

TheMennonite



Ted Swartz moves on

APRIL 2010

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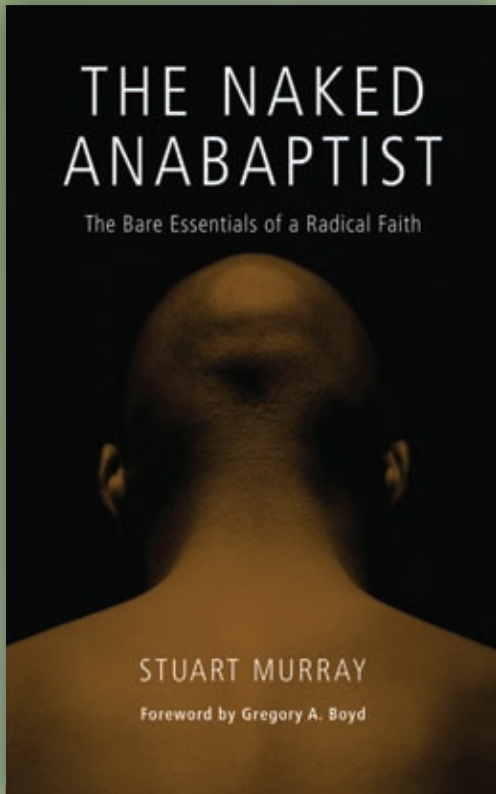
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The Naked Anabaptist The Bare Essentials of a Radical Faith

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This publication welcomes your letters, either about our content or about issues facing the Mennonite Church USA. Please keep your letter brief—one or two paragraphs—and about one subject only. We reserve the right to edit for length and clarity. Publication is also subject to space limitations. Send to letters@themennonite.org or mail to Letters, *The Mennonite*, 1700 S. Main St., Goshen, IN 46526-4794. Please include your name and address. We will not print letters sent anonymously, though we may withhold names at our discretion.
—Editors

Where is the outrage?

The letter from Jerry Stanaway (“War and Abortion Both Violence,” February) addresses only a part of the problem. By focusing only on abortion, we miss the concept of what reproduction is about.

Reproducing means taking responsibility. When two people beget a child, it is the responsibility of both to raise the child. That means being responsible financially for a child’s education, medical expenses, clothing, feeding and providing shelter. It means being responsible for being there to share joys and sorrows and to provide emotional support.

When a man simply chooses not to be involved and walks away, the emotional and financial burden is placed on the mother.

Should men who choose not to be involved not be allowed to walk away with impunity? Should there not be some consequence, such as losing driving privileges, serving time in prison, doing community service, wearing a scarlet letter on their foreheads or something?

If that were to happen, it seems logical there wouldn’t be as many unwanted pregnancies, therefore not as many abortions.

Where is the outrage for failure to take responsibility? It’s past time to abolish the double standard.—*Cora Askren, Goshen, Ind.*

On playing the national anthem

I read with great regret of Goshen (Ind.) College’s recent decision to begin playing the national anthem at select sporting events.

While I realize there is a diversity of practices among the Mennonite colleges and universities concerning the song, it seems especially unfortunate that Goshen’s administration has chosen to cave to outside pressure.

As the 21st century rapidly progresses, decisions like this and other trends, such as increasing Mennonite participation in the political process, threaten our identity. We must remember that we belong to a kingdom that “is not of this world.”—*Joel Koerner, Kalona, Iowa*

How can we sing a strange song in the Lord’s land?—*Mary Sprunger-Froese, Colorado Springs, Colo.*

Before we say goodbye to Goshen College for its decision to play the national anthem, as some seem to be doing, we might reflect on that vital principle of re-examination. All may not be lost, after all. We all need to reconsider decisions made, sometimes unwisely, and Goshen has this ability. Taking the issue to the larger church for a second opinion would seem to be part of such reconsideration.

Certainly the national anthem is antithetical to our Anabaptist understandings of emulating the way of Jesus—both his message (Sermon on the Mount, parables) and his actions (a forgiving, nonviolent love for all). We often fail to live out this vision, and when we do, we ask for the forgiveness of each other and of the Eternal. But we do not compromise ahead of time, keeping the intention of Christ consciously and consistently before us, as our guiding spirit and light.

Goshen College continues witnessing to a forgiving, nonviolent love in many a classroom, in music, the arts and theater. This suggests as well reconsideration within.—*Leonard Gross, Goshen, Ind.*

Richer for diversity

I read with interest Everett Thomas' February editorial ("Almost Mennonite") about what a Mennonite is today. It inspired me to go through my own church's directory and count how many adults over age 18 are not first-generation Mennonite. Two-fifths of our members can claim their family has been Mennonite for more than one generation.

I believe our congregation is all the richer for this diversity. Instead of talking about our past, we focus on what it means to be Mennonite today: peace, justice and being a community.—*Rebecca Bare, Champaign, Ill.*

The push and pull of faith

I want to thank you for doing such a good job with the article on Penelope Moon (February). Her story connects with mine in that I left my lifetime home as a Presbyterian to be "rebaptized" into the Mennonite church. I surely understand her saying what she did about finding one's self between two places. I was a bit more sure of my decision than she says she was when I "jumped," but the issue of

walking away from a history is not easy.

When I see this kind of reporting, I want to cry. I am so proud to be a part of the Mennonite denomination where people can come and find a home. I surely have done that. Thank you, Penelope, for having the guts to let your story be told.—*Jim Compton-Schmidt, Fresno, Calif.*

Satan has an easy time

I had a dream where a few of us had bread together and a small cup of wine. We had good fellowship together. A day or so later our shuffle group had snacks and a cup of grape juice; we had fun and called it Communion.

I have a vision where many small and large groups can have Communion together and find forgiveness, love, joy, peace and more good fruits from the Spirit of God. We can have all this and much more through Jesus the Creator, Savior, Sanctifier, Healer, Servant, Singer of Praises Eternally and much more.

But in this world, it is time to wake up. Satan, the evil one, comes as an

angel of light to deceive and blind and lie and brainwash us. Satan also comes as a lion to devour and kill. Satan is attacking us in many ways. For many who do not realize the evil around, Satan has a pretty easy time to deceive and lead astray.

It is time to come and turn to the supernatural authoritative word, the Bible, which says in Revelation 3:20, the words of Jesus, "I am now standing at the door (of your heart) and knocking. If anyone listens to my voice and opens the door, I will be his guest and feast with him and he with me."

If Christians unite with the Lord, we will see miracles in our spirit and all around us. If good people get together with God's people, we will see an awakening in our lives, our families, our community, county, state, United States and the world. We can be a light in the world of darkness headed for destruction. Jesus is the light of the world.

Time is running out; we need to do it now before it gets too dark.—*Wayne Kratzer, Kidron, Ohio*

IN THIS ISSUE

In the fall of 2008, we asked Ted Swartz if he would be ready to talk about the loss of his "Ted & Lee" partner, Lee Eshleman. At that time, he said he was not yet ready. We asked again last fall. This time he said yes. So we commissioned Jim Bishop to write our cover story entitled, "The Show Must Go On" (page 12).

It is not easy for a monthly magazine to break a big news story. But in this issue we bring the news that some \$3 million will be distributed to 180 former General Conference Mennonite Church leaders (see page 37). We appreciate the trust shown to us by Mennonite Church

USA executive leadership staff, who first informed us of this development in mid-January.

The News Analysis section (pages 45-47) represents our most ambitious research project so far. First, assistant editor Anna Groff polled all area conferences to categorize church plants and other initiatives. Then Dee Birkey, our designer, plotted them on a U.S. map. We offer this research as a way to illustrate God's missional activity in our midst.

Several major meetings get original reporting in this issue: the formal installation of Ervin Stutzman as Mennonite Church USA's execu-

tive director (page 38) and the Mennonite Health Assembly (page 39).

We also welcome former associate editor Rich Preheim back to the pages of *The Mennonite*, now as director of Mennonite Church USA's Historical Committee. His first Leadership column is on page 34.

Since we changed to a monthly frequency, we do not usually report the results of each online poll at our Web site, www.themennonite.org. But the question we posed for most of March drew a record number of voters: Should Mennonite schools play the national anthem before sporting events? The results on are page 60.—*Editor*

Robin Anne, a friend of God



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

Robin died of pneumonia in the woods behind Wal-Mart. She lived in the forest for the past decade, but it wouldn't be exactly true to say that she was "homeless." She called the forest her home. She turned the woods into her dwelling by hanging pictures of her family on the trees surrounding her cozy tent.

I can't say that I knew her well. We mostly chatted about the weather. I ate lunch and talked and prayed with her and the other people who wandered out from the forest to meet us near the highway every Wednesday.

At her memorial service, I learned a lot more about Robin.

Doug stepped up to the pulpit first. He's a retired man who regularly brings food for our Wednesday meals. He spoke about Robin's selfless concern for her friends. Every time Doug would see her, Robin told him about someone else who needed care. She seemed to keep a list: Francis and Don need a new tent, Karl needs a sleeping bag, Cliff needs a few dollars, check in on John because he is depressed.

Karl also took a turn at the microphone and told stories about how Robin always took care of him even though she didn't have much. She would give her few dollars away if Karl said he needed it, even though everyone knew he was a drunk.

Solidarity is the shape of Jesus' life of love. He lived among his beloved.

The folks that spoke during the memorial service painted a portrait of Robin as one who glowed with Christ's gentle love—a warm fire in the forest, a friend of God.

According to First John, to be a friend of God one must learn to abide in the love of Jesus: "God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them" (1 John 4:16).

I think Robin was one of the beloved friends of God. She knew what it meant to abide in God's love. She knew what John knew, that God's love is something we do with our bodies; it has more to do with lifestyle than emotions.

We love God through what we do for one another.

"Beloved," John wrote, "if we love one another, God lives in us" (4:12).

God's love is played out materially, with our stuff. John has strong words for the rest of us who don't share like Robin did: "How does God's love abide in anyone who has the world's goods and sees a brother or sister in need and yet refuses help?" (3:17).

At the memorial service, friends testified to Robin's generosity. She shared everything with friends and strangers. And that's what it looks like to dwell in the depths of God's love, to be one of God's beloved. Robin's generous life echoed First John's gospel of love.

John uses the Greek word "agape" where our translators write "love." But agape means so much more than what we usually think of as love.

Dorothee Soelle, the German theologian and activist, helps us see the profound commitments involved in agape.

"The best translation of what the early Christians called agape," Soelle writes in *The Mystery of Death*, "is still 'solidarity.'"

God's love is solidarity. Agape as loving solidarity is what we learn through the incarnation of Christ. Jesus is God's love manifest as solidarity.

As John says, "God's love was revealed among us in this way: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might live through him" (4:9). Solidarity is simply the movement of God becoming human in Jesus Christ: "Jesus Christ has come in the flesh" (4:2). After all, Jesus is called Immanuel, God with us.

Solidarity is the shape of Jesus' life of love. He lived among his beloved. And so did Robin. That's what it means to be a friend of God, one of the beloved.

God comes to us when we follow Robin's wandering path into the forests behind Wal-Mart—or wherever the lonely hang out. We befriend God when we draw near to God's children, our sisters and brothers, friends and strangers. Love happens when you let a stranger call you a friend. **TM**

After the annunciation

by Tania Runyan

She couldn't sleep.
Lightning flickered in her head.
Her toes curled and uncurled.

Strange how the world
slumps on as usual, she thought.
Same brown mountains outside,
same cattle herd of snores
from her father.

But even she
couldn't think of angels now,
nor bellies nor saviors
nor blood. Just the images
from yesterday, when she walked
through the marketplace
and knew nothing.

The leprous old woman
crouched outside the city gate,
fingertips dissolving
like bread in the rain.

Two skeletal boys
poking through the mud
for shreds of fish.

Bruised and bejeweled
prostitutes hovering
by the leering vegetable vendors.

Everyone who is probably
lying awake like me, she thought.
Feeling too much. Wondering
why they have been chosen.
Waiting for the world
to start over.

Tania Runyan lives in Lindenhurst, Ill.



Conference plan delayed

GOSHEN, Ind.—Franconia Mennonite Conference (FMC) leaders had decided to lay off some of their staff.

“It is an attempt to retool,” R. Blaine Detwiler said on March 2. “[It is] not because of job performance. The staff have been doing their work almost too well.”

Detwiler, conference moderator and pastor at Lakeview Mennonite Church in Susquehanna, Pa., said the instincts of the churches is to support the conference and conference initiatives. FMC has been working to decentralize its ministries and put them back in the hands of congregations, Detwiler said.

But a statement posted on the FMC Web site on March 16 said the plan is now delayed.

“The plan to lay off staff is on hold while an in-depth review of our conference is undertaken,” says the statement. “This review will include our conference, its board, executive minister, staff and congregations. The conference has retained LaVern Yutzy, a consulting associate with Mennonite Health Services Alliance” to help with the review, says the statement.

According to the Web site, FMC has 17 staff members, but not all are full-time.—*Everett J. Thomas*

King new dean of Eastern Mennonite Seminary

HARRISONBURG, Va.—Michael A. King, a longtime writer, editor, publisher and pastor from Telford, Pa.,

has been named the new vice president and dean of Eastern Mennonite Seminary (EMS), Harrisonburg, Va. King will begin his new role July 1. He succeeds Ervin R.

Stutzman, who held the position for nine years. Stutzman has begun serving as the new executive director of Mennonite Church USA. Sara Wenger Shenk is interim dean.—*EMS*



MMA to change name

GOSHEN, Ind.—Mennonite Mutual Aid, which prefers to be called MMA, told the Mennonite Church USA Executive Board on Feb. 18 that it has hired a consultant to develop a new corporate identity and name “that brings together all parts of MMA into a unified brand.” Among the reasons: MMA members are confused by the variety of names currently being used; Mennonites no longer seek out other Mennonites to do business with as they did two generations ago; as an organization that works with multiple denominations, the word “Mennonite” is both a positive and a negative; in Internet search engines, the acronym “MMA” has been taken over by Mixed Martial Arts. MMA planned to release the name to the public on March 31.—*Everett J. Thomas*

Everett J. Thomas



Friedenswald's first mentor-mentee day

On Feb. 27, Camp Friedenswald, Cassopolis, Mich., held its first mentor-mentee day; it included a game called “Spot.” Here (from left) Efrain Núñez and his mentee, Lane Groves, stand on a spot next to Gail Shetler and her mentee, Madison Miller. All four are from Goshen, Ind.—*Everett J. Thomas*

MC USA moderator questions MCC

GOSHEN, Ind.—In a letter dated Dec. 28, 2009, Mennonite Church USA moderator Ed Diller listed 13 concerns about the restructuring process now underway at Mennonite Central Committee.

Diller expressed his concern that MCC will become a nongovernment identity, as has happened to Heifer International, and insisted that it “remain close to the church and not go the way of other nonprofit organizations.” As to its accountability to sponsoring denominations, Diller said, “Global Anabaptists should participate in a [new] governance board, but non-Anabaptists should not.”

Diller also said, “Denominational representatives at all levels must be ... appointed by and accountable to the denominations” that support MCC. Anticipating that the process, called “New Wine/New Wineskins” by MCC, will require changes to MCC bylaws, Diller said, “Late approval of the bylaws is a recipe for problems. MCC is too important for Mennonite Church USA to have an up-or-down voice at the end.”

On March 2, MCC executive director Arli Klassen said the letter was requested by MCC in their first round of feedback. Klassen said there will be two more rounds of feedback during 2010. In 2011, details of the organizational change will be shared with all sponsoring denominations, with final approval of the changes in late 2011.—*Everett J. Thomas*

GAMEO bolstered by new content

WINNIPEG, Manitoba—Researcher, author and historian Helmut T. Huebert has donated his Russian Mennonite research to the growing Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online. Huebert is the author of nine books and co-author of the best-selling book *Mennonite Historical Atlas* with William Schroeder. Hue-

bert's books documenting settlements, individuals and estates contain biographical information on influential Mennonites.—*Conrad Stoesz*

Painting presented to Harvard Divinity School

LAWRENCE, Kan.—Abner Hershberger, a professor at Goshen (Ind.) College for 34 years, donated a painting to the Harvard Divinity School at a tea honoring Gordon D. Kaufman, 84, in late January. Hershberger credits Kaufman for inspiring his work. The painting, “Heritage Field as Color II,” reflects Hershberger’s interest in Kaufman’s concept of God as creativity itself. “By chance, I read something by Kaufman on creativity in my early years as an artist,” Hershberger says. “I never forgot it, since it reinforced what engaging in the act of painting taught me. Being able to connect creativity with faith provided the connection I needed over these many years.”—*Barbara Yoder*

Marlene Kropf to retire

ELKHART, Ind.—Marlene Kropf will retire Sept. 6 from her position as denominational minister of worship with Mennonite Church USA Executive Leadership. The date marks the 27th anniversary of her employment with the Mennonite



church. She will continue as an associate professor at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Elkhart, Ind.

Completion of Kropf’s work in denominational ministry has marked a job change for her administrative assistant. Evon Castro transitioned last Nov. 30 from the Elkhart office to the Mennonite Education Agency in Goshen, Ind.—*Mennonite Church USA*

Bluffton, Mennonite Home receive \$1 million

BLUFFTON, Ohio—James and Frieda Basinger of Bisbee, Ariz., left their estate, estimated to be valued at \$1 mil-

Ben Depp



Mennonite Central Committee sends meat

Deis Succes, left, and Ryan Schlangen unload cases of Mennonite Central Committee’s canned meat for distribution through an MCC partner, the Christian Center for Integrated Development in Port-au-Prince, Haiti.—*MCC*

lion, to Bluffton (Ohio) University, their alma mater, and Mennonite Home Communities. On Feb. 9, at Mennonite Memorial Home, a property of Mennonite Home Communities, Bluffton University president James M. Harder announced the gift.—*Bluffton University*

CPT founder Stoltzfus dies

CHICAGO—Gene Stoltzfus, founding director of Christian Peacemaker Teams, died March 10 after a heart attack. He served as CPT director from its founding in 1988 until 2004, when he retired and moved to Fort Frances, Ontario. He was born in 1940.



In the early 1970s, Stoltzfus directed the General Conference Mennonite Church voluntary service program. In the late 1970s, he and Dorothy Friesen, his wife, codirected the Mennonite Central Committee program in the Philippines and later helped establish Synapses, a grassroots international peace and justice organization in Chicago to connect

the United States and people in the developing world.

Stoltzfus graduated from Goshen (Ind.) College and held a master’s degree in South and Southeast Asian Studies from American University, Washington, and a Master of Divinity from Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Elkhart, Ind.—*CPT*

Mission Network hears from partners in Chile

ELKHART, Ind.—An 8.8 magnitude earthquake struck Chile on Feb. 27 and continued in the days following. Mennonite Mission Network relates with several groups of Anabaptists and Mennonites in Chile and is in partnership with Mennonite Church Canada. Mónica Parada and her husband, Carlos Gallardo, who together pastor in Concepción, survived the earthquake. Samuel Tripainao, from the Mennonite church in Santiago, also survived. The family of Raquel Contreras, president of the Union of Baptist Churches in Chile, survived.

Mennonite Central Committee has allocated \$150,000 to relief efforts in Chile.—*Mennonite Mission Network*

Idaho utility company pays customers to stop using power

Four decades ago, when Sid Erwin began his career as an inspector at the Idaho Power Company, a string of new hydroelectric plants was pumping out power faster than locals could buy it. Soon enough, Erwin recalls, the utility began sending representatives to rural areas, urging farmers to use more electricity when irrigating their crops.

These days, Idaho's farmers are being paid to stop using power.

Since 2004, Idaho Power has been paying farmers like Erwin to cut power use at crucial times, resulting in drop-offs of as much as 5.6 percent of peak power demand.

In a related program, it pays homeowners to turn off their air-conditioners briefly at times of high demand.

Other efficiency initiatives by the utility, including one promoting attic insulation, have saved about 500,000 megawatt-hours of power since 2002, according to the company—roughly equal to the amount used by 5,000 gadget-filled homes over eight years.

To pay for these and other energy-saving measures, Idaho customers—individuals and companies—are charged a 4.75 percent “energy efficiency” rider on their electric bills, one of the highest percentage charges of this kind in the country.

“It’s clearly iconic in terms of a utility that’s turned the corner,” says Tom Eckman, the manager of conservation resources with the Northwest Power and Conservation Council, a planning group created by Congress. “They have gone from pretty much ground zero to a fairly aggressive program level.”

The company’s efforts are especially striking given that the push for energy efficiency is generally associated with

coastal states like California and Massachusetts, not with a state whose electric rates are among the lowest in the country.

But the concept has rung true for Idaho’s farmers, anglers and snowbirds, who have helped keep the state nearly free of coal plants. They have been largely receptive to the utility’s arguments that it is cheaper to save energy than to build new power plants.

Vast amounts of energy are required to pump water up to the state’s plains from the Snake River or from wells. The largest farms can use as much electricity as several thousand homes. In the summer, big farms keep their pumps on nearly 24 hours every day.

In recent years, Idaho Power decided that farmers could help it reduce the load on sunny summer days, when air-conditioners and other gadgets are on, by turning off their pumps for up to 15 hours a week.

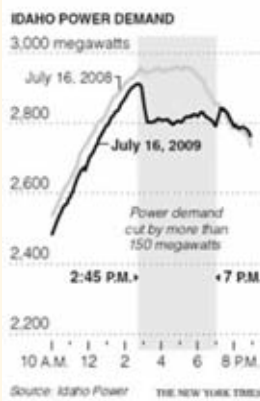
This concept, called demand response, involves paying users to make small sacrifices when there is an urgent need for extra power (the “peak”). The utility can then rely on cutting some demand on its system at crucial times—and, in theory, avoid the cost of building a new plant just to meet those peak needs.

Executives say the program lowers use during peak periods by about 1 percent. Participants are paid \$7 a month during the summer.

Courtney Washburn says her electric bill has dropped by about 30 percent as a result of attic insulation and the \$7 credit.—*Kate Galbraith in The New York Times*

Taming Peak Demand

Idaho Power pays some customers to cut electric use at times of peak demand as a way to slow the need for new power plants. Here are the results from one day last summer.



Pontius' Puddle

Joel Kauffmann



“People have a lot of fear. The flip side of fear is understanding. When you travel to places new to you, you understand more, so you fear less. And then you can love people, as a Christian should.”—Rick Steves, author of *Travel as a Political*

Act, in *The Christian Century*

Churches often do more harm than good

American Christians aren't doing enough to alleviate poverty, and when they attempt to do so, they often do more harm than good. So say Steve Corbett and Brian Fikkert, authors of *When Helping Hurts: How to Alleviate Poverty Without Hurting the Poor ... and Yourself* (Moody Publishers).

“Handing over money is fast and easy ... and therein resides the problem of many poverty-alleviation efforts,” say Corbett and Fikkert of the Chalmers Center for Economic Development, which equips churches around the world to minister to the economic and spiritual needs of low-income people (www.chalmers.org).

The authors discuss the dangers of “McDevelop-

ment”—using a “blueprint approach” in which the economically non-poor develop a standardized product and then roll out that product in cookie-cutter fashion on a massive scale devoid of the essential relational dimensions. Such a “fast-food-franchise approach to poverty alleviation ... has resulted in more than 2.5 billion poor people not being served,” the authors write.

They conclude: “North American Christians are simply not doing enough. We are the richest people ever to walk the face of the earth. We do not necessarily need to feel guilty about our wealth. But we do need to get up every morning with a deep sense that something is terribly wrong with the world and yearn and strive to do something about it.”—Bernie Alimonti

Coptic Christians killed in Egypt

The drive-by gunfire killing of six Coptic Christians in Egypt at their church on Jan. 6, the eve of their Christmas celebration, has drawn widespread shock from the Vatican and church leaders in Europe, the Middle East and Australia. Jerusalem Lutheran Bishop Munib Youman has denounced the killing of the Christians and a Muslim security officer. Some nine others were injured in the attack in the upper Nile city of Nag Hammadi. Of Egypt's 83 million people, Coptic Christians account for about 9 percent and Muslims 90 percent.

—*The Christian Century*

Hurt Locker, Glee win awards

The Catholics in Media Associates on Feb. 28 honored *The Hurt Locker* and Fox Television's *Glee* with its annual awards for best film and TV show, respectively. The CIMA Awards seek “to promote and applaud individuals, films and TV programs that uplift the spirit and help us better understand what it is to be part of the human family.”—*Religion Press Release Services*

Don't sit too long

Sitting is unhealthy, according to recent studies. Scientists are increasingly warning that sitting for prolonged periods—even if you also exercise regularly—could be bad for your health. Research is preliminary, but several studies suggest people who spend most of their days sitting are more likely to be fat, have a heart attack or even die.—*Associated Press*

Klansman turns preacher

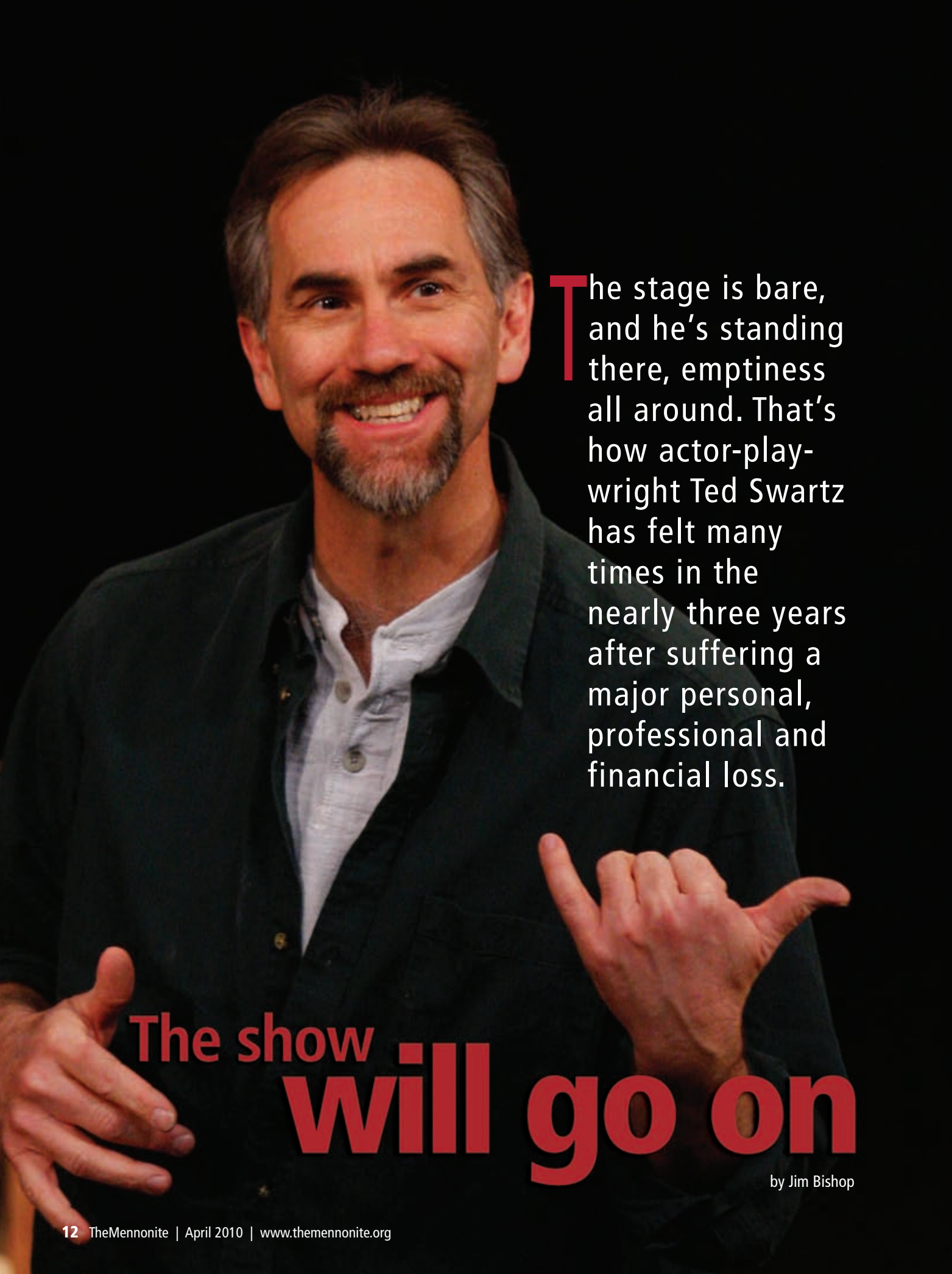
A former Ku Klux Klan national leader is now an ordained minister in the Church of God in Christ, the largest historically black denomination in the United States. Johnny Lee Clary joined the Klan at age 14 and worked his way up to imperial wizard, the group's highest position. Clary left the KKK 80 years ago and now travels the country speaking on fighting terrorism.

—*Christianity Today*

Suggestions for government programs to help fight cardiovascular disease

1. Require graphic warnings on cigarette packages.
2. Sponsor “commitment contracts” to quit smoking.
3. Subsidize whole grains, fruits and vegetables in the food-stamp program.
4. Set targets for salt reduction.
5. Incorporate physical education into No Child Left Behind.
6. Require that sidewalks and bike lanes be part of every federally funded road project.

—*Newsweek*



The stage is bare, and he's standing there, emptiness all around. That's how actor-playwright Ted Swartz has felt many times in the nearly three years after suffering a major personal, professional and financial loss.

The show
will go on

by Jim Bishop

Mennonite actor-playwright Ted Swartz has overcome loss.

From 1987 to 2007, Ted and his creative partner, Lee Eshleman, the duo popularly known as Ted & Lee, had captivated upward to one-quarter million people across the United States and into Canada, Kenya and Japan with their trademark quirky, dramatic takes on everyday life—through imaginative monologues, sketches and full-length productions, many on biblical themes and always liberally laced with wholesome humor.

The relationships Ted & Lee explored in their theatrical pieces usually took a different bent—the human responding to the Divine, prompting unpredictable yet profound responses both from actors and audiences.

They became household names, first in Mennonite circles and then spilling across denominational lines as more people came to experience their delightful on-stage presence and performances. Their careers accelerated after gaining entrée to the Staley Christian Lecture Series circuit and performing at national youth events, including the late Mike Yaconelli's Youth Specialties ministries.

It wasn't without struggles, personally, professionally and especially economically. Keeping the specter of the starving artist at bay was all too real for the duo.

Then the unthinkable happened.

Ted & Lee were scheduled to perform "Live at Jacob's Ladder," a musical they had written with composer Ken Medema, May 18-19, 2007, at Eastern Mennonite High School (EMHS) in Harrisonburg, Va. The show didn't go on.

Late afternoon of May 17, Lee, 45, lost a long struggle with depression and took his life at his Harrisonburg home, leaving his wife, Reagan, and children Nicolas, Sarah and Gabe, extended family members and countless friends and fans around the world.

"To say it was devastating is putting it mildly," Ted says. "I lost my business associate, my longtime creative partner and my best friend—all at once.

"Lee loved wrapping laughter around magical moments of God's grace and presence," Ted said at the memorial service attended by more than 800 people in Harrisonburg. "He was gifted greatly, flawed greatly, he was greatly human, and he was greatly loved by God and by so many in the world."

But the 53-year-old Harrisonburg artist has moved forward, determined that the curtain will open, the spotlights come up and the interaction between actor or actors and audience continue.

He simply wishes at the moment for more patrons at the box office.

New Looks at the Old Old Story

Ted speaks passionately of his "calling" to a theatrical career, even though he didn't sense that as a hormone-laden teenager at Christopher Dock Mennonite High School, Lansdale, Pa., who married his high school sweetheart, Sue Althouse, at age 19 and worked in his father's meat-cutting business in Spring City, Pa., for 12 years.

"That experience taught me a lot about people,"

Keeping the specter of the starving artist at bay was all too real for the duo.

Ted says, but as time passed he grew restless behind the counter, the business eventually closed and members at Plains Mennonite Church in Lansdale encouraged him to continue his education beyond a year of community college.

In 1987, at age 30, Ted and Sue and sons Eliot, Derek and Ian moved to Harrisonburg to enroll at Eastern Mennonite University. He got involved in EMU theater productions and "fell in love" with the greasepaint and the stage, earning a bachelor's degree in liberal arts in 1989.

Ted went on to graduate in 1992 with a master of arts in church leadership degree from Eastern Mennonite Seminary and a sense of ministry that would involve a different kind of pulpit to communicate the story of God's love affair with creation.

An inauspicious beginning

The dramatic duo's coming together began at Spruce Lake Retreat in the Pocono Mountains of Pennsylvania. Ted, then a student at EMU, had prepared a series of comedy sketches for a youth leaders gathering at the Franconia Mennonite Conference-sponsored camp. The material was written for two people, but at the last minute his partner backed out.

Then EMU president Joseph L. Lapp introduced Ted to Lee, a 1986 art graduate of the university





Ted and Lee as fast friends: catching up after the worship service at Community Mennonite Church, Harrisonburg, Va., the first Sunday of April 2007, a little more than a month before Lee's death. Photo by Jim Bishop

who worked part-time in the school's print shop and did graphic design work for EMU.

Lee agreed to accompany Ted to Spruce Lake, where their performances met with enthusiastic response. "You guys must have worked together for a long time," many commented afterward. A friendship formed in the fall of 1987 and evolved into a dramatic partnership, Ted and Lee TheaterWorks. Their comedy sketches expanded to a full-length production, "The Armadillo Tour."

Their repertoire broadened to longer original

While walking where Jesus walked, I realized that Ted and Lee's portrayals of biblical stories were exceptionally well done.—Sue Swartz

works based on biblical characters and events, including "Fish-Eyes," a dramatic portrayal of two of Christ's disciples, Peter and Andrew, and "Creation Chronicles," a fresh look at stories in the Old Testament. They teamed up with actress Ingrid De Sanctis on a Christmas show she helped write called "DoveTale." Ingrid estimates that she has done at least 150 performances with Ted over the last 11 years.

"Ted and I have come to a really lovely place as friends and artists working together, like a brother-sister thing at times," she says. "We have a friendship that is hard earned. We are both sensitive and stubborn and like our own ideas, but that's what makes it work—we genuinely respect each other."

Ingrid says she is proud of Ted for moving and pushing and forcing through the loss, that grief.

"Artistically, he exploded and created so many new shows and is continuing to redefine himself and the direction of his work. I love directing and working with new plays, and we've found a great rhythm in that regard.

At the time of Lee's death, the pair was involved in their biggest undertaking to date, "Good God Theater, Pts. 1 and 2," a 32-episode video and study series for Abingdon Press of the United Methodist Church. Some content was new, some based on earlier material. The project had high production values, according to Ted, and included a substantial investment of personal funds.

"Even though faced with a whole new set of issues and challenges, I still wanted to complete the project, which required recasting and rewriting some material," Ted says. Video shoots took place in Virginia in September and November of 2007. It wouldn't have been possible, he says, without the tireless assistance of Sue, Ingrid, who directed, and "a host of loving, giving performers and technicians."

Unfortunately, by the time the massive project was completed, the economy nationwide was sagging. Prospective audiences evaporated; only about 20 percent of sales projected by Abingdon have materialized to date.

"What I'd hoped would provide much of my retirement pension instead became a major financial setback," Ted says.

He credits his wife, Sue, a teacher at EMHS, and extended family on both sides with helping him survive, persevere and work at the healing process.

"Amid the grief and pain of recognizing that our lives were forever changed, I think I supported Ted best by taking care of myself," Sue says. "I read all the cards and notes that came to our house and appreciated visits from family and friends who came to check on us. Our small group and congregation, Community Mennonite Church, opened their ears and arms."

Sue continues: "You love by listening and showing patience, you put up with crazy schedules, you help with self-produced shows by selling tickets or merchandise, you often take a back seat, you make drastic changes with loss of income, and you trust that God will take what you give and multiply it for others."

Soon after Lee's death, Sue visited the Middle East, a trip that had been planned for months. While walking where Jesus walked, she says, "I realized that Ted and Lee's portrayals of biblical

stories were exceptionally well done. I was so grateful for their years of working together. That started my healing of the business loss. After returning, I read books on grief and took a master's level class at EMU, Self-Care and Renewal of the Teacher."

Ted and Sue attended a youth conference where, instead of performing, they were invited to come and be, with opportunity to talk and grieve together. A family meeting held at Christmas time with friend and counselor Nancy Good was a significant event in Ted's journey of heal-

I feel a lot of freedom as a solo writer and performer, and I believe some of my best material has evolved more recently.—Ted Swartz

ing, he says, as they laughed and cried together.

Several months later, Ted helped Sue direct the senior class play, "To Kill a Mockingbird," at EMHS. The show was dedicated to Lee, who had played the role of Atticus as a high school senior there.

Following Lee's death, Ted worked feverishly on new material. He co-wrote four new shows in 2008-09, collaborating with fellow actor-writer-music colleagues, including "Tattered and Worn," an exploration of losing one's faith and finding it again with actor-pianist Jeff Raught of Talmage, Pa.; "Excellent Trouble," co-written with Ingrid De Sanctis, bringing biblical pairs to life with all their human joys and heartaches; and "What Would Lloyd Do?," drawing on the talents of free-lance actor-musician Trent Wagler of Harrisonburg and teacher-musician Jay Lapp of Ann Arbor, Mich. This show, also dramaturged by Ingrid, premiered at EMU's homecoming weekend, Oct. 10-11, 2008. Ted also rewrote "Jacob's Ladder," which calls on the improvisation talents of musician Ken Medema.

"I feel a lot of freedom as a solo writer and performer, and I believe some of my best material has evolved more recently," Ted says. "Lee's passing has fueled my work and gives it a new passion and life as a creative artist that will have a life beyond Lee. I still enjoy doing some of our

older material, but the Ted & Lee brand is gone, and I needed to move on."

With new projects in the works, some things must end. Although scripts and videos for the Christmas play "DoveTale" are available, Ted, Trent and Ingrid performed the Christmas play for the last times Dec. 22-23 in the EMHS auditorium in Harrisonburg.

Ted & Company looks ahead

Ted is geared up—a "kickstart momentum," he calls it—to present nine new productions and a solo piece. But he wonders, "Can this structure we've put together be sustainable—professionally, financially, emotionally—in a difficult economic climate?"

"I need to do 100-110 shows a year to make a living," Ted says matter-of-factly. "But I can't keep up the previous pace at this stage of life, and having incurred major debt doesn't help."

Ted is working with a consultant to develop a fresh marketing strategy and find the niche for his new material—what direction is appropriate when historically only about 10 percent of his work is at Mennonite Church USA-related venues. He is also experimenting with different options to replace the graphic look that Lee once handled for promotion, playbills and simple stage props.

Sue is optimistic about the direction of Ted & Company: "For a long time, it felt like wheels were spinning. We had heard that any trauma to

Through our editorial process, we introduced errors into the article "Whispers of Resurrection" by Isaac Villegas (March). The correct version is now available on our Web site: www.themennonite.org/issues/13-3/articles/Whispers_of_resurrection.



Ted and Lee in costume: In 2005, Ted and Lee appear at Community Mennonite Church's variety show as judges of the Sanhedrin, trying Peter and John after they healed a man. The piece, "Duly Noted and Recorded," was originally performed at the 2005 Mennonite Church USA Convention. Photo by Jim Bishop



Moving on: Ted Swartz at home in Harrisonburg, Va. Photo by Jim Bishop

business takes two years for recovery; we are closer to three,” she says. “Many good things are happening: name, logo and Web site are in place, downloadables are available, new scripts are ready for publication, marketing and other roles in the company are better defined, and Ted is sighing less. I’m happy when he can concentrate on writing and performing, the things he does best.”

Beyond Sue and extended family members, Ted credits Sheri Hartzler, the troupe’s agent and manager for some 16 years, as an invaluable support throughout the readjustment process.

“The biggest adjustment was feeling a lot like

we were starting over, only now it wasn’t only name recognition but what shows to do,” Sheri says. “The unsettled economy has directly affected the number of churches and other organizations that are able to book a show.

“I think progress and success for Ted & Com-

As we make some changes in the business, in the shows, in the way we work and the people we work with, the laughter and the joy of the work is returning.
—Sheri Hartzler

pany will occur as we seek to expand our marketing efforts, continuing to explore other options for performance, such as Ted’s solo shows, workshops, spiritual life weeks and weekend retreat events—in other words, using past material in new ways, still trying to get it out into the world while promoting the new shows with other actors.”

According to Sheri, “Fish-Eyes” was the most-booked in the past and remains the most-purchased script and video. All scripts and DVDs are readily available at www.tedandcompany.com/store.

For churches that feel pinched in the pocket-book, Sheri suggests that they consider working with other churches in their community to cosponsor a show, find sponsors for the actual show fees, make tickets or offerings available for use for a local or church cause, or purchase script books or download scripts of an entire show (or individual scenes) and do their own performances. A click on “products” and a quick click on videos on the Web site provide the needed information at a glance.

“I invite persons to check with me on Ted & Company’s upcoming schedule,” Sheri says. “We may find a way to piggy-back on another performance and save some travel costs.”

Ted is enthused about “I’d Like to Buy an Enemy,” a one-hour show co-starring Trent Wagler that premiered at the Mennonite Church USA convention last July in Columbus, Ohio. “I think it will appeal to a broader audience,” he says. The Center for Justice and Peacebuilding

at EMU sponsored a performance on March 22.

“Nothin’ Funny ‘Bout Money,” another collaboration with Trent Wagler, weaves comedy and original music around the sensitive topic of finances and caring for God-given material possessions. He premiered a solo show on the Apostle Paul at a Catholic church in Cleveland. Another new work, “St. John’s Revival and Music Review,” is a stage play that functions like a radio program structured around a church service. Ted wants to turn “What Would Lloyd Do?” into a screenplay.

“When I started working with Ted and Lee, I often said they helped me learn to laugh,” Sheri says. “When Lee died, the work became so overwhelming that laughter was no longer a priority. Now, as we make some changes in the business, in the shows, in the way we work and the people

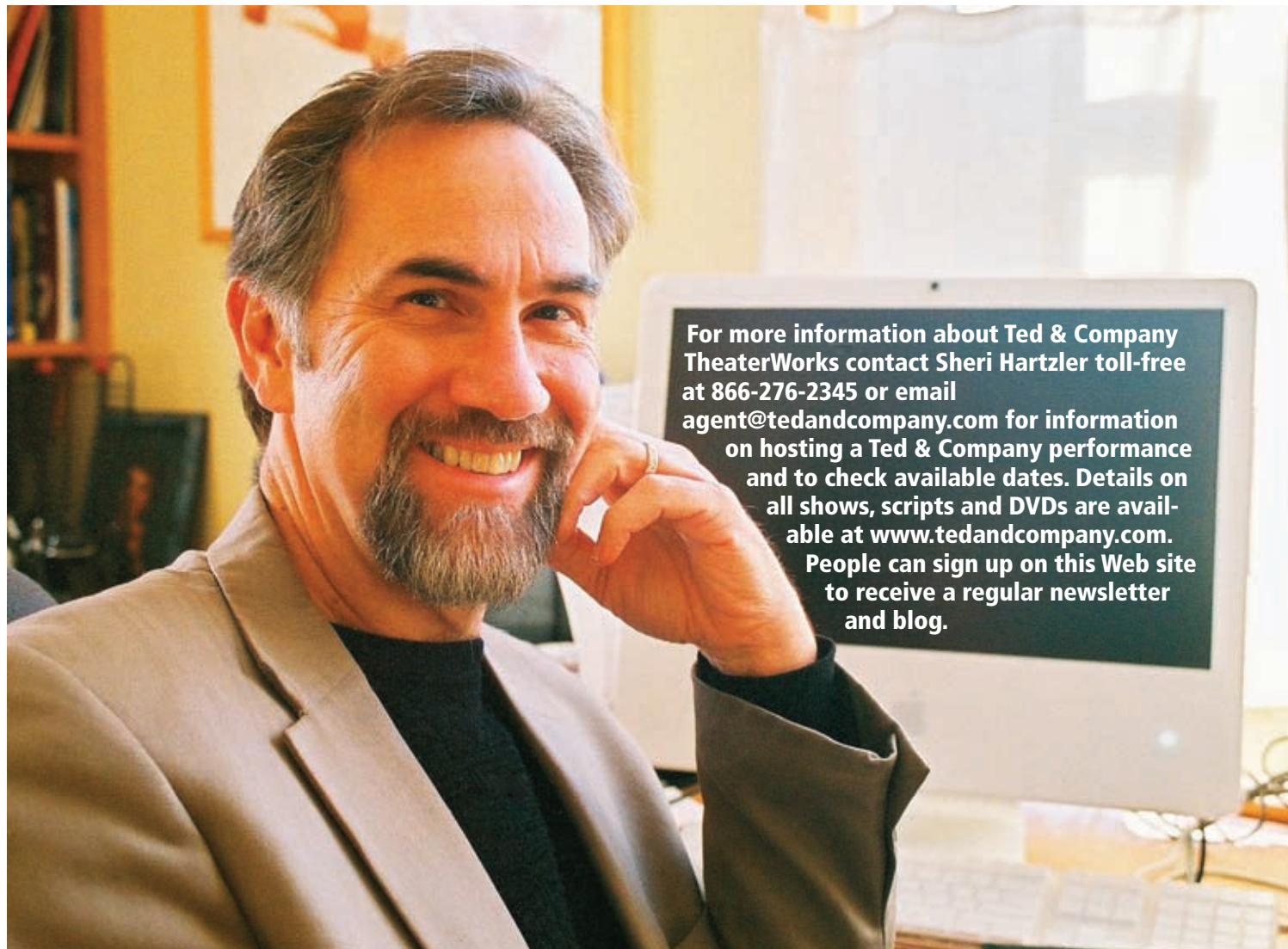
we work with, the laughter and the joy of the work is returning.”

“I’m addicted to goose bumps and laughter,” Ted says, “and I feel a spiritual calling to continue sharing these gifts with others.”

Out of tragedy plus time, there is renewed hope, healing and laughter for Ted & Company.




Jim Bishop is public information officer at Eastern Mennonite University, Harrisonburg, Va., and a member of Community Mennonite Church in Harrisonburg, as is Ted Swartz.



For more information about Ted & Company TheaterWorks contact Sheri Hartzler toll-free at 866-276-2345 or email agent@tedandcompany.com for information on hosting a Ted & Company performance and to check available dates. Details on all shows, scripts and DVDs are available at www.tedandcompany.com. People can sign up on this Web site to receive a regular newsletter and blog.

A solo writer: Ted Swartz at home in Harrisonburg, Va. Photo by Jim Bishop

A photograph of a group of people in a warm, indoor setting. In the foreground, a woman with long dark hair, wearing a black vest over a white t-shirt, is seen from the back. To her right, a woman wearing a purple headwrap and a patterned purple and white dress is holding a baby wrapped in a blue blanket. In the background, a man with glasses and a dark jacket is looking down at something. To the left, a man in a light blue shirt is partially visible. The overall atmosphere is intimate and focused.

What do you think of when you hear the expression "Christian family"? It actually has two distinct meanings.

Practicing first family

by David A. Stevens

Reflections on Mark 3:19b-21; 31-35

When some people hear “Christian family,” they think of having Christian parents and relatives, going to church together on Sunday mornings, sharing family devotions or service projects and growing up in a Christian home. For these people Christian family refers to Christians in families. For others, it means the church as family, something beyond our natural relatives. And you know which meaning is right. They both are.

But which understanding of family, does Jesus consider most important?

In Mark 3:19b-21; 31-35 we meet members of Jesus’ biological family. His mother and siblings go out to where he is teaching in order to restrain him. People are starting to talk: “This guy’s gone out of his mind, off the deep end.” So Jesus’ biological family comes to him to perform a well-known family function: to get one of their members back in line, one whose behavior is tarnishing the family name. There’s a nail sticking up, and we’ve got to pound it down. Jesus can’t seem to get a grip, so we’ll get a grip on him. Sometimes that family function can turn into family dysfunction. But some measure of providing feedback and boundaries is a legitimate part of being family.

There’s such a crowd around Jesus that his mother and siblings can’t get close. So they send him a message that they want to speak with him. When he gets the message, Jesus says something surprising: “Who are my mother and my brothers? ... Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother.” In response to his biological family, Jesus creates a whole new definition of family. Family is the new community of Jesus’ followers; those who strive to do God’s will are Jesus’ family.

How do you suppose those people around Jesus that day would have reacted when he said his followers are his first family? They may well have been shocked. Kinship ties were at least as important in Jesus’ day as they are now. Blood family was the primary building block of society, the primary group that formed one’s identity, the primary group to which one owed loyalty—for the whole life span.

Are we a little shocked too? Don’t we place a high value on biological family? Is it a little unsettling to hear Jesus place natural relatives in a position of lesser importance than our faith relatives?

Maybe this is just a unique, isolated text. Sorry. There’s more. For example, Jesus and Paul both place marriage in a different perspective from what most of the church does today. Jesus and Paul affirm the sanctity of marriage. But they consider singleness the first choice of an adult Christian lifestyle. And singles often expand family to include nonrelatives. Have you ever heard the church putting that forth to young people, that singleness is to be preferred, that singleness is a great gift to the church? I know some wonderful parents who, from the time their child is small, start praying for that child’s future spouse. The assumption is that that child’s future is marriage. In 24 years of ministry, I’ve never heard of a single Christian parent praying for a son or daughter to choose the New Testament’s preferred lifestyle of singleness. I know many young people who, when they reach a certain age, if they’re not married, think they must be part of the Left Behind series. But Jesus and Paul teach and model that singleness is a tremendous gift to the church. It’s not only the peace and justice values of the Bible that challenge our culture; it’s the family values, too.

Family is the new community of Jesus’ followers; those who strive to do God’s will are Jesus’ family.

Don’t misunderstand. Jesus is not antibiological family. To Jesus, biological family is the second most important family we have.

We can also consider 2 Timothy 1. Paul speaks to Christians in families. Paul acknowledges the importance of Timothy’s biological grandmother Lois and mother Eunice in the development of Timothy’s faith. In 1 Timothy 5, Paul calls on natural sons and daughters to take care of their own widowed mothers. But later in that same chapter, Paul also speaks to Christians as family. Paul says for a widow who has no children, the church is to be her family and to be as responsible for her as if she was a biological parent. Jesus himself practiced this kind of first family. On the cross, Jesus asked a “beloved disciple” to take care of his mother and make her part of his



own family. Christians in families are important but Christians as family is even more important.

For the first few centuries, churches met in homes. In Acts 16, an out-of-town businesswoman named Lydia listens to Paul's message. She accepts Christ and is baptized. She immediately invites Paul and his companions to stay at her house. By the end of Acts 16 it's clear that a brand new Christian fellowship has begun meeting in Lydia's home, and Paul goes there to encourage "the brothers and sisters" (Acts 16:40). In the church, "water is thicker than blood." The waters of Christian baptism initiate us into Jesus' new definition of family.

The hospitality of Christians in families is a tremendous partnership in God's mission of creating Christians as family.

But it is the tiny book of Philemon that shows us the most radical implications of practicing first family. While Paul is under arrest, a slave named Onesimus comes to him. Onesimus is owned by one Philemon, a friend of Paul's. Paul writes to Philemon on behalf of the slave. He calls on the master to receive the slave back favorably, since, in the Lord, their relationship can no longer be defined merely as master and slave; they have become Christian brothers.

Can you imagine? That family language of equals, "brothers," applied to a Christian master and slave, that revolutionary leveling of relationships was destined to one day make slavery unacceptable in the church.

American Christianity has provided an enormous amount of speaking and writing and counseling and conferences and film production in order to strengthen the biological Christian family. And much good has come from it. But almost none of it has taken account of where Jesus himself puts the emphasis. Jesus' focus on the family is not so much Christians in families as it is Christians as family. What would happen if the church started putting as much energy into becoming a non-relative family as it has into being families of relatives? What would such a church look like and feel like?

The truth is we are already doing some of that. At child dedications, when we dedicate ourselves to young children, all of us together

pledge our responsibility to that child's upbringing. We are dedicating ourselves to be that child and her parents' family. We are also obeying Jesus' understanding of family when we practice ministries of nursery and mentoring and teaching and mutual aid and shared decision-making.

It's no accident that the church in the New Testament calls its members "adelphoi"—brothers and sisters. It's no accident that from their beginnings, the Anabaptists called themselves "brothers and sisters"—even the husbands and wives. In Christ, water is thicker than blood. In Christ, the church has become the primary family unit. In the church, there's a whole new meaning to mothering and fathering and grandparenting.

And that's good because there's a tremendous need around us: We have young adults in our communities who have never been parented. Maybe the parents weren't there, maybe they were preoccupied. Maybe the parents had never grown up from being kids themselves. We have a tremendous opportunity to practice first family to people who have never really known a family.

In their farewell message, a wise pastoral couple told their congregation: "You have strong families in this church. These strong families can be fortresses or they can be oases. We encourage you not to use your families as an end but as a means, as partners with Christ in creating belonging beyond biology." Their encouragement applies to all of us. The hospitality of Christians in families is a tremendous partnership in God's mission of creating Christians as family.

What will our children learn from us about Christian family? Hopefully they will learn that Christians in families nurture our faith. We live and serve the Lord together. Hopefully they will also learn that family is a verb; that family is something we do. Christians as family means ever expanding relationships in the mission of God, a home without boundaries that comes from inviting others in.



David A. Stevens is pastor of Eden Mennonite Church, Moundridge, Kan.



Veiled and free

by Esther Stenson

The young woman washing her hands beside me in the rest stop bathroom asked, "Do you know Jesus?" Her abrupt question surprised me. She continued, "Are you born again?" and barely listened as I found my voice and assured her I did and I was. She continued pressing me with questions as I searched my mind for the reason she zeroed in on me like that. Evidently the fact that I was wearing a veiling symbolized "Amish" and spiritual darkness to her.

People in various cultures/religions still wear head coverings and should be respected in spite of the reality that many deny the relevance of this practice.

I forced myself not to laugh in her face. What signified good “Christian” behavior in my community of birth represented something “other” to her in her cultural ignorance.

Another time, I was riding a crowded ferry across Hong Kong harbor when I was approached by a sharp-looking young man who

and in a vulnerable position. While this is one example that is contrary to the myth, I cannot say that other young women were not spared being raped because they were wearing a veiling. Those stories are also a part of the mythology I grew up with.

So why am I resurrecting this issue of the veil when many Mennonites have given up the practice and rarely talk about it anymore except in reference to the Mennonite dark ages? I do so because I still live in a world between the veiled and unveiled. Not only do my mother, sister and other family members still value the wearing of a veil but I teach Muslim students in my university classes, some of whom are veiled. I still wear the veiling selectively, and some observers may think I am a religious schizophrenic.

I ask myself what the veiling symbolizes for me now. For one, I disagree with those who assert that veilings are nothing but symbols of bondage and subservience. I have known plenty of veiled Mennonites who are every bit as happy and free within their domains as are those who are not veiled and must operate within the confines of difficult work situations. Going outside the Mennonite tradition, let me give further illustrations of those who happily wear a head covering.

A young Muslim woman in my class says wearing her hijab gives her a feeling of freedom and rightness with God—especially when she prays. She feels more comfortable and at ease within the given structure of her religious practice than were she to discard her veiling and live without boundaries. She also finds freedom in not having to worry or think about how to fix her hair. Protection from unwanted male harassment is another positive aspect she notes for wearing a veiling. These justifications are not unlike those given traditionally among Mennonites.

Zainab Chami, a Lebanese American woman, says: “if I decided not to wear [the hijab] because of society, that would be oppression. ... It makes me think of who I am, it reminds me of God, and it keeps me rooted. ... For me the hijab is not a constraint; it’s the ultimate sign of liberation.”

Similarly, Rajdeep Singh Jolly, writing in the *Washington Post* (April 5, 2009) in response to a

I disagree with those who assert that veilings are nothing but symbols of bondage and subservience.

pressed a flyer into my hand. I suspected he was selling something, but I found it strange that he should target me alone and not the other expatriate English teachers on the seat beside me. After he retreated, I glanced at the print only to find a lengthy argument against the worship of Mary. Suddenly I got it. I was the only one in the group wearing a veiling and obviously looked Catholic to some observers, although I am Mennonite.

I grew up, like most Amish Mennonites, believing the wearing of a veiling a nonnegotiable command in Scripture (1 Corinthians 11) that is somehow disconnected from cultural context. Since the Bible teaches the practice, women should do it—no questions permitted. Church authorities interpreted women’s wearing of a veiling as a requirement for coming into God’s presence in prayer and a sign of acceptance of God’s order of creation (in terms of gender). Additionally, the idea that women were to have a symbol of authority on our heads “because of the angels” (v. 10) meant that if we wanted their protection, we’d better be veiled.

Although I was taught when I was growing up in the 1960s that the veiling provided protection for young Christian women, that assertion was blown to bits when an acquaintance of mine, a conservative Mennonite who always wore a veiling, was followed home from work by a stranger and raped. This upstanding young woman from a small rural Mennonite community had not knowingly put herself in harm’s way but was simply taken advantage of when she was alone

critic, states: “For observant Sikhs, tying a turban is neither a ritual nor a sign of extremism; it is a declaration of Sikh identity and signifies commitment to the Sikh principles of justice and universal equality. The turban distinguishes a Sikh as an ambassador of his or her faith and is a source of strength and pride for millions.” He further makes the point that tying a turban is no more bothersome or time-consuming than many American cultural rituals such as shaving a beard or waxing one’s legs.

Whatever significance a person gives this symbol within a given cultural context is what makes the practice either meaningful or not.

Here we have examples of individuals of other cultures or religions who have a commitment to and respect for their religious practices. These folks are not a small minority in the world and, like some veil-wearing Mennonites, are often maligned and misunderstood within secular settings, both in this country and in other places. Like Mennonites, they sometimes find intolerance among “outsiders” as well as among variants of their own primary religion.

Perhaps it is because I identify with some of the values these people hold that I am as yet unwilling to completely set aside my own practice of wearing the veiling. I recognize that as a state university instructor sprung from Amish Mennonite roots, I hold a liminal position in a world that is becoming increasingly secular and fragmented. I work with others who likewise have been uprooted and now live among people with values contrary to their own. Sometimes I, like them, experience feelings of being a cultural refugee, and sometimes I also want to be reminded of where I came from—from roots that are as valid and good as any.

I do not know if I will always continue my irregular habit of wearing the veiling, but I believe that whatever significance a person gives this symbol within a given cultural context is what makes the practice either meaningful or not. I hope that at least I will always extend my respect to those who wear a veiling, or don’t wear it, for whatever reason or whatever occasion—that I will extend to others the freedom God has so generously given to me.

Esther Stenson is a member of Community Mennonite in Harrisonburg, Va.



Dreamstime.com

At my house, just outside the window of our bathroom, grows a thin tree. It's small and at first sight appears to be nothing more than a glorified bush. But perhaps because of its simple nature, this tree provides the perfect place to build a structure of support: a nest. For some reason birds love this tree; they love to make it their home. Occasionally, I see the birds at work.

They carefully weave together twigs, bits of trash and other plants in anticipation of new birth.

Learning to fly

by Mayeken Kehr



God does not nurture our faith so that we can stay within safe boundaries.

When I came home from college last May, I saw that the nest was not only constructed but was full. Inside several tiny eggs, baby robins were resting safely under a parent's wings, waiting to burst from their shells into the bright but intimidating light of new life.

I grew up in a sturdy nest and am grateful for that stability. In a fractured world, I was born into a loving, intact family. I was born into the church—a body of people who sought the face of God together in worship, community and acts of justice. I was born into a tradition—named Mayeken for a 16th-century Anabaptist martyr, I carry a story of fierce faith in my name.

This nest allows me to relate to Timothy, the wide-eyed, budding pastor whom Paul addresses in his letter. It seems Timothy's heritage was also one of great faith. Timothy not only traveled with and learned from the apostle Paul but was a third-generation Christian. He grew up in a sturdy nest. Paul praises God for the faith that lived in Timothy's grandmother Lois, his mother Eunice and that now resides in Timothy. And this is praiseworthy.

How wonderful for families to become an instrument of God! How much joy Lois and Eunice must have felt to be able to share in the good news with Timothy, to worship together as another family—that of Christ! How much joy God must feel to see different generations worshipping together through corporate and individual expressions of faith!

God's joy lives in the questions generations continually ask. With energy and excitement God's people wonder, How can we pass on the words of faith to which we've been entrusted? How will we nurture the next generation? These are dynamic questions to which Paul's second letter to Timothy may offer some guidance.

Most importantly, Paul does not want us to forget who is the mama bird, the master weaver and the divine planner of this nest: God. In this metaphor, it's easy for me to place my parents in the role of mother or father bird. It seems natural; they are the most physical representation for me of love, comfort, stability and Christ followers. But really, my parents, the church, my experiences are all twigs and materials; they surround me with protection and the example of a sturdy faith, but ultimately it is God who has

pieced together and holds together these things in my life. God is the continuity that carries through generations. The grace we receive is not a sign of our parents' faithfulness but the faithfulness of Jesus Christ even to the cross.

Paul makes this clear: We do not choose Christ by default. We do not have faith unless it is our own. Paul writes to Timothy, grateful for the example of faith modeled by the women in his life but even more thankful for Timothy's ownership of that faith. In his letter to Timothy, Paul writes, "I am reminded of your sincere faith." This faith is Timothy's, not his grandmother's or his mother's. Paul encourages Timothy to stand firm in this conviction, to say unashamedly that this faith, the foolishness of the cross, is his own.

How does this appropriation of faith happen? I

It was only then, after I had known darkness, that I could appreciate the Light.

was born into a nest that proclaimed a strong faith in Jesus Christ, but I was not born into faith. That birth happened later. I liken my story of ownership to that of a baby bird upon hatching. Inside the shell of my safe life, I was warm, comfortable and naive. Outside was not very comfortable.

During my freshman year of high school one of my close friends was diagnosed with cancer. For the next two years she went through treatments of chemotherapy and radiation, swinging between joyous periods of remission and the dreaded discoveries of yet another tumor. I was 16 on March 1, 2005, when, gathered together with classmates, I heard that she was dead.

This experience brought an intense anger that is still hard to articulate. It was more than sorrow—I was angry with God. I wanted nothing to do with God. When I followed my parents to church, I wondered, Why pray? My pain was raw and my skepticism deep.

But slowly God nursed me back to life. Slowly and tenderly God tended my wounds, despite

my resistance. It was only then, after I had known darkness, that I could appreciate the Light. It was only after knowing what it was to be without God that I could appreciate the presence of God. It was then that my faith began to become my own.

My introduction to suffering and the subsequent act of owning my faith is significant in my spiritual journey. When asked to share a reflection from my spiritual journey, this is usually the one I tell. But I cannot live in reflections; Paul reminds us there is much more after ownership.

A few weeks after first taking notice of the eggs outside our window, I was surprised to find that the nest was full of life. Little robins sat eagerly, continually focused upward, waiting for a parent to drop a bit of sustenance into their tiny

was empty. I had almost forgotten that a bird's purpose is to fly. Although grounded at times, they aren't meant to stay in the nest.

Paul says that God not only saves us but calls us to a holy calling. We are called not only to own the great news of Christ Jesus but to live by and testify to the reason for our hope. God does not nurture our faith so that we can stay within safe boundaries. No, God calls each of us to something dangerously holy and equips us for that purpose.

Paul knew this all too well. He knew it in his own calling—he was “an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God” (2 Timothy 1:1). God's will led Paul to travel, preach and suffer for the sake of one very-much-alive Jesus Christ. Paul saw that same call alive in Timothy, and he says we are all called by the power of God. Paul reminds Timothy and us to “fan into flame” or “rekindle the gift of God” within us (2 Timothy 1:6).

Imagine that. The power of God plus us plus fire—the prospect sounds dangerous and unsettling. But maybe that is how it is supposed to be. To rekindle a fire we need to disturb and disrupt the coals. Maybe we need to be unsettled to enliven the gifts within us. In fact, Paul promises we will be uncomfortable; we will suffer. It takes courage to disrupt our comfortable kindling. It takes courage to fan into flame our gifts when

God calls each of us to something dangerously holy and equips us for that purpose.

beaks. I saw this feeding take place, and it was incredible. To see the life and growth of what had just broken free from its shell—it's a small splendor you want to share with others. But in a few more weeks, again to my surprise, the nest



we know that God's will is involved. It is not a safe calling.

But, says Paul, "God did not give us a spirit of cowardice, but rather a spirit of power and of love and of self-discipline" (1:7). We are not ashamed of the fire we carry but are called to lovingly tend it and offer its blazing power and comforting warmth to others.

For me, it is much easier to be a coward and stay within the nest where it's safe. Within the nest—my family, friends and church—sharing and nurturing faith seems easy. But outside that fortress? Beyond the nest where I need to take risks to proclaim my faith in Christ Jesus? Where I risk being rejected, being labeled and degraded by intellectuals as naive or lumped together with a mainstream and political form of Christianity? That's much scarier.

Fortunately, God equips us with an alternative to a spirit of cowardice: the Spirit of power, love and a sound mind.

Of what then, do we have to be afraid? Death, our greatest enemy? Not even death, says Paul. Because our Savior Christ Jesus abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. Because God's history is one of unending provisions and faithfulness, we have no reason to be ashamed of our faith, only our cowardice. That's why this verse is so wonderfully disturbing. We are not called to be cowards. What I often mistake for arrogance in Paul's writings may simply be an unashamed and unabashed testimony to the one in whom Paul has put his trust and life.

Unfortunately, it is not only fear that can keep us from flying. If we want to fly perfectly on the first try, it's hard to leave the nest. For me it's always tempting to get caught up in self-perfection instead of realizing that I am gradually being perfected by God. Instead of soaring with trust on the wild winds of grace, I choose to be tied down by self-inflicted toil toward unattainable sinlessness.

Paul reminds us that this attempt is fruitless. We were saved and called by God, "not according to our works but according to God's own purpose and grace" (1:9). God does not ask us to earn the grace we have received, just to not be ashamed of it. And how can we keep it a secret? If we are integrated in Christ, if we fan into flame the gifts of the Spirit, we cannot help but share the Good News with others. We cannot help but pass on the faith. We have chosen Christ, who gives us this irresistible longing—we cannot help but fol-

low him. We cannot help but leave the safety of our own nests to build up others.

We still rejoice and give thanks for the nest—for the sound teachings that nurture us through faith and love in Christ Jesus. We need the nest, but the nest is not our treasure. Christ is our good treasure. God has entrusted us with the Good News and told us to guard it. But to guard the gospel does not mean to bury it like some unused talent. We guard it by courageously spreading the deep joy of this treasure. We protect it by entrusting it to others who are willing to make it

If we are integrated in Christ, if we fan into flame the gifts of the Spirit, we cannot help but share the Good News with others.

their own. We guard it as a sacred calling to pass on our heritage of faith.

Our very lives attest to this heritage because what we guard also guards us and our actions. We not only seek to pass on but to live by God's presence in Scripture, tradition, innovation, silence and each other. With the help of the Holy Spirit living in us, we are equipped to live out this calling. We can pass on the faith and be courageous. We can move beyond the safety of our nests to come proudly to God's table, confessing that our faith is our own. We come secure in the bone-deep knowledge that the wind that carries us—although wild and unpredictable—is God's own Spirit of self-discipline, power and love. Praise be to God.



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Laborers in the vineyard

A parable for today

by Thomas Lehman

In the parable of the laborers in the vineyard (Matthew 20:1-16), a landowner goes out early in the morning to hire workers for his vineyard, promising them the usual daily wage. He goes back to the marketplace to hire more workers at 9 a.m., promising to pay them “whatever is right.” He does the same at noon and again at 3 p.m. and finally at 5 p.m. When the working day ends, he instructs his manager to pay all of them the usual daily wage.

The workers who had put in a full day grumbled against the landowner, who replies, “Friend, I am doing you no wrong; did you not agree with me for the usual daily wage? Take what belongs to you and go; I choose to give to this last the same as I give to you. ... Or are you envious because I am generous?”

The moral of the parable is simple: The generous landowner assumes that all his workers have similar basic needs, and all should go home with enough at the end of the day to feed their families. The parable shows that God’s sense of economic justice is far superior to ours in its insistence on meeting basic human needs from day to day.

Matthew 5:45 tells us that our Father in heaven “makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous.” Here we see as well that divine justice includes a measure of generosity.

When humans run things, it is possible to insure that basic needs go unmet. The current poverty guidelines established by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services for the contiguous 48 states (Alaska and Hawaii are higher) define poverty for a two-person household as an income of less than \$14,000, and for a household of four, \$21,200.

In July 2008, Michael Bloomberg, New York City’s mayor, raised the poverty guideline for a family of four living in the city to \$26,138. This apparent generosity needs to be placed in context: In Manhattan the average income of the wealthiest fifth of the population is 50 times as great as the average income of the bottom fifth.

The federal minimum wage recently advanced to \$6.55/hour. An employee who works 2,000 hours per year at the federal minimum has a gross annual income of \$13,100, a mere 62 percent of the poverty guideline for a family of four. Do the bureaucrats who define the poverty threshold and the legislators who set the minimum wage ever talk to each other? Do they even inhabit the same country? This kind of hypocrisy has been national policy for many years.

In Canada, the minimum wage is set by the respective provinces; the overall average is \$8.40.

In *Unexpected News*, Robert McAfee Brown discussed the famous passage in Matthew 25 in which Jesus presides over all of human history on judgment day and asks who gave food to the hungry, a drink to the thirsty, who welcomed a stranger or gave clothing to the naked. Brown

sums it up in these words: “Giving food to the hungry or clothing to the naked is not a charitable handout but an exercise in simple justice—restoring to the poor what is rightfully theirs, what has been taken from them unjustly. So Jesus’ vision is not a plea for tax-deductible donations but a fervent cry for justice, for setting right what has gone wrong.” In light of this country’s longstanding failure to pay an adequate minimum wage, we need not look far to see who has been unjustly treated and realize that much of what we buy is the work of underpaid laborers.

Our nation’s economy offers unlimited wealth to those who can achieve it and unending poverty to those trapped in it.

The parable of the laborers in the vineyard

shows that, in contrast to the financial bailout engineered by the U.S. government, in God’s economy the concern starts at the bottom by first meeting the daily needs of the least among us. It is a truly radical economy and quite the opposite of practice in the United States.

Our nation’s economy offers unlimited wealth to those who can achieve it and unending poverty to those trapped in it. Though people differ greatly in their ability to earn a living, Christians can never cite this to excuse a lack of concern.

The United States has redefined but not abandoned the concept of slavery if we institutionalize economic servitude by paying a poverty-level minimum wage. To enjoy great prosperity when it is based on the sacrificial labors of chronically underpaid and often overworked people is to ignore the lessons of this parable in particular as well as the general concern for the poor in both Old and New Testaments. The Bible gives the wealthy nowhere to hide.



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As my friend rehearsed for me what she planned to say to her husband, I could see myself in her manner. She built her case, presented her view and left no clever phrase unsaid. She raised her voice to emphasize her point, lowered her voice to appear agreeable and paused dramatically when nothing else worked. Speaking to myself as much to her, I asked, "How about if you say it short, grin and be quiet? Then let him think about it."

Like my friend, I have for years presented my ideas to anyone who would listen with a song, a dance and some snazzy flair. But I've concluded that this approach reveals my lack of trust in God and failure to love others. I've asked God to help me develop a less-is-more way of speaking.

Simply put

by Jan Johnson

When fewer words mean more



Keep it simple: We often use words to get our way. Without realizing it, we dominate conversations by interrupting and exaggerating. We think we're right, and we want others to share our beliefs or accept our advice. Other times we're concerned about our reputation so we rattle on to defend ourselves.

In Jesus' day, "evasive swearing" was common. As long as people avoided swearing by God's name (instead by heaven, the earth, Jerusalem or even their own head), they could say anything and not mean it. This allowed them to impress others while being insincere. In contrast to their showy speech—and ours—Jesus' instructions sound radical to a world that routinely speaks in italics: "Let your word be 'Yes, Yes' or 'No, No'" (See Matthew 5:33-37.)

Taking our words to heart: Jesus' teaching hints at our need to examine the motives behind our words. Since most of us are concerned about what others think, we use words to make a good impression. Knowing this helps us recognize when it might be best to remain silent.

Some time ago, some people I was serving with asked if I planned to attend a concert they were giving the next evening. I smiled and said no. I decided not to give my reason (I'd been traveling a lot and was reserving the next day for a sabbath) because if I explained myself, I would probably sound as if I were lecturing them about practicing a sabbath. I smiled again and asked them to tell me about their plans—which they loved doing. Less really was more.

True simplicity of speech flows from a heart filled with the compassion, truth and love of Jesus: "For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks" (Matthew 12:34). As my heart mirrors the heart of Christ—caring for others, trusting God with my reputation, abandoning my desire to have my way—my heart will direct my mouth to state an idea briefly and peacefully and then allow others full freedom to respond.

Speech therapy: Certain practices help us shift our conversations away from self and allow God to retrain us in speaking simply. They grow our confidence that God will work in our conversations without our over-the-top efforts. Here are a few practices to consider:

Silence. Times of silence retrain our mouths and quiet our compulsions to impress others through our words. We are relieved of the burden of making small talk. We may even journal about how we use speech to try to adjust others' opinions of ourselves.

Following the example of a friend, I've attempted to practice the situational silence of not giving my opinion unless asked. As I was teaching several nights at a church, I discovered the pastor's daughter was a painter. Since art history is my hobby, I could not resist asking her who her favorite painter was. Even before she replied, I realized I was not listening for her answer. I asked her only because I wanted her to ask me that question. Recalling my intention not to offer my thoughts until asked, I disciplined myself to listen to her fully.

After she responded, she didn't ask my opinion. So I asked her more questions. As she spilled out her thoughts, she became dear to me. I wondered with joy at the person God put in my life. I almost missed that moment of connection in my hurry to offer my opinion.

Silence retrains our mouths and quiets our compulsions to impress others through our words.

Confession. As we become more conscious of our showy speech, we can then ask ourselves what's behind our words—self-importance? pushiness? disregard for the other person? After admitting this, we can ask God to help us plan the next step. For example, putting my hand over my mouth when I want to interrupt.

Attentiveness. Try waiting for an answer after asking others, "How are you?" If we truly listen, their answer will probably prod us to inquire further about them. Try answering questions with a simple yes or no. You won't come across as uncommunicative if you also smile to let the person know you're eager to be attentive.

When speaking with others, ask yourself, How can I love the people around me and hear their deeper selves in this moment? State your ideas briefly and instead of thinking about what you're going to say next, look at the people you're talking with and consider what they're saying.

As we allow the practices of simple speech to retrain our hearts and mouths, we too will become the kind of people who see the hearts of others more easily. What a rich way to live!



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Scarcely a week goes by without someone saying, "Give people fish and you feed them for a day; teach them how to fish and you feed them for life."



Fishy tale

Updating an overused slogan



It's a handy slogan, and ever since Chinese philosopher K'uan-Tzu came up with it 2,500 years ago, it has neatly expressed a core truth about giving help that lasts. He understood how short-term hand-outs relate to long-term impact.

Christians can relate to the image. The disciples caught fish; Jesus employed fish in powerful metaphors that endure.

Like any good phrase, however, it has been overused. It also glosses over the complexity of today's poverty.

Maybe it's time for an update.

Are fishing lessons what the poor need most? Chances are, they already know how to fish, maybe better than we do, but they lack other necessities to make it happen. Besides, not everyone fishes the way we do. Using bamboo baskets to catch red snapper off the coast of Haiti is different from angling for trout in Manitoba. Before we head out to teach, we have to be sure we actually possess the skill they need.

Maybe what they really need is better equipment. But how to get it? The banks probably won't lend them money to buy it because the poor may not have collateral or credit history. There's always the local loan shark, but who wants to pay 250 percent interest? Perhaps what they need is affordable credit so they can purchase the items on their own.

So now they have the right fishing tackle. Can they gather by the river? "Whoever owns the pond decides who gets the fish," says African-American minister John Perkins. No matter how well they can fish, they'll stay poor if they can't get access to the water. In order to feed themselves for life, they may need help getting fishing rights. That complicates things. Maybe the help they need has less to do with imparting a skill than pressing for larger issues of justice.

Let's say the poor have managed to arrange a spot on the river but a factory upstream (perhaps owned by corporations in which our pensions are invested) is dumping effluent that contaminates the river. Poisoned fish can't be sold or fed to the family. To really help the poor we may have to

help them achieve better environmental standards. Or at the very least urge corporations who do business there to behave themselves and not make messes that keep people poor.

OK, let's assume our fisherfolk have overcome all these obstacles. They know how to fish. They've obtained credit at a decent price to buy fishing equipment. They've gained access to the river. The water is clean and the fish are edible.

But when they bring in the fish they discover they can't sell their catch. Why? The export market has collapsed because rich countries have imposed duties on imported fish or have subsidized their own producers so heavily that they can dump their product on the rest of the world. Maybe the best way to help is to improve trade laws to give poor countries an equal footing.

Maybe the help they need has less to do with imparting a skill than pressing for larger issues of justice.

Meanwhile, well-meaning North Americans have sent a shipload of second-grade canned fish which relief agencies are giving away on street corners. Now even the local people won't buy their product. Why pay for something that others are handing out for nothing?

K'uan-Tzu had it right—in his day. But today's poverty is far more complex.

So are the solutions.

Which means we have to get beyond glib slogans, heartfelt as they may be, if we want to make a difference.



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Historical dimensions of the missional church



Rich Preheim is director of the Mennonite Church USA Historical Committee.

There is no aspect of life that can be divorced from historical understandings.

Last month's Winter Olympics were unquestionably a fantastic display of athleticism and dedication. We got to see elegant ice skating, stomach-churning luge, cerebral curling and more—all with ample human drama of perseverance and sacrifice.

But the games were more than that. They were also a great history lesson, as it was impossible to watch these competitions without being made aware of past successes and failures. The U.S. men's hockey team's surprising success invoked memories of the championship squads of 1960 and 1980. Canada, motivated by its record of Olympic futility, won the most gold medals of any nation at Vancouver. Perhaps the most overlooked landmark was the presence of the first-ever winter olympians from seven countries, including warm-weather Colombia and Ghana.

Such a litany of accomplishments underscores a lesson taught by one of my undergraduate professors: history is everything. There is no aspect of life that can be divorced from historical understandings. Want more proof? Scientists' claims of global warming are based, at least in part, on examination of climate conditions over many years. How a physician treats an injury or illness is influenced by the patient's health history. Current U.S. tensions with Iran must be viewed in the context of U.S. involvement in the region through the years.

Likewise, history needs to be a requisite element in Mennonite Church USA's pursuit of faithfulness. In fact, the call to be missional, which has been placed at the heart of our young denomination, is actually an emphasis of the principles that fueled the formation of Anabaptism in the 16th century. The movement sought to embody Christ's example of love and peace in every facet of life. Becoming a Christian wasn't just a matter of professional or social expediency; it was to be a total reorientation of perspective and values.

Nowhere is that more evident than in Menno Simons, our church's namesake. A Catholic priest, he confessed to leading an unpriestly life, "playing cards, drinking and in diversions as, alas, is the fashion and usage of such useless people." He even admitted to not reading the Bible. But when Menno converted to Anabaptism, he became a leading advocate for a com-

prehensive faith encompassing more than Sunday morning.

Devotion to faithful living every day and in every facet of life became a defining characteristic of the Anabaptist movement. By the 20th century, the development of the missional North American Mennonite church was fostered by a wide range of new institutions. These were not just for ministers or missionaries. Businessmen organized Mennonite Economic Development Associates to use their expertise for God and God's people. Church members in health-care professions formed organizations such as Mennonite Medical Association, Mennonite Nurses Association and Mennonite Health Association. The various Mennonite voluntary service programs allowed people to use any number of skills and interests for the sake of the kingdom.

Just as it did nearly 500 years ago in the era of Menno Simons, that missional focus continues to generate interest and draw converts. The Mennonite Church USA Historical Committee is charged with preserving and proclaiming the stories of that heritage. Carrying out those responsibilities makes the organization distinctly, even uniquely, missional.

An important reason is that it can witness to those who may not otherwise be exposed to the message of faith. The Historical Committee's archives in Goshen, Ind., and North Newton, Kan., serve hundreds of researchers a year. They include people who are not Mennonite and may not even be familiar with Mennonites. They may not even be Christian. But they come to better understand subjects that intersect with Mennonite life and thought. It might be mental health care, migration patterns, hymnody or quilting. Regardless, the very act of inquiry introduces researchers to the faith that helped shape whatever topic they are studying.

Apart from the academic process, it is probably impossible to assess the Historical Committee's effects on non-Mennonite researchers. But it's also often difficult to know the impact of a Mennonite Voluntary Service worker in an urban unit or a Mennonite Mission Network worker overseas or the countless acts that church members do everyday.

But then quantifying effectiveness is not the point of being missional. **TM**

Our marvelous bodies

It was a long-ago summer day, a day made for going without shoes. I was barefoot in the back yard with a bunch of friends, playing Freeze Tag—if you are tagged, you are frozen in position until someone comes along and tags you free. As this game required no particular skill in hitting or catching balls and did not require being the fastest or the strongest, I actually enjoyed playing it. That is, until the bee. A barefoot game of Freeze Tag in a backyard full of clover led to my foot landing on an unsuspecting bee, which immediately protested, stinging me and ending my afternoon fun.

The bee was doing what bees do and responding as bees respond upon the interruption. The actual sting was not so bad, but my body's reaction was severe, and I learned that I should avoid bee stings.

Human bodies are marvelous; they are at once capable in astonishing ways of carrying on any number of unseen, necessary functions for life. They can be strong and powerful, yet they are fragile. Bodies move and breathe and bend and do. Bodies tire and weaken and sicken and die. There is no guarantee about what the package one is given will be able to do. We have a modicum of control but not complete control. Somewhere in the space between, we do the best we can.

At either end of the life's spectrum—tiny, newborn flesh or older, brittle bones covered with papery skin—and at all the points in between we humans and other animals contain the possibility of weakness and the eventuality of death. I remember holding each of my babies for the first time and feeling so adequate about the notion of my responsibility to care and protect these tiny beings.

Even with growing experience and confidence, that sense of awe, in the complete sense of the word, remained. We are encased in fragile

flesh—flesh that is vulnerable to bees and more. This is life—we are born, and we will surely die.

God walks that path with us. The mystery and splendor of the incarnation is wrapped up in this reality. The Word became flesh. The Word became flesh and dwelt among humanity—humanity that sweats, weeps and bleeds.

Jesus took on the fragility and vulnerability of a human body. That seems to me to be as important as remembering Jesus as wise, compassionate and bearing a certain power and strength.

Perhaps it is irreverent, but I think it worth pondering that Jesus took on the very inconvenience of humanity. How much more efficient might ministry be if one did not have to eat and sleep and take care of bug bites and bee stings?

Recently in Bible class, my students and I watched a movie that depicted the life, ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus. Part of our purpose was to identify and compare narrative lenses—what episodes are emphasized and how they compare with the emphases of the Gospel writers. I was captivated by a scene during the last few minutes of the movie as Jesus—resurrected, the stone rolled away, holes in his wrists and feet, invites a

grieving, disbelieving Thomas to touch the wounded flesh, acknowledge the scars and believe. The incarnation itself presents a lens through which we come to know and understand and believe.

The life of Jesus tells us that our flesh, vulnerable as it may be, is worth tending to. Our bodies, though they may confuse and dismay us at times, are valuable and honorable. All bodies, contrary to some conventional wisdoms, no matter their size, shape, color, gender, ability (and so on and so on) are gifts of and gifted by the Creator. And the Creator knows intimately the strengths and vulnerabilities of these bodies, because Jesus has worn our flesh. **TM**



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Mennonites and the arts



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Mennonites desperately need to rethink how we view the arts. For most of us, “art” sounds frivolous—an elitist distraction—or dangerous: sensual depravity bent on destroying faith. But whether we like it or not (and whether we are aware of it or not), faith speaks in the language of the arts. To a great extent, our understanding of God is shaped by the poetry of the Gospels, the inflection of a sermon, the rhythm of hymns, the performance of Communion, an image in a children’s book, the arrangement of the places we worship.

The typical Mennonite view of the arts is both too narrow and too wide.

On the narrow end, we fail to recognize that, beginning with Creation itself, creative expression brings richness to every facet of our otherwise monochrome lives.

This is true even for a tradition that values simplicity and practicality. Writing (including Scripture and sermons) and music are two artistic languages that all Mennonites agree are important and many employ fluently. Quilting, woodworking and fraktur (ornamental lettering) are Mennonite arts with long histories. Conservative Mennonite communities are attentive to clothing design.

When actress Kim Stauffer began working on an Anabaptist arts network in 2007, she didn’t know who would be interested. But within months of launching the Mennonite Artist Project last year, the Web site was filled with hundreds of Mennonite-related actors, designers, musicians, writers and visual artists in every age group, from all corners of the United States and Canada.

In another respect, however, the typical Mennonite view of the arts is too wide. When we do see creativity around us, we don’t discriminate between juvenile and masterful skills, between a dynamic and a dull product, between good expression and agreeable content.

Last fall, I participated in a Mennonite benefit auction. The first items to sell were apple pies, the winners of a student baking contest. Each

was made by a young chef who had never baked a pie before, and each raised more than \$1,200. A few minutes later, another food item was up for sale: a multicourse Korean dinner for 24 guests, with a company of trained performers providing live Korean music and dance as after-dinner entertainment. But it, too, sold for about \$1,200. Despite a demonstration from the performers, the lavish Korean evening didn’t impress this Mennonite audience—they liked their apple pie.

Of course, the church is not a benefit auction.

One could argue that in God’s eyes, each person’s heartfelt offering is equally valuable. I believe that’s true. Still, as the Apostle Paul suggests, even in the church not all gifts are valuable for all purposes.

Few churches would tolerate a treasurer who was a little fuzzy on math or a fellowship meal committee that resorted to cold cereal and toast. Yet on many Sundays, we sit through Scripture readings

that sound like a math quiz or something on the back of a cereal box: prophecy with no conviction, history with no smile of recognition, teaching with no hint of surprise. We seem to have no expectation that God’s Living Word could leap from the page and speak to us in a new way.

We call ourselves people of the Word, but often we don’t care enough about words to learn how they are pronounced or to glance at them before we read them out loud in church.

Here is one place where Mennonites need this broader and narrower view of art: an expanded appreciation for the literature of the Bible and the performance of Scripture; a refined expectation that Scripture will be compelling (not merely familiar) and that the people entrusted to read it will prepare rigorously.

The arts are not evil or disposable; they are gifts of God. Whether traditional crafts such as quilting, practical skills such as architecture or seemingly foreign expressions such as dance, they are languages that can reveal new richness in God’s grace. **TM**

We seem to have no expectation that God’s Living Word could leap from the page and speak to us in a new way.

The views expressed do not necessarily represent the official positions of Mennonite Church USA, *The Mennonite* or the board for The Mennonite, Inc.

MC USA receives \$3 million surprise

180 former General Conference pastors will receive funds.

Mennonite Church USA, successor to the General Conference Mennonite Church, will receive some unexpected funds because a mutual insurance company, related to a 403(b) retirement plan it sponsored, “demutualized.” More than \$3 million will be distributed to approximately 180 qualifying participants over the next several months.

The money received will be distributed to those participants with an active GCMC 403(b) account or who were an annuitant receiving payments as of Oct. 1, 2002. This date was the effective date of the demutualization.

Marty Lehman, Mennonite Church USA’s director of operations, sent all qualifying recipients a letter on March 22 alerting them to the distribution coming their way.

GCMC used to sponsor a retirement plan with the participants’ accounts invested through a contract with an insurance company.

The most recent insurance company was Provident Mutual Insurance Company. In 1996, GCMC changed its plan to one operated by Mennonite Retirement Trust. Some GCMC ministers elected to leave their funds with Provident. Following this change, GCMC had little interaction with Provident. In 2001-2002, Provident went through a “demutualization process” and became part of Nationwide Financial. GCMC was notified in October 2002 that as part of the demutualization process GCMC had been awarded “policy credits.”

The value of the policy credits was subsequently reflected in a flexible premium annuity contract issued by Nationwide to GCMC. Staff members for Mennonite Church USA have been discerning how best to distribute the funds. They solicited the advice of a number of people, including several 403(b) experts and three attorneys.

Dave Weaver, Mennonite Mission Network’s senior

executive for finance, also assisted in the process.

“There haven’t been a lot of demutualizations,” Weaver said on March 1, “so there are not many clear rules on how distributions from a demutualization should be handled. Because the plan was a 403(b) plan and a church plan, the situation was even more unique. We won’t know the actual final balance of the annuity contract until Nationwide terminates the contract.”

In order to ascertain how best to make the distributions, staff considered the information available from Provident, other situations in which demutualizations had occurred and recommendations from consultants.

“It took so long to resolve this,” Weaver said, “because of the complexity of the situation and the lack of specific guidance available on how to handle this situation.”

Staff had to work through the old plan records of participants, ascertaining exactly who would qualify as a recipient.

According to Lehman, Executive Board will retain sufficient funds to cover expenses incurred and in case other qualifying recipients are discovered. Eventually, however, all remaining funds will be distributed.—*Everett J. Thomas*

By the numbers

Demutualization funds: \$3,000,000*

Effective date: Oct. 1, 2002

Qualifying participants: 170

Attorneys and consultants: at least eight

*Exact amount will not be determined until Nationwide terminates the contract.



Stutzman installed as executive director

Augsburger, Shelly and Villegas talk about roots, branches and wings.



Everett J. Thomas

Executive Board member Terry Shue (left) leads the commissioning of Ervin Stutzman. Stutzman's wife, Bonita, is at right. At far right is Executive Board member Patty Shelly.

More than 400 people packed Park View Mennonite Church, Harrisonburg, Va., on March 7 to participate in the formal installation service for Ervin Stutzman as the new executive director for Mennonite Church USA. Stutzman began his role on Jan. 1.

Park View pastor Phil Kniss and Iglesia Menonita Hispana (Hispanic Mennonite Church) moderator Juanita Nuñez were the worship leaders for the service. Jack Suderman, general secretary for Mennonite Church Canada, brought words of affirmation.

The message was provided by three people. The first part was “roots.” The second part was “branches.” The third part was “fruit.”

“The roots of our faith call us to faithfulness in discipleship of Christ,” said Myron Augsburger of Harrisonburg, Va., “to building congregations that share the discipline of Christ, to transcend individualism and materialism by a meaningful sense of community, to hold to the priority of God’s kingdom now, to be active extensions of love in an increasingly violent society and to share a witness of God’s saving grace with those about us.”

Patty Shelly, Executive Board member and member of the executive director search committee, spoke about branches.

“God has been faithful,” Shelly said, “sustaining and empowering the branches of our church as it spreads out in witness, ministry and fruitfulness of many kinds. Abiding in the vine brings blessing. Today we celebrate that God continues to call forth leaders for the church—not only at the national level but throughout the church.”

Isaac Villegas, pastor of Chapel Hill (N.C.) Mennonite Church, ended the

three-person sermon by talking about fruit: “The future of any garden lies with the seeds and the soil,” Villegas said. “When the fruit dies, the seeds are set free to produce new life. The secret to new life is in the compost, with the decomposing fruit, where the seeds of life abide. Compost shows us how fruit dies its way into the future. Jesus, the fruit of Mary’s womb, dies his way into the future. With Christ, resurrected life is our future as well, a life that we die into.”

Terry Shue, a member of the Executive Board, provided the charge to Stutzman:

Moderator: Do you believe that you are called by God and God’s church to this ministry?

Ervin: I believe I am so called.

Moderator: Will you respect and be guided by the beliefs and practices of Mennonite Church USA?

Ervin: I will.

Other elements of the service included several solos by Tony Brown, Hesston (Kan.) College faculty member, and the Park View choir (see photo below), which sang “Ye Shall Have a Song.” Stutzman spoke briefly, giving thanks to the many people who helped make the new assignment possible.—*Everett J. Thomas*



Park View choir members (from left): Pearl Hoover Hartman, Rachel Whitmer, Kim Troyer Schmucker

Everett J. Thomas

Health-care providers learn of 'Googlies'

Mennonite Health Assembly focuses on 'navigating in a sea of change.'

Many of the 235 health-care providers who gathered at the Mennonite Health Assembly in Norfolk, Va., March 4-7 take care of people who were born before 1973. But they heard that it is the people born after 1973 who will lead massive changes in our culture over the next 10-20 years.

In the opening session, Leonard Sweet, vice president of academic affairs and dean of the theological school at Drew University in Madison, N.J., said those born before 1973 are Gutenbergs—meaning our lives have been shaped by the printed word and the print version of the English Bible first introduced by Gutenberg. Those born after 1973—the year Google and cell phones were introduced—Sweet called “Googlies.”

Googlies are comfortable with the new TGIF world: Twitter, Google, iPhone and Facebook, Sweet said.

“This is the culture we have,” Sweet said. “God has chosen you and me to do a ministry of healing now.”

The TGIF world does not communicate with words, said Sweet, but with images.

“Gutenbergs use words and points,” he said. “Googlies use images and stories. Gutenbergs are immigrants in this culture; Googlies are the natives. ... We used to have kids to work the fields. Now we have kids to work the remote.”

Googlies can find any information they need, said Sweet, which means there is no longer a need for someone to decide what they should learn.

“These Googlies are the first generation in history who do not need authority figures to access information,” he said. “But they need authority figures to assess the information.”

But this TGIF world won't last long, Sweet predicted. In 15-20 years, holograms will be so common that it won't be possible to tell if a person is real without physical contact.

“In 20 years you will be able to trust only what you touch,” Sweet said, “because what you see may be a mirage, an avatar. ... The [computer] screen will disappear, and we'll move entirely into a holographic world.”

National health-care reform: In a March 6 plenary session, Mennonite health-care providers got in touch with the political battles in Washington surrounding efforts to pass health-care reform.

Tammy Alexander, from Mennonite Central Committee, brought an up-to-the moment report on the efforts of President Obama to get legislation through Congress. Alexander is legislative associate for domestic affairs in MCC's Washington Office. “President Obama hopes to use the budget reconciliation process and have [health-care legislation] passed by the Easter recess,” Alexander said. She also said the budget reconciliation process can only address budget implications and revenue streams in the Senate's version of the bill.

The budget reconciliation process in the House of Representatives cannot change the Senate's language on abortion, immigration or national vs. state-based exchanges, she said. The problem with using the budget reconciliation process, Alexander said, is that “it allows for an unlimited number of amendments. So the Republicans are planning to filibuster by amendments.”

Blind singer/songwriter Ken Medema provided a concert on March 6 using narratives from Bible stories in his songs to illustrate the theme of the event, “Navigating in a Sea of Change.”—*Everett J. Thomas*



Everett J. Thomas

Leonard Sweet was the keynote speaker at the March 4-7 Mennonite Health Assembly.

Medical humor

An easy familiarity with the human body provided some humor for health-care providers at Mennonite Health Assembly. Kenton Derstine, Harrisonburg, Va., reported that his discussion group was concerned about unprecedented ethical issues introduced by new technology.

“You might have a nurse texting a friend while caring for a patient,” Derstine said. “One member of our group reported a doctor taking a personal cell phone call while doing a pelvic exam.”

Two nursing students also gave presentations. During hers, Goshen (Ind.) College senior Michelle Miller described her first clinical experience.

“I was taking care of this 88-year-old man with chronic diarrhea,” she said. “The supervisor told me to give him a bath. So he sat on the toilet while I gave him a bath and changed his diaper. I had never seen a naked man before, let alone an 88-year-old man. I don't suppose there is any way to prepare for that.”—*Everett J. Thomas*

Two hundred gather to 'affirm the faith'

Five pastors reinforce traditional teachings on human sexuality.

We're glad the day is finally here. More importantly, we thank God that you're here." These words from Marc Hershberger, pastor of Grace Mennonite Church in Lansdale, Pa., opened the one-day conference titled "Affirming the Faith: What the Mennonite Church Believes about Homosexuality" on Feb. 20. Nearly 200 people attended.

The need for the conference became apparent to both Hershberger and Lowell Delp, pastor of Line Lexington (Pa.) Mennonite Church, as "at [this] time when there are growing calls to change our denominational position about homosexuality," Hershberger said.

In response, Hershberger and Delp called together a group of pastors from Eastern District Conference and Franconia Mennonite Conference to take action.

"As this was a conference to encourage and equip members of our Mennonite community," Hershberger said, "the input was provided primarily by pastors from this community rather than outside sources. This is because we acknowledge that pastors are the denominationally ordained shepherds of our Mennonite communities."

Don Fry, pastor of New Eden Fellowship in Schwenksville, Pa., opened the first session with "And They Will Become One Flesh."

"The reality is, truth cannot exist without love," Fry said. "The reality is, love cannot exist without truth."

Fry affirmed that Scripture emulates both truth and love, which is why it has always been a core principle in the Anabaptist movement. He went on to give an overview

and body are affected, the mind also changes, Delp said. But according to Delp, God's wrath and abandonment can be reversed.

"The Jesus I know certainly loves all people regardless of sin," Delp said. "But the Jesus I know loves people too much to let them stay there. God loves the world, and I pray the Mennonite church never forgets that. The question is, Do we love the world that much?"

Hershberger presented "Such Were Some of You," addressing three questions that Paul submitted to the Corinthian church in 1 Corinthians 6:9-20. Through the first question, Hershberger reminded the group that everyone is in need of salvation. Through the second question, he said, "Homosexuality violates God's purpose for the body." Through the third question, he challenged the group to use the body in service to God.

Charles Ness, pastor of Perkiomenville (Pa.) Mennonite Church, shared from Matthew 19:3-6 and John 8:1-11 on "Neither Do I Condemn You; Go Now and Leave Your Life of Sin." He spoke on the purpose of marriage and the permanence of marriage and celibacy for the unmarried. Ness emphasized safe communities and reconciliation vs. condemnation and separation.

"If we are going to teach the truth of Scripture—as has been done so well today—we must come alongside with the hand of grace and mercy and a community of hope," Ness said. "If we can't do one, then we can't do the other."

Rodger Schmill, pastor of Deep Run West Mennonite Church in Perkasio, Pa., concluded the five pastoral presentations with "They Will Turn Their Ears Away From the Truth" from 2 Timothy 4:1-8. Schmill said that the Mennonite church often fails to encourage. As a result, people turn from the gospel to live the way they want to live.

The conference also included a time for personal testimony. Both Ben Cochrane, from Harvest USA, and Shawn Harrison, from Six11 Ministries, shared their individual journeys away from same-sex relationships. The church played a large role for both men along the way. The men challenged attendees to extend arms to hurting people.

Six11 Ministries grew out of Harrison's passion to reach out to the gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered community. The vision of Six11 is simple: share God's identity and wholeness. Harvest USA began in 1983 and is committed to equipping individuals, families and churches. Harvest USA offers individual discipleship and mentoring, support and accountability groups.—*Heidi Martin*

Audio and visual copies of the conference are available. Contact Grace Mennonite Church for information.

God loves the world, and I pray the Mennonite church never forgets that. The question is, Do we love the world that much?—Lowell Delp

of several important themes found in the Bible: the people of God stand out from the culture of the world and this unique identity honors God: God is the Creator of all things, including sexuality, and there is an ability to live free from the bondage of sin.

Drawing on Romans 1:18-32, Delp's session was titled "Therefore, God Gave Them Over."

Delp focused on three words, wrath, abandonment and grace, and asserted that God's wrath and abandonment begin when God's people turn from God. Eventually, God also turns away, leaving people to follow their own sinful desires, he said, since they practice "sexual immorality" and partake in "unnatural relationships." Once the heart

Mennonites address child abuse

Collaborative launches resources for Child Abuse Prevention Month

April is “Child Abuse Prevention Month,” a sober reminder that while childhood is often viewed as the springtime of life—a time for exuberance, growth and joy—many children experience pain, shame and terror instead. It is especially tragic that much of this abuse is done by those who should be nurturing and protecting the child.

According to U.S. government sources, in 2007 more than 1,700 children died as a result of abuse or neglect—more than four children every day.

Over 75 percent were under 4 years of age, and in almost 70 percent of these cases, one or both parents were involved. In addition, 794,000 children were victims of maltreatment or neglect—more than 1 percent of all children in the United States. Unfortunately, many believe these figures are low due to underreporting and varying definitions of abuse.

In light of these realities, a new effort is being launched called the Dove’s Nest Collaborative.

Dedicated to “empowering and equipping Mennonites to keep children safe in their homes, churches and communities,” the goals are as follows:

1. Educate Mennonites about child abuse and neglect.
2. Provide Mennonite churches with resources for worship, education and outreach on how to keep children safe.
3. Empower and equip Mennonites to protect children within their own churches.
4. Empower and equip Mennonites to protect children within their communities.

A primary tool is a new Web site from Dove’s Nest Collaborative at <http://www.dovesnest.net/>. Among other features, the site includes the following:

Sample child protection policies: These documents include a short policy by Jeanette Harder, a more thorough one prepared by Julie Prey-Harbaugh in partnership with the child protection leadership team of Franconia Mennonite Conference and one on mentoring by Marlene Bogard, minister of Christian nurture for Western District Conference.

A list of speakers and trainers: This list includes several who are certified trainers with Faith Trust Institute and Darkness to Light.

Data from the Mennonite Church USA 2006 Church Member Profile: This survey indicates that 20 percent of women in Mennonite Church USA congregations have experienced sexual abuse or violation as children or teens. For men, the incidence is 5.5 percent.

Worship resources: These resources include a bulletin insert for raising awareness during Child Abuse Preven-

tion Month and “Take Heart, Your Faith Has Made You Well,” “A Service of Lament, Healing and Hope for Survivors of Abuse” and “Those Who Support Them” by Prey-Harbaugh.


A list of other resources includes: *Let the Children Come: Preparing Our Faith Communities to End Child*

In 2007, more than 1,700 children died as a result of abuse or neglect.—Linda Gehman Peachey

Abuse and Neglect by Jeanette Harder (Herald Press, forthcoming this fall) and *Making Your Sanctuary Safe: Resources for Developing Congregational Abuse Prevention Policies Packet* (Mennonite Central Committee, 2007).

To learn more about this movement or join these efforts, please visit the Dove’s Nest Collaborative at www.dovesnest.net or write to info@dovesnest.net.

—Linda Gehman Peachey of Mennonite Central Committee U.S.



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Decade-long church building project comes to a close

Brooklyn church heals relationship with lender through MMA church loan

Relationships drive our lives—for good and for less than good sometimes. In 1998, United Revival Mennonite Church in Brooklyn, N.Y., had so excelled at building relationships in its economically challenged neighborhood that it had outgrown its facility, according to Moises Angustia—now an associate pastor at the church, but who then was just the pastor’s son.

“When we saw that for a whole year we kept sitting people in the kitchen area for church services on folding chairs, then my father thought it would be a great idea to build a bigger building,” Angustia says. They started building in 2000.

“Since then, families have continued to come, and the church has continued to grow,” he said. But there is still no bigger building. “It is a long story,” Angustia says. However, it’s a story worth telling.

Lesson in communication: United Revival worked with Eastern Mennonite Missions (EMM) in 1999 to secure a loan for the expansion project—and received one. In 2000, they broke ground. What followed is a lesson in how not to conduct a building program.

“To sum up,” Angustia says, “there was a lot of miscommunication between the banking institution, the church, the contractors and the people running the project on the church’s behalf.”

Along the way a decision was made, without EMM’s knowledge, to expand the scope of the project by almost

The feelings of hurt that occurred during our relationship with EMM have healed.—Moises Angustia

100 feet, Angustia says. Add to that some questionable behavior on the part of the contractors then involved, and what you get is a stalled church building project.

“Today we understand how important it is to keep everyone together and informed,” Angustia says. “But then? Then we just forged ahead, and as the work grew, we needed more money—and were denied that. We ended up stuck with a shell, the concrete foundation and the roof.”

But the church kept growing in numbers, and it was having an increasing impact on its urban community, so walking away from the project was never an option.

“We had the shell—a visible project up and erected,” Angustia says. “That gave the congregation hope. When the

congregation had hope, that gave my father motivation.”

Move forward a few years. Now a bishop in the denomination, Angustia’s father, Nicholas, at the Mennonite Church USA Convention 2007 in San José, Calif., hears Mennonite Mutual Aid president Larry D. Miller talk about MMA’s church loan program. The Angustias drafted a letter to MMA inquiring about a loan possibility.

J.B. Miller, MMA’s vice president of investment products and overseer of the church loan program, responded to the letter—and to the congregation’s need.

“After San José, it took us almost two years to get a loan in place for United Revival,” Miller says. “We just kept working at it and working at it. Their giving is so good; we thought they could handle it. In August 2009 we closed the loan.”

Partnership with previous lender: But it wasn’t just a new loan after nine years, Miller says. It was a 50-50 partnership with United Revival’s previous lender, Eastern Mennonite Missions.

“There is no question that this church is an anchor in its community,” Miller says. “MMA was committed to making this happen, and I wanted to keep [EMM] involved as well, because they are a vital partner to this ministry.”

MMA has been making money available for first-mortgage loans to congregations and institutions interested in building new facilities or improving existing locations since 1980. As MMA members purchase annuities to save for their retirement or other long-term goals, a portion of those deposits supports the church loan program. In turn, repayment of loans provides additional annuity opportunities for church members. It’s a circle of giving, saving and lending within the church community.

But the dividends being paid back on this particular loan extend beyond the monetary, according to Angustia.

“The feelings of hurt that occurred during our relationship with EMM have healed,” he says. “Because we reached out to MMA and because we were able to bring everyone to the table, we were able to agree that, no matter what happened, the church would be built.”

More than just a building: United Revival began its project in 1998, and this summer the building will be occupied, Angustia says. “This church walks alongside people in their struggles, providing what we can,” he says. “Our warmth and our acceptance of who people are is what is growing this church.”

Miller agrees but sees something else at work, too. “This really reflects the tenacity of this congregation ... and is a statement to their connection to their community,” he says.—*Tom Duckworth of Mennonite Mutual Aid*

Longtime editor looks back on rich experience

James Horsch spent over 40 years with Mennonite Publishing Network

Although his name will be listed as the editor of *Purpose* magazine until June and as editor of the *Adult Bible Study Guide* through the fall quarter, James Horsch has retired after 41 years with Mennonite Publishing Network (MPN).

Challenging, rich, full—those are the words that James E. Horsch uses to describe his career with MPN.

Although Horsch retired at the end of October 2009, his name still appears as the editor of *Adult Bible Study*, *Purpose* and *Mennonite Directory*.

He began his career in 1968 with what was then called Mennonite Publishing House.

Over the decades he was responsible for developing and editing curriculum for all ages, worship service bulletins, VBS materials, devotionals, elective studies and books.

“There is almost nothing for congregations that Jim didn’t have a hand in over the past 41 years,” says MPN executive director Ron Rempel. “Generations of children, youth and adults have grown up benefiting from the materials he helped create. He has left a lasting and valuable legacy in the church.”

“It’s been a great pleasure to work with James,” says Eleanor Snyder, who directs Faith & Life Resources, the congregational division of MPN. “I have appreciated his careful attention to detail as well as his professional responses to readers when they shared concerns about the materials he edited. He will be missed, not only for his expertise as an editor but also for his warm, gentle, easy-going personality.”

Horsch’s first assignment with MPN was to revise and upgrade the *Mennonite Graded Sunday School Series*. He then went on to edit two new children’s curricula—*Herald Omnibus Bible Series* and *The Foundation Series*—as well as updating the *Herald Summer Bible School Series*.

Other assignments included *Family Worship* and its successor, *Rejoice!* He also assumed full editorial responsibility for the *Mennonite Yearbook* in 1975 (now *Mennonite Directory*). He served as its managing editor from 2003-2009.

Other publications he edited include *Purpose*, *Adult Bible Study* and curricula such as Mennonite Central Committee’s *Second Mile* series.

During his tenure, Horsch participated in several Mennonite church and ecumenical programs and events. This included serving as chair of the committee on the Uniform Series, a body that selects the biblical themes and texts for the International Sunday School Lessons used in the congregations of many communions in North America and around the world.

Looking back, Horsch says he enjoyed “a challenging, rich, and full life in the world of Mennonite publishing. I experienced the broad scope of the types of editorial fields offered by MPN and, in the process, gained much knowledge of the workings, life and ministries of Mennonite Church Canada and Mennonite Church USA.

“I treasure the opportunity of working with many talented colleagues, as well as with many lay and professional workers and volunteers across the church.”

Horsch has been succeeded by Sharon K. Williams, who will edit *Adult Bible Study*, and Carol Duerksen, who will edit *Purpose*.—*Mennonite Publishing Network*



James Horsch



Tyler Falk, 2009 graduate
Mennonite Voluntary Service worker
Seattle, Wash.

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Decade to Overcome Violence continues

Rich Meyer connects Mennonite Church USA to the WCC initiative

For more than four years, Rich Meyer has been representing Mennonite Church USA on the U.S. Committee for the Decade to Overcome Violence (DOV).

Rich, a farmer and a mechanic, travels frequently to Palestine in his work with Christian Peacemaker Teams.

In his work with the DOV—an initiative of the World Council of Churches—Meyer keeps company with other Mennonites, some of whom played a critical role in initiating the DOV. The drama unfolded at the General Assembly of the World Council of Churches in Harare, Zimbabwe, in 1998. Fernando Enns, a delegate from the German Mennonite churches, stood and made a proposal from the floor. Though this is not how WCC business is usually done, the delegates responded favorably, and within a year the WCC Central Committee had declared 2001-2010 the DOV.

One of DOV's goals is to “challenge the churches to overcome the spirit, logic and practice of violence, to relinquish any theological justification of violence and to affirm anew the spirituality of reconciliation and active nonviolence.” The U.S. DOV committee meets two or three times per year and brings together representatives from primarily mainline Protestant churches and the Historic Peace

Churches. During the first years, Meyer says, the agenda often seemed unclear, and he worked to figure out his particular contribution.

“Violence takes many forms, and the WCC wanted to address the problem of violence in a broad and holistic way,” Meyer says. “From my perspective, what often gets lost in the shuffle is war. This is one aspect of violence where churches have not only often been silent but have blessed and supported violence and publicly honored those who participated in it. My role in this committee, in one sense, is to keep asking, And what about war?”

After several years of regular participation and building relationships, significant opportunities opened for Mennonite voices to play significant roles. In preparation for a culminating convocation in Jamaica in May 2011, an ecumenical drafting committee wrote a 23-page “Initial Statement Toward an Ecumenical Declaration on Just Peace.” Planners anticipate that some statement like this will be adopted in Jamaica. An intense process of consultation and dialogue is envisioned to shape the final statement and build ownership. Through Meyer’s involvement in the U.S. DOV Committee, Mennonite Church USA stayed informed about these developments and was encouraged to participate in this process.

Through Interchurch Relations of Executive Leadership, Mennonite Church USA recently submitted a two-page response to the “Initial Statement” that affirmed grounding the peace witness in the life, teaching, death and resurrection of Jesus, who loved even his enemies. “Our peacemaking,” the Mennonite response stated, “involves putting on the mind of Christ and being led by the Spirit.” The response also encouraged churches in the “just war” tradition to make that theory “operative.” Specifically, it called on churches to support selective conscientious objectors and dramatically increase programs of active nonviolence.

The two-page Mennonite Church USA response is posted at www.mennoniteusa.org/interchurch under the Peace Initiatives tab. Peter Stuckey, leader in the Colombian Mennonite church, has been appointed by the WCC to the second drafting committee that will review comments submitted. Also as part of the DOV, Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary is sponsoring “Peace Among the Peoples,” an ecumenical peace conference July 28-31, 2010.—*André Gingerich Stoner, Interchurch Relations of Executive Leadership of Mennonite Church USA*



Rich Meyer



PRESIDENTIAL SEARCH

The Board of Directors of Bethel College in Kansas announces the search for a new President and invites expressions of interest in this unique opportunity for leadership at the oldest Mennonite undergraduate liberal arts institution of higher education. Bethel College enrolls approximately 500 students each year in a strong liberal arts curriculum and several professional programs that prepare students for the world of work and graduate education. The institution, located in North Newton, enjoys excellent rankings in Kansas and nationally for its academic program. Founded in 1887, with an independent charter, the college has served with distinction throughout its existence.

Bethel College has a 90-acre campus with excellent facilities that provide for additional growth beyond its current enrollment. It is located 35 minutes from Wichita, the largest city in Kansas, and has easy access to highway I-135. The college operates on a budget of approximately \$10m and has an endowment of \$14m. The student body comprises primarily Kansas residents, and enjoys diversity in religious backgrounds, race, and international experience. Male and female enrollment is fairly balanced and a large majority of the students reside on campus. The college offers intercollegiate sports for men and women and has competitive facilities within the Kansas Collegiate Athletic Conference and NAIA Division II programs. The town of Newton, adjacent to North Newton, has a population of 18,000 and historically served as a railroad hub for western traffic.

The Science programs at Bethel College are recognized nationally. The college is ranked in the top 100 colleges in the country for the percentage of bachelor degree students who continue their education and earn doctorate degrees. The college has several affiliated institutions including Kauffman Museum, Kansas Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution (KIPOCR) and Bethel College Academy of Performing Arts (BCAPA).

The Search Committee is seeking a distinguished leader who is committed to small, personalized, church-related college education offered in a caring environment. The next president should have an informed commitment to the ideals of liberal education based in the tradition of Bethel's Mennonite heritage. Collegiality and integrity in decision-making are expected at all levels of interaction with the Board, faculty, staff, students and community.

Prospective candidates are encouraged to review the Presidential Search Profile which is posted on the website of the college, www.bethelks.edu and at www.academic-search.com.

Application instructions are provided in the Presidential Search Profile. All materials should be submitted electronically to Bethelks@academic-search.com and addressed to the Search Committee Chairman, Ray Penner. Although applications will be accepted until the time that a new president is selected, candidates should plan to submit materials by April 15 for the most favorable consideration.

Dr. James A. Davis is assisting with this search. Nominations and expressions of interest will be treated in confidence and can also be directed to:

Dr. James A. Davis
jdavis@academic-search.com
540 539 9415

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Church planting is local and organic

Mauricio Chenlo shares how denomination can support church planting efforts

Relationships trump strategy in church planting, according to Mauricio Chenlo. Today church planting happens organically and through local relationship building, he says. It is not as strategic and professional as in the past.

Chenlo works as the Mennonite Church USA denominational minister for church planting. The denominational ministry team works to bring together aspects of urban ministries, church planting, peace and justice, and intercultural relations. The team attempts to make connections between these areas, he says, and discover which principles make us more effective and faithful.

According to Chenlo, Mennonite Church USA desires to support these church-planting efforts; instead of centralizing its plans to offer more networking, communication and support for the conferences.

The first circle in church planting is the local leaders, the second is conference leaders and the third the denominational leaders and agencies.

“We don’t want to interfere and tell the first circle what to do,” Chenlo says. “Ownership of local must be central to how we understand church planting.”

Church-planting efforts received recognition at denominational gatherings in the last year. At the Constituency Leaders Council meeting in Toano, Va., last Oct. 19-21, moderator Dick Thomas led a time for conferences to report their initiatives and mark them on a map. At the Executive Board meeting Feb. 18-20 in Hampton, Va., board members heard a report from Chenlo and offered him their support and prayers (see photo).

Through his role, Chenlo surveyed conferences about their church planting and found the following: the largest conferences carry a history of promoting the initiation of new churches; younger conferences seem to be catching up with the missional church priority; most conferences respond to local leadership starting new churches; and most conferences hold minimal guidelines and resources when it comes to church planting.

He provided the following ways that the denomination could work at providing resources for those involved with church-planting projects:

- learn about and from new immigrant churches with strong connections to their country of origin,
- offer guidelines and documents for church planting and guidelines for ordaining and licensing leaders,
- integrate underrepresented racial/ethnic groups and respect their strategies,
- develop a financial system for church-planting projects,



Anna Groff

Members of the Mennonite Church Executive Board pray for Mauricio Chenlo’s work with church planting at the Feb. 18-20 meeting in Hampton, Va.

- work on a theological framework for church planting,
- offer more documents in Spanish,
- work with the seminaries in continuing education,
- plan an annual church-planting retreat for leaders.

See pages 46-47 for a map that locates new church plants and other initiatives across the United States as of 2009.—*Anna Groff*

What does a church plant need?

Community organization: Help leaders define a vision for a new community and develop the local leadership required to create a self-sustaining, thriving community.

Vision ownership: Work with emerging leaders to identify core ministry practices to become a thriving church.

Community education & training: create opportunities for adequate leadership development skills: spiritual growth, community service, urban agenda.

Sustainable spiritual growth: Develop ministry groups that are driven by service and planting the seeds of God’s kingdom.

Passing on the blessing: Help other groups plant new churches.—*Mauricio Chenlo*

Assistant editor Anna Groff surveyed area conference leaders in January, February and March to learn of activities in each category:

- new churches (past five years)
- church plants in various stages
- ★ locations of exploration

Allegheny: Dave Garber and Donna Mast
 ■ Grace Fellowship, Greenwood, Dela.
 ● Asian Indian Christian Church, Pittsburgh

Atlantic Coast: Warren Tyson
 ● African Community Church of Lancaster, Pa.
 ● Ebenezer Evangelical Mennonite Church, Baltimore
 ● Grace Ubuntu Fellowship, Lancaster, Pa.
 ● Pocomoke (Md.) River Church
 ★ Baltimore area
 ★ Milford, Conn. (dual with Eastern District)
 ★ Portland, Maine (dual with Eastern District)
 ★ Springfield, Mass. (dual with Eastern District)

Central District: Lois Johns Kaufmann
 ■ Emmaus Road, Berne, Ind.
 ■ Milwaukee Mennonite
 ● Asian Mennonite Community Church, Lombard, Ill. (dual with Illinois)
 ● Hively Jesus Village Church, Elkhart, Ind.

Central Plains: Ed Kauffman
 ■ Mission Dei, Minneapolis
 ● Livelt!, Moline, Ill.
 ● Shalom, Eau Claire, Wis.
 ● Twin Cities, Minn.
 ● Washington, Iowa
 ★ Third Way Community, St. Paul, Minn.
 ★ Woodland Hills, St. Paul, Minn.

Eastern District: Warren Tyson
 ● Christ Fellowship, Allentown, Pa.
 ● Easton, Pa.
 ● Iglesia Menonita Ebenezer, Souderton, Pa.
 ● United Christian Church International, Souderton, Pa.
 ★ Circle of Friends, Hamburg, Pa.

Franconia: Stephen Kriss
 ■ Atlanta Revival Center
 ■ Nations Worship Center, Philadelphia
 ■ New Hope/Nueva Esperanza Fellowship, Alexandria, Va.
 ■ Peace Fellowship Church, Washington, D.C.
 ■ Peace Mennonite Church, East Greenville, Pa.
 ■ Philadelphia Praise Center
 ● Crossroads Community, Gas Center, Vt.
 ● Grace Community, Charleroi, Pa.



● Indonesian Community Fellowship, Greensburg, Pa.
 ● Ripple Lehigh Valley Allentown, Pa.
 ★ Indonesian Fellowship, Yonkers, N.Y.
 ★ Nations Worship Center, D.C./Wheaton, Md.
 ★ Ripple Delaware Valley, Frenchtown, N.J.

Franklin: Darrell Baer
 ■ Westminster, Md.
 ● Washington D.C.
 ★ Baltimore (with Atlantic Coast)

Gulf States: Nelson Roth
 Not available

Illinois: Chuck Neufeld
 ● Asian Mennonite Community Church, Montgomery, Ill.

● Community Mennonite Fellowship, Sterling, Ill.
 ● Crossroads Christian Center, Mt. Vernon, Ill.
 ● Galesburg (Ill.) Mennonite Church
 ● Iglesia Cristiana Roca de Esperanza, Chicago
 ● Iglesia Evangélica Hispana, Burbank, Ill.
 ● Pana SIMP Church Plant, Pana, Ill.
 ● Stanford Community Church, Stanford, Ill.
 ★ Springfield, Ill.

Indiana-Michigan
 ■ Belmont Neighborhood Fellowship, Elkhart, Ind.
 ■ Faith House Fellowship, Goshen, Ind.
 ★ Kalamazoo (Mich.) Mennonite Fellowship
 ★ Nashville, Tenn.

**Lancaster**

- Alleluia Worship Center, Upper Darby, Pa.
- Iglesia Cristiana Ebenezer, Lebanon, Pa.
- Blackwood Group, Blackwood, N.J.
- Columbia, Pa.
- Congregación Menonita Nueva Canción, Sunbury, Pa.
- CONNECT, Lancaster, Pa.
- Hummelstown Group, Hummelstown, Pa.
- Iglesia Cristiana El Shaddai, Shoemaker, Pa.
- Iglesia Hispana Bethel, Pa.
- Iglesia Hispana Kennett Square (Pa.)
- Latter Rain House of Restoration, Claymont, Dela.
- North Carolina group
- Philadelphia group
- Upper Darby (Pa.) Mennonite Fellowship

Mountain States: Herm Weaver
Initiatives do not fit categories

New York: Gene Miller
★ Buffalo, N.Y.

North Central: Mary Ellen Kauffman
Not available

Ohio: Tom Kauffman
■ Chestnut Ridge, Orrville, Ohio
■ First Mennonite, Berne, Ind.
■ Grace Community, Bryan, Ohio
● LifeBridge Christian Fellowship, Dover, Ohio
★ Columbus, Ohio

Pacific Northwest: Linda Dibble

- International Bethel City, Portland, Ore.
- The River, Bend, Ore.
- Spring Water, Portland, Ore.
- Peace Community Mennonite Church, Salt Lake City

Pacific Southwest: Joel Shenk

- Basileia Christian Fellowship, El Monte, Calif.
- Community of Faith Church, Dana Point, Calif.
- Church for Others, Temple City, Calif.
- Ecclesia Collective, San Diego
- Emmanuel Faith Chapel, Las Vegas
- La Mesa del Señor, City of Industry, Calif.
- Palmdale Faith Church, Palmdale, Calif.
- Rivers of Living Waters Church, Los Angeles
- Wholcare Community Missionary Church, Pasadena, Calif.

South Central: Dave Gerber

- Journey @ Yoder, Yoder, Kan.
- ★ Southern Texas
- ★ Macon, Miss.

Southeast: Marco Guete

- Atlanta Hispanic Mennonite
- College Hill (Fla.) Hispanic Mennonite Church
- Hispanic Mennonite, Orlando, Fla.
- North Tampa (Fla.) Christian Fellowship
- United Pentecostal Church of God Mennonite, Homestead, Fla.

Virginia: Ed Bontrager

- Hickory Hmong Mennonite Church, Hickory, N.C.
- Manantial de Vida (Fountain of Life), Harrisonburg, Va.
- The Table, Harrisonburg, Va.,
- Stephens City (Va.) Korean Community Church
- Anabaptist Fellowship of Charlotte, N.C.
- Christian Deaf Fellowship, Staunton, Va.
- Eastside Church, Harrisonburg, Va.
- Early Church, Harrisonburg, Va.
- Mennonite Hispanic Initiative, Harrisonburg, Va.
- New Song Fellowship, Harrisonburg, Va.
- New Church in James City County, Va.
- Outlet 10.27, Graham, N.C.

Western District: Dorothy Nickel Friesen

- House of Healing, Dallas
- Iglesia Menonita Mi Redentor, Dallas
- Iglesia Menonita Nueva Jerusalén, Pasadena, Texas
- Iglesia Menonita Casa Betania, Newton, Kan.
- Iglesia Menonita Casa de Dios, Garland, Texas
- Mt. Zion Mennonite Church, Hallsville/Columbia, Mo.

Planting Churches in the 21st Century: A Guide for Those Who Want Fresh Perspectives and New Ideas for Creating Congregations is available from Mennonite Publishing Network.

Spanish-speaking pastors connect with seminary

Pastors graduate from Seminario Bíblico Anabautista course in Dallas

Seminario Bíblico Anabautista, the first Spanish-language theological program offered by Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS), Elkhart, Ind., concluded with its final session in early February.

The program was established to provide ministry training to pastors of Hispanic Mennonite churches, but it achieved more than that. It also helped bridge gaps between the seminary and the Spanish-speaking pastors.

Seminario Bíblico Anabautista, which began in 2006, included graduate-level courses taught in Dallas, Texas. Over the last three years, the seminary's Engaging Pastors program sent several professors to Dallas to sit in on classes, learn to know the students and find out about the congregations in which they minister.

Then, before the end of both programs—Engaging Pastors in December 2009, and the Seminario program in February—the seminary brought the Hispanic pastors to Elkhart.

Nina Bartelt Lanctot, assistant director of Engaging Pastors, who planned the October visit, says: “The goal was mutual learning. The Seminario students could see resources here and become aware of those that could be useful to them, and the AMBS community could learn to know a slice of Mennonite Church USA that these pastors represent.”

Blanca Vargas, pastor of Iglesia Menonita Comunidad de Vida, San Antonio, Texas, says she valued “the sharing that we had with all the administrative and teaching staff and their interest in getting to know us and listen to us.”

As part of their class work while they were in Indiana, students joined in a seminary chapel service and participated in the Sunday worship service at Iglesia Menonita del Buen Pastor in Goshen, Ind. The experience also included a visit to MennoHof (the Mennonite and Amish visitors center in Shipshewana) and to the Mennonite Central Committee facilities in Goshen, where AMBS alumni Jorge Vielman and Saulo Padilla explained the work of MCC Great Lakes.

Juan Limones, pastor of Iglesia Menonita Luz del Evangelico, Dallas, said after the visit, “I became aware that the purpose of the Mennonite church is very missional and missionary and that there is also a concern for [providing] education for others. For me it was a great blessing.”

Oneida Dueñas of Ferris, Texas, appreciated the warm welcome from the AMBS community. Those who planned the visit and the AMBS students “showed me that in the Body of Christ there is no distinction of race, color and culture,” she says.

The final course, which concluded on Feb. 6, focused on worship and preaching with instructor José Ortiz. Seminario students who participated in this course, in addition to Vargas, Limones and Dueñas, were Alberto Parchmont and Aurora Parchmont, pastors of Iglesia Menonita Casa del Alfarero, Pasadena, Texas; and Samuel Moran, pastor of Ministerios Restauración, Oak Grove, Ore. Several of the students who completed all the Seminario course work earned credits toward AMBS's Certificate in Theological Studies.

Seminario Bíblico Anabautista was coordinated by AMBS-Great Plains Extension and the Western District Conference of Mennonite Church USA. Funding for the program came from the Lilly Endowment-funded Engaging Pastors project, the Schowalter Foundation, Western District Conference and AMBS.—*Mary E. Klassen of Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary*



Pastors graduate from Spanish-language program

A group of pastors graduated on Feb. 20 in Dallas, Texas, from the Seminario Bíblico Anabautista, an eight-course Spanish-language program offered by the Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary-Great Plains Extension with support from Western District Conference. Certificates of participation were awarded to Juan Limones, pastor of Luz del Evangelio in Dallas; Aurora Parchmont, church planter with Neue Jerusalem, Houston; and Alberto Parchmont, pastor of Casa del Alfarero, in Houston. Certificates of completion of a Certificate of Theology were awarded to Blanca Vargas, pastor of Comunidad de Vida, San Antonio; Oneida Duenas, Bible tutor, Monte Horeb, Dallas; and Samuel Moran, pastor from Oak Grove, Ore. In addition there were more than 15 people who audited a course.—WDC

Photo: Front row from left: Oneida Duenas, Blanca Vargas and Aurora Parchmont. Back row, from left: Alberto Parchmont, Juan Limones and Samuel Moran.

Correction for page 48: The bottom graph in our March issue incorrectly labeled the lines. The red line represents the number of men on the Governance Council, and the blue line represents the number of women.

Executive Leadership welcomes new staff, roles

Search for director of denominational support services continues

Upon his new position as Mennonite Church USA executive director, Ervin Stutzman announced a move to a slightly different arrangement for executive staff, which will replace the associate director role with two positions: director of churchwide operations and director of denominational support services.

Stutzman appointed Marty Lehman to serve as director of churchwide operations.

Lehman's new position carries responsibility for communication, development, convention planning and church relations. She will also continue to give leadership to the Historical Committee, finance/administration and The Corinthian Plan.

In the long term, finance and administration will move to the new support services position. Lehman will continue to work from her office in Elkhart, Ind., and Kathryn Rodgers will serve as executive assistant.

On Feb. 1, Leanne Farmwald, director of marketing and communication for Mennonite Mission Network, began quarter-time with Executive Leadership as director of the Executive Leadership communication team along with her role as director of marketing and communication for Mennonite Mission Network. This is an interim arrangement and will be reviewed in the coming months.

On Feb. 22, Executive Leadership welcomed Deidre

(Summerton) Bias on staff. She joins the convention planning team in the role of convention communication coordinator.

Bias will write all external print pieces related to convention promotion and marketing. She will also work with the children and junior youth gatherings and take on other logistical planning responsibilities as needed.

Bias, a Goshen and Elkhart, Ind., native and a Goshen College graduate, attends College Mennonite Church in Goshen. Most recently she worked for First Steps as the family outreach and public awareness coordinator.

Her responsibilities included promoting the statewide program, which works with children, birth to 3, who have special needs and their families. She loves to read and travel and is always in the midst of planning the next adventure for her and her family.

—Mennonite Church USA



Marty Lehman



Leanne Farmwald



Deidre Bias

How to be a peace-oriented family

Mennonite Women Bible Study Guide by Elizabeth Soto available in May

The 2011 Mennonite Women Bible Study Guide, *Seek Peace and Pursue It: Women, Faith, and Family Care*, by Elizabeth Soto will be available in May from Mennonite Publishing Network.

The Bible Study Guide focuses on families becoming more peace oriented and less violent as indicated in Scriptures in both the Old and New Testaments. Soto developed an interest in reducing family violence through her work with families suffering from violence.

"Family life is near to our hearts as women," Soto says. "We are usually mediating, negotiating, intervening, nurturing and caring for those we love within the holy space of our family. We need to find ways of more effectively promoting the value of peace within our families."

Soto was born in Puerto Rico but lived part of her childhood in Chicago. In 1984, she returned to the United States to finish her Master of Arts in Religion degree at

Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Elkhart, Ind.

With her husband, Frank Albrecht, and two children, Soto did service work in Colombia for seven years and was ordained for ministry by the Colombian Mennonite Church. In 2005, Soto completed a doctorate in ministry with an emphasis on international feminism. Her dissertation, *Family Violence: Reclaiming a Theology of Nonviolence*, was published by Orbis Books.

Soto and her family attend Laurel Street Mennonite Church in Lancaster, Pa. Soto is coordinator for field education at Lancaster Theological Seminary and also works as an associate chaplain at Women & Babies Hospital in Lancaster.—Patricia Burdette for Mennonite Church USA



Elizabeth Soto

EMM's David Shenk films video course

Bridge-building lectures on Islam and Christianity for Russia, Central Asia



Professional videographers prepare the video course taught by David Shenk (on right). The lectures on "Theological and Practical Approaches to Islam" will be available in English and Russian on DVD and online.

Russian Baptists at the Trinity Video Seminary in Kursk, Russia, hosted David W. Shenk for 25 hours of teaching on Islam and Christianity during the month of January. Shenk serves as global consultant with Eastern Mennonite Missions.

Shenk says the request for the video series grows out of increasing awareness of the presence and dynamism of Islam throughout Russia and Central Asia. Feelings of apprehension sometimes accompany that awareness, as occasional conflicts have erupted between Muslims and Christians or secularists. Conflicts can also develop between moderate Muslims and minorities that embrace militant visions of a purist Islamic political order.

Loosely affiliated with the Baptist Union but serving a broad spectrum of the evangelical churches in Russia and Central Asia, the seminary will release the lectures on DVD and on the Internet to help equip Christian leaders for peacemaking with Muslim communities.

Shenk lectured for five hours a day on the "Theological and Practical Approaches to Islam." He said he was keenly aware of the diversity in his broader audience, as the course is slated for wide dissemination throughout the region. Sponsors had invited Shenk in part because they felt it would be helpful for someone from outside the region to make these presentations.

As he lectured, Shenk also interacted with the seminary faculty who attended the sessions, contributing appropriate questions and comments as the week unfolded.

Two of Shenk's books on Islam, written with a Muslim friend Badru D. Kateregga, which have been translated into Russian, augmented the 20 lecture

topics covered in the course.

"It was an excellent week with professional videographers who captured the dynamism of the experience," Shenk says. "I spoke in English without a translator, but the video will have Russian overlay for release throughout the region. The English version will also be available internationally."

Shenk says that whenever he teaches a course on Islam, he tries to imagine that his friend, Badru, is in class teaching with him. This leads him occasionally to comment, "What I am going to share, Badru would not agree with. But this is how I see it through the lens of Christian faith."

Shenk used that same format in these lectures. He says he tried to imagine an audience in which large numbers of Muslims were also listening and responding to what was said. This approach requires not only truth but kindness.

"This does not mean sugarcoating the issues," Shenk says, "but rather addressing the divergences between Islam and the gospel directly, in ways that build bridges rather than walls. I hope that Muslims who listen will respond by saying, 'Shenk has represented Islam truthfully.'"

Shenk says that as he lectured he also tried to represent the gospel as good news for everyone, including Muslims.

He says he hoped to teach in a way that any Muslim who might hear and see the teaching would respond, by saying, "Now I understand why Christians believe the gospel is good news for everyone, including us Muslims."

In addition to this new course on Islam and Christianity, Trinity Video Seminary has more than 50 courses on theology and Christian faith that are offered through DVD and the Internet.—*Jewel Showalter of Eastern Mennonite Missions*

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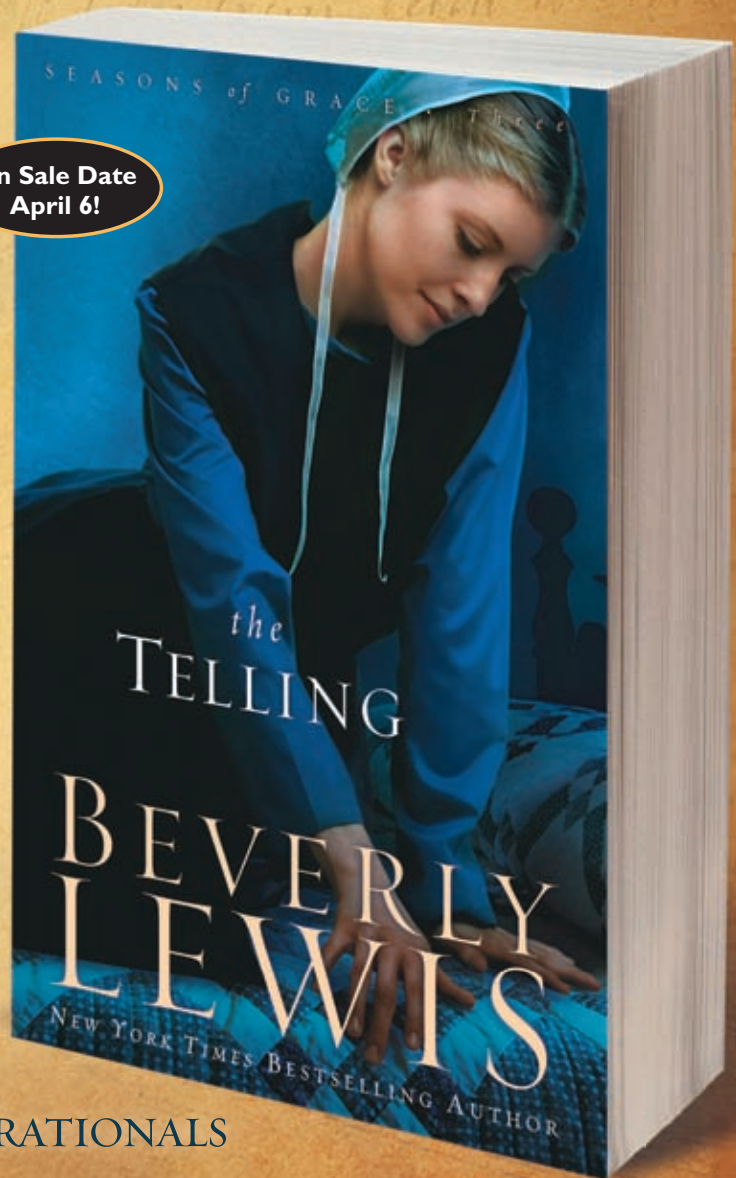
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CALENDAR

Annual Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society Banquet and Program,

April 10; 6:30 p.m., at Yoder's Restaurant in New Holland, Pa. Call 717-393-9745 to register.

Many Voices Yet One Voice: Program of Music and Drama,

April 25; 3 p.m. Theater of the Seventh Sister will be performing scenes from their Lancaster historical drama, "Seed of a Nation." Part of the **Lancaster Roots 300** events throughout 2010.

PULSEations: 15 years of the Pittsburgh Urban Leadership Service Experience at 6:30 p.m. on April 16 at the Union Project, 801 N. Negley Ave. in Pittsburgh. Advance tickets are \$10/at the door \$15.

The Mennonite Children's Choir of Lancaster (MCCL) will perform five concerts April through June. For more information call 717-898-0398 or go to www.mennonitechilrenschoir.org.

Annual Lancaster Family History Conference, May 8; 8:30 a.m.-4:15 p.m., at Willow Valley Resort. Call 717-393-9745 to register.

WORKERS

Hadtasunsern, Chaiya, was ordained as pastor of Hickory Hmong Mennonite Church in Hickory, N.C., on Feb. 21.

Ranck, Jay L., retired from lead pastor role at Mechanic Grove Mennonite Church, Quarryville, Pa., on Feb. 1.

Rutter, Richard M., was licensed as associate pastor at Crossroads Mennonite Church, Lancaster, Pa., on Jan. 17.

Sensenig, Kenneth, was licensed for MCC Leadership at Red Run Mennonite church, Denver, Pa., on Jan. 17.

OBITUARIES

Alexander, Joan, 95, Salt Lake City, Utah, died Dec. 16, 2009. Spouse: David Alexander (deceased). Funeral: Dec. 29 at Bethesda Mennonite Church, Henderson, Neb.

Blosser, Peggy Ann Yoder, 67, Iowa City, Iowa, died Feb. 16 of a heart attack. Spouse: Harold Blosser. Parents: Clifford and Marjorie Stutzman Yoder. Child: Sonya Blosser; two grandchildren. Funeral: Feb. 20 at East Union Mennonite Church, Kalona, Iowa.

Boehr, Donald, 91, Henderson, Neb., died Feb. 22. Spouse: Laura Friesen Boehr. Parents: Bernhard and Sarah Mierau Boehr. Children: Stan, Vivian Pereboom, Stuart, Laura Steingard, Doris Miller, Brenda Srof; 15 grandchildren; seven great-grandchildren. Funeral: Feb. 25 at Bethesda Mennonite Church, Henderson.

Boller, Martin Dean, 85, Kalona, Iowa, died Feb. 12. Spouse: Leona Gingerich Boller. Parents: Jason and Emma Miller Boller. Children: James, Arnold, Emma Lou Miller; 12 grandchildren; 29 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Feb. 15 at East Union Mennonite Church, Kalona.

Boshart, Harold Lyle, 73, Carthage, N.Y., died Feb. 27. Spouse: Constance Joslyn Boshart. Parents: Clayton and Florence Bast Boshart. Children: Daniel, Brian, Timothy, Shawn, Kevin; six grandchildren. Funeral: March 3 at First Mennonite Church, New Breman, N.Y.

Brehm, Tori, 34, Henderson, Neb., died Dec. 2, 2009. Parents: Dean and Jane Brehm. Funeral: Dec. 5 at Bethesda Mennonite Church, Henderson.

Brown, Malinda "Linda" Rose Lingenfelder Regier, 92, Newton, Kan., died March 7. Spouse: Max Regier (deceased). Spouse: Lelus Brown (deceased). Parents: Jacob and Susanna Lingenfelder. Children: Rosalind Scudder, Max Regier, Mary Regier, Robert Regier, Melissa Ann Keenan, Mark Regier, Bill Brown, Anita Sadowsky, Martin Brown; 24 grandchildren; 22 great-grandchildren; three great-great-grandchildren. Funeral: March 10 at Bethel College Mennonite Church, North Newton, Kan.

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Brown, Vivian Weldy, 94, Wakarusa, Ind., died Feb. 19. Spouse: Abner Brown (deceased). Parents: Cornelius and Golda Wenger Weldy. Children: LeVeda Bontrager, Annabelle Nisen, Abner, Jr., Kermit, Norma; 18 grandchildren; 24 great-grandchildren; three great-great-grandchildren. Feb. 25 at Holdeman Mennonite Church, Wakarusa.

Burkhardt, Doneta Hershberger, 86, Goshen, Ind., died Feb. 5. Spouse: John W. Burkhardt (deceased). Parents: Freed and Nina Horner Hershberger. Children: Ronald, Gloria Ziegler, Debra Thomas; four grandchildren; one step-grandson; one great-granddaughter; one step-great-granddaughter. Funeral: Feb. 8 at Green-croft Meeting House, Goshen.

Courtney, Mabel King, 91, Archbold, Ohio, died March 8. Spouse: Leore V. Courtney (deceased). Parents: William Henry and Carrie Anne Nofzinger King. Funeral: March 13 at Zion Mennonite Church, Archbold.

Deckert, Ronald L., 67, Freeman, S.D., died March 9. Spouse: Elvera Hofer Deckert. Parents: Herman and Delilah Ratzlaff Deckert. Children: Melissa Deckert, Darren. Funeral: March 13 at Hutterthal Mennonite Church, Freeman.

Eash, Elon Henry, 87, Archbold, Ohio, died Jan. 22 of cancer. Spouse: Lorene Nofziger Eash (deceased). Parents: Ervin and Ada Aeschliman Eash. Children: William, Neal, Marybeth Watterson; nine grandchildren; six great-grandchildren. Funeral: Feb. 14 at Lockport Mennonite Church, Stryker, Ohio.

Eichorn, Virginia Rae, 87, Grantsville, Md., died Feb. 28. Spouse: Alvin B. Eichorn (deceased). Parents: Leafy Leith. Children: Dwight, Donna Winters, Janet Blocher, Arthur, Leonard, Keith, Robert; 19 grandchildren; 33 great-grandchildren; one great-great-grandchild. Memorial service: March 13 at Newman Funeral Home, Grantsville.

Eigsti, Agnes Weaver, 99, Goshen, Ind., died Feb. 16. Spouse: Orie J. Eigsti (deceased). Parents: Joseph H. and Anna Stuzman Weaver. Children: Karl, Nicholas; three grandchildren; four great-grandchildren. Funeral service will be held at a later date.

Epp, Carl H., 90, Henderson, Neb., died Dec. 29, 2009. Spouse: Margaret Ruth Tieszen Epp. Parents: Heinrich and Elisabeth Richert Epp. Children: Mark, Mary Klassen, Carmen Shelly; five grandchildren. Funeral: Jan. 2 at Bethesda Mennonite Church, Henderson.

Friesen, Gladys Huebert, 98, Henderson, Neb., died Feb. 15. Spouse: Herman I. Friesen (deceased). Children: Janice Siebert, Marlene Ott, Joan Friesen, Lloyd; 12 grandchildren; 26 great-grandchildren; three great-great-grandchildren. Funeral: Feb. 19 at Bethesda Mennonite Church, Henderson.

Friesen, Olga Janzen, 92, Henderson, Neb., died Dec. 2, 2009. Spouse: Albert H. Friesen (deceased). Parents: Jacob D. and Helena Peters Janzen. Children: Roger, Russell, Rondell; 10 grandchildren; 15 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Dec. 8 at Bethesda Mennonite Church, Henderson.

Gingerich, Rev. Andrew L., 98, Lowville, N.Y., died Feb. 21. Spouse: Esther Zimmerman Gingerich. Parents: Jacob and Lydia Lehman Gingerich. Children: Lois Bast, Willard, Hubert, David; 11 grandchildren; 18 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Feb. 26 at Croghan Mennonite Church, Croghan, N.Y.

Hamm, Donald, 85, Freeman, S.D., died March 1. Spouse: Miriam Glanzer Hamm. Parents: Henry and Anna Janzen Hamm. Children: Alan, Joseph, Joyce Palmateer, Sidney; 12 grandchildren; three step-grandchildren; one great-grandchild; six step-great-grandchildren. Funeral: March 4 at Hutterthal Mennonite Church, Freeman.



Planting Churches in the 21st Century



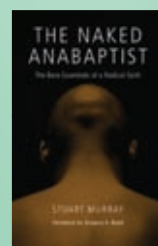
Is the goal of church planting to plant more churches or plant new kinds of churches? For **Stuart Murray**, church planting

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Hamm, Willie, 85, Altona, Manitoba, died Feb. 9. Spouse: Mary Hamm. Parents: Bernard G. and Suzanna Janzen Hamm. Children: Elaine Gerbrandt, Elvira Klassen, Rob, Larry; 11 grandchildren. Funeral: Feb. 13 at Altona Bergthaler Mennonite Church.

Harms, Leona, 105, North Newton, Kan., died Feb. 19. Parents: John A. and Mary Schmidt Harms. Funeral: Feb. 24 at Grace Hill Mennonite Church, Whitewater, Kan.

Hart, Amanda Irene Bryan, 95, Doylestown, Pa., died Feb. 25. Spouse: Charles K. Hart (deceased). Parents: William and Ella Trauger Bryan. Child: Walter Bryan Hart; one granddaughter; two great-grandchildren; one great-great-granddaughter. Funeral: March 2 at Doylestown Mennonite Church.

Hostetler, Bruce David, 61, Hesston, Kan., died Jan. 21 of a heart attack. Spouse: Cheryl Stutzman Hostetler. Parents: F. Dale and Vivien Schweitzer Hostetler. Children: Luke, Lezlie Patton, Cydney Eshleman; three grandchildren. Funeral: Jan. 25 at Bellwood Mennonite Church, Milford, Neb.

Jantzi, Mabel Luella Burkholder, 91, Glendale, Ariz., died Feb. 10. Spouse: Albert Jantzi (deceased). Parents: Adam and Beulah Hooley Burkholder. Children: Judith Jantzi Weaver, Denton, Paul, Sherrill Jantzi Rudy; five grandchildren; six great-grandchildren. Funeral: Feb. 14 at Glencroft Retirement Community, Glendale.

Jenkins, Edward Atkinson, III, 84, Reedley, Calif., died Jan. 16. Children: Suya Colorado-Coldwell, David, Thomas; one grandchild. Memorial service: Feb. 20 at First Mennonite Church, Reedley.

Klingenberg, Velma Ruth Regier, 87, Reedley, Calif., died Feb. 10. Spouse: Herman Klingenberg (deceased). Parents: Albert and Selma Penner Regier. Children: Eddie, Myrna Quinn; five grandchildren; seven great-grandchildren. Funeral: Feb. 17 at First Mennonite Church, Reedley.

Kupeerus, Sjoerd, 89, Milford, Ind., died Jan. 8. Spouse: Elizabeth C. Clemmer Kupeerus (deceased). Parents: Frank and Hebeltje Mulder Kupeerus. Child: Gerald; two grandchildren; two great-grandchildren. Funeral: Jan. 14 at Mishler Funeral Home, Milford.

Lehman, Agnes M. Hershberger, 89, Goshen, Ind., died Feb. 20. Spouse: Reuel S. Lehman. Parents: Earl and Mary Rhoads Hershberger. Children: Jeanne Rothchild, Judy VanderMaas, Bruce; four grandchildren; two step-grandchildren; two great-grandchildren. Funeral: Feb. 24 at Goshen College.

Linder, Luella, 79, Louisville, Ohio, died Feb. 18. Parents: Eli and Lizzie Schmucker Linder. Funeral: Feb. 22 at Beech Mennonite Church, Louisville.

Loewen, Helen Kroeker, 93, Altona, Manitoba, died Feb. 4. Spouse: Jake L. Loewen (deceased). Parents: F. B. and Agnes Kroeker. Children: Frances Heinrichs, Grace Knelson, Lloyd, Warren, Dwight, Lin; 15 grandchildren; eight great-grandchildren. Funeral: Feb. 7 at Altona Bergthaler Mennonite Church.

Martin, Beatrice Dettweiler, 79, Elmira, Ontario, died Jan. 19. Spouse: Ervin L. Martin. Parents: Norman and Lucinda Dettweiler. Children: Lois Pryse, Phyllis Martin-Neufeld, Linda Martin, Elizabeth MacPherson, Christy Hoffman; 10 grandchildren. Funeral: Jan. 22 at Floradale Mennonite Church, Floradale, Ontario.

Mayer, Clayton, 89, Sarasota, Fla., died Dec. 21, 2009. Spouse: Lydia Steckley Mayer (deceased). Parents: Solomon and Lydia Mayer. Children: Cyndi Brubacher, Marilyn Beachy, C.J.; 15 grandchildren; 26 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Dec. 28 at Bahia Vista Mennonite Church, Sarasota.

Miller, Kathryn Grace Elnora Yoder, 86, Salem, Ore., died Jan. 19. Spouse: Warren Miller. Parents: Min Edward Z. and Alice Troyer Yoder. Children: Edwin, Edward, Pamela; four grandchildren. Memorial service: Jan. 31



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Mishler, James W., 71, Shipshewana, Ind., died Feb. 5. Spouse: Darlene Helmuth Rheinheimer Mishler. Parents: Sanford and Millie Nusbaum Mishler. Children: Ami Glassburn, stepson Craig Rhienheimer, stepdaughter Gayle Roth; four grandchildren; five step-grandchildren. Funeral: Feb. 9 at Shore Mennonite Church, Shipshewana.

Moon, Naomi G. Graybill, 85, Scottdale, Pa. and Guilford, N.Y., died Feb. 9. Spouse: Ivan D. Moon. Parents: Bishop J. Paul and Phebe Martin Graybill. Children: Rachel A. Kutcher, Daniel E., Lois N. Mannhardt, Elisabeth E. Crofutt; 13 grandchildren; one great-grandchild. Funeral: March 20 at Scottdale Mennonite Church.

Nunemaker, Miriam R. Harter, 89, Wakarusa, Ind., died Jan. 28. Spouse: Willis Nunemaker. Parents: Earl and Bertha Harter. Children: Paul, Sharon Brooks, Lowell, Don, Glen, Linda Nunemaker, Ron; 14 grandchildren; 15 great-grandchildren; two step-great-grandchildren. Funeral: Jan. 31 at Holdeman Mennonite Church, Wakarusa.

Pankratz, Helen Mierau, 102, Henderson, Neb., died Jan. 10. Spouse: Alvin J. Pankratz (deceased). Parents: Henry and Aganatha Bruks Mierau. Children: Inez Epp, Joe; five grandchildren; 13 great-grandchildren; 23 great-great-grandchildren. Funeral: Jan. 13 at Bethesda Mennonite Church, Henderson.

**Puffinburg, Olive Kathryn Brenne-
man**, 87, Springs, Pa., died Feb. 23. Spouse: Daniel Leroy Puffinburg. Parents: Ernest and Amelia Schrock Brenneman. Children: James, Mary Brant, Lois Ann Butler; 10 grandchildren; eight great-grandchildren. Funeral: Feb. 23 at Springs Mennonite Church.

Siebert, Arlin, 84, Henderson, Neb., died Jan. 14. Spouse: Janice Siebert. Parents: Aaron and Margaret Friesen Siebert. Children: Myron, Janelle Goding, Brenda Friesen, Larry; nine grandchildren; three great-grandchildren. Funeral: Jan. 18 at Bethesda Mennonite Church, Henderson.

Slabach, Monroe C., 80, Orrville, Ohio, died Feb. 26 of a stroke. Spouse: Beatrice Joan Hilty Slabach. Parents: Crist N. and Mary Miller Slabach. Children: Mark, David, Ruth Emswiler, Regina Brubaker, John, Rhoda BanBenschoten, Tim, Miriam Warnock; 29 grandchildren; two step-grandchildren; five great-grandchildren. Funeral: March 1 at Crown Hill Mennonite Church, Rittman, Ohio.

Steier, Evelyn Rose Hunnell Bergen, 84, Henderson, Neb., died Jan. 4. Spouse: Elvin Steier. Spouse: Harley Bergen (deceased). Parents: Henry and Matilda Ochsner Hunnell. Children: Terry Bergen, Tim Bergen; four grandchildren; two great-grandchildren. Funeral: Jan. 9 at Bethesda Mennonite Church, Henderson.

Tessman, Olene Kliewer, 63, Henderson, Neb., died Feb. 8. Spouse: John Doug Tessman. Parents: Albert and Mary Mierau Kliewer. Children: Jason, Corbin, Chad; six grandchildren. Funeral: Feb. 12 at Bethesda Mennonite Church, Henderson.

Thieszen, Abraham P., 99, Henderson, Neb., died Jan. 20. Spouse: Margaret Buller Thieszen (deceased). Parents: Abraham A. and Aganetha Peters Thieszen. Children: Darrel, Walter, Laverna Morgan, Evelyn Batson; seven grandchildren; 15 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Jan. 25 at Bethesda Mennonite Church, Henderson.

Tyson, Millard, 89, Silverdale, Pa., died Jan. 21. Spouse: Jeanette Moyer Tyson. Parents: Raymond and Martha Tyson. Children: Donna Greene, Mary Lou Davenport, Cynthia Hause; five grandchildren. Funeral: Jan. 30 at Anders-Detweiler Funeral Home, Souderton, Pa.

Unger, George Stoesz, 84, Goshen, Ind., died Jan. 29. Spouse: Dorothy J. Keller Unger. Parents: Peter N. and Helena Stoesz Unger. Child: Ben. Funeral: Feb. 3 at College Mennonite Church, Goshen.

Weirich, Harvey H., 86, Goshen, Ind., died Feb. 16. Spouse: Martha Slabach Weirich. Parents: Levi and Elizabeth Zehr Weirich. Children: Tony, Cheryl Burton, Brenda Szirovecz; five grandchildren; one great-grandchild. Funeral: Feb. 20 at Miller-Stewart Funeral Home, Middlebury, Ind.

Yoder, Esther Peachey, 76, Belleville, Pa., died Feb. 20. Spouse: Warren Yoder. Parents: Joe L. and Minerva Glick Peachey. Children: Brenda Coggin, Cheryl Burns, Cedric, Rodney; nine grandchildren; six great-grandchildren. Funeral: Feb. 23 at Maple Grove Mennonite Church, Belleville, Pa.

Yoder, Harold, 94, Kalona, Iowa, died Jan. 30. Spouse: Mildred Kinsinger Yoder (deceased). Parents: Christian and Mary Miller Yoder. Children: H. Marcus, Rachel Schwarzendruber, Della Gascho, John; 11 grandchildren; seven great-grandchildren. Funeral: Feb. 2 at West Union Mennonite Church, rural Parnell, Iowa.

Zimmerman, Erma Ruth Zook, 91, Goshen, Ind., died Feb. 7. Spouse: Lester Jay Zimmerman (deceased). Parents: Edward K. and Nancy Edith Hershberger Zimmerman. Children: Judy Herr, Mary Jane Zimmerman, John L., Ronald J.; four grandchildren. Funeral: Feb. 13 at College Mennonite Church, Goshen.

For the Record is available to members of Mennonite Church USA. Births and marriages appear online at www.themennonite.org. Obituaries are also published in *The Mennonite*. Contact Rebecca Helmuth at 800-790-2498 for expanded memorial and photo insertion options. To submit information, log on to www.themennonite.org and use the "For the Record" button to access online forms. You may also submit information by email, fax or mail: Editor@TheMennonite.org; fax 574-535-6050; 1700 S. Main St., Goshen, IN 46526-4794.

Advertising space in *The Mennonite* is available to congregations, conferences, businesses and churchwide boards and agencies of Mennonite Church USA. Cost for one-time classified placement is \$1.30 per word, minimum of \$30. Display space is also available. To place an ad in *The Mennonite*, call 800-790-2498 and ask for Rebecca Helmuth, or email advertising@themennonite.org.

Church planting coordinators (two positions): **Lancaster Mennonite Conference** and **Atlantic Coast Conference** are seeking self-motivated, missionally minded person(s) for separate .25 FTE positions with the two conferences. The preferred candidate(s) will have ability to recruit, coach, resource and network with church planters as well as walk alongside established congregations who are seeking to follow their missional calling. The preferred candidate(s) should have the ability to work with a team and collaborate with other Mennonite Church USA area conferences. Salary and expenses compatible with MC USA salary guidelines, immediate opening. Send resumé to or contact Joanne H. Dietzel, 2160 Lincoln Highway East, Lancaster, PA 17602; jdietzel@lancasterconference.org; 717-293-5246 ext. 102; or Warren L. Tyson, 2257 Old Philadelphia Pike, Lancaster, PA 17602; 717-394-8107; warrent@atlanticcoastconference.net.

Goshen College seeks **full-time, tenure-track music faculty** starting fall 2010 to teach music education courses and supervise student teachers, conduct the orchestra and develop professional relationships with area schoolteachers. Doctorate in music education or conducting (or ABD) preferred; experience teaching music at the elementary and/or secondary levels required. For more details and to apply, see the position announcement at: www.goshen.edu/employment. With a commitment to building a diverse faculty and staff, minority people are encouraged to apply.

Souderton Mennonite Church, Pa., seeks a **part-time director of music and worship** to plan and lead worship for both traditional and contemporary worship settings. The candidate should be a gifted worship leader and musician who will be able to lead, train and equip other people and teams to lead worship as well. This person should be a gifted musician, eager to lead people into the presence of God in worship with a faith rooted in the Anabaptist understanding of knowing and following Jesus. Interested applicants should forward questions and resúmes to: Gerry Clemmer, Senior Pastor, c/o Souderton Mennonite Church, 105 W. Chestnut St., Souderton, PA 18964; 215-723-3088 ext. 18; gclommer@soudertonmennonite.org.

Join **Frazer Mennonite Church** in its **centennial celebration on Oct. 15-17**. A summer Bible school reunion is planned for June 12 and a special service on May 9. See www.frazermennonite.org for details or contact Harry King at info@frazermennonite.org or 610-644-3397.

Central Plains Mennonite Conference (CPMC) is seeking a gifted leader for the position of **executive conference minister**. This is a full-time position for an individual who will be able to give overall leadership to the conference through tending and articulating the vision of CPMC. It also involves leading and working with a ministry team that has two members in place. A complete job description is available on the CPMC Web site. We invite interested individuals to send a letter of application to the search committee chairperson and to direct the denominational office to forward their Ministerial Leadership Information form to the chairperson. The target start date for this position is Aug. 1, 2010. The letter of application can be sent to: moderator@centralplainsmc.org or CPMC Search Committee, c/o Diane Zaerr Brenneman, 3243 Johnson Iowa Rd., Wellman, IA 52356.

Goshen College seeks **full-time professor of Informatics** beginning fall 2010 to develop and teach courses in Informatics, advise student capstone projects, work with other departments to develop cognates and promote the new program. Ph.D. preferred, master's degree required, in a computing field. Prior experience in establishing an Informatics program or prior teaching experience in Informatics preferred. For further details and to apply, see the position announcement at www.goshen.edu/employment. With a commitment to building a diverse faculty and staff, minority people are encouraged to apply.

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Goshen College seeks applicants for a **full-time nursing faculty member** to teach psychiatric/mental health nursing courses in the classroom and clinical setting. The ideal candidate will bring significant experience in nursing practice and nursing education. Doctorate in nursing or doctoral candidate preferred, master's degree in nursing required. For further details and to apply, see the position announcement at www.goshen.edu/employment. Goshen College, an affirmative action employer, is a liberal arts institution affiliated with Mennonite Church USA.

Pastor for family ministries: A diverse Southern Alberta Mennonite fellowship of 300 is looking to add to our leadership team. The prospective candidate will be asked to demonstrate expertise in leading worship, mentoring young adults, directing family-based outreach programs and walking with fellow church members in their daily lives. The candidate will be expected to contribute to existing church programs and help develop strategies for local ministries. Please reply to Peter Janzen at **Coaldale Mennonite Church**; email cmchurch@telusplanet.net; fax 403-345-5303.

Calgary First Mennonite Church, located in central Calgary, invites applications for a **full-time lead pastor** position. Our congregation seeks an applicant with a commitment to Mennonite theology and to the practices of the Mennonite church. We seek a spiritual leader with gifts of preaching, teaching and pastoral care. Related education and experience in pastoral leadership is a priority. Please direct resumés to our Pastor Search Committee Contact: Marguerite Jack: mjack@netkaster.ca.

Trinity Mennonite Church is located in the rolling foothills of the Rocky Mountains between Calgary and Okotoks, Alberta. We are a growing congregation with an active membership of about 100, with diverse ages, occupations and cultural backgrounds. We are actively involved with Mennonite Church Canada and Mennonite Church Alberta. We seek a **pastor** who will provide strong leadership and focus on the vision, mission and values defined by our congregation, working together with our members and participants to foster a faith community that is open and welcoming to new participants and is founded upon the Anabaptist understanding of the Christian faith. Proposed start date on or about July 1, 2010. Please apply in confidence to: Rob.Doerksen@shaw.ca or Rob Doerksen, Trinity Mennonite Church, RR 1 Site 17 Box 21, DeWinton, AB T0L 0X0, Canada.
<http://trinity.mennonitechurch.ad.ca/>

Salem Mennonite Church of Tofield, Alberta, Canada, is celebrating 100 years as a congregation July 24-25. We would love to have you help us celebrate this historic and joyous event. Preregistration by May 31 is imperative so we can properly plan for this time together. For further information and/or to pre-register contact; Joe and Elaine Kauffman by mail: Box 212 Tofield, Alberta, AB T0B 4J0, Canada. Phone 780-662-2344; email jolane72@gmail.com.

Mennonite Publishing Network seeks a full-time **managing curriculum editor**. Primary responsibilities include developing, managing and editing curriculum and other publications with the Faith & Life Resources imprint. Must have training and/or experience in education, theology and editing. Preferred location in Elkhart, Ind., or Goshen, Ind. Other locations will be considered. Mid-July start date. Contact Ron Rempel for more information, rrempel@mpn.net or 800-631-6535.

Rocky Mountain Mennonite Camp, Divide, Colo., is seeking applicants for the new position of full-time **program director**. Responsibilities include assisting the executive director in facilitating camp programs and marketing in addition to helping serve campers, guests and volunteers with food service, housekeeping and office needs. Cover letters and resumés accepted through May 15 with a fall start date. Contact Corbin Graber, executive director, with interest: 719-687-9506 or corbin@rmmc.org.

Waynesboro Mennonite Church, Waynesboro, Va., is seeking a one-half time **youth minister**. We are a vibrant, mission-minded congregation committed to discipleship with youth, both within and outside of WMC. A wonderful opportunity for an EMS seminarian. Contact: Howard Miller at millerh@ntelos.net or 540-471-9526.

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Peter Epp lives in Portland, Ore., and is a member of Portland Mennonite Church and a member of Young Adult Fellowship.

It's as if we enjoy our Mennonite identity so much on Saturday night that we don't have any energy left to bring it to church on Sunday morning.

The prodigal son—with a twist

I don't know about your generation, but mine grew up hearing all about the parable of the prodigal son. It must've made an impression, because we seem to have ended up living it—with a twist. Consider this:

Generations of Mennonite parents have been passing on a priceless inheritance: commitment to faith-centered Anabaptist community (or “church,” if you like it short and sweet). The youngest sons and daughters of these faithful parents (my generation) have welcomed their inheritance. We love the vigor of Mennonite colleges, the relevance of Mennonite Central Committee, the beauty of Mennonite camps, and—most of all—the full benefits of Mennonite community.

Masses of post-college Mennonite young adults are flocking to vibrant cities such as Denver, Portland and Pittsburgh to enjoy that social richness. It's easy for us; generations of diligent ancestors set the foundation for it.

But we forget (or choose not) to nurture our inheritance. Thanks to the social connections we've inherited, we can now throw great parties or field fun-loving softball teams. But how much are we doing to build up our local Mennonite congregations? It's as if we enjoy our Mennonite identity so much on Saturday night that we don't have any energy left to bring it to church on Sunday morning.

If the trend continues, it's hard to believe that we'll maintain the only thing that could pass this inheritance on to our kids: the church. You won't find the Mennonite generations-to-come rallying around their grandparents supper club, or that great election party they threw in 2008. Our social connections can be great, even spiritually fulfilling, but I can no longer deny a hard truth: When it comes to the future of Mennonite identity, we're withdrawing, not investing.

While we do our part as the free-spending prodigal son, there are those who must feel like the prodigal son's brother. They've committed to their home churches while the rest of us have gallivanted around the world. There must be times when they resent those of us who drop by church because we want a place to make a name for ourselves, get married or bring our visiting parents. It must be even harder because the congregation rushes to accommodate us; they want to win us back.

The connections to the parable are almost tailor-made.

There's a new twist, though. A third sibling has quietly joined us in the meantime. She (or he) often has a background that we don't consider traditionally Mennonite. She may be from a growing church plant for non-English-speaking Mennonites. Or she may be one of the many spiritual seekers who are finding that Anabaptism weathers postmodernism surprisingly well.

Still, we overlook her contributions. We feel an almost familial connection to the Mennonite friends we've known longer, even those not at church.

As a result, we spend more time on our old friends and less of it welcoming people who choose to be there. I do this every time I welcome a new person after worship but cut the interaction short to talk with my “traditionally Mennonite” friends.

We could invite the new person into the conversation, but she'd probably feel awkward—especially since so much of our “Mennonite” conversation is about people and events outside church. She's there, she's ready to invest, but we pass up the gift—even as our survival depends on it.

Over time, she has to be noticing this. And it has to feel insulting. It would be one thing if our church was hard to break into because we're not good at building community; it's another thing entirely when we're great at it—just not with you.

So what's the solution? I've heard enough about the prodigal son to know that it has something to do with grace. But grace for whom? Already as I write this, I fear I'm coming dangerously close to casting blame on friends—friends whose love sometimes feels more unconditional than the church's.

But I also know that my current priorities are limiting the graciousness of my welcome, hampering my church's growth and robbing future generations.

I don't have an answer to this dilemma yet, but I do ask you to join me in prayer and discernment. God's grace is sufficient for us all. By trusting in the power of the Holy Spirit, not ourselves, may we find ourselves—and all parts of our community—truly transformed. **TM**

FILM REVIEWS

The Last Station (R) depicts the last months of Russian author Leo Tolstoy's life and dramatizes the struggle between his wife and Tolstoy's followers over who will gain royalties to his work when he dies. While the film strays into cliché with some characters, the fine acting keeps the drama alive.—*Gordon Houser*

The Messenger (R) tells the story of an American soldier who struggles with an ethical dilemma when he becomes involved with a widow of a fallen officer. He is one of two "messengers" who bring news of loved ones deaths in Iraq. This film shows the severe psychological wounds soldiers bring back with them from war zones.—*gh*

BOOK REVIEWS

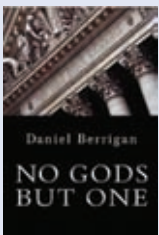
Daniel Berrigan: Essential Writings, selected and introduced by John Dear (Orbis Books, 2009, \$20) presents selections of



Berrigan's voluminous writing, much of it poetry. Perhaps known more for his actions for peace (and against war) and his willingness to go to prison for those actions, Berrigan has

written poems, essays, a memoir and Bible studies (see below). Dear introduces him as poet, prophet and peacemaker. One is left amazed at Berrigan's consistent message and his incisive creativity.—*gh*

No Gods but One by Daniel Berrigan (Eerdmans, 2009, \$15) is a study of



Deuteronomy that looks at its darker side. He sees in the book a "war of myths. Prophet versus King" and applies that to our own time, when so many powers, including religious ones, seek

to dominate rather than obey God's way of justice. Berrigan's terse style takes getting used to but is worth reading.—*gh*

Find films that challenge stereotypes

While the number of people who see films may be smaller than the number who use other media, films nevertheless affect our cultural conversation. And too often, films present stereotypes that may affect our political and social conversations.

Racial stereotypes are among the most destructive in our society, and these appear too often in the films we watch (not to mention the TV programs we watch).

For example, Charles M. Blow in *The New York Times* (Feb. 26) reports on a National Survey on Drug Use and Health released in mid-February that found young black adults ages 18 to 25 years old "less likely to use illicit drugs than the national average."

Further, he writes, "a 2007 study of college undergraduates published in the *Journal of Ethnicity and Substance Abuse* found that young blacks' rates of illicit drug use was substantially lower than their counterparts, with black women having the lowest rates of all."

Unfortunately, the stereotype persists that most African Americans are crack addicts. And the crack-addicted black mother is a particularly pernicious stereotype.

Blow takes African-American filmmaker Tyler Perry to task for promoting this stereotype: "In the last five years, [Perry] has featured a crack-addicted black mother who leaves her children in two of his films and on his very popular sitcom, 'House of Payne.' ... In another film, a main character is a drug-addicted prostitute. And in yet another, a mother leaves her family for the drug dealer."

Among the popular and critically acclaimed films from last year was *Precious*, which was nominated for best film at the Academy Awards and won two Oscars at the March 7 event. (It was also no. 5 on my top 10 list in our February issue.)

This powerful film tells a harrowing story about a young Harlem teenager who is pregnant for the second time by her drug-addicted father and also suffers abuse at the hands of her cruel mother. It goes on to show the courage and fortitude of the title character in overcoming these huge hardships. The film raised much discussion among African-American culture critics; some said it presented a negative stereotype of poor blacks, while others applauded both its realism and its artistic merit.

But at least it presented a serious film made by African Americans about African Americans. That needs to happen more often to make our cultural conversation healthier.

Films can be a good way to expose ourselves to other cultural experiences and thus a way of broadening our awareness of the world around us.

Besides *Precious*, my top 10 list included *Goodbye, Solo*, about a Senegalese man who drives a taxi in North Carolina, and *Sin Nombre*, which follows the journey of a father, daughter and uncle from Honduras toward "el norte." These films introduce us to a world unfamiliar to us and help us be more empathetic toward people in these situations.

Another stereotype in our society is about Muslims. A Religion News Service story in March by Omar Sacirbey alerts us to *My Name Is Khan*, "a new Hollywood film that has shattered box office records in India and is now making a respectable showing in the United States," writes Sacirbey. *Khan* is one of "a small but growing number of films shown in the U.S. depicting Muslims positively, or at least as something other than a

terrorist," he writes.

We all need to have our horizons broadened and our stereotypes challenged. **TM**



EVENTS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

by Jeanette Baer Showalter



THESE READERS SUBMITTED ANSWERS

Roelif Badertscher, Goshen, Ind.
 Clara Bartel, Hydro, Okla.
 Norma Bauman, Middletown, Ohio
 Mary L. Beck, Archbold, Ohio
 Claudia Beechy, Salem, Ore.
 Alice Berkey, Molalla, Ore.
 Carrol H. Birky, Denver, Colo.
 Ruby Bontrager, Bristol, Ind.
 Ellenor Brenneman, Rocky Ford, Colo.
 Alice Buller, Henderson, Neb.
 Nelda Buller, Tremont, Ill.
 Lyle Burkholder, Waynesboro, Va.
 Ruth L. Burkholder, Harrisonburg, Va.
 Miriam A. Cochran, Hollsopple, Pa.
 Hettie Conrad, Hesston, Kan.
 Betty G. Denlinger, Lititz, Pa.
 Margaret Derstine, Lancaster, Pa.
 Lois Deter, Sterling, Ill.
 Ginny Doehrmann, Stryker, Ohio
 Dennis Duerksen, Hillsboro, Kan.
 Marian Egli, Hopedale, Ill.

Ralph Frey, Chambersburg, Pa.
 Elsie Friesen, Henderson, Neb.
 LuEtta Friesen, Middlebury, Ind.
 Vernelle Friesen, Henderson, Neb.
 Anna Rose Fuentes, Elkhart, Ind.
 Katherine Garber, Elizabethtown, Pa.
 Lois Garber, Lancaster, Pa.
 John Geriach, Landisville, Pa.
 Martha B. Gingerich, Hartville, Ohio
 Evelyn Good, Urbana, Ill.
 Rosalie Grove, Elkhart, Ind.
 Paul Helmuth, Louisville, Ohio
 Amy Hershberger, Hesston, Kan.
 Harley & Margaret Himes, Kidron, Ohio
 Henry Hochstetler, Bonita Springs, Fla.
 Mary Ina & Sunita Hooley, Bluffton, Ohio
 Grace Hostetler, Louisville, Ohio
 Vileen Hostetler, Colorado Springs, Colo.
 Adeline R. Huebert, Henderson, Neb.
 Paul & Elaine Jantzen, Hillsboro, Kan.
 Anne Smucker Jantzi, Albany,

Ore.
 Darlene Kauffman, Canby, Ore.
 Joy Kauffman King, Goshen, Ind.
 June Kirkton, Chenoa, Ill.
 Faye Landis, Lancaster, Pa.
 Mary Ellen Leaman, Strasburg, Pa.
 Orlyn Lehman, Berne, Ind.
 Phyllis Lehman, Mt Eaton, Ohio
 Kathy Leichty, Wellman, Iowa
 Anna V. Liechty, Berne, Ind.
 Glenn & Erma Maust, Bay Port, Mich.
 Freda Maust, Springs, Pa.
 Louise Metzler, Quarryville, Pa.
 Vernon Meyer, Wooster, Ohio
 Ernest C. Miller, Newport News, Va.
 Joe & Jane Miller, Mount Union, Pa.
 Vernon & Margaret Miller, Walnut Creek, Ohio
 John Moser, Bluffton, Ohio
 Elton Moshier, New Holland, Pa.
 Norman Moyer, Middleburg, Pa.
 Marjorie Neufeld, Goshen, Ind.
 Barbara Newcomer, Seville, Ohio
 Elaine Newcomer, West Liberty, Ohio
 Louise Newswanger, Salem, Ore.
 Peter & Shirley Nofziger, Archbold, Ohio
 Edna Otto, Leonard, Mo.
 Elsie Pennington, Lancaster, Pa.
 Jennie Peters, Mt. Angel, Ore.
 Imogene Plank, La Junta, Colo.
 Adele Reichert, Bremen, Ind.
 Odette Rolon, Archbold, Ohio
 Dwayne & Bonnie Rufenacht, La Junta, Colo.
 Marlin Rupp, Pettisville, Ohio
 Marjorie Schantz, Albany, Ore.
 Elvira Schierling, Denver, Colo.
 Alma Schmidt, Newton, Kan.
 Harlo Schmidt, Buhler, Kan.
 Edith M. Schrock, Lancaster, Pa.
 Margaret Schrock, Grabill, Ind.
 Verlene Sebes, Hanston, Kan.
 Ruth Shaum, Goshen, Ind.
 Dorothy F. Shirk, Denver, Pa.

Doris Shoemaker, Danvers, Ill.
 Eleanor Shoup, South Bend, Ind.
 Sharon Showalter, West Liberty, Ohio
 Eugene & Alice Souder, Grottoes, Va.
 Edna Springer, Fisher, Ill.
 Ruth Stoltzfus, Elizabethtown, Pa.
 Ethan Stuckey, Archbold, Ohio
 Max & Gabe Stuckey, Westover, Md.
 Isaac & Margaret Tiessen, Pandora, Ohio
 Meredith Vendrely, Sarasota, Fla.
 Mary Helen Wade, Sterling, Ill.
 Lenore Waltner, North Newton, Kan.
 Elizabeth Wenger, Ephrata, Pa.
 Lois Whisler, Hanover, Pa.
 Marjorie Wideman, Akron, N.Y.
 Elaine K. Widrick, Croghan, N.Y.
 Galen Yoder, Goshen, Ind.
 June L. Yoder, Davidsville, Pa.
 Luke & Marilyn Yoder, Archbold, Ohio
 Duane Yoder, Mechanicsville, Va.
 Robert J. Zani, Tennessee Colony, Texas
 Florence Zehr, Manson, Iowa
 Pearl E. Zehr, New Wilmington, Pa.

Online poll sets record with 629 voters:

Should Mennonite schools play the national anthem before sporting events?

No: 80%

Yes: 16%

Not sure: 4%

Note: Online poll results are not statistically reliable as indicators for Mennonite Church USA values.

www.themennonite.org

All references are to the New International Version unless stated otherwise.

ACROSS

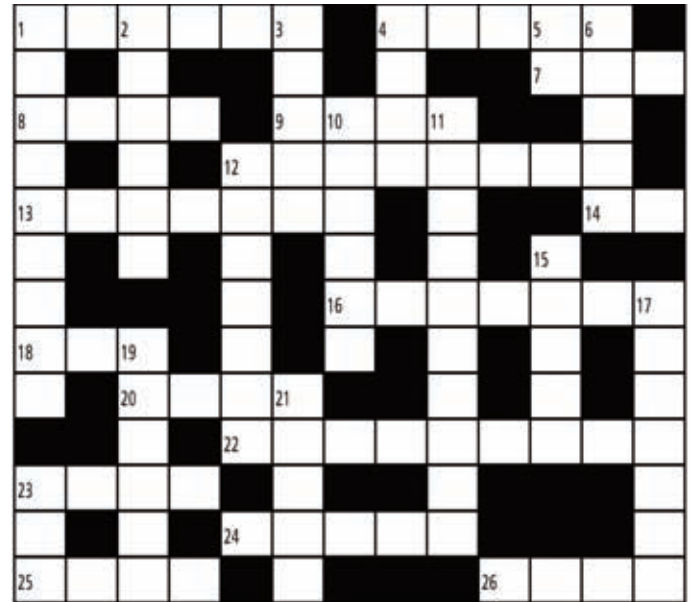
1. Birthplace of Paul.
4. Paul calls this companion of Titus a lawyer. (Tit. 3)
7. Paul states, "The sting of death is ____ ..." (1 Cor. 15)
8. Time of day when Saul was confronted by the light of Jesus near Damascus. (Acts 22)
9. "Let God be ____, and every man a liar." (Rom. 3:4)
12. Paul's port of call following both his second and third journeys. (Acts 18:22)
13. Greek philosophers brought Paul before the ____ of the Areopagus. (Acts 17:19, 22)
14. Direction Paul traveled from Ephesus to Caesarea. (abbrev.)
16. Priscilla and Aquila traveled with Paul from Corinth to this place. (Acts 18)
18. Paul quotes Isaiah: "No ____ has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him."
20. Paul commends Timothy's upbringing by his mother Eunice and his grandmother _____. (2 Tim. 1)
22. Paul crossed this body of water when he left Corinth and traveled to Asia Minor. (two words)
23. Place of Paul's death.
24. Paul's companion Gaius was from this city near Lystra in Lycania. (Acts 20:4)
25. Paul and Barnabus were expelled from Pisidian Antioch and "so they shook the ____ from their feet in protest against them and went to Iconium." (Acts 13)
26. Book of the Bible with the account of Paul's journeys.

DOWN

1. Occupation Paul shared with Priscilla and Aquila.
2. Paul stopped at this large island on his third journey when sailing from Cos to Patara.
3. Paul calls the thorn in his flesh "a messenger of ____." (2 Cor. 12)
4. When Paul healed a cripple at Lystra the crowd called him Hermes and Barnabus this god.
5. "____ Paul and Barnabus were leaving the synagogue, the people invited them to speak further about these things on the next Sabbath." (Acts 13:42)
6. A companion of Paul on his second journey and imprisoned with him at Philippi. (also called Silvanus).
10. "Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no ____, but worldly sorrow brings death." (2 Cor. 7:10).
11. This caused the prison cells to spring open when Paul was imprisoned at Philippi. (Acts 16)
12. Region in which Paul was born. (Acts 21 and 22)
15. Paul walked from Troas to this seaport city and met Luke there. (Acts 20:14)
17. Paul and Barnabus, along with John Mark, preached at this city on Cyprus. (Acts 13)
19. Paul struck this sorcerer blind at Paphos. (Acts 13)

The life and journeys of Paul

By Jeanette Baer Showalter



RECOGNITION

To be recognized in our June 2010 issue, send the completed puzzle and form below to: The Mennonite, 1700 South Main Street, Goshen, IN 46526.

DEADLINE:

May 1, 2010

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EMAIL ADDRESS

21. This many sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest in Ephesus, were trying to cast out demons in the name of Paul and Jesus. (Acts 19)
23. Paul was beaten three times with one of these, stoned once, and three times shipwrecked. (singular) (2 Cor. 11:25)

RESOURCES

Claiming the Beatitudes: Nine Stories from a New Generation by Anne Sutherland Howard (The Alban Institute, 2009, \$17) juxtaposes reflections on each of Jesus' Beatitudes with contemporary stories of students living out those Beatitudes.

Shaking the Tree: New and Selected Poems by Jeanne Lohmann (Fithian Press, 2010, \$14) includes several poems published in *The Mennonite*.

The Least of These: Poems by Todd Davis (Michigan State University Press, 2009, \$19.95) explores the connection between the visible and invisible worlds. Davis is a Mennonite who has published poetry in *The Mennonite*.

Ambassadors of Reconciliation: Volume I: New Testament Reflections on Restorative Justice and Peacemaking by Ched Myers and Elaine Enns (Orbis Books, 2009, \$16) offer a lens for rereading the entire biblical tradition as a resource for the cause of restorative justice and peacemaking.

Ambassadors of Reconciliation: Volume II: Diverse Christian Practices of Restorative Justice and Peacemaking by Elaine Enns and Ched Myers (Orbis Books, 2009, \$20)

explores a theology and practice of faith-rooted restorative justice and peacemaking.

Death and Afterlife: A Theological Introduction by Terence Nichols (Brazos Press, 2010, \$22.99) addresses contemporary and perennial human questions about death and what lies beyond, making a Christian case for an afterlife with God.

Pentecostal Pacifism: The origin, development and rejection of pacific belief among the Pentecostals by Jay Beaman (Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2009, \$23) is republished 20 years after its initial publication and includes a foreword by John Howard Yoder. Beaman has written a new introduction.

Hiking Through: Finding Peace and Freedom on the Appalachian Trail by Paul V. Stutzman (Synergy Books, 2010, \$23.95) recounts Stutzman's five-month hike following the death of his wife to breast cancer.

Pennsylvania German Broad sides, a Reflection of Daily Life 1741-1890 by Trudy E. Gilgenast (Cedar Tree Books, 2010, \$75) unravels the experiences of Pennsylvania Germans from 1741 to 1890 through translations of one-sided sheets printed in German. The book is heavily illustrated and includes 12 color pages.

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Martyrs Mirror: Reflections Across Time

June 8–10, 2010



The conference, marking the 350th anniversary of the first publication of the Anabaptist martyrology *Martyrs Mirror of the Defenseless Christians...*, will feature plenary speakers James Lowry, Julia Spicher Kasdorf, Patrick Erben, and Sarah Covington. It will include presentations on spirituality, accounts of women, translation from Dutch to German, history of the first edition in America, and the work's reception among Anabaptist groups, as well as background on author Thieleman van Braght and illustrator Jan Luyken.

For more information or to register, visit www.etown.edu/youngctr, e-mail youngctr@etown.edu, or call 717-361-1470.

THE YOUNG CENTER
FOR ANABAPTIST AND PIETIST STUDIES
Elizabethtown College
Elizabethtown, PA 17022

First things first Pray for everyone

One of my most humbling experiences in the past months is to have so many people say they are praying for me. I suppose two things have prompted these prayers. First, I have taken up a new and rather visible role in the church. People sense that my task will not be an easy one. Second, many congregations and church agencies responded to the planning committee's invitation to write a prayer of blessing for my formal installation service at Park View Mennonite Church on March 7. I expect to be buoyed up by those prayers for a long time, especially during tough times.

The installation service was much more than recognition of my appointment; it was a celebration of God's work among us—past, present and into the future. I recognize that our work as a church will come to fruition only as it aligns with God's intentions for the world. This understanding lies at the heart of a missional church.

Although we've committed ourselves to become a missional church, I hear plenty of worry that this goal may be beyond our reach. Will we be able to survive our internal differences? Will we be relevant to the next generation?

We will do well to heed the counsel the Apostle Paul once gave to his protegee: "I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone—for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness," (1 Timothy 2:1).

Paul's advice was a response to the tough situation that Timothy was facing in his ministry of oversight at Ephesus. Paul clearly believed that the first and proper response to difficulties was to pray, not only for the individuals at the center of the trouble but for all those who surrounded them. His concern stretched even to kings and all those in authority. In this time of anxiety, we can benefit by putting things first—committing ourselves to prayer in a new and deeper way. Let's cultivate a deeper awareness of God and increase our sense of communication with God.


In this vein, I was encouraged by the words of Merrill Moyer at the Mennonite Church USA Executive Board meeting in Hampton, Va., in

February. In a devotional reflection, Merrill cited a pastor who said: "If we fail to regularly remember who God is, what he's done, what he's going to do, we will make decisions on the basis of what we can accomplish without him, which restricts us to life of the 'possible.' This leads to discouragement, mediocrity, burnout ... and other problems when we lose touch of what God is doing."

At the same board meeting, David Miller, professor at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Elkhart, Ind., spoke of "tracking God," cultivating the capacity to detect the signs of God's presence and movement among us. This discipline clearly informed Paul's prayers; he wrote expansively of God's work in the world. He prayed with joy for the people at Philippi, full of confidence that God was at work among them (Philippians 1:3-6).

How then shall we pray for each other in the struggles and worries we face as a church? As for me, I feel like I'm still learning how to pray most effectively for others. At times I worry that

At times I worry that my prayers simply add to a mountain of requests that arrive as "junk mail" in God's celestial mansion.

my prayers simply add to a mountain of requests that arrive as "junk mail" at God's celestial mansion. Yet at other times, I pray with a strong confidence that God already knows what people need and that the Holy Spirit is interceding for them—sometimes with groans too deep for words. I invite us to learn together how to join our own groans with those of God's Spirit, tracking with God's actions in our church and far beyond. 



Ervin Stutzman is executive director of Mennonite Church USA.





At peace with war



Everett J.
Thomas

Twenty years ago, our government threatened to start the first Gulf war, then made good on those threats in August 1990. We had the first Gulf War, the Second Gulf War and now the war in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Mennonites now seem to be at peace with these nearly continual wars.

There may be many reasons, and different people may have different reasons. But why are Mennonites not resisting the current wars or protesting military spending? Here are some possible answers:

1. We are comfortably middle class; we don't want to rock the boat that provides the wealth and security we enjoy.
2. We don't know how to protest a distant and "technological war." It was much easier to protest when the draft took the bodies of our young men.
3. We are influenced by postmodernist influences that suggest there is no absolute truth, including the belief that all violence is wrong.

Having made peace with war, our peace convictions may become history.

4. We have become assimilated into the political system and support—or don't want to object to—the rationale provided by the political party of our choice.

5. We see the wars as appropriate "police actions" by the global community against rogue states or lawless cultures.

There has been a lack of energy in Mennonite Church USA around this issue for the past several years. The Delegate Assembly did adopt a resolution against the Iraq War in 2005, and some 17,000 of us signed a letter sent to Presi-

dent Bush in 2002. But now the remnants of a robust peace activism are weekly prayers of peace distributed across the Internet and a few "specialists" helping military members who have become conscientious objectors. Occasionally we also hear from a family that maintains resistance to war by not paying their taxes or see a faithful few stand in a vigil to remind the public.

I'm guessing few Mennonite congregations hear sermons these days that articulate a clear repudiation of the wars our country is fighting. In some places such a sermon may negatively impact a pastor's performance evaluation.

"We believe that peace is the will of God," says Article 22 of *Confession on Faith in a Mennonite Perspective*. "God created the world in peace, and God's peace is most fully revealed in Jesus Christ, who is our peace and the peace of the whole world. Led by the Holy Spirit, we follow Christ in the way of peace, doing justice, bringing reconciliation and practicing nonresistance even in the face of violence and warfare."

Here at *The Mennonite* we receive many manuscripts for publication; few of them reinforce our church's convictions about war and peace. However, our denomination made a specific commitment in 2005:

"We will renew our commitment to teach peace to every generation and to provide youth with meaningful alternatives to military service," says the Statement on the War in Iraq.

We want to do our part to "teach peace to every generation" and specifically invite writers to submit articles that reinforce our peace convictions. We are particularly interested in articles that connect to current events and elements in popular culture that would be of interest to youth and young adults.

Mennonite Church USA claims to be a historic peace church. Having made peace with war and rumors of wars, we do not want our peace convictions to become history.—*ejt*