can do to dredge up those old stories from 70 years ago, some are also asking why we should be bringing to light old stories of abuse by Mennonite church leaders,” she said.

The answer, for Penner, is simple.

“We owe it to the survivors to be truthful and honest,” she said. “When we harm others, we should be held accountable for that harm. Part of being a peace church means looking at the ways we have been violent and who we have harmed.”

To that end, Penner praises the openness of MCEC to examine decades-old claims of abuse.

“MCEC is pioneering accountability, and that is helping survivors come forward,” she said of the flurry of historical sexual misconduct cases in Ontario involving former leaders like Frank H. Epp, Vernon Leis, Wilmer Martin and



PHOTO: PIXABAY/CREATIVE COMMONS

John Rempel.

She gives credit to MCEC leaders who have had the courage to “understand the consequences of pastoral misconduct and who have the guts to address it,” despite the “barrage of criticism,” she said.

**The idea of a power differential was not well understood. Abuse was often framed as an affair between consenting adults.**

A turning point for her was when MCEC was willing to do a posthumous investigation of Leis.

“That opened up the possibility of other investigations,” she said. It told survivors of other abusers they would be listened to if they came forward.

**WHILE GLAD TO SEE** the work done by MCEC, she wonders if there are other stories where there are large concentrations of Mennonites.

“It’s not like Kitchener-Waterloo is a hot spot for abuse by church leaders,” she said. She would be “astonished” if there aren’t similar historical cases of abuse by pastors and other church leaders in places like Winnipeg, Man., Lancaster, Pa., or Abbotsford, B.C.

As for why stories of abuse remained hidden for so long, she said it was easier for men to be protected in the past. Conference policies were more informal or not as rigorously enforced.

The idea of a power differential was not well understood. Abuse was often framed as an affair between consenting adults.

“But it was often not an affair for the victim,” she said. “It was an abuse of power. We have a clearer understanding of how power can be misused.”

MCEC’s survivor-centered approach is empowering victims to come forward now, she said.

“They are the ones propelling this whole conversation,” she said. When one survivor comes forward, it can encourage other victims of the same abuser to tell their stories, too.

“That’s why it’s so important to go public about abuse,” she said. ●

# MCEC known for taking abuse survivors seriously

**GROWING UP ON A FARM**, Marilyn Rudy-Froese remembers seeing, and smelling, the “honey wagon” — the manure spreader. It wasn’t the most appealing aspect of life on a farm, but she knew it was important if crops were to grow and be healthy.

Today, as Mennonite Church of Eastern Canada church leadership minister, Rudy-Froese sees parallels between driving the honey wagon and dealing with historical cases of sexual misconduct by church leaders.



Rudy-Froese

“Dealing with old abuse cases isn’t an appealing task either,” she said. “But it’s also essential for a healthy church.”

Since starting her role in 2018, she has dealt with three cases of abuse by former church leaders with national reputations — Wilmer Martin, John Neufeld and Frank H. Epp — more than any other Mennonite conference in Canada and the U.S. in that time frame.

Why so many? Rudy-Froese credits MCEC leaders and others who came before her for developing policies and procedures that tell survivors MCEC will take their stories seriously.

She gives special praise to David Martin, who retired as MCEC executive minister in 2020, citing his work on the Vernon Leis case in 2015.

“David’s work set the stage,” she said. Despite taking a lot of criticism, “he showed that the conference was willing to listen to victims and then act.”

Along with that, she credits the larger #MeToo movement for helping victims feel freer to share about abuse they had suffered in the past.

**WHILE IT IS UNUSUAL** to have so many cases in such a short time, she doesn’t think MCEC is unique.

“I’m sure there are victims out there in other places,” she said. “The key is

whether they feel safe going to conference leaders in their provinces or states to share their stories.”

Although she feels good about how MCEC has responded, it hasn’t been easy.

“Dealing with those cases came at a cost,” she said. There was lots of criticism from some who felt MCEC should have left those men alone — especially those who were seen as great leaders in the church.

“The problem with putting people on a pedestal is we don’t know how to take them off when it is appropriate to do so,” Rudy-Froese said. She compared the exercise to how hard it has been in Canada to deal with statues of politicians and others who supported policies that harmed Indigenous people.

And yet, it’s imperative to do that when wrong has been done.

“If the church is to have a witness in the world, if it is to have integrity, it needs to speak the truth about those harmful things and hold people to account,” she said.

**THOUGH MCEC HAS HAD** more experience than other conferences in dealing with historical abuse cases, Rudy-Froese resists thinking they have become the experts.

“We are still finding our way,” she said. One of the things they learned after the most recent case was the need for an independent place where survivors could go to tell their stories.

Through an outside counseling agency, MCEC has created an “arms-length” service where survivors can feel safe. Not everyone feels comfortable going to the organization that once employed their abusers.

“It’s hard for victims to tell their stories,” Rudy-Froese said. “It’s re-traumatizing. We wanted to create the best environment for them. I think our processes today are as good as they can be, but we always want to do better.”

— John Longhurst

# Dove’s Nest director resigns

**AFTER ALMOST SIX YEARS** of service, Anna Groff, executive director of the abuse-prevention organization Dove’s Nest, submitted her resignation July 26. She will be an assistant professor of communication at Goshen College this fall.

Dove’s Nest began as a grassroots movement at the 2009 Mennonite Church USA convention. In 2012, the Dove’s Nest board decided to



Groff

broaden the scope beyond Mennonite churches to further fulfill its mission to equip faith communities to keep children and youth safe.

“I am humbled by the many churches and individuals that supported our work and who bravely prioritized children’s safety,” Groff said.

With board and staff, Groff grew the size and scope of trainings, increased the number of speaker bureau members, created online and video trainings and started a consultation service for policies and situations.

Groff worked with Jeanette Harder, Dove’s Nest cofounder and board member, to provide cultural awareness trainings to social services in areas with Plain communities. Dove’s Nest facilitated the Safe Children Project, a partnership with Plain community members, to distribute *For the Sake of a Child: Love, Safety and Abuse in our Plain Communities* to over 46,000 Plain community families.

“We are continuing to offer resources, trainings and consultations, which have been an area of growth despite the pandemic,” said board chair Nancy Kauffmann.

Kathy Haake will continue as associate director. — Dove’s Nest

# Vaccine suspicion pushes conservative families in Canada to emigrate

## Misinformation, mistrust make Latin American destinations more attractive

**OPPOSITION TO COVID-19** vaccinations is causing some Low German-speaking Mennonites in Manitoba to leave for places like Mexico, Paraguay and Bolivia.

The *Winnipeg Free Press* reported more than 100 Low German-speaking Mennonites from southern Manitoba have left the country in the last three months, with more likely to follow.

“They are trying to get out of Manitoba as fast as possible,” said Winkler immigration consultant Mary Friesen.

The moves have been prompted by government campaigns encouraging people to get vaccinated. Some are

leaving because they worry proof of vaccination may be required to cross the border in the future.

The Low German-speaking Mennonites, also known as *Kanadier* Mennonites, have dual citizenship in Canada and countries in Central and South America, allowing them to move between places.

In Manitoba, they mainly live in the Winkler area southeast of Winnipeg, making up a quarter of the population of 25,000 people in the city and surrounding municipality of Stanley. Those areas have the province’s lowest vaccination rates. About 27% of

Winkler residents are vaccinated; only 14% in Stanley.

*Kanadier* Mennonites vaccine opposition is based on historical mistrust of government but also misinformation circulating on social media, said Kenneth Giesbrecht, editor of *Die Mennonitische Post*.

He said misinformation includes vaccine-borne government-control tracking chips, infertility, end times and the biblical “mark of the beast,” and that getting vaccinated will result in a mass die-off.

“There is so much false information out there,” he said, adding that they are also leaving because they feel this is just the first step in more government control. “The issue is splitting families apart, with non-vaccinated people breaking off contact with vaccinated people.”

**THE POST, WHICH IS** aimed at Low German-speakers across North and South America, “tries to be a reliable source of information” about the pandemic for its 12,000 subscribers, Giesbrecht said.

This has resulted in canceled subscriptions, since “lots of people don’t consider my information accurate,” he said.

Giesbrecht warned in a recent editorial that discontent with the government rarely goes away when switching countries.

“Those who run away from problems and things they don’t like will probably bring most of them with them,” he wrote. “You can’t run away from problems, mainly because you are generally the biggest problem yourself. . . . Very often the ‘grass in another country’ is only greener because we don’t know so much about that country, because most things in life always look better and rosier from a distance.”

## An Anabaptist Resource for the Turbulent 2020s

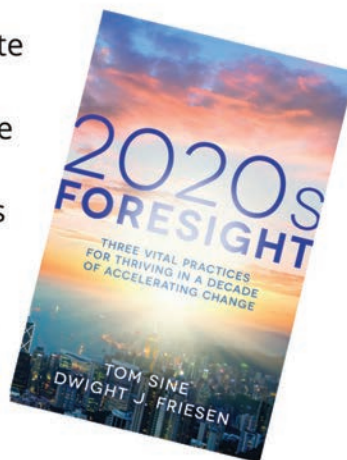
Looking for a resource to anticipate and creatively respond to the incoming waves of change that are likely to impact our lives, communities, and churches in this decade of accelerating change?

Check out ***2020s Foresight: Three Vital Practices for Thriving in a Decade of Accelerating Change***.

A new book by Tom Sine and Dwight J. Friesen.

Designed as a study book with questions at the end of each chapter and a free webinar to get started. Tom Sine is available for a Zoom visit to one of your final sessions if you contact him ahead of time:

[twisine@gmail.com](mailto:twisine@gmail.com) and [www.newchangemakers.com](http://www.newchangemakers.com)



Giesbrecht knows COVID is real, based on increased obituaries.

“We usually have 500 to 600, but we had over 1,000 last year,” he said, noting most don’t mention COVID but say the cause of death was a lung infection.

The paper is on pace for a similar number of obituaries this year.

**GIESBRECHT HAS HEARD** the virus is hitting colonies in Paraguay, Belize and Bolivia hard, such as one extended family in which eight adults died and another where a husband, two sons and an uncle all died in one week. Three of his own cousins in Paraguay died in May.

“My sense is the colonies are being hit hard,” he said. “People agree it is a serious illness but are not willing to get vaccinated or stop gathering or practice social distancing.”

Abe Janzen, a former executive director of MCC Alberta who is involved with Low German-speaking Mennonites in northern Alberta, has heard of some who are leaving that province, where resistance to vaccination is high.

“Some are getting vaccinated, but they won’t tell anyone” for fear of being ostracized, he said. “I hear wild stories about the vaccine.”

People he talks to say they won’t let the government tell them what to do, and they need to be separate from the world.

“They are also quite fatalistic about life,” he said, seeing death from COVID as part of God’s will.

**ABE HARMS**, executive director of Mennonite Community Services in Aylmer, Ont., which serves Low German Mennonites in southwestern Ontario, promotes vaccinations and other ways of preventing illness from the virus.

“But they don’t believe us,” he said. “They are very opposed to the vaccine, and to restrictions.”

He has also heard of a few families leaving Ontario for Mexico, but nobody has told him directly it is due to vaccines.

As in southern Manitoba, vaccination rates in the Aylmer area are low.

“We have the lowest uptake of anywhere in Ontario,” he said. ●



Participants from around the world take part in Mennonite World Conference's bimonthly online prayer hour in July. PHOTO: MENNONITE WORLD CONFERENCE

## Online prayer gatherings span global concerns

**DESPITE A TWO-DAY HEADACHE** and recovery from a COVID-19 infection, Madhur Lakra logged on at 7:30 p.m. local time to pray.

Not only did he participate, he led a Hindi prayer room for Mennonite World Conference's bimonthly online prayer hour in July.

After a welcome in English with simultaneous interpretation, the 100 participants on the Zoom call broke into “rooms” for small-group prayer in English, Spanish, French, Hindi and Indonesian.

“Prayer is the act which God instituted that we should enjoy and must practice also with our global family members,” said Madhur Lakra, English pastor at Hastings Chapel in Kolkata, India, a part of the MWC member India United Missionary Church (*Bharatiya Jukta Christo Prachar Mandli*, BJCPM). “MWC prayer hour gives us a better understanding about other Christian brothers and sisters and gives us a sense of belonging to the greater family.”

In the Hindi room, diversity was evident in the six participants: from Brethren in Christ Odisha, Bihar Mennonite Mandli, BJCPM, Dham-

tari Mennonite Church and BIC Nepal.

By the end of the hour, Lakra’s headache was gone.

Breakout room leaders prayed for:

- Christians in India experiencing government hostility;
- church leaders in Austria struggling financially;
- good governance in Indian Mennonite conferences;
- people suffering from police violence in Colombia;
- perseverance and hope amid rising COVID cases in Indonesia;
- vaccine availability in Nepal amid instability;
- political leadership in Haiti;
- the civil situation in Argentina;
- crisis flooding in Germany and Belgium;
- those suffering violence in Ethiopia’s Tigray region; and
- those who receive misinformation about vaccinations, that they would know the truth.

The next online prayer hour events will be Sept. 17 and Nov. 19. Register at [mwc-ccm.org/node/4055](http://mwc-ccm.org/node/4055). ●

# MB church plant has global reach

From base in California, Ethiopian pastor builds a multicultural community

**SITUATED IN CALIFORNIA'S** Silicon Valley, KCulture Church, a church plant in the U.S. Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches, reaches a global audience — from the United Kingdom to South Africa to Australia and across the United States.

With a strategy patterned after the area's technology giants, Pastor Moni Worku has a vision for a church that focuses less on what happens within the four walls of a building and more on broadcasting a message via social media.

"Are we a different church? Yes," Worku said. "Does my vision scare a lot of people? Absolutely. Because it's never been done before. But great influence comes with something that is different.

"We're not changing the message. We're changing the method of how things are done."

KCulture Church broadcasts its services on YouTube, with additional content on Instagram and TikTok.

Geared toward ages 18-40, KCulture services include a welcome, worship, announcements, an invitation to give via PayPal or Cash App, and a sermon.

People around the world are tuning in.

"It's a global church from the launch," said Brian Wiebe, chair of the Pacific District Conference Board of Home Mission. "I've never seen or experienced anything like this. I really don't know how to coach [Moni]. All I can do is encourage him. It's just awesome."

The church is still in the pre-launch stage, and Wiebe said the timeline is moving so quickly that PDC has not yet officially adopted the project but intends to do so. Worku, who is in the licensing process, received full approval at a church planters' assessment in Orlando.

**THE "K" IN KCULTURE** stands for "kingdom."



Pastor Moni Worku preaches during a KCulture Church worship service on YouTube.

PHOTO: KCULTURE CHURCH

"Because we are mainly on social media, and we're really riding this technology wave, it allows for our church to be in multiple places at the same time," Worku said. "It's helping us expand the kingdom of God."

Worku, a first-generation American whose parents immigrated from Ethiopia, wasn't always set on even pursuing ministry.

**"We are mainly on social media, and we're really riding this technology wave." — Moni Worku**

As a student in nursing school in Olathe, Kan., Worku fell in love with Jesus. He called his uncle, Tariku Sharku, associate pastor at Ethiopian Christian Fellowship, a USMB congregation in Santa Clara, Calif., to express his desire to learn about Jesus.

Sharku advised Worku to pray, and upon seeing Worku's conviction invited

him to move to California. He left nursing school to pursue a Christian leadership degree, which he completed at William Jessup University in 2019.

Worku began serving at Ethiopian Christian Fellowship, organizing music and teaching the youth group. He started a young-adult ministry, calling it Kingdom Culture, for those who might not fit with ECF's service in Amharic.

Then the pandemic hit, and church leaders decided to quit meeting in person.

"I didn't know which direction to go with the young-adult ministry," Worku said. "A lot of young adults were stuck at home, and it was really hard to pastor people."

**WORKU STARTED A 30-DAY** devotionals on Instagram Live in April 2020. During the hourlong video, Worku shared how the gospel had impacted his life.

As people shared the devotionals in group chats and text messages, more began tuning in — first 25, then 45, then close to 60 on Easter Sunday, six of whom accepted Jesus. By the end of the 30 days, 100 people were participating.

With between 40 and 50 people connected and tuning in regularly, KCulture Church started women's and men's Bible studies on Zoom.

"Coming out of an Ethiopian culture, my greatest fear was to be limited to one culture but, by his grace, we are able to make it a multiethnic and multicultural church," Worku said.

"We have African Americans, Hispanics, Ethiopians, Caucasians. We're all over the place, and I love it because it really paints an amazing picture of the kingdom of God." ●

**Janae Rempel** is associate editor of the U.S. Mennonite Brethren magazine *Christian Leader*.



# Scholar shaped vision for mission

**UNTIL THE LAST** several months of his life, missiologist and professor Wilbert R. Shenk, 86, who died July 13, continued to teach.



Shenk

This fall, a group of Korean students in the School of Intercultural Studies at Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, Calif., will receive a translation of his final set of class notes.

Juanita G. Shenk, Wilbert's wife of 63 years, shared this story during a telephone interview from her home at Greencroft Communities in Goshen, Ind., where her husband received hospice care the final two weeks of his life.

"Wilbert had been traveling, periodically, back to Fuller, where he served as senior professor and taught short courses," said Juanita, who married Wilbert after they met at Hesston College in the early 1950s. "One of the last work things he did was to send off his final lecture to the translator."

For decades, Shenk served in missiological vision-casting, seminary teaching and executive leadership, moving beyond Mennonite institutions to impact global missiology.

Born Jan. 16, 1935, near Sheridan, Ore., Shenk graduated from Goshen College in 1955. He was a Mennonite Central Committee worker in Indonesia from 1955 to 1959 and an administrator for MCC from 1963 to 1965. From 1965 to 1990 he was an administrator for Mennonite Board of Missions.

John A. Lapp, former executive director of MCC, said Shenk was a leader in building cooperation between MCC and MBM.

"He emphasized the theological grounding of mission activity," Lapp said. "He was ecumenical in the finest sense."

He was instrumental in launching the Council for International Anabaptist Ministries and birthing *Mission Focus*, a mission journal, now called *Anabaptist Witness*.

With a doctoral degree from the University of Aberdeen, Scotland,

Shenk taught at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary from 1990 to 1995. From 1995 to 2005 he was senior professor of mission history and contemporary culture at Fuller.

The Koreans at Fuller are some of the many students Shenk mentored and befriended. Others included staff at Mennonite Mission Network, who said his missiological vision — partnering with global communities in which God is already at work — shapes how MMN carries out its call today.

James Krabill said Shenk was his first boss at MBM when Krabill served in West Africa.

"The work where he was most insightful involved Indigenous movements, including those with African Initiated Churches and in Argentina, as well as guiding those who would establish urban, Anabaptist centers in Europe," Krabill said.

Mike Sherrill, MMN executive director, said Shenk was his favorite missiologist.

"His academics were always balanced with grace, humility and love for humanity," Sherrill said. ●

# Mexico warns to stop cutting jungles

**THE MEXICAN GOVERNMENT** said Aug. 12 it has reached a preliminary agreement with Mennonites living in southern Mexico to stop cutting down low jungle to plant crops.

The Environment Department said the agreement covered Mennonite communities in the state of Campeche, on the Yucatan Peninsula. Mennonites there have roots in northern Mexico dating back to the 1920s, and many are dual citizens of Mexico and Canada. The citizenship status of those involved in the agreement is not clear.

In the 1980s, Mennonites began moving south, deeper into Mexico, settling in the Yucatan area.

The department said they cut down trees to establish highly mechanized farms using herbicides, pesticides and



Mexico has warned Mennonites in Campeche to stop cutting jungle. PHOTO: WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

genetically modified crops.

The agreement requires "the Mennonite communities to commit themselves to stopping all activities that result in deforestation," according to the department.

Negotiations will continue on implementing "more nature-friendly" farming practices and resolving land-title issues.

In 2018, Mexico fined one Mennonite community \$540,000 for clearing tropical vegetation in Quintana Roo state, also on the Yucatan Peninsula.

The Attorney General for Environmental Protection said members of the community removed plants including endangered chit palm and jobillo trees from 3,251 acres that are home to a protected olive-throated parakeet.

Indigenous Maya have long used the fronds of the chit palm to thatch roofs and make brooms, while fishermen have been known to construct lobster traps from its stems. The plant has become so scarce that Mexican law forbids removing the palms. The jobillo is a flowering tree in the cashew family coveted for wood floors.

— *Associated Press*

## MHF annual gathering to focus on provider resilience

Mennonite Healthcare Fellowship's annual gathering will focus on provider resilience in a Sept. 17-19 virtual event.

MHF has sponsored several virtual conversations, support sessions and times of prayer for health-care providers to reflect on how their faith has shaped their response to COVID-19, and that will continue at this year's event.

Many health-care providers and MHF members have been on the pandemic's "front lines," but many also resist this term, noting that military language has often dominated discourse.

The annual gathering's featured event will be a two-hour training on "Strategies for Trauma Awareness and Resilience," or "STAR," provided in a partnership with the Minnesota Peacebuilding Leadership Institute. The training will be a chance to acknowledge struggles faced in the last year and learn skills for resilience, all from an Anabaptist-aligned framework.

Friday night's plenary will be the launch of a new project for MHF, applying Doris Janzen Longacre's "Five Life Standards" from her 1976 book *More with Less* to health care.

Registration is at [eventbrite.com](https://eventbrite.com).

— Mennonite Healthcare Fellowship

## MVS director to lead new MMN ventures division

Marisa Smucker, director of Mennonite Mission Network's Mennonite Voluntary Service, has been named senior executive for MMN's new ventures division.



Smucker

One of three divisions created in a realignment, ventures combines the former resourcing and mobilization and international partner engagement departments. Smucker will oversee the team creating and maintaining collaborative programs and services

for constituents and partners.

Smucker began at MMN in 2016. After graduating from Goshen College with a degree in social work, she participated in PULSE (Pittsburgh Urban Leadership Service Experience) and worked with churches and schools to provide resources for disadvantaged children and youth. While attending Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, she felt called to return to her birth country, Costa Rica. There, she assisted with short-term mission groups, taught English and sixth grade. After returning to the U.S., she began leading MVS in 2019.

This is the first new senior executive position to be filled in a realignment process. Five divisions were streamlined to three: ventures, operations and advancement. Wil LaVeist is senior executive for advancement. The senior executive for operations position is yet to be filled.

— Mennonite Mission Network

## Disabilities network hires resource director

Kate Szambecki joined Anabaptist Disabilities Network as resource director on Aug. 2. A student at Eastern Mennonite University, she will graduate in the spring with bachelor's degrees in English and writing studies and a minor in digital communications. She grew up in Newton, Kan., where she attended Shalom Mennonite Church.

She will be responsible for ADN's social media, blog and newsletter, as well as strengthening its network of churches, advocates and disability resources. — ADN

## Ohio retirement community enters operations agreement

Mennonite Home Communities of Ohio announced a three-year management agreement with Brethren Retirement Com-

## Devotional card deck: 'Pause: Play, Breathe, Pray'

The faith formation ministry of Mennonite Church USA has released an interactive, devotional card deck for families, "Pause: Play, Breathe, Pray."

The resource was developed as a passion project by six Mennonite pastors and lay leaders and led by Shana Peachey Boshart, denominational minister for faith formation.

The deck consists of 40 reflection cards, with instructions and tips. Cards contain prompts for an individual or family to reflect on feelings and attitudes, as well as Scripture. Many of the cards include physical or creative activities, and some encourage using the *Voices Together* hymnal.

The cards can have many uses, such as a quick devotional, conversation starter, an aid to communicate feelings or a way to step back from a tense situation.

One side of each card has an image created by Charlottesville Mennonite Church co-pastor Maren Hange, who provided nature watercolors, or Hyattsville Mennonite



"Pause: Play, Breathe, Pray" is a new devotional card deck developed by a group who came together within Mennonite Church USA's faith formation ministry. PHOTO: MENNONITE CHURCH USA

Church associate pastor Michelle Burkholder, who primarily contributed black-and-white paper-cutting designs.

Other members of the group include Chicago Community Mennonite Church Pastor Alison Casella Brookins, Rainbow Mennonite Church director of faith formation Sarah Neher, Waterford Mennonite Church

pastor of family life ministry Katie Misz and Raleigh Mennonite Church children and youth pastor Rachel Taylor.

The cards are available at the Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary bookstore in Elkhart, Ind., or [ambs.populiweb.com/router/bookstore](https://ambs.populiweb.com/router/bookstore).

— Mennonite Church USA.

munities, located in Greenville, Ohio. MCO operates facilities in Bluffton and Pandora.

MCO board chair Elizabeth Kelly said the agreement follows a 2019 consultation agreement with BRC and is not a sale or merger.

"BRC will work with us to renew our existing bonds, create a multiyear strategic plan and work on mutually developed goals and metrics to gain fiscal stability and security," she said.

BRC's primary role will take place at the corporate level, in areas such as finance, operations, human resources, risk management and other business office and administrative functions.

— *Anabaptist World*

## Police investigating possible Sask. residential school death

The Saskatchewan Royal Canadian Mounted Police Historical Case Unit-North is investigating a death that might have taken place in 1974 at a residential school operated by what is now the Be in Christ Church (formerly Brethren in Christ).

The Prince Albert *Daily Herald* reported the death might have happened at Timber Bay Children's Home near Montreal Lake. Indigenous children from across northern Saskatchewan were sent there until 1994.

The home, funded by the government under various names, was run by the Northern Canada Evangelical Mission until 1969, when the BIC Church took over.

Thus far, the federal government has not officially recognized Timber Bay as a residential school, leaving it out of the settlement process established by Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

More than 1,300 unmarked graves have been found at sites of former residential schools this year in western Canada.

— *Anabaptist World*

## MCC curriculum teaches resolving church conflict

To help people work through divisive issues in their congregations, Mennonite Central Committee U.S. has produced a new curriculum, *Peaceful Practices: A Guide to Healthy Communication in Conflict*. It invites churchgoers to follow Jesus' call to peacemaking through dialogue. Each of the nine sessions has a peaceful practice, biblical reflection, conflict transformation tool, at-home reflection questions, group activity, closing blessing and resources to go deeper.

To download or order a print copy, visit [mcc.org/peaceful-practices](http://mcc.org/peaceful-practices). — MCC



At the Capitol in Washington, Sen. Todd Young of Indiana meets on July 28 with Center for Sustainable Climate Solutions Climate Ride participants Greta Lapp Klassen, Sierra Ross Richer, Anna Paetkau and Doug Kaufman. PHOTO: TAMMY ALEXANDER/MCC

## Cross-country bicycle ride for climate reaches capital

After two months and almost 4,000 miles, 17 climate riders with the Center for Sustainable Climate Solutions Climate Ride bicycled onto the National Mall July 28 in Washington, D.C.

The journey began May 31 in Seattle and was not finished until riders split into groups for advocacy meetings with senators and representatives, with assistance from Mennonite Central Committee's Washington Office.

The ride made stops at churches and

other venues across the country for in-person and virtual town hall events on climate and land issues.

In addition to making presentations, the riders learned from others, including a group of recent immigrants from the Democratic Republic of Congo, an Amish community practicing sustainable agriculture and a community effort to promote solar energy solutions.

The Center for Sustainable Climate Solutions is a collaborative initiative of Eastern Mennonite University, Goshen College and Mennonite Central Committee. — *Anabaptist World*

# Plans in place for return to classroom

## Vaccine requirements vary; some institutions offer financial incentives

**MENNONITE COLLEGES** and universities returning to classrooms this fall are using everything from blanket requirements to cash prizes to encourage students and staff to get COVID-19 vaccinations.

**EASTERN MENNONITE UNIVERSITY** and **GOSHEN COLLEGE** are requiring all students to be vaccinated — EMU before students arrive on campus, Goshen within a week after the U.S. Food and Drug Administration gives full approval. Both will allow students to seek a waiver for medical or religious exemption.

At EMU, proof of vaccination may be a requirement to participate in off-campus experiences such as internships, mentorships and cross-cultural programs. Faculty and staff will not be required to be vaccinated. Everyone is required to wear masks indoors regardless of vaccination status for the first three weeks.

Goshen is not requiring employees to be vaccinated, but those who aren't must get a weekly test, along with any unvaccinated students who have a medical or religious exemption. Masks will be required for everyone in shared public spaces until 90% of students and employees are vaccinated.

After having online-only instruction all of the last academic year, **FRESNO PACIFIC UNIVERSITY** is back to in-person instruction and requiring all residential students and student-athletes to be vaccinated before returning to the main campus.

"Everyone is highly encouraged to be vaccinated," but religious beliefs and health issues will be respected. The unvaccinated will be required to wear masks, which are required for everyone indoors.

Other institutions are refraining from requirements, turning instead to consequences and incentives.



Bethel College tennis coach Gabe Johnson, left, helps students register and move into dorms in early August. PHOTO: CHASE DEMPSEY/BETHEL COLLEGE

**BLUFFTON UNIVERSITY** students and employees are "strongly encouraged to obtain a vaccination," but this will not be mandated. Because the NCAA is considering weekly testing for athletes who are not vaccinated and for teams that do not have an 85% vaccination rate, any student athlete who chooses not to be vaccinated will pay for their testing costs three times a week.

If an outbreak occurs on campus, unvaccinated students may be required to participate in random testing. No isolation or quarantine spaces will be provided.

**BETHEL COLLEGE** is not requiring COVID vaccinations but is paying every vaccinated student and employee \$250. The funds come from the Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund III, a federal program created in March to ensure learning continues during the pandemic. All vaccinated individuals will be entered in drawings that will award three \$1,887 prizes, representing the year the college was founded, Oct. 2 during Fall Festival.

Masks will be required of everyone in indoor groups of 10 or more. Unvaccinated individuals must wear masks as well in smaller groups.

**HESSTON COLLEGE** is giving \$20 Amazon gift cards to vaccinated students. Policy requires masks "be worn when in an indoor shared space when in the presence of others." Quarantined students will pay daily meal-delivery fees, and the college may impose on athletes measures more stringent than dictated by governing bodies.

**TABOR COLLEGE** "students and employees are strongly encouraged to be vaccinated," and two vaccination clinics will be held at the beginning of the semester, but shots are not required. Vaccinated individuals will not have to quarantine if they are exposed to someone with COVID. "A modest dollar amount" will be added to vaccinated students' accounts for purchases around campus. No physical distancing is planned, and all events are open to the public with no restrictions.

**CANADIAN MENNONITE UNIVERSITY** is not mandating vaccinations for students and staff, in compliance with Canadian law, but requests all members of its learning community consider being vaccinated as a form of social responsibility and expression of care for others. As of July, a voluntary anonymous survey of staff showed 95% indicated they are vaccinated.

CMU anticipates holding 90% of classes in-person, with 10% online, along with some hybrid extensions of classes for students who cannot attend for COVID-related reasons.

**CONRAD GREBEL UNIVERSITY COLLEGE** is supporting advocacy efforts to Ontario's provincial government to make vaccination mandatory for anyone studying or working at post-secondary institutions. Grebel is requiring vaccination to live in its residences. Anonymous declaration of vaccination status will be required to be on campus. This data will be used to plan health and safety strategies. ●

# Mennonite Brethren seminary leader leaving for accreditation role



Fresno Pacific Biblical Seminary dean Valerie Rempel has accepted the role as a director of accreditation at the Association of Theological Schools in the United States and Canada.

PHOTO: FRESNO PACIFIC UNIVERSITY

**VALERIE REMPEL** is stepping down as vice president and dean of Fresno Pacific Biblical Seminary at Fresno Pacific University to become a director of accreditation at the Association of Theological Schools in the United States and Canada, effective Aug. 30.

Rempel joined the seminary faculty in 1996 and was appointed dean in 2014 and vice president in 2019. She also served as associate professor and J.B. Toews chair of history and theology and was a past director of the Center for Anabaptist Studies.

“We congratulate Valerie on her new position and look forward to seeing the impact she will have on the education of seminarians at the institutional level,” said FPU President Joseph Jones. “Valerie’s focus has always been to help students grow in their knowledge of

and love for Jesus and his church and pass that on in their work and life.”

ATS includes more than 270 graduate schools offering postbaccalaureate degree programs in ministry, teaching and research in the theological disciplines.

Rempel has master’s and doctoral degrees from Vanderbilt University, a master’s degree from what is now Fresno Pacific Biblical Seminary and a bachelor’s degree from Tabor College. She was elected to the ATS Board of Commissioners in 2020, serves on Mennonite World Conference’s Faith and Life Commission and is a member of Willow Avenue Mennonite Church in Clovis, Calif.

Tim Geddert, professor and program director of New Testament, will act as interim dean of FPBS. ●

# Conrad Grebel hosts global conference on spirituality and aging

**CONRAD GREBEL UNIVERSITY COLLEGE** hosted the International Conference on Aging and Spirituality across three weeks in June. Health care experts from around the globe gathered virtually to advance the connections between spiritual practice and the effects of aging.

Started in Australia in 2000, the conference had previously been hosted in the United Kingdom, New Zealand, Scotland and the United States. The conference was to be held at Grebel in 2021 until the pandemic brought world travel and in-person events to a stop.

The virtual approach created a version of the conference that connects more people simultaneously than

in-person conferences had previously allowed.

Speakers covered topics on COVID-19 and pandemic care in elder spaces, moral injury, medicine and spiritual well-being, workplace engagement, dementia, oral traditions in Afro-Indigenous communities, mental health and art interventions.

Participants also heard directly from elders, who were encouraged to send in 60-second clips describing what has helped them feel connected during the pandemic.

“The conference has been an opportunity for researchers from a variety of disciplines, along with spiritual care practitioners, to collaborate — sharing observations and research

findings and learning together about spiritual needs we hold in common across religions and cultures as we grow older,” said Jane Kuepfer, Schlegel specialist in spirituality and aging at Grebel.

“It’s also an opportunity to engage diverse resources, like the Australian Aboriginal practice of *Dadirri*, the *Ba’al Shem Tov’s* three-step approach to unwelcome experiences (Jewish) or the use of storytelling and song by East African elders.”

An in-person conference will take place in 2022 on Grebel’s campus, continuing this year’s theme and discussions in person.

— Margaret Gissing,  
Conrad Grebel University College

# CMU working on projects to support Indigenous students

**INITIATIVES TO WELCOME** and include Indigenous students at Canadian Mennonite University are gaining momentum.

Christy Anderson, instructor and Indigenous engagement adviser, was hired in 2020 to provide institutional support and teach courses.

“My experience at CMU was very Christian-centered,” said the 2011 graduate of her time as a student over a decade ago. “There were no Indigenous history classes and no real conversations about colonization.”

Now, Anderson said, “I notice already that there is a lot more happening in terms of building more awareness of our shared Indigenous-settler histories, and CMU is doing more for Indigenous students in terms of resources and programming.”

She is facilitating a faculty workshop for CMU professors and student life staff to learn about antiracist practices, decolonizing education and how to become better allies.

Many initiatives have been put into



Canadian Mennonite University's Indigenous student lounge is painted in the colors of the medicine wheel. PHOTO: CANADIAN MENNONITE UNIVERSITY

action by the Indigenous Student Group. The group has worked on projects such as a new Indigenous student lounge, a four-day ceremonial fire in the Assiniboine forest commemorating missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls, and the planned construction of a tipi on the campus.

Conversations about construction of a tipi began in 2018. Charlie Peronto, dean of student life, said it is to “be a place to gather, to be Indigenous-led, to receive teachings from elders, to de-

marcate a place on campus for Indigenous people, to decolonize our land and space in a way that makes Indigenous students feel more welcome.”

The creation of a new Indigenous student lounge, painted with the colors of the medicine wheel and enclosed with a ventilation system favorable to smudging (a traditional ceremony), will be used as a safe location for students to practice their spirituality, host elders during the winter months, eat lunch and study. ●

## Tabor launches sports management MBA degree

Tabor College is starting a master's degree in business administration this fall focused on sports management and leadership.

Amy Ratzlaff, associate dean of the School of Professional Studies and assistant athletic director, will direct the two-year program, which was approved this spring. The courses will consist of eight weeks of online sessions.

Ratzlaff said many students in health and human performance majors choose to go to graduate school and can now stay at Tabor.

“There are students who are going to be juniors in the classroom and freshmen in eligibility,” she said. “To help them progress academically and athletically, we had to have a solution, and we had to have it right away.”

The program can also connect with students who aspire to work in athletics in accounting, finance and marketing.

With an additional year of eligibility because of COVID-19, athletes can extend their stay at Tabor. A high number of these athletes have majors that correlate with this master's degree. — *Tabor College*

## Bethel adds software development major

Bethel College is adding a major in software development, set to begin in August 2022.

The program was developed by Bethel faculty who consulted with a group of alumni experts in computer-related fields. The major will include courses in graphical user interfaces, web app development and programming languages, along with software design and development.

There will also be a minor for students

looking to acquire software skills applicable to their major and a graduate-school track to prepare those who want to pursue advanced study in computer science.

— *Bethel College*

## Tabor honors inaugural class in Arts Hall of Fame

The first class of the Tabor College Arts Hall of Fame is being inducted Aug. 28.

Eight selections span opera, visual arts, band, choir and theater. Inductees include Carl Gerbrandt, A.R. Ebel, Malinda Nikkel, Jack Braun, Lonn Richards, Herbert C. Richert, Paul Wohlgenuth and Jonah Kliewer.

A banquet precedes the 7:30 p.m. inauguration ceremony in Richert Auditorium.

The Arts Hall of Fame was created to recognize alumni and former faculty who have contributed in extraordinary ways in music, theater or art. — *Tabor College*

# Goshen alumni contribute to Pfizer vaccine development

## TWO GOSHEN COLLEGE ALUMNI

played important roles in the development of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine against COVID-19. Robert Lerch, head of lab and site management and business operations at Pfizer, and Mark Wittrig, senior director of quality assurance at Pfizer, both graduated from Goshen in 1984.



Lerch

Three months after the first known cases of COVID-19 were reported in December 2019, Pfizer released its initial plan for combating the pandemic and announced it would partner with German pharmaceutical company BioNTech to develop a vaccine.

As senior director of vaccine research, Lerch was responsible for many parts of the vaccine development process, including fulfilling lab and office space needs, keeping track of budgets and ensuring Pfizer had enough scientists and researchers to move the project forward. He said the hardest part of the process was the pandemic's global scale.

"The initiation of the collaboration with BioNTech to develop the COVID vaccine actually meant ramping up activities while trying to minimize potential pandemic impact," he said. "That was the biggest challenge for



Wittrig

me: keeping work going to create new space for the ever-growing COVID vaccine program while managing supplies and activities amid pandemic shortages and restrictions."

**MEANWHILE**, Mark Wittrig began work on the quality and regulatory aspects of the vaccine at Pfizer's manu-

facturing site in Kalamazoo, Mich.

"I worked very closely with scientists to ensure that every new process, new piece of equipment and new testing procedure was qualified and validated," he said.

Once Pfizer and BioNTech successfully developed a vaccine against COVID-19, the companies needed to determine how to get it to as many people as possible, scaling up operations dramatically.

**"Instead of making a dozen doses a day in a lab, we needed to be able to make millions of doses a day." — Mark Wittrig**

"Instead of making a dozen doses a day in a lab, we needed to be able to make millions of doses a day," Wittrig said. "We converted facilities that formerly produced other sterile products so that they could make the millions of doses of the vaccine that we needed."

**HIS TEAM AT KALAMAZOO** is now distributing about 15 million vaccine doses a week. Most are being sent to Canada, Japan and Latin America.

"Pfizer will distribute three billion doses this year and has plans to produce four billion doses in 2022," Wittrig said. "The majority of those doses will be distributed at a discounted cost or free."

He added that there is still much to do, updating processes to become even more efficient.


"This is the best project I've worked on in my entire career because it has helped and will help so many people," he said. "It's the reason I got into the pharmaceutical industry 37 years ago."

Lerch is hopeful for the vaccine's fu-

ture and attributed some of his interest in vaccine research and public health to his Goshen education.

"Early on, working for a biopharmaceutical company seemed a little at odds with the Culture for Service motto," he said. "However, in my 27-year career with Pfizer Vaccine Research and Development, I've had the privilege to work on multiple vaccines, including COVID-19, which have saved millions of lives and had a significant impact on public health."

Lerch added that his time at Goshen helped him to learn to "think critically and understand that science doesn't have all the answers. Sometimes you just have to have faith." ●



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# #MeToo and boys

*Men are afraid that women will laugh at them. Women are afraid that men will kill them.* —Margaret Atwood

IT HAS BEEN ALMOST four years since the #MeToo movement inspired thousands of women to publicly share their stories of being sexually harassed or abused. As the testimonies poured in and the public pressure built, society began to hold men accountable for their sexually inappropriate actions with a level of scrutiny and intensity that I think surprised everyone.

Though it was mostly famous men in the headlines, males everywhere were forced to analyze, many for the first time, how their words and actions affected the women around them. This includes the subtler forms of harassment: the predatory gaze, the insinuating tone of voice, the lewd language, the intimidation. Men could no longer hide behind “I didn’t touch her” or “I didn’t actually force her to do anything.”

As I read the #MeToo news stories each morning I’d look over at my 5-year-old boy eating his Cheerios and felt gratitude that he would become a man in a world that expected healthier and more equitable male-female relationships.

## Sin does not begin with an action but with a belief. Here are some right beliefs I would pass on to my son.

He had much to learn. Don’t whistle or catcall. Keep your eyes on a girl’s face no matter what she is wearing. Respect girls. Be clear about giving and getting consent. Keep your hands to yourself. Don’t rate a girl’s looks with numbers. Doing something “like a girl” is a compliment. Don’t talk about private parts.

But somewhere along the way I realized that, while good and necessary, all these dos and don’ts only treat the symptoms of misogyny, not its root thoughts and beliefs.

Jesus spoke to this in the Sermon on the Mount when he redefined adultery as an intention more than an action: “But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.”

I appreciate what Jesus is doing here, but I feel like further clarification is needed concerning the concept of lust. Lust is defined as “a passionate desire for something.” To desire something isn’t bad, so at what point does a desire become so passionate it is sin?

**MY LITTLE BOY** is about to turn 10 years old now. He’s currently unconcerned about females in general, but in a few short years I imagine he will care about girls quite a bit. He will, to keep our terminology consistent,

desire them. How will he know if he is desiring or lusting?

I think sexual desire becomes corrupt when it is coupled with the need to dominate and control. This is manifest in nonconsensual physical contact like date rape or the handsy boss.

The desire to dominate also comes out in demeaning language about women’s bodies or sexist stereotypes. Men threaten women by looking at their bodies in a possessive, leering way. It seems that most complaints of sexual harassment and abuse stem from a need for domination or possession.

**SIN DOES NOT BEGIN** with an action but with a belief. Here are some right beliefs I would pass on to my son:

- 1. You are fearfully and wonderfully made, just as you are.** Desiring women doesn’t make you perverted or weird, though it may cause you to feel and do embarrassing things at times.
- 2. Like all humans, you will want to possess what you desire.** You will be tempted to treat women as objects, as things you can dominate and control. This is the Deceiver’s voice and not of God. In contrast, Jesus showed you that the victor serves and sacrifices for others.
- 3. Part of being a Christian is to care about others and advocate on their behalf.** In the same way that we teach you to stand up to bullies, you need to stand up against “locker room talk,” and any other behavior that causes a woman to feel uncomfortable. Even when there is no female present.
- 4. You are not a victim.** You don’t need to whine about a “gotcha” culture or the feminist police or having to be politically correct. When you make mistakes, say you’re sorry and learn to do better.
- 5. Try your best to do justice and love mercy.** Most important, walk humbly before God. ●



Sarah Kehrborg lives in the Craggy Mountains of western North Carolina with her husband and three children.



# To cultivate or cut down?

**MORE THAN A DOZEN** years ago we planted a tree in our front yard. A plum tree. It's pretty. It provides shade. And it falls over every single time a storm blows through. It doesn't just bend, it literally falls over, trunk to the ground.

With neighborly help, we've rescued our tree time and time again. We've dug the hole deeper, staked it to the ground, trimmed off the top-heavy branches.

And still it falls.

How long will we have compassion on this tree? My husband and I keep cheering for it, hoping for it, believing it will one day hold its own. Our son, however, has had quite enough and ruthlessly begs for its removal.

This reminds me of the parable Jesus told of the fruitless fig tree, recorded in Luke 13. In this story we meet a tree, a gardener and the owner of a vineyard. The tree, similar to ours, was experiencing some difficulty in its little life. For three years, the owner came looking for fruit on it only to find none. "Cut it down!" he said. "Why should it be wasting the soil?"

The gardener, however, had a different idea. Instead of cutting it down, he suggested they cultivate it. "Sir, let it alone for one more year until I dig around it and put manure on it."

As you might have guessed, I'm a great fan of the gardener. I jump for

joy with a shout of hallelujah over the mercy and kindness he shows to the tree.

"See!" I want to say to my son, "we must never give up hope. The tree may yet live!"

But I completely (and conveniently?) ignore the gardener's final words: "If it bears fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down."

What? No! Permission to cut the tree down? Never!

**IN ALL FAIRNESS**, the owner of the vineyard had a legitimate question when he asked, "Why waste good ground with [the tree] any longer?" (verse 7, *Message*). I noticed, much to my dismay, that even after a year of

**Can I see the fruitless tree's removal as a gift and a grace that provides space for what is living or wants to come forth?.**

specialized care from the gardener, there was no guarantee the tree would live up to its potential. There remained a possibility it would go on depleting the soil and blocking the sunlight, negatively impacting the other trees. A possibility it might have to be cut down after all.

I do not like this one bit. I want the tree to live. I want to give it as many chances as it needs.

I'm sure you can guess by now that I'm a better gardener than owner, much more prone to cultivate than cut down.

I love to think of the gardener on hands and knees, diligently tending the tree, coaxing it to life, giving it the nurture and nourishment it needs. But what, then, is it like for him, after investing all the time and effort, to step back, step aside, and hand the tree



PHOTO: GILLY STEWART, UNSPLASH

over to the owner, who just may chop it down?

I'm weeping here, people.

**I SENSE AN INVITATION** to view this whole scenario differently. Instead of seeing the owner as the bad guy who shows no mercy, can I view him as the one who has the fuller picture in mind? The longer view? The health of the whole as a priority?

Can I see the fruitless tree's removal as a gift and a grace that provides space for what is living or wants to come forth? Is what feels so hostile to me actually an act of hospitality?

I need to think on this.

I begin to ask a series of questions.

What is taking up too much space in the vineyard of me or my work?

Is there a tree I'm giving undue attention to, trying to keep alive when its time has passed or simply may never come?

Is my attachment to this particular tree a hindrance to the health of the vineyard as a whole?

I honestly don't want to, but I am trying to welcome God not only as the gardener who cultivates, cares for, nourishes and nurtures, but also as the owner, who, for the sake of the whole, knows when to cut out, cut down or carry away.

I long to know deep in my bones that both actions are for fullness of life. It's not hostility, but hospitality.

God have mercy on the tree of me. ●



**Jenny Gehman** is a freelance writer and retreat speaker who publishes a weekly devotional, *Little Life Words*, at [jennygehman.com](http://jennygehman.com). She and her husband, Dan, are elders at Millersville Mennonite Church in Pennsylvania and enjoy hosting friends and strangers from around the world.

# In church, be a good teammate

**DURING THE OLYMPIC GAMES**, American gymnast Simone Biles shocked the world by withdrawing from the team and individual all-around finals. This was shocking, because Biles is the GOAT (Greatest of All Time). She withdrew to focus on her mental health.

There was a backlash. Some called her selfish and a quitter. Many accused her of not caring about her teammates enough to go out and perform.

As one who has participated in team sports all my life, I found Biles' actions brave and inspiring. I cannot imagine the pressure she was under.

I wondered how her teammates would respond. They were depending on her to lead the team. I was pleased with the support they showed. They rallied behind her and put together a great team performance, earning a silver medal.

Biles' teammates understood her struggles and the pressure she was carrying. In one of the interviews after earning silver, they all said it wasn't fair to her that she was forced to carry the team all the time. They had talent too, and they showed it.



**Jerrell Williams** is pastor of Salem Mennonite Church in Oregon. A 2015 graduate of Bethel College, he has a master of divinity degree from Pittsburgh Theological Seminary.

We as Christians can learn something from Biles and her teammates. Often when we talk about self-care, we place the responsibility on the individual. We tell people to make sure they are taking care of themselves, but we may be the ones who've applied the pressure.

In one breath we tell people to take the time they need, yet we fail to acknowledge the pressures that contribute to a lack of self-care.

We love to talk about selflessness and the importance of community. We're less likely to acknowledge church can be exhausting.

Much of this stems from over-reliance on certain individuals. We expect them to give all of themselves. We expect them to prioritize church work. This pressure we put upon them can lead to burnout.

I have seen people leave the church because they were asked to do too much.

I have seen people refuse to join the church for fear they will be asked to do too much.

While we want people to be deeply committed to the work of the church, we have to remember they have lives outside the church. They may need the church to be a place where they can take a break from stress. It is important for the church to be life-giving, not life-draining.

**JESUS PAID ATTENTION** to his disciples' need for self-care. Imagine the pressure they felt, leaving their families to follow Jesus and create a new community.

In Mark 6:30-32, Jesus gives the disciples a short rest in preparation for their next assignment. Jesus had sent them out in groups of two to share the good news with all who would hear it. When they report back to Jesus all that they had done and taught, Jesus tells them to get on a boat and to go to a

deserted place to eat and rest.

Jesus acknowledges their need for rest and preparation before the next big thing. Being in tune with his community, Jesus knows the disciples need

**We love to talk about selflessness and the importance of community. We're less likely to acknowledge church can be exhausting.**

time for self-care. This alleviates the pressure they may have felt if they had to keep going without taking care of themselves.

**WE NEED TO WATCH FOR** signs of burnout in our church communities. Who are we calling on to show up and shoulder the burden time and time again? Who are the ones we keep running to without giving them a chance for rest? Sometimes it's good to give people the space and option to just show up without the burden of responsibilities.

By being in tune with our community, we can know who may need time for rest and how we as a community can step in and help out. Self-care is not only about how an individual cares for himself or herself. It is also about how a community cares for an individual. Are others prepared to pick up some duties? Do we understand the situation a person may be facing?

We can learn a lot from how Jesus responds to his disciples after all of their work. We can learn much from the teammates of Simone Biles. When the people around us need self-care, we have to listen to them and be prepared to fill in where we can, like good teammates. ●

# A Canaan or an Egypt?

**SOMEONE ASKED** me: How do you explain intercultural work to people who see immigrants as a threat and who are afraid their jobs and resources are being taken from them?

I answer that question with questions. Who owns the resources in the first place? Aren't immigrants supposed to have an equal opportunity to work and cultivate the land?

When my two boys fight over a toy, I tell them sharing is caring. Why do we have to fight, when there is enough for everybody? Isn't God our provider?

The United States attracts so many immigrants because of opportunities for employment, land ownership, religious freedom, adventure, a new start in life. Another reason immigrants are here is because the U.S. was there — in their home countries. I can name several occasions in the history of my country, Indonesia, where U.S. and Western interests were present. From regime change to economic impact, the results have not been as beautiful

as Americans might think.

I believe in mutual transformation and intercultural exchange, but the idea of the U.S. policing the world while selling the American dream can easily dominate and become a nightmare for those who are marginalized.

**WHEN I PLANNED** to come to the United States, it took years to make it happen. I needed to build enough wealth, property and business ties in

**As an Indonesian, I saw the U.S. as the world's economic and military power. I did not understand that this power was not a sign of God's favor.**

my country for the U.S. government to approve my visa. Without these assets, it would have been impossible to get a visa. It's harder for foreigners to come to the U.S. than for U.S. citizens to go to other countries.

As an Indonesian, I saw the U.S. as the world's economic and military power, the land of the free and the home of the brave. I did not understand that this power was not a sign of God's favor but a tool of domination, intimidation and manipulation. With this power comes a curse and not a blessing.

I remember feeling intimidated and inferior as I prepared for my visa interview at the U.S. Embassy in Jakarta. But my struggle was nothing compared to the hardships experienced by families separated at the U.S.-Mexican border. It was nothing compared to the risks taken by thousands of people who have died trying to cross the desert

into the United States.

Why is the most powerful country in the world so afraid of outsiders and foreigners? I'm not sure, but maybe with power comes the fear of losing power.

**XENOPHOBIA** — dislike or prejudice against people from other countries — is nothing new. Around 1400 B.C., in Egypt, the Israelites faced the same problem. Long after the era of Joseph, the Israelites had grown in numbers, and the Egyptians felt threatened. Pharaoh commanded that all newborn sons of the enslaved Hebrews should be killed. One baby boy managed to escape the atrocity, and the rest is history. God's chosen people gained their freedom.

When I see U.S. power and superiority, I see the United States less as a Canaan, a land of promise, and more like an Egypt. I think the idea of one nation under God needs to be revisited and redefined. This god that the U.S. is under — is it the God of Scripture? Or another? Jesus said, "No one can serve two masters; for [you] will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth" (Matthew 6:24).

As an immigrant, I see hope in the church. When I came to the U.S., God brought me to a community of believers who practiced true brotherly and sisterly love. This love was not just sentimentality but action — sharing possessions and resources to meet people's needs. The sharing ranged from financial support to giving me keys to a house where I could stay during my seminary years.

I'm grateful that the God I love and serve doesn't shut the gates of the kingdom but invites us all to come and share. Let us help all who are oppressed and marginalized, so we can bring blessings to the land. ●



**Hendy Stevan Matahelemual** of South Philadelphia grew up in Bandung, Indonesia. After serving as a pastor in Indonesia, he moved to the United States. He received a master's degree in Christian leadership from Eastern Mennonite Seminary in 2019. He is an ordained minister in Mosaic Mennonite Conference of Mennonite Church USA.

# Words without knowledge

**AT THE END OF THE** Book of Job, God shows up in a whirlwind and responds to Job: “Who is this who darkens my counsel with words without knowledge?” (Job 38:2).

This verse is a caution for us when we speak about God’s ways in the world — that, in our speaking, we trip over our words as we stumble toward God’s truths, as if we’re wandering through unfamiliar terrain in the darkness of night without a flashlight. Any guidance into divine revelations we offer each other turn out to be words without knowledge.

Twenty years ago, while on a flight to London, I read a warning in Rick Steves’ travel guide. Tourists should beware when asking locals for directions because, even if someone didn’t know the location, they’d provide a detailed account of how to get there just because they didn’t want to let the person down. They would give directions, wrong ones, instead of facing a visitor’s disappointment. They just wanted to be helpful, so they’d offer directions without knowledge.

That’s the temptation for all of us: To explain God’s ways even though we don’t know what we’re talking about. We go on with our words because we have to say something. We don’t want to let each other down. We want to be helpful, to offer some direction, some clarity, even if the truth is that we ourselves are also lost. So we offer words

without knowledge, like the person who gives directions that only get the tourist all the more lost.

Job is like that tourist — disoriented, bewildered because of all he has suffered. His world has crumbled. He wanders through the rubble of a life that has been leveled. The first couple of chapters describe disasters that take away his family, his possessions and finally his health.

The rest of the book is a conversation about what God has to do with the

**We are well-meaning locals and lost tourists at the same time — lost people trying to offer directions to lost people.**

tragedy of Job’s life. Friends talk about God. Job talks to himself about God. And God is silent.

Until the end, when God shows up in a tornado-like phenomenon, a whirlwind like the one that killed Job’s children. From the whirlwind, God confronts Job with how little he knows about the world. God’s questions expose Job’s lack of knowledge:

“Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth?” (38:4).

“Where is the way to the dwelling of light, and where is the place of darkness?” (38:19).

“Do you know the ordinances of the heavens? Can you establish their rule on the earth?” (38:33).

“Who has the wisdom to number the clouds?” (38:37).

We know so little of this world, so little about God, so little of our lives and the lives of the people we are called to love. We know so little.

**THIS PANDEMIC HAS BEEN** a whirlwind. So much has been taken. So much has collapsed. I feel like I’ve lost a year. I confuse my months as I try

to think about what happened when. Time has become a maze for my mind. A lostness has swallowed our lives. We’ve become lost to one another. It has been hard to keep track of our own lives, let alone people we care about.

As we find each other again, as we pick up the pieces and see what kind of life we can make together, I’m sure we’ll speak words without knowledge. We’ll have to get to know one another again, to learn what we’ve missed. We’ll have to be patient and generous, especially as we offer mistaken words. We reach for words about God to pass along. Our words might not be the right ones, even if they come with the best of intentions.

Back to my story about London 20 years ago: We are well-meaning locals and lost tourists at the same time. We’re lost people trying to offer directions to lost people. All we have are words without knowledge, words we use as we try to offer care, even if we’re not quite sure where we are. We offer what we can because we want to be helpful. We want to rebuild a common life, to find ourselves together again in God’s love.

**THE GOOD NEWS IN THE** Book of Job is that despite all the words without knowledge and theological misunderstandings, God hears Job and his friends. God shows up.

In the end, God can’t help but be drawn into the conversation, because God wants to be part of Job’s life. God wants to share life with Job, to join the fellowship of words. God longs for communion.

This is a calling we share as members of the church: When I ask you for directions, instead of drawing a map and wishing me luck as I go on my way, you offer to come with me — even if we might get lost together.

The good news is that wherever two or more are gathered, God is there, even if all of this feels like a whirlwind. ●



Isaac S. Villegas is pastor of Chapel Hill Mennonite Fellowship in North Carolina.

# Why is it so hard to talk about faith?

**IN THE CONCLUSION** to her new book, *Tongue-Tied*, Sara Wenger Shenk, who served nine years as president of Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary, sums up her message: “We talk about what we love.” This leads to the question: If we are unable to talk about our faith in God, is that because we are not experiencing the love of God we say we believe in?

The tone of that question may feel harsh, but Shenk is far from harsh. In her introduction, she says it this way: “When we are honestly vulnerable about what we grieve, what we long for and what we are elated about, vital faith is awakened, and we find ourselves in need of a language that will free us to speak truthfully, humbly and sometimes with moral authority about a God who so loves the world that God became one-with-us — in Jesus Christ.”

Clarity, humility and theological acuity run through the book. Shenk is passionate about helping Christians talk about their faith, but she does not try to hit her readers over the head with her message.

Most of us, I imagine, have encountered someone who talks assuredly about God in a way that feels arrogant, as if they have an inside track on divine things, and we don’t. Or maybe we’ve been that person. Such experiences may have contributed to our own refusal to engage in God-talk, not wanting to come across as a blowhard. This book is for us.

Shenk calls such people her peers and names them as part of her intended audience — “moderately progressive and relatively comfortable North Americans who grew up with faith language that we largely jettisoned upon becoming educated professionals.”

In the first part of the book, “Losing Fluency,” Shenk explores this reticence to talk about faith. She looks at the disillusionment many feel with people who call themselves Christian yet participate in actions that go against

our understanding of what it means to follow Christ’s teachings. She discusses the superficiality of much Christian talk. For example, we identify ourselves with the Jews fleeing Egypt while our treatment of Native and Black people makes us more like Egypt. She notes how our failure to trust the power of God leads us “to build defensive castles of certainty.” She uncovers our inability to talk honestly about our bodies and the harm this leads to.

She warns against us-versus-them default thinking and how many Christians weaponize faith language against people they don’t consider part of their tribe. She critiques her own tribe, Mennonites, offering stories to illustrate her points. She then calls us to learn community-based language that we pass on to our children. “Formation in the language of faith,” she writes, “is about the quality and consistency with which we talk to each other and do small, everyday things.”

**IN THE BOOK’S** second part, “Learning Fluency — Step by Step,” Shenk outlines how we can discover freedom, honesty and resolve when talking about faith. A key to this is learning to listen to others and submit to mystery. Again, she writes out of her experience, noting that “the less I presume to know for certain, the more a quiet assurance that I am known and loved grows within — along with a readiness to speak what I believe about God.”

Learning to talk about faith, Shenk writes, “will mean figuring out how talking about God is like telling our own love story.” Telling that story, however, must be balanced with holding our convictions in tension with others’ convictions, recognizing “our shared humanity and desire to know and be known by God.”

Shenk discusses rediscovering the power of sacred words, the importance of talking about bodies and how faith gains life force in hard times. She shows how our language of faith is bol-



*Tongue-Tied: Learning the Lost Art of Talking About Faith*, by Sara Wenger Shenk (Herald Press, 2021)

stered by stories of Woman Wisdom (Proverbs 1:20, for example), Scripture and Christian tradition. She celebrates curiosity, nature and beauty as ways to discover new facets of God’s face.

Shenk’s humble wisdom comes through. She’s unafraid to address issues that have led to divisions, such as LGBTQ inclusion, expressing her own convictions yet calling for a mature approach of patient listening. She remains alert to those who feel excluded by much of the God-talk that’s occurred. She writes: “What we need are hospitable spaces for playing with God stuff — not in a careless, irreverent kind of way — but with inquiry that is animated by wonder, exploration that carries a good compass, experimentation that is guided by a generational wisdom and artistic design that takes its blueprint from the sages and Jesus.”

We need Shenk’s wise voice to help us talk about the love we’ve experienced through God’s grace. ●

Gordon Houser is author of *Present Tense: A Mennonite Spirituality*.

# As vaccine mandates spread, questions rise about religious exemptions

**MANY PRIVATE BUSINESSES**, hospital systems and universities that require COVID-19 vaccines also offer religious exemptions. But with no consistent method for navigating these requests — or defining the terms, for that matter — leaders are scrambling to respond.

Catholics who study or work at a Catholic college or university, for example, won't get far if they cite their faith as a reason not to get vaccinated, although they may have success making similar requests at secular institutions. Requests have been coming in nonetheless, says Dennis H. Holschneider, president of the Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities, which serves as a resource and voice for its 200 member campuses.

"There is no religious exemption in Catholicism," Holschneider said, citing Vatican teaching on the matter. He notes that they may accept other religions as a basis for exemption.

"You're not going to find in this church a lot of sympathy for those who don't want to support the health of the community," Holschneider added, noting that Catholic hospitals nationwide have been on the frontlines caring for patients with COVID-19. "This is a church that does health care."

Jeffrey C. Barrows, senior vice president of bioethics and public policy at the Christian Medical & Dental Associations, started fielding similar calls in late July from colleagues who feared taking the vaccine conflicted with their Christian beliefs.

"I've heard from physical therapists. I've heard from physicians," Barrows said. The callers worked for hospital systems that mandated, or planned to mandate, the COVID-19 vaccine.

"Our official position is we are recommending that people get the vaccines," Barrows said. "We do feel that the benefit of being vaccinated against COVID-19 outweighs the risks."

His group opposes COVID-19



Tyson Foods team members receive COVID-19 vaccines from health officials in Wilkesboro, N.C. Tyson Foods will require all of its U.S. employees to get vaccinated. PHOTO: MELISSA MELVIN/AP

vaccine mandates, however, and a statement on its website notes that "there is no justifiable moral obligation to accept vaccination."

"Our members are divided," Barrows said. He encourages his colleagues who oppose vaccines to wear masks and agree to frequent testing.

**AS THE NUMBER OF** businesses that mandate COVID vaccines for their employees continues to rise — Tyson Foods, Microsoft and United Airlines announced mandates in August — so does the number of questions about religious exemptions.

"This is all such uncertain territory," said Jenna Reinbold, a professor at Colgate University who studies the intersection of religion and law. "All kinds of legal professors and professionals are talking about this."

So are college and university leaders, according to Holschneider. "These are very fresh questions on our campuses right now," he said.

Following guidance from the Equal Opportunity Employment Commis-

sion, many private businesses, hospital systems and universities that require vaccines also offer medical and religious exemptions. But there's no consistent method for navigating these — or even defining the terms.

**THE CIVIL RIGHTS ACT** of 1964 includes language forbidding religious discrimination, a protection the U.S. Supreme Court upheld in a 2014 case involving a Muslim woman's right to wear a hijab to work at an Abercrombie & Fitch clothing store. But during a surging global pandemic, employers reviewing the religious exemption requests must weigh such religious protections against community health and safety, navigating deeply personal religious beliefs and questions about religious authority, all in a moment of divisive political tensions and misinformation about the vaccine.

The U.S. court system tends to take religious protection cases seriously, said John Inazu, professor of law and religion at Washington University in St. Louis.

“If you’re a religious person, and you say, ‘I need an exemption because my faith tells me I do,’ it’s very hard for the government to say that’s insincere or that’s inconsistent with their faith,” Inazu said. “Even idiosyncratic religious beliefs that are out of step with the religious hierarchy are still considered sincerely held.”

Many prominent religious leaders and organizations encourage their community members to get the COVID-19 vaccine: the Vatican, the National Association of Evangelicals, the National Council of Churches, the

### Anti-vaccination activists have mounted online campaigns encouraging people to claim religious exemptions.

Jewish Orthodox Union and Rabbinical Council of America and the National Muslim Task Force on COVID-19 are among those who have released statements favoring vaccination. A recent study shows vaccine hesitancy is declining among faith groups, thanks in part to targeted advocacy within faith communities.

Still, examples of religious exemption claims range from some anti-abortion Catholics and Protestants who object to researchers’ use of fetal cell lines to develop and test the vaccines to members of traditions that rely on faith healing.

**THE BIGGER PROBLEM** with people asking for religious exemptions, experts say, isn’t about doctrine but sincerity. Anti-vaccination activists have mounted online campaigns encouraging people to claim religious exemptions, leading some to question whether politically motivated anti-vaxxers are trying to game the system.

Others, noting Supreme Court cases protecting the rights of conscientious objectors to war, say it may be enough to claim a moral or philosophical opposition to the vaccine.

“Those cases set a precedent that is also looming in the background,” Reinbold said. ●

# Texas revival features Christian nationalism

**“AMERICA’S REVIVAL”** — a Christian nationalist event that drew more than 1,000 people to the Frisco Convention Center north of Dallas on Aug. 6-8 — was part tent revival, part megachurch extravaganza and part political rally. It began with a video promoting a conservative online pharmacy and a word from the head of a pro-Trump conservative Christian insurance company who said he refuses to wear a mask and offered audience members a chance to win a new AR-15 rifle if they texted their number to his company.

“You come to worship Jesus and leave with a gun,” he told worshippers. “Amen.”

Christian nationalism — the idea that being a Christian is an essential part of America’s identity and destiny — was on full display.

The words “America’s Revival” were projected on a screen behind the band, with an American flag waving in the background. At center stage was a pulpit resembling a presidential podium, with a seal of the United States on the front. The pulpit sat on a carpet that featured the same color scheme and seal found in the Oval Office.

Featured preachers Joshua Feuerstein and Greg Locke of Global Vision Bible Church in Tennessee filled their sermons with a mix of patriotism and piety, with callouts to Donald Trump and claims that faith is more powerful than COVID-19.

**ONE OF THE BIGGEST** names on the program was MyPillow Inc. CEO and election conspiracy theorist Mike Lindell, who gave a rambling speech about how God saved him from a cocaine addiction and detailed how he “fully surrendered his life to Jesus” after meeting Trump.

Lindell then listed what he called a series of miracles that allowed him to uncover how the 2020 election was stolen from President Trump.



“America’s Revival” drew more than 1,000 people to the Frisco Convention Center north of Dallas. PHOTO: BOB SMJETANA/RNS

He promised to reveal more evidence about the election in an upcoming “cyber-symposium” to be broadcast on his website, Frankspeech.com.

His remarks were greeted with waving flags and cheers of “U.S.A! U.S.A!”

Before the worship started, a group of women in white dresses with single red letters posed in front of one of the giant American flags, spelling out the message “TRUMP WON.” Outside the main exhibit hall was a pair of Trump stores, selling merchandise with pro-Trump, pro-God messages.

Perhaps the biggest reaction on Aug. 6 came during a sermon by Greg Locke, a fire-breathing Tennessee preacher known for his pug-nacious social media presence and proclivity for controversy.

A Trump defender and COVID-denier, Locke recently told worshippers at his church that anyone who wore a mask would be kicked out of services.

He said his church was both “biblical and constitutional.”

“We so believe in our First Amendment right to gather that if you show up and you impede my First Amendment right, we are going to meet you at the door with our Second Amendment right,” he said. ●

# Infrastructure bill offers energy-efficiency grants for houses of worship

**BURIED ON PAGE 1,729** of the trillion-dollar infrastructure bill approved by the U.S. Senate on Aug. 10 in a bipartisan vote is a project titled “Energy Efficiency Materials Pilot Program.”

It would fund \$50 million in grants to nonprofits, including religious congregations, so they can buy new energy-efficient heating and cooling systems for their buildings. The program, to be administered by the Department of Energy, would provide grants of up to \$200,000 each for nonprofits that want to purchase new HVAC units and generators or fund replacements of windows and doors to make them more energy efficient.

The relatively small item in the infrastructure deal has been in the works for years. It was spearheaded almost a decade ago by the Orthodox Union Advocacy Center, a Jewish public policy

arm representing one of the largest Orthodox Jewish groups in the U.S., and supported by a coalition including the National Council of Churches, the National Association of Evangelicals and the YMCA of the USA.

“For synagogues, energy and utility costs can be the most expensive line item in their budget, especially if they have a small staff,” said Nathan Diamant, executive director of the Orthodox Union Advocacy Center.

This project, he said, would allow congregations to “allocate greater funding to programs and services and less to energy bills, ultimately decreasing their energy footprints.”

Back in 2012, the Orthodox Union worked with Sens. Amy Klobuchar and John Hoeven to push for the Nonprofit Energy Efficiency Act, which was reintroduced in Congress twice since then.



The “Energy Efficiency Materials Pilot Program” would fund \$50 million in grants to nonprofits.

ILLUSTRATION: MOHAMED HASSAN/PIXBAY/CREATIVE COMMONS

Maintaining older sanctuaries has become an ever-increasing burden. Congregations of all faiths are aging and membership is declining, putting a greater financial strain for building upkeep on fewer people.

Given the overall size of the infrastructure bill, the project is tiny. If it awards maximum grants of \$200,000 each, it would only help 250 nonprofits.

# Black Baptists renew civil-rights calls

**THE PROGRESSIVE** National Baptist Convention marked the 60th anniversary of its forging in the heat of the civil rights movement, citing its founders as inspiring new calls for racial justice, against voter suppression and in favor of critical race theory.

The historically Black denomination held a virtual annual convention in the first week of August with a series of worship services, panel discussions and votes on policy resolutions.

It denounced voting restrictions approved in Republican-led statehouses, comparing these efforts in a resolution to past suppression of the Black vote.

“There is not a voter fraud problem in the United States,” the resolution said, rebutting the justification often used for restrictive voting laws. “There

is a voter suppression problem in the United States.”

The denomination also voiced support for critical race theory, which has been a target of religious and political conservatives.

The resolution disputed claims that the theory is even being taught in elementary and secondary schools, saying it is primarily a graduate-level topic.

But the resolution said the theory is valuable for focusing on how “systemic, institutional racism has been at work in every aspect of American life since before the nation was even formed.”

Another resolution called for passage of a long-pending bill in Congress that would require studying the issue of reparations for African Americans due to the impact of slavery and dis-

crimination.

And a resolution declared that gentrification — in which poorer residents often are priced out of their neighborhoods after wealthier people and businesses move in — amounts to a “state of emergency in Black America which requires a righteous action agenda,” including private and government funding to counteract its impacts.

The convention, with churches across the United States, the Caribbean and other lands, was founded in 1961 in a split from the larger National Baptist Convention USA.

Founders included Martin Luther King Jr. and his supporters, who wanted their denomination to put its full support behind the civil rights movement. — *Peter Smith, Associated Press*



# What does it mean to have faith over fear during a pandemic?



Still, it's an important measure, said Galen Carey, vice president of government relations for the National Association of Evangelicals, part of the coalition that pushed for the program.

"Anything we can do to help the energy efficiency in the nonprofit sector is good for mitigating climate change and the operating efficiency of nonprofits that play such important roles in our society," Carey said.

The main features of the \$1 trillion infrastructure measure the Senate passed would mostly pay for roads, bridges, rail and water systems. The bill now goes to the House.

**NONPROFITS HAVE A** harder time accessing energy-efficiency subsidies, which typically come in the form of tax credits. Since nonprofits don't pay taxes, the tax credits aren't useful to them.

At the same time, many religious congregations have deferred maintenance upgrades for years and are paying costly utility bills as a result.

Felipe Witchger, executive director of the Community Purchasing Alliance, a cooperative that helps struggling churches and nonprofits buy basic services, said 80% of congregations desperately need maintenance upgrades on such items as aging heating and air conditioning units, leaky roofs, drafty windows, cracks in the basement and crawl spaces.

"HVAC and building envelope improvements can reduce 20 to 30% in energy usage and cut carbon emissions," Witchger said. ●

**THE SPLIT AMONG CHURCHES** over how to respond to the coronavirus pandemic now includes threats of violence. These outcries reflect the language of personal autonomy and security over selflessness and sacrifice. Take for example:

"If you show up to impede our First Amendment rights, we're going to show up at the door with our Second Amendment rights."

Spoken during the Freedom Matters Tour, these words belong to pastor Greg Locke and received a standing ovation. The founder and lead pastor of Global Vision Bible Church in Mount Juliet, Tenn., Locke has been one of several religious leaders who have gained a public platform for their vocal opposition to COVID-19 restrictions.

Locke bases much of his opposition on religious belief, exemplified in an Aug. 7 tweet displaying a sign reading: "This is a MASK FREE Church. Kindly Remove Them or Stay in your car. We Celebrate FAITH over Fear."

In Portland, Ore., worship leader Sean Feucht issued a similar threat. Feucht posted a picture of himself on Twitter, kneeling with his guitar in front of a group of men outfitted in military style vests, and warned, "If you mess with them or our 1 amendment right to worship God — you'll meet Jesus one way or another."

In other words, they are willing to take the life of their neighbor.

**LOCKE AND FEUCHT** are sideshows in the midst of a global pandemic. Hungry for media attention and skilled at getting headlines, both have given non-Christians another reason to reject Christianity.

The most concerning aspect of

these sideshows is the adoption of their "faith over fear" line among many Christians. The insinuation is that wearing masks, getting vaccinations and taking other precautions against the disease represent a spiritual deficiency, whereas true believers have confidence to trust God and so need not do any of that.

In this interpretation of divine providence, it is hard not to think that faith has been reduced to a cos-

**Do we want to be known for love that reflects our Savior or a sideshow demanding its rights?**

mic coin flip. Why draw the line with masks? Just burn through stoplights and eat food off the bathroom floor. After all, faith over fear, right?

**YES, FAITH CALLS US** to trust in the security of God. Many Christians around the globe encounter real persecution for the sake of the gospel. Moreover, there are times when Christians should oppose the government when there are legitimate threats to religious freedom. Pastor Mark Dever modeled this well last fall in opposing lockdown restrictions, earning his church not only a precedent-setting legal victory but the respect of other leaders.

The question for Christians is simple: Do we want to be known for love that reflects our Savior or for a sideshow demanding its rights?

You can't scream at the world and reach the world at the same time. Showing Christ's love for the good of our neighbors, even when it's uncomfortable and sacrificial — that's what it means to have faith over fear. ●

# Classifieds

[classifieds@anabaptistworld.org](mailto:classifieds@anabaptistworld.org)

## EMPLOYMENT — GENERAL

**Archivist/Librarian.** Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society, Lancaster, Pa., seeks a qualified archivist and librarian to conserve and make accessible its world-class collections. Learn more at [lmhs.org/about/employment](http://lmhs.org/about/employment). Our vision is diverse communities connecting across boundaries by knowing and valuing their own and each other's stories of life, faith, cultures and histories. (10-11)

## EMPLOYMENT — SCHOOL

**Freeman Academy** is seeking a new Development/Marketing Director. Candidate must have strong interpersonal and communication skills, be a relationship builder and have a commitment to Christian education. Contact: Nathan Epp at [nepp@freemanacademy.org](mailto:nepp@freemanacademy.org). (11)

**Fresno Pacific University** invites applications for Vice President/Dean of Fresno Pacific University Biblical Seminary. Complete job description and requirements at [fresno.edu/visitors/careers](http://fresno.edu/visitors/careers). (11)

## TRAVEL

**Two seats remain** for the tour to the Oberammergau Passion Play in Bavaria, Germany, in 2022! Join tour host Pastor Weldon Martens of Grace Hill Mennonite Church of Whitewater, Kan., on a 10-day tour to Germany, France and Switzerland, Aug. 10-21, 2022. We will see the Swiss Alps, the Black Forest, Neuschwanstein Castle and enjoy a Rhine River Cruise. See the tour brochure and register at [pilgrimtours.com/ghmc.htm](http://pilgrimtours.com/ghmc.htm) or contact Pastor Weldon for a brochure or registration update at [weldon.martens@gmail.com](mailto:weldon.martens@gmail.com) or 402-202-9276. (9-11)

## FOR RENT

**North Newton, Kan.** Two-bedroom, two-bath cottages under construction at West 23rd and Edgemore, North Newton. Owner-agent 316-283-8441. (10-16)

## LODGING

**North Newton, Kan.**, guest housing. 316-283-5231; [vadasnider@cox.net](mailto:vadasnider@cox.net). (2-13)

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## COMING EVENTS

**The 175th anniversary** celebration of Yellow Creek Mennonite Church, postponed because of COVID-19, is now planned for Sept. 11-12. Activities begin at 2 p.m. Sept. 11. That evening will include a hymn sing and service of sharing memories. L. Keith Weaver, LMC moderator, will bring the message Sept. 12. For more information, contact Yellow Creek at 574-862-2595 or visit our website: [yellowcreekmc.org](http://yellowcreekmc.org). (11)

# Obituaries

[obituaries@anabaptistworld.org](mailto:obituaries@anabaptistworld.org)

## Robert R. Coon

Robert Russell Coon, 90, of Goshen, Ind., died July 28, 2021, at Greencroft Goshen. He was born Feb. 17, 1931, to Hugh and Cora Coon in Dayton, Ohio.



Coon

He was baptized at a Grace Brethren church in Dayton and asked to preach his first sermon at 14. The pastor inquired if he might be interested in becoming a minister.

After high school he joined the Marines and went on reserve for a year. While there he heard a call from God to go into the Christian ministry. His experience helped him as a pastor when he counseled young conscientious objectors in his churches during the Vietnam War.

He attended Grace College in Winona Lake, then Bluffton College in Ohio, where he earned a bachelor's degree in history. He concluded that he couldn't bring himself to take a life, which, combined with his interest in a Mennonite pastor's daughter, Helen Neufeld, and the tutelage of several professors, led him to a position of pacifism and to study at Bethany (Mennonite) Seminary, then in Chicago.

He and Helen served at First Mennonite Church in Chicago, Flanagan Mennonite in Illinois, First Mennonite of Christian, Moundridge, Kan., Bethany Mennonite, Quakertown, Pa., Cordell Mennonite, Deer Creek Mennonite and Turpin Mennonite in Oklahoma, and two congregations in Pekin and East Peoria, Ill. Upon his retirement, they served a year as curators at Menno-Hof in Shipshewana and made their home in Topeka, where they joined Topeka Mennonite Church.

He wrote for Mennonite publications and anthologies on Mennonite history, pacifism and inclusion. He spent his retirement as a curator for the Topeka Historical Society Depot and researching his family genealogy. He and Helen wrote *Faith of Our Mothers and Fathers*, an

Anabaptist history in story and song, which they performed for churches and other gatherings.

He advocated for mental health support and acceptance for pastors and their families. His own experience with depression led him to promote measures that would help others struggling with mental illness.

In his last years he lived at Greencroft. He joined Silverwood Mennonite Church.

Survivors include a son, Russell (Kathy) Coon; two daughters, Cathy Coon (Merv) Bitikofer and Dorothy Coon; five grandchildren and many great- and great-great-grandchildren.

Helen preceded him in death in 2006.

## Naomi Kauffman Lederach

Naomi Kauffman Lederach, 88, of Goshen, Ind., died July 24, 2021. She was born Oct. 22, 1932, to Amsa H. Kauffman and Nona Marie Miller Kauffman in Goshen.



Lederach

With her parents serving in South Texas under Mennonite Board of Missions, she attended grade school in Texas and completed high school at Hesston Academy in Kansas. In 1954, she graduated with a bachelor's degree in science and nursing from Goshen College. She

completed her master's degree in nursing with honors at Wichita State University in 1978.

She married John Mensch Lederach at Clinton Brick Mennonite Church, Goshen. Starting their marriage in Dunlap, John served as the pastor of Sunnyside Mennonite Church, and she worked as a nurse in the Elkhart Hospital. In 1957, the young family moved to Hubbard/Whiskey Hill, Ore. For the 10 years that John was pastor at Zion Mennonite Church, she used her musical gifts to lead children's choirs. In 1968, they joined the faculty at Hesston College, where they taught for 16 years. During a sabbatical year they lived in Jerusalem, where she taught at Bethlehem University and helped create the curriculum for the Arab School of Nursing in Ramallah. By 1984, they had moved to Lancaster, Pa., to serve as master clinicians with Philhaven Hospital. They jointly developed and served as founding directors of Recovery of Hope, a marital therapy program.

Upon retirement from Philhaven, they volunteered with Mennonite Central Committee in Northern Ireland. She worked with cross-community groups during the "Troubles" between Catholics and Protestants. Over the decades, she and John hosted more than 40 TourMagination trips to the Middle East, Europe, Scandinavia, the Caribbean and Alaska.

Through her extraordinary grace and deeply held convictions, she showed others that actions and voices must always bend toward justice. Her life illustrated the essence of compassion.

Survivors include her husband of 68 years,

John; three children, John Paul (Wendy Liechty) of Silverthorne, Colo., Philip K. (Lisa Herr) of Goshen and Elizabeth Marie (Lori Clanton) of Clovis, Calif.; 13 grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.

Memorial services were held at College Mennonite Church in Goshen. Memorial gifts may be given to Beth "Let Her Rock" Lederach Social Justice Scholarship, Clovis High School.

**Glendon C. Jantzi**

Glendon C. Jantzi, 94, of Goshen, Ind., died July 22, 2021, at Greencroft Health Care. He was born April 19, 1927, to Michael and Alma (Zehr) Jantzi in Alden, N.Y.

On June 19, 1965, he married Vlasta Maria Cvitanovich in Long Island, N.Y.

He graduated from Eastern Mennonite High School, Harrisonburg, Va., and received his bachelor's degree from Goshen College. He served with Mennonite Central Committee in Jordan in the early 1950s. He later received his master of divinity degree from Hartford Seminary Foundation of Religion and Psychiatry, New York City. He served as a director of Clinical Pastoral Education at Bellevue in New York City for 33 years and retired in 2000.

He was a member of Eighth Street Mennonite Church, Goshen.

Survivors include a daughter, Mona (Matthew

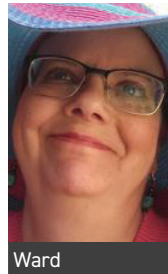
Connor) Jantzi of Broomall, Pa.; and two grandchildren.

He was preceded in death by his wife, Vlasta Jantzi; a sister, Lonabelle Christina Yoder; and two brothers, Lewellen and Donald Jantzi.

His cremated remains will be scattered at the Greencroft Memorial Garden. A memorial service will take place at a later time.

**Amy Friesen Ward**

Amy Louise Friesen Ward, 60, of Manhattan, Kan., died July 31, 2021, at KU Medical Center in Kansas City from complications of ovarian cancer. She was born April 25, 1961, to Wanda and Vern Friesen in Tucson, Ariz.



Ward

She attended school in Manhattan and graduated from Bethel College in 1983 with a degree in speech and drama. While there, she was active with the Thresher speech and forensic teams and won the prestigious Thresher Award. She may be best

remembered for her lead role in the comedy *Arsenic and Old Lace* presented at Bethel. Friends at Bethel enjoyed her quirky sense of humor and warm personality.

She returned to Manhattan, where she met and married Eric Ward. They raised their family in Manhattan. They were active in the Living Word Church where they had met, and she served on the worship team for many years.

She channeled her talents for drama into her work at Flint Hills Christian School in Manhattan. She served as school librarian, building the library with her flair for the humorous and creative. Elementary children loved to hear her dramatic storytelling. She made reading fun! Scores of students worked under her supervision to produce school play productions. She was a Mary Kay consultant in her spare time, putting on many parties and sessions for friends and family.

Survivors include her mother, Wanda Friesen, in California; a son, Josh Ward of Manhattan; a daughter, Kendra (Eric) Lind of Topeka; a brother, Jeff Friesen; three sisters, Janelle (Brian) Epp of Hesston, Dallas Garner Lake of Topeka and Hailey Friesen of Junction City; and one grandchild.

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