

# TheMennonite



## A new journey

for new moderator  
Elizabeth Soto Albrecht

July 2013

[www.TheMennonite.org](http://www.TheMennonite.org)

INSIDE:

- Worth getting your heart broken
- Entertaining angels
- Essentials for a good retirement
- Who needs reporters?
- Digital dieting

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ON THE COVER: Photo by Emily Ralph

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## LETTERS

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. Email to [letters@themennonite.org](mailto:letters@themennonite.org) or mail to Letters, *The Mennonite*, 3145 Benham Ave., Suite 4, Elkhart, IN 46517. Please include your name and address. We will not print letters sent anonymously, though we may withhold names at our discretion.—*Editors*

### Yost chicken house

Thank you, Susan Miller, for the tribute and recognition you gave to Lyle Yost (June). The article reminded me that I, too, am a beneficiary of his generosity. While my path seldom crossed Lyle's path, his gift to me has impacted my life for 50 years.

I moved to Hesston, Kan., in 1962 to enroll in the pastoral ministries program at Hesston College. I was married, and we had two small children. Finding suitable housing was a critical need. We were fortunate to have access to a modest two-bedroom house at 208 Academy St. The house was affectionately called "The Lyle Yost Chicken House." The building was moved from the farm and renovated for the purpose of housing pastoral ministry students. We lived in the house for two years and paid \$10 per month rent for the privilege. I don't know how many people benefited from that gift. That journey through Hesston resulted in my giving over 40 years to pastoral ministries.—*John Otto, Newton, Kan.*

### Sickened by Yoder reference

Gordon Houser must not have retained much from the Colorado seminar he attended back in the early '90s on Men Working to Stop Violence Against Women. It's pretty sickening that he can encourage us to rush out and buy a "remarkably relevant" book about John Howard Yoder's admonishments to fol-

low Jesus "in every aspect of our lives" (Mediaculture, June) and not even mention the irony of Yoder's chronic sexually abusive and violent behavior toward women all over the world for many years, while the church conducted its well-organized coverup.

Kind of ruins my day. Just more water in the face for those women who endured his assaults and have yet to receive any kind of official apology or recompense from the church. Just more accolades for their perpetrator. Just more "crying peace, peace when there is no peace." The pacifist theology of the Mennonite church is nothing but a sham until the men of the church become willing to apply an equal amount of passion for peace to their relationships with their sisters in Christ and work to stop violence against women and children in their own homes and congregations. They could start by including the ethical ironies of John Howard Yoder's life in their study of his work.—*Barbra Graber, Harrisonburg, Va.*

### Response to 'sickened'

I'm glad Barbra points out the ironies of Yoder's writings in view of his abusive behavior. Nevertheless, I believe we can learn from his insights as a scholar.—*Gordon Houser, associate editor, The Mennonite*

### Digital immigrants and natives

During Screen Free Week, I read Gordon Houser's "Digital Natives Keep Getting Younger" (Miscellany, May). I commend him for presenting the struggle we digital immigrants encounter when relating with digital natives.

Digital immigrants struggle to find evidence that screen time is beneficial for children under 2. We struggle with reports that excessive screen time is linked to childhood obesity, sleep disturbance, short attention spans and difficulty in completing tasks. In today's media-saturated, commercially-driven culture, we struggle to avoid violent, sexualized, stereotyped or commercial—*(Continued on page 54)*

## Going to Phoenix convention? Why or why not? Facebook friends respond.

**Marta Castillo:** As an intercultural congregation (Caucasian, African, Caribbean, Asian, and Central and South American), we will not attend out of respect for our Spanish-speaking brothers and sisters who can or will not attend due to the risk of being racially profiled and/or arrested.

**Andrea Zuercher:** I am going because I want to try to learn more about the challenges our Hispanic brothers and sisters face in Phoenix, to gain skills and understanding in helping address immigration issues in my own community and to join in solidarity with Mennonites in a border state whose lives are greatly affected by the immigration environment there.

**Janet Lynn Trevino Elizarraraz:** I'll be there to listen to what the Mennonites present have to say about the world around them. As a person of color and a Latina, I'm more curious than anything. I believe this denomination is at a crossroads, and I'm watching. Which way will it go? Will it make a difference? How will it handle

the ever-increasing diversity of voices around it?

**Lori Klassen:** Not going—too far away, too much money and just not really all that interested anymore in what it has become.

**Beth Bontrager:** I have enjoyed conventions in the past as a teen and as an adult. But the price of convention and housing in hotels really irks me.

**Susan Greenwald:** Although I don't plan to go to the convention, I'm really puzzled as to the ongoing responses of why people choose not to come to Arizona. Injustice is everywhere all over the world, not just limited to Arizona. Arizona has a huge Hispanic and Native American population that appears to live and coexist with all the rest of us. We work, do business and live together. I personally enjoy the rich diverseness of my adopted state.

**Alberto Othun Nyagwegwe:** We will not attend as a conference since there is a price on people of color.

**Glen Guyton:** Phoenix has about 596,000 Latinos and 94,000 African Americans living in the city. Many people of color live, work and worship there on a daily basis (including undocumented people). Many of the stories we hear about racial discrimination in Mennonite Church USA are happening throughout the United States, not [only] in Phoenix.

Sadly we don't have a Hispanic Mennonite congregation in a city where Latinos make up 40 percent of the population. Hopefully our learning experiences will help transform our church as people travel back to their hometowns.

**Michael Smith:** I will be in Phoenix for three basic reasons: I'm the delegate from my congregation; Phoenix is a place that greatly needs a prayer presence; I want to keep some focus on how we as a denomination can be more inclusive and evangelical.

However, I understand the decision of many people and organizations, like Christian Peacemaker Teams, not to attend, and I support them in that.

### IN THIS ISSUE

**B**eginning in July, Elizabeth Soto Albrecht will begin her two-year term as moderator of Mennonite Church USA—the first Latina to hold this office. She will be installed at the end of the July 1-5 Phoenix convention. Our cover story introduces this remarkable woman who fought her way to the front of the classroom while growing up in Chicago (page 12).

The 2011 choice of Phoenix for the convention site was a controversial one, and many people are sitting out

this month's gathering. On our Facebook page, we asked about attendance. Some of those responses are posted above.

For our readers considering retirement, Edgar Stoesz offers advice on how to prepare with "Essentials for a Good Retirement" (page 26).

The news section leads off with some good news: Mennonite Church USA has planted 85 new churches in the past five years (page 32). The news section also reports on a delegation of Mennonite Church USA lead-

ers who traveled to Washington, D.C., to lobby elected officials to create "just and humane immigration reform" (page 33).

In News Analysis (page 44), Berry Friesen asks the church to "build discernment of social issues into the rhythms of the church."

Finally, Anna Groff addresses gluttony related to the use of social media and describes some changes she made in her lifestyle after establishing her "virtual weight index" (page 56).—*Editor*

## Phoenix convention numbers down

ELKHART, Ind.—On June 3, Mennonite Church USA's convention staff closed online registration for the July 1-5 gathering in Phoenix. According to Scott Hartman, convention planning coordinator, registration was 4,311 at that time. This is a 33 percent decline compared with the 6,420 registrants at the Pittsburgh convention in 2011.

Some of the decline is attributable to Iglesia Menonita Hispana deciding in 2011 that it would not participate because of Arizona's draconian immigration laws. Others are sitting out this convention to be in solidarity with Hispanic Mennonites vulnerable to Arizona's laws (see page 5). Other reasons for the decline include demographics (the declining number of Mennonite youth) and the distance from major Mennonite population centers in the eastern United States.

According to Hartman, 1,380 were registered for the adult convention, 2,754 for the youth convention, 79 for the junior youth convention and 98 children for their convention. The largest drop is in the adult convention, with 916 fewer registrants—a 40 percent decrease—compared with Pittsburgh 2011.—*Everett J. Thomas*

## MWC Executive Committee plans for assembly

AKRON, Pa.—The Mennonite World Conference Executive Committee met May 23-28 and toured the site of the next global assembly and imagined the global faith family worshipping and relating in that space. They explored ways to increase funding of MWC as a growing global movement.

The next global assembly—the 16th—will be July 21-26, 2015, at the Farm Show Complex in Harrisburg, Pa. Organizers said they expect around 6,000 participants, and the site itself can handle up to 11,000. They said they will get a better idea of numbers once registration begins in August 2014.

The committee agreed to make “Walking With God” the assembly

MCC photo by Sarah Adams



## MCC raises Syria crisis response goal to \$1.5 million

Zakaa Mohamad Khalid, a Syrian refugee, arrived in Lebanon about three months ago after fleeing from her burning home in Homs with nothing, not even documentation. Mennonite Central Committee provides material resources to many refugees like Khalid, helping them to retain some dignity as they adjust to living in refugee settlements.—*MCC*

theme after several rounds of intense discussion. A smaller task group had proposed “Walking in the Light of God.” Though some liked the biblical language, drawn from Isaiah, others saw “light of God” as “insider” language and wanted a theme that would communicate to people both inside and outside the church. Also in the discussion was a formulation emphasizing unity and diversity: “Many Members, One Body” or “Many Clans, One Tribe.”

The Executive Committee also appointed the members of the Program Oversight Committee for the 2015 Assembly and heard plans for the Global Youth Summit—for youth aged 18 and over—which will be held July 17-19, 2015, at Messiah College near Harrisburg.—*MWC*

## MC USA redesigns youth leader webpage

ELKHART, Ind.—A collection of 117 Bible studies written by college stu-

dents for use by high school youth groups is one of several new features of Mennonite Church USA's revamped youth leaders webpage.

Between 2004 and 2009, Michele Hershberger, a Bible and Ministry faculty member at Hesston (Kan.) College, engaged students in her Christian Education and Intro to Youth Ministry classes in writing the Bible studies. Hershberger, colleague Carol Duerksen and students from LCC International University in Klaipeda, Lithuania, where Hershberger taught in 2009, also contributed to the collection.

Users of the site can also submit their own Bible studies for consideration for the collection via a link on the Bible studies page.

Other features of the revamped webpage include information about peace curriculum resources for youth groups; lists of conference youth ministry websites, Mennonite colleges and service opportunities; Scriptures/re-

sources pertaining to selected social justice issues; and a link to a Facebook group for those who work with youth.  
—*Mennonite Church USA*

## German Mennonites award peace prize

GERMANY—Judy DaSilva, a First Nations woman from Grassy Narrows, Ontario, has been awarded the Michael Sattler Peace Prize from the German Mennonite Peace Committee.

“We want to award the prize to Judy DaSilva in order to honor the nonviolent resistance of the Grassy Narrows First Nation against the destruction of nature and for the preservation of their indigenous culture,” said James Jakob Fehr of the German Mennonite Peace Committee at a May 20 ceremony.

DaSilva is a mother of five children and has organized countless youth gatherings, women’s gatherings, protests, speaking tours and participated in blockades to advocate for jus-

tice and a healthy environment. Her humble, passionate and relentless advocacy has resulted in a suspension of logging on Grassy Narrows territory for nearly five years.—*Mennonite World Conference*

## Noam Chomsky interview available on CPT website

CHICAGO—A podcast interview with linguist, cognitive scientist, philosopher and radical truth-teller Noam Chomsky is now available from a link on Christian Peacemaker Teams’ website, [cpt.org](http://cpt.org). Tim Nafziger, CPT interim assistant director, and Joanna Shenk, *Widening the Circle* editor, conduct the interview, which is followed by a discussion that includes Nafziger, Shenk and Mark Van Steenwyck, editor of [Jesusradicals.com](http://Jesusradicals.com).

Chomsky and Nafziger discuss the 2005-2006 CPT hostage crisis. Chomsky was among the first internationally known personalities to sign a petition

calling for the release of Tom Fox, James Loney, Harmeet Singh Sooden and Norman Kember when Iraqi militants kidnapped them in 2005. He has said in the past that CPT’s work gives him hope.

Chomsky, Shenk and Nafziger devote much of their discussion to how grass-roots movements sustain themselves. All successful movements, Chomsky says, have in common ordinary people who know their struggle will not succeed in the near future but are committed to being a part of the struggle “for the long haul.”

When asked about ways to empower leaders of movements Chomsky says he “shudders” when he hears the word “leader,” because where there are leaders, there must be followers, and what the world really needs are participants. He notes that the principle of consensus can be co-opted by domineering people in grass-roots organizations who through the strength of their personality assemble followers and take over the group.—*CPT*

## Connecting Families holds annual retreat

MT. PLEASANT, Pa.—The 26th annual gathering of Connecting Families-East was held May 17-19 at Laurelville Mennonite Church Center. Connecting Families meets one weekend each year to connect families and individuals dealing with LGBT concerns and is associated with Brethren Mennonite Council. It welcomes families, individuals and supporters on a Christian journey seeking greater understanding of sexual minority concerns.

Sheri Hostetler, pastor of First Mennonite Church in San Francisco spoke on “Loving Our Neighbors as Ourselves.” Worship was based on Genesis 38:12-19 and Mark 10:1-12. Several families shared coming-out stories.

Connecting Families-East will meet on May 16-18, 2014, at Laurelville Mennonite Church Center. For more information, contact Ken Beam at [kebe46@comcast.net](mailto:kebe46@comcast.net)—*Ken Beam*



## Mennonite Disaster Service at work in Oklahoma

This house was damaged by a May 19 tornado that hit Shawnee, Okla. Mennonite Disaster Service had a crew with chainsaws and skid steers from the Oklahoma MDS unit on the ground May 22 cleaning up debris. MDS enjoys a long standing partnership with the Oklahoma Volunteer Organizations Active in Disaster and anticipates working with partner agencies within VOAD to respond to this disaster as needed.

—*MDS*

## Worth getting your heart broken



**Ron Adams**  
is pastor of  
Madison (Wis.)  
Mennonite Church.

I am a Doctor Who fan. For those benighted few who don't know, Doctor Who is a long-running British science fiction TV series produced by the BBC. The Doctor is a 900-year-old alien who travels through time and space with a human companion. They have adventures and meet scary things, and they run away. There is a lot of running away. And, inevitably, the human companion falls in love with the Doctor.

The Doctor is immortal—at least from a human perspective. This means his companions grow older while he does not. And sooner or later, the companions get left behind on earth. The Doctor cannot bear to watch them age and die.

Some companions welcome the return to a normal life. Others never recover from the loss. After traveling the stars, life on earth seems dull and colorless. For those companions, being left behind means a permanently broken heart. Most say, though, that despite the pain, they'd not change a thing. They'd not trade their time with the Doctor for anything. As one older and wiser companion said to her younger counterpart, "Some things are worth getting your heart broken for." Things like the Doctor.

Her advice may be bad grammatically, but it's great theologically. Some things are worth getting your heart broken for. Like the gospel.

**What sets us apart from our culture**, or ought to, is our refusal to ignore the injustice in

**While the world grows colder and more hardhearted, the reign of God remains a place of sacrifice and love, of justice and peace and inexhaustible mercy.**

our society. The dominant message these days is that those who suffer deserve it. The poor are not poor because of unjust economics. They are lazy. The uninsured should just get better jobs. The homeless are in that mess because of dissolute living. The undocumented should head back over the border. And wasn't life better when everyone knew their place?

It used to be you had to listen to right-wing radio to get this kind of social analysis. Now it's everywhere. The clever couch it in the language of deficits and tough choices and austerity. The

less clever shout their bigotry from the rooftops. And the sad truth is, much of this analysis is endorsed by people claiming to follow Jesus.

I worry that Christians in the United States have become so domesticated that we can't tell the difference between the gospel and the marketplace. I worry that we confuse our faith in Christ with our faith in democracy and capitalism. I worry that we are becoming more adept at justifying our silence through a false humility and our complicity through a self-serving distaste for partisan politics. I worry that we've chosen the broad path of complacency over the narrow road of the prophetic.

Doesn't Jesus call us to lives of service? To lives given over to the needs of others? Aren't we called to name injustice and to tell the truth about its consequences? Isn't that the same prophetic stance that got Jesus killed?

If we answer yes, we will find ourselves at odds with our society. Following Jesus means no more business as usual. It means preaching good news to the poor. It means speaking truth to the powers of this world. It means risking a broken heart.

**While the world grows colder** and more hardhearted, the reign of God remains a place of sacrifice and love, of justice and peace and inexhaustible mercy. We are called to inhabit that reign and reveal it by living out the gospel of Jesus.

It won't be easy. We've become so comfortable with our society's celebration of individualism and greed that it's going to hurt us to step away. We may see things that frighten us. We may want to run away. Right-thinking folks will ostracize us. Good Christian folks will condemn us. The powerful will ignore us. Politicians will seek to co-opt us. Our calling is not easy, but it is ours.

If we take that calling seriously, we will find ourselves outside the gates of the city, cut off from much that we've come to call the real world. That's going to hurt. It may even break our hearts. But then, some things are worth getting our hearts broken for. Like following Jesus. **TVM**

## Not your typical Beachy Amish bishop

On the surface, Mario Ramon Quevedo may not fit your image of a Beachy Amish bishop. Raised as a Catholic in central Paraguay, Mario is more comfortable speaking Spanish or Guaraní than English. Moreover, his beard is not very full, he cannot trace his genealogy back to Switzerland, and his soft-spoken, gentle demeanor confounds the stereotype of bishops in conservative traditions. Yet the fact that Mario has been an ordained minister for more than 25 years and a senior bishop in the Beachy Amish church for the past decade testifies to the way Anabaptist-Mennonite convictions are finding expression in a beautiful variety of cultural forms.

In May, I taught the course Anabaptist-Mennonite History in Paraguay. Since Paraguay is home to at least 20 Anabaptist-related groups, the country is a microcosm of the diversity of the global Anabaptist-Mennonite fellowship. With 17 Goshen (Ind.) College students, we visited eight different groups in Paraguay. In each encounter we tried to deepen our understanding of the history of the group, the central convictions of their faith, the distinctive cultural forms they had adopted to express that faith, and the challenges of identity and witness they faced within the larger Paraguayan context.

**Behind our study was a deeper question,** one that has confronted followers of Jesus from the beginning of the Christian movement: How is the Word made flesh (John 1:1)? How is the good news of Jesus—a message of universal authority and appeal—incarnated within the particular cultural forms of the gathered church that bears his name? The call of Jesus always unsettles the culture in which it is proclaimed, yet Christian faith is always expressed in a particular culture.

Cultural identity—carried forward in language, folkways, communal practices, economic assumptions and ethical boundaries—can be a gift that enables a group to witness to the gospel in visible ways. But it can also be a burden that reinforces boundaries of race, class, status and power.

In the spring of 1967, when Paul and Amanda Eichorn, along with several other Beachy Amish families, left the comforts of Pennsylvania to establish a Christian community in the wilderness of eastern Paraguay, their goals were not entirely clear. Some were fleeing the temptations of modern society, others were interested in mission, and some, no doubt, were looking for economic

opportunities and the promise of an adventure. Now, nearly 50 years later, the Luz y Esperanza colony seems to be doing well. The community is home to some 20 families, their farmlands are thriving and they are known throughout the region for their maternity clinic and their prison ministry. Throughout their sojourn in Paraguay, members of Luz y Esperanza have maintained a distinctive cultural identity—in outward appearance they appear similar to other conservative groups you might meet in northern Indiana or eastern Pennsylvania.

**But as we enjoyed an afternoon of softball,** singing and relaxed conversation, we were amazed at the many expressions of cross-cultural integration evident in the community. From the beginning, members of Luz y Esperanza were committed to becoming multilingual. Today, everyone in the community speaks at least three languages, and Laban Eichorn, one of the community's leaders, speaks no fewer than seven. As the linguistic barriers dissolved, the group quickly developed close friendships with their Latino Paraguayan and indigenous neighbors. Soon, members of the original Luz y Esperanza community married newcomers to their church, making Spanish—or occasionally Guaraní—the language of their households. With marriage came the adoption of new foods and cultural practices and a broader network of relationships with other Paraguayans.

Even more impressive was the fact that the Luz y Esperanza community looked to the first generation of converts for leadership. Thus it was that Mario Ramon Quevedo, some four years after his conversion, was ordained a minister and shortly thereafter selected by the lot as bishop of the congregation. In quiet Spanish, Mario expressed to our group his love for the church. “There are many people here who have more experience or education than I do,” he said. “But I have been entrusted with the spiritual oversight of this church and I pray every day that God gives me wisdom for that task. It is not always easy, but we have learned to forgive each other.”

The apostle Paul describes Jesus as the one who has “destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility” (Ephesians 2:14) that separated Jews and Gentiles, making one body of a divided people. In a quiet way, that vision is being realized today in the community of Luz y Esperanza. **TMM**



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

The call of Jesus always unsettles the culture in which it is proclaimed, yet Christian faith is always expressed in a particular culture.

## What if we treated gun crime as a disease?

Amid all the verbal furor over gun rights and crime, at least one state is having some success by treating gun crime as a disease. However, most states won't be able to follow suit.

Writing in the May/June issue of *Pacific Standard*, senior editor Vince Beiser discusses the Armed Prohibited Persons System, a program in which California officials comb through mountains of data to find people who have lost the right to own guns, then send agents to take those guns away. According to Beiser, "The agents are looking for people who bought guns legally but were later convicted of a felony, put under a restraining order or were deemed seriously mentally ill—any of which bar them from owning a firearm."

In California, that list includes almost 20,000 people who hold more than 38,000 handguns and 1,600 assault weapons. Last year, agents with the California Bureau of Firearms confiscated more than 2,000 illegally owned weapons.

This information exists in part because of the work of Garen Wintemute, a doctor and researcher at the University of California, Davis Medical Center. "He is one of a number of academics and activists," writes Beiser, "trying to get people to look at gun violence not just as a criminal-justice issue but as a public-health one."

"Whether it's cancer or traffic accidents, you ask the same questions," says Wintemute. "You identify the high-risk groups and then look for interventions."

**One such high-risk group** is pistol-owning ex-cons. "People with serious felony records are barred nationwide from owning guns," Beiser writes, "but research shows that such folks are nonetheless relatively likely to commit new crimes—with a gun."

Statistics support this. Federal data show that about 40 percent of felons surveyed who were convicted of gun-related offenses were prohibited from owning firearms when they committed the offense. Researchers studying people charged with homicides in Illinois found similar results.

This probably doesn't surprise anyone. What the prohibited-persons program does is pretty straightforward: It enforces existing laws by taking the guns away. And apparently, this works.

Wintemute and a team of researchers gathered records on people who bought handguns before a ban took effect in 1990 and those who tried to buy handguns after the ban but were turned down. Over the next three years, the researchers found, "the risk of committing new nonviolent crimes was about identical [for both groups]," Beiser writes. "But in the group that was banned from buying handguns, the risk of new gun and/or violent crimes went down by about 30 percent."

**These kinds of results** have a bipartisan appeal. The bill that created the program was introduced by a Republican and was supported by the National Rifle Association.

Wintemute estimates that as many as 180,000 people nationwide should be on a prohibited-persons list, but it's unlikely other states will set up similar programs. Why? "California is essentially the only state that has the data to make the program possible," Beiser writes.

For example, he writes, "California allows only licensed retailers to sell handguns—there's no 'gun-show loophole'—and has recorded those sales since 1996." And don't expect the federal government to set up a centralized gun-tracking system. It's prohibited by law from doing so.

While rhetoric flies around social media about gun rights, and though gun crime is a complex issue, there are rational approaches that have proven helpful in reducing it. Unfortunately, rationality rarely prevails in our polarizing culture.—*Gordon Houser*

## Pontius' Puddle

Joel Kauffmann



“Jesus taught that hating your neighbor is tantamount to hating God, yet some Christians hate their neighbors as a matter of policy and are busy hunting biblical justifications for doing so.”

—Wendell Berry in *The Christian Century*

## Church whistleblowers join forces on abuse

They call themselves Catholic Whistleblowers, a newly formed cadre of priests and nuns who say the Roman Catholic Church is still protecting sexual predators. Although they know they could face repercussions, they have banded together to push the new pope to clean house and the American bishops to enforce the zero-tolerance policies they adopted more than a decade ago. Most in the steering group of 12 have blown the whistle on abusers in the past, and three are canon lawyers who once handled abuse cases on the church's behalf. Four say they were sexually abused as children.

**70%**

of home-owning Americans cannot park cars in their garages because there's too much stuff.

**10%**

of home-owning Americans has a storage unit.  
—*Pacific Standard*

Their aim, they say, is to support both victims and fellow whistle-blowers, and identify shortcomings in church policies. They hope to help not just minors but adults who fall prey to clergy who exploit their power for sex. They say that their motivation is to make the church better and safer and to show the world there are good priests and nuns in the church.—*New York Times*

## Many people live with no buffer

Consider a household with a single earner and two children. Assume that the earner is in good health and manages to work a full 40 hours a week (the average work week of American workers is 34 hours) at a wage somewhat above the minimum, say, around \$8.50 per hour, so that after paying his Social Security tax, he gets \$8 per hour and thus receives \$16,640 for his 2,080 hours. Assume he pays no income tax, but his employer charges him \$200 a month for health insurance for his entire family and picks up the rest of the \$550 per month cost of insurance. This brings his take-home pay to \$14,240 a year. If he is lucky, he might be able to find a two-bedroom apartment (with utilities included) for \$700 a month. This leaves him with \$5,840 to cover all other family expenses for the year. Like most Americans, he may consider a car a basic necessity; insurance, gas, maintenance and depreciation in the vehicle could easily take up some \$3,000. The family's remaining funds are \$2,840—under \$3 a day per person—to cover basic expenses such as food and clothing, not to mention things that make life worth living, like entertainment. If something goes wrong, there is simply no buffer.—*The Marketplace*

## Gun violence 'a public health crisis'

Black clergy have launched a new coalition to fight gun violence, saying they are undeterred by the recent failure of legislation on Capitol Hill and all too aware of the problem of gun violence. At meetings held April 23 in Washington and Los Angeles, supporters of the African-American Church Gun Control Coalition called gun violence “both a sin and a public health crisis” and committed to a three-year action plan of advocacy, education and legislative responses.—*Religion News Service*

## Stressed pastors

Rising levels of stress are causing more depression among pastors. Stressors include declines in membership and contributions, personal financial worries (often due to educational debt) and discord in congregations. One of the top predictors of depression is social isolation. Pastors moving from hospital visits to funerals to weddings experience a range of unpredictable emotions—another indicator of depression. On the positive side, some counselors see an increase in the number of pastors who are willing to seek professional help and are open with their congregations about their emotional difficulties.—*Christian Century*

## Christian leaders oppose polarization

Twenty-five top Christian leaders gathered in the U.S. city with perhaps the worst reputation for civil discourse May 15 and committed themselves to elevating the level of public conversation. Meeting in a row house three blocks from the U.S. Capitol, the group spanned the Christian spectrum and included officials from liberal churches and the most conservative of interest groups.—*Religion News Service*

## Numbers to ponder

- Temperature in degrees Fahrenheit reached by prey-stunning bubbles shot from a pistol shrimp's claw: **8,500**
- Temperature in degrees Fahrenheit of the sun's surface: **9,980**
- Percentage of the banking industry's assets held by local community banks: **14**
- Percentage of small loans to businesses and farms that are made by local community banks: **46**—*Yes! Magazine*

Elizabeth Soto Albrecht, Mennonite Church USA's new moderator, has faced racism and sexism in her life.

# A new journey



Soto Albrecht (right) talks with Kevin Ressler and Mindy Nolt, two of her students from Lancaster Theological Seminary. Photo by Emily Ralph

by Emily Ralph

Elizabeth Soto Albrecht challenged the congregation of Nueva Vida Norristown (Pa.) New Life Mennonite Church on May 5: "No more shunning, no more violence. It's a call for discernment in difficult issues. We must lead it. We must learn how to fight for unity."

As the first Latina to be appointed moderator of Mennonite Church USA, Soto Albrecht feels the pressure of a church facing the challenges of the 21st century: hot issues stirring up conflict, diverse expectations from diverse people, uncertainty about the future of the church.

Yet she is uniquely qualified to serve in such a time as this. “As a woman, there’s always been a natural, organic sense that I can’t pastor this beautiful church without making connections,” she says. “Networking comes very naturally for me, and I want to be able to continue that in my role as moderator.”

Nueva Vida was just one stop in what Soto Albrecht is calling her “journey to Phoenix” this summer: more than a month of traveling around the country to listen, network and meet the many people who make up Mennonite Church USA.

The members of Mennonite Church USA don’t know how they are similar or different, Soto Albrecht says. “I will be the connector saying, ‘This is the commonality, this is what keeps us together.’”

#### **La comunidad me ha llamado (A community calling me forth)**

When Soto Albrecht was approached about becoming Mennonite Church USA’s next moderator, she was fully prepared to say no. She had already been serving on the Executive Board for two years and knew that the volunteer role of moderator would take much sacrifice and extraordinary leadership.

“She struggled with balancing this commitment, her work and, most of all, her family,” remembers Dionicio Acosta, a member of the Leadership Discernment Committee. “I was proud of her as a person, her discernment in the whole process, her desire to be there for her daughters.” As a fellow Puerto Rican, Acosta was thrilled to call a Latina to the role of moderator. “I [was proud of] the amazing example she was leaving not just for her own daughters but for my daughters as well to see the church opening its doors for women in leadership.”

“I was afraid,” Soto Albrecht says. “Afraid of doing a lousy job. I had to take a step of faith and, with the little courage I had, say, ‘I’m going to be obedient to you, God.’”

It had been while she was serving on the Executive Board that the denomination faced the difficult decision about whether or not to cancel or relocate their biennial convention in Phoenix, Ariz. Arizona had passed a sweeping anti-illegal-immigration law in April 2010 that included a pro-

vision that allowed law enforcement to stop and ask for papers from anyone they suspected of being an immigrant. Responses to the legislation were varied and passionate; leaders from Iglesia Menonita Hispana (Hispanic Mennonite Church) were adamant that they would not attend the convention if it were held in Phoenix.



For Aldo Siahaan, pastor of Philadelphia Praise Center, the decision to hold the convention in Phoenix brought into question whether Mennonite immigrants mattered. Not attending the convention, says Siahaan, “is one of the ways we are showing our solidarity with our brothers and sisters who have been affected because of the immigration legislation.”

Then, during the board’s January 2011 meeting, when it was making a final decision about the convention’s location, Soto Albrecht’s name was nominated to be the next moderator-elect. “I thought to myself, This doesn’t make sense. These two things don’t go together,” Soto Albrecht says with a laugh. “Then I realized that this was a reality I needed to live into.”

Whether pastoring in Colombia or, later, working as a chaplain at Lancaster (Pa.) General Hospital or as coordinator of field education at Lancaster Theological Seminary, Soto Albrecht says, her calls to leadership have often been a direct result of “people believing in me and seeing things I can’t see. Usually they’re right. There is a community calling me forth, then there’s God, and sometimes I’m the last one to get on board.”

Soto Albrecht traces the planned route for her journey this summer to Phoenix.

Photo by Emily Ralph

### **Fui desde sentada en la parte de atrás a (From sitting behind)**

Her story reflects that of many other children who struggled through racist structures to make a life for themselves. Growing up in the racially charged atmosphere of Chicago in the 1960s, Soto Albrecht and other Puerto Rican children were relegated to the back of the classroom, where, knowing no English, they were neglected and passed to the next grade only because of social promotion.

When I see people who are rejected, I have to speak up, because I was rejected.—Elizabeth Soto Albrecht

Gordon Houser



The social stigma was not extended to all newcomers—Italian immigrants were welcomed and celebrated, given seats at the front of the classroom and quickly integrated into the white social structures. Even as a child, Soto Albrecht noticed that these European immigrants soon learned English and did well academically while she, after six years of schooling, still could not read or write.

The direction of her life changed when her mother sent her to Puerto Rico in

sixth grade to live with her aunt, an experienced teacher who determined right from the start that her niece would learn to read and write Spanish. After a single semester, Soto Albrecht had learned the skills she needed to take her education into her own hands. When she returned to Chicago, she refused to “sit behind” and found ways to wiggle her way into the middle of the classroom, where, within the space of only a few months, she taught herself to read English.

Even as her grades improved and she made a name for herself academically, the shame of her early years continued to haunt her. “When your education is stolen from you, you will always struggle,” she says. “I felt handicapped, wanting

to express these wonderful ideas flying through my soul and mind—how do I put this in words?” Her own experience has given her a passion to speak up for the marginalized. “When I see children whose education is stolen from them, I have to speak up—firmly,” she says. “When I see people who are rejected, I have to speak up, because I was rejected. That’s why I want to speak on behalf of the immigrants in this country.”

### **Deseo estudios teología (I want to study theology)**

Soto Albrecht’s family moved back to Puerto Rico when she was in middle school. After graduating from high school, she was accepted into the prestigious University of Puerto Rico, where she studied health education. When she finished her bachelor’s degree, her mother pushed her to study medicine, but she responded, “No, Mommy—I want to study theology.”

Her friends and neighbors couldn’t understand why she would want to go to seminary. Was she trying to find a husband? But Soto Albrecht soaked up her classes, first for two years at Seminario Evangélico de Puerto Rico, and finally finishing her degree at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Elkhart, Ind. After seminary, she taught at Goshen (Ind.) College for three years in the Spanish degree program and worked for Mennonite Board of Education in fund-raising for minority education.

Soon she moved to Akron, Pa., to work for Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) as assistant for its Latin America office. It was during this time that she met and married Frank, her husband. While their daughter Yentli was still an infant, the three of them moved to Bogotá, Colombia, to serve with the General Conference Mennonite Church’s Commission on Overseas Mission (COM). They were joined two years later by Sara, their second daughter.

Soto Albrecht found her roles in Colombia, first for COM and later for MCC, and as pastor of Armenia Mennonite Church, to be fulfilling. During her second term with MCC, she completed her Doctor of Ministry degree from San Francisco Theological Seminary, which allowed her to integrate her love for theology, health education and advocacy for women and children. In October 2004, she was ordained; the following summer, her family moved back to Lancaster.

The culture shock of returning to the United States was difficult. In Colombia, Soto Albrecht was respected as a minister and as a U.S. citizen; her ethnicity didn’t matter. “I dreaded going back

to Lancaster,” she says. “I had suffered racism and sexism in the United States and didn’t want to fight that battle again.”

As she struggled to find her new identity in Lancaster, she was given the opportunity to take several units of Clinical Pastoral Education at Lancaster General Hospital. “CPE helped me become a better pastor and see my identity as a minister of the community at large, not just the Mennonite church,” she says. She continued as an associate chaplain at LGH for seven years, resigning only to take on her role as moderator.

Soto Albrecht’s pastoral gifts have also blessed the members of Laurel Street Mennonite Church, her home congregation, according to Janet Breneman, her pastor. “Her pastoral care and concern for others are always evident, especially for those in our congregation who come from afar and don’t always and immediately feel at home among us,” says Breneman. “In her new role as moderator, she will hold her mother and pastor heart in her hands.”

#### **Camino a Phoenix (Journey to Phoenix)**

Glen Guyton, director of convention planning for Mennonite Church USA, sees Soto Albrecht’s appointment as a sign of hope to people of color. “It is proof that our denomination is changing in many ways,” he says, “hopefully to a denomination that is more inclusive, more compassionate and led more by the Spirit.”

Soto Albrecht, too, dreams that her time as moderator will help the members of Mennonite Church USA become a community of discernment, beginning first with herself and extending to all the members of the board.

“That’s something I learned from my Pentecostal Mennonite upbringing in Puerto Rico,” she says. “To be in tune with what God is doing and to be in the Spirit.” Community discernment is messy and requires a commitment to unity, she says. “Among the beautiful diversity of different cultural and ethnic perspectives, different ways of doing community interpretation, we can still claim unity in Jesus Christ,” she says. “Not just in a romantic, feel-good way but [in] how ... we embrace our diversity as one body in Jesus.”

It was Soto Albrecht’s desire to celebrate the denomination’s diversity and to listen to its unheard stories that led her to plan her journey to Phoenix. “I am realizing what a privilege I have as a citizen of the United States,” she says. “I may not have power to make cultural institutional change, but I can speak.”

After weekend trips to New York City and Philadelphia, Soto Albrecht, her husband Frank, and her communication team were to leave Lancaster at the end of June, arriving in Phoenix on July 5, the closing day of convention, when she will give the keynote address and receive her charge as moderator. After Phoenix, her team will travel up the West Coast and across America’s heartlands.

“When we return, and I look back, I want to be able to say I was empowered by holding all these stories so that they inform and shape me as moderator,” Soto Albrecht says. “I want to connect with and meet people I don’t know but who I know are doing God’s work. I want to be able, when I pray, to see people and faces, and I want to know they are praying for all the staff they have empowered to work on their behalf.”

**I want to be able to say I was empowered by holding all these stories so that they inform and shape me as moderator.—Elizabeth Soto Albrecht**

Soto Albrecht will be documenting her journey on her website, [journeywithelizabeth.com](http://journeywithelizabeth.com). While her journey begins with a single story—her own—she hopes that by the time she has finished her term as moderator she will have been able to collect 1,000 stories.

“This journey is not about me,” she says. “God will be speaking to all of us.” And though she will travel many miles this summer, Elizabeth Soto Albrecht realizes that her pilgrimage will not end in July; the real journey will have just begun.



*Emily Ralph is the associate director of communication for Franconia Conference and coordinator of [journeywithelizabeth.com](http://journeywithelizabeth.com). She is a member of Salford Mennonite Church in*

*Harleysville, Pa.*

## QUESTIONS TO

# women leaders



**Laura Glass-Hess** is in her second term as a board member of Pacific Southwest Mennonite Conference (PSMC). She is a member of the leadership team at Trinity Mennonite Church in Glendale, Ariz. She previously served as a youth sponsor at her church as well.

The thing that encourages me in those times is the trust that others have given me.—Laura Glass-Hess

**Do/did you have a woman leader as mentor? If so, how does/did she help you?**

I don't have any specific person that mentors me. However, I am fortunate to be surrounded by examples of women in leadership—women in PSMC churches who teach and provide vision—as well as my supervisor at work.

**Are you mentoring a young woman who may be a potential church leader?**


Although I have served as a youth sponsor in the past and continue to be involved with the youth, I do not currently serve as a formal mentor to any young women in the church.

**What impediments have you faced in becoming a leader?**

I am incredibly fortunate to be a part of a community, time and place in which I have never been told that I could not be a leader because of my gender. My mother spent much of her young adult life being told what she could not do because she was a woman. I have not faced that. There is still a real gender disparity in leadership positions in the church as a whole, which can impose a barrier in subtler ways by not providing examples of women leaders.

**When you face challenges as leader, what encourages you?**

Often I feel inadequate to the task of leadership. The thing that encourages me in those times is the trust that others have given me—the fact that wise and discerning people believed I could do it. That confidence from others is such a gift but also a responsibility.



Lessons from unexpected  
Christian hospitality  
at a small struggling  
Mennonite congregation  
in Mexico City

# Entertaining angels

by Don Clymer

“We don’t have any money to give you,” the pastor said to the strange man who approached him in a busy bus station in the northern part of Mexico City.

“But we can provide you with lodging at our church and invite you to present your case to the members to see how they respond.” ▶

My wife and I were meeting Victor, the pastor of a small Mennonite congregation dwarfed among some 22 million people inhabiting Mexico City. We were with a group of 18 students from Eastern Mennonite University (EMU), Harrisonburg, Va. Victor's church was hosting us for a week of working, worshiping and playing together.

The stranger spotted a Christian fish symbol on Victor's T-shirt and figured he would be more approachable than others in the crowded bus station. Slowly his story unfolded. His name was Abram, and he was on the way back to his family in Guatemala from the United States. He was completely broke when he arrived in Mexico City and was asking for money to buy a ticket home and for a meal to eat on the way.

Victor extended his invitation and promised to take up an offering for him with no guarantees on how much it would be.

Abram had been working in Charlottesville, Va., as a painter. He had entered the United States without papers and had numerous jobs in various cities until he finally settled in Charlottesville. He was doing well at his job but got into a bad crowd and spent most of his money partying and in general misbehavior. In desperation, he returned to the faith of his childhood, began attending a Latino church and recommitted his life to Jesus.

Just as he was beginning to turn his life around and make some economic strides, he received a call from his family in Guatemala. He was urgently needed back home to help resolve some family issues. He was really torn between family obligations and his newfound hope with steady employment and a changed lifestyle. Going back to Guatemala would probably mean never being able to return to the United States again; the risks of crossing the border without papers were too high. To ignore the pleas of his family went completely against his cultural sensibilities, so he decided to return to Guatemala, throwing away all his dreams of a better life.

**He returned over land, mostly by bus.**

Somewhere along the way, all his money was

stolen, and he ended up in a church-run refugee shelter in a U.S.-Mexico border town. By helping out around the shelter and with some donations from good people along the way, he was able to scrape together enough to buy a bus ticket to Mexico City. This is where his story coincided with ours.

To a person, our group had a great deal of trouble believing Abram's story. We figured he was pulling a major con job and was using the benevolence of a Christian brother with a fish symbol on his T-shirt to beg for money. Victor, on the other hand, did not bat an eyelash. He extended his invitation and promised to take up an offering for him with no guarantees on how much it would be. So Abram climbed on board the back of a pickup with a half-dozen students from our group to ride with us to the church of our destination.

It was remarkable enough that Victor offered this stranger hospitality at all. But his church was in the process of hosting 18 students and their two leaders for a week and was struggling financially to make their church budget reach. Didn't they have enough to do? Wouldn't the money raised to give to Abram be better used for the needs of the church? Weren't there other churches that could see to Abram's needs? These seem to be questions that were going through our American minds. I doubt any of them occurred to Victor, who lovingly invited Abram to accompany us on our adventure.

**"Share with the Lord's people** who are in need," says Romans 12:13, then continues, "Practice hospitality." In 1 Peter 4:9 we are admonished to "offer hospitality to one another without grumbling." Victor embodied the essence of both these verses. Our troop of American sojourners was the ones doing the grumbling. What is it about our culture that makes us so suspicious? Why is it so difficult for most of us to extend the biblically mandated hospitality to strangers?

"Scripture is replete with references to ... the stranger," writes W. David Buschart in his book *Exploring Protestant Traditions: An Invitation to Theological Hospitality* (IVP Academic, 2006). These references include a clear call to offer hospitality to the stranger. "Hospitality extends the embrace of welcome," he writes. "Christian hospitality extends the embrace of Christ's welcome." We are called to offer hospitality to the stranger because of what God has done for us. In turn, the hospitality we offer is from God.

"When faced by a stranger, those who extend

the embrace of hospitality have a keen awareness of God's hospitality toward them," writes Buschart. "Furthermore, this hospitality includes not only a sense of who they are (namely strangers) and what God has done (embraced them) but also an awareness that what they have to offer in hospitality is ultimately from God." Hospitality reaffirms our relationship to others and to God.

**In spite of our initial skepticism,** Abram soon endeared himself to our group. He ate meals with us at the church, worshiped with the congregation during several services and helped with the church's painting project. The coincidences were many. We had just been in Guatemala, the country to which he wanted to return. He had lived in Charlottesville, just over the mountains from where our students studied at EMU. He was a painter whose skills were needed at that particular time in the church. The better we got to know him, the more our skeptical attitudes faded away. When the special offering for Abram was received during the Wednesday evening service, most of our group walked forward to add their pesos to the love gift.

Although there was much less distrust among the Mexican Mennonites at the church than in our group as a whole, they, too, raised some questions when the special offering for Abram was announced. Victor, whose only motivation was Christian love, had a ready answer for the skeptics: "What he does with the money is on his conscience," he said. "We were asked to extend Christian hospitality to a stranger, so we did what Jesus would have done." Human motives are seldom completely pure. Extending hospitality in Jesus' name is.

A small offering basket for Abram was placed at the front of the church along with the normal offering basket during the Wednesday evening service. The money received for him was placed in an envelope and given to him after the service, no questions asked, no conditions imposed. According to the pastor who saw that he got to the bus station the next morning, the money Abram received was just enough to cover his bus trip and a meal along the way—exactly what he had asked for, no more, no less. He disappeared on to the bus in the early hours of the day, never to be heard from again.

**Our group learned a valuable lesson** in Christian hospitality during our time with pastor Victor's church in Prensa Nacional, a working-class neighborhood in northwestern Mexico City.

The church almost unquestioningly took Abram in and offered him what they had in spite of few resources of their own. Through the church's acceptance of Abram, and through exposing us to Christian hospitality at its best, our group learned

## Hospitality reaffirms our relationship to others and to God.

to love a suspicious stranger and learned to respond to that love without expecting anything in return. We also experienced God's love in action. Abram responded to our hospitality, and new friendships were forged through this encounter that will be forever etched in the minds of those of us who were there to experience it.

"Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers," states Hebrews 13:2, "for by so doing some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it." For all we know, Abram was an angel.



*Don Clymer teaches Spanish and humanities at Eastern Mennonite University, Harrisonburg, Va., and leads cross-cultural seminars to Guatemala and Mexico. He also serves on the Pastoral Care*

*Team at Lindale Mennonite Church where he is a member.*



# Apprenticed to **Christ**



Ukiyo-e workshop | commons.wikimedia.org

by C. Norman Kraus

## **Disciples have an intimate, trusting relationship with Jesus.**

Some years ago I attended an art exhibition in downtown Tokyo featuring the renowned American artist Clifton Karhu. Karhu himself was there, tall, clearly Caucasian, dressed in a traditional kimono. He had spent some 40 years in Japan, mastering the technique of Japanese woodblock print making. He became a disciple of the Japanese masters, and his ukiyoe style was flawless. His prints were clearly not American, yet I noted a subtle coloration that was not simply a literal copying of the centuries-old tradition. In the language of Luke 6:40, the apprentice/disciple Karhu had become so proficient in the tradition of his Japanese masters that he dared do more than a number painting imitation.

As I browsed his works, one of which we bought, and talked with him about his style, it became clearer to me what it means to be a “disciple” of the “master,” Jesus and his tradition. In an individualistic culture in which copying and imitation are frowned on, where “painting outside the lines” is seen as a virtue, where expressing one’s unique inner self is strongly encouraged, where each generation has its own moniker and where excelling one’s teacher establishes one’s unique identity, copying and imitation are not highly respected virtues. In such a culture the difference between literalistic copying and authentic imitation is difficult to recognize.

**New Testament culture** was a traditional culture that greatly respected those who by imitation mastered the tradition. Paul exhorted his converts in Philippi to imitate him as he imitated Christ (Philippians 3:17). When we use the language of discipleship, we must be careful to understand this cultural context of the New Testament. Two words are regularly translated master. One means teacher, and the other means social and political superior (lord) who has the power to control. A master may be a master of slaves or an accomplished teacher-example. Jesus is recognized as both “teacher and lord” (John 13:12-15), but in the role of “lord” he does not emphasize his right to dominate and dictate but rather to lead as a pioneer (Hebrews). Thus, to be a disciple is to “follow his lead.”

Many years ago I heard a sermon entitled “The Style of the Man” that described the secret of Jesus’ life and winsomeness. Discipleship is imitating this style of Jesus as an art apprentice follows the style of his or her master. Sometimes it has been described as a “WWJD”—What would Jesus do?—ethic. But following the literal commands of the New Testament does not constitute discipleship. It is not mimicking a moral pattern. Without the Spirit of Jesus, such literalism is not discipleship. And even the poorest achiever who sincerely follows the style of the master is a disciple. Discipleship must never be confused with moral discipline or saintly personality.

This style is often symbolized with a cross, but what are its characteristics that we should imitate? We cannot describe them with a moralistic set of practices. The overarching characteristic is agape, which really means respectful, compassionate justice—loving one’s neighbor as oneself. According to Jesus’ example, this included inclusive relationships that accept even the enemy as a neighbor and mutuality that prompts genuine will-

ingness to share even out of poverty. Such mutuality implies more than charity; it requires social justice. It means living above and beyond the fear of death so that one’s life is not determined by self-serving decisions. It means implicit trust in God as a heavenly Parent, which frees one to love as God loves. It means the kind of attitude and stance that inevitably led Jesus to the cross. Sometimes it is identified with following the Jesus way of nonviolence and peacebuilding. But without a spiritual appreciation of the style of Jesus, such practice becomes the stuff of well-intentioned politics. Even poor imitations in the spirit/style of Jesus are genuine discipleship.

## Discipleship must never be confused with moral discipline or saintly personality.

**According to the Matthew version** of Luke 6:40, Jesus says “it is enough for a disciple to be like his teacher” (10: 25). Yet Jesus is reported to have promised his disciples that they “would do greater things” than he had done (John 14:12).

Karhu’s works are a fine example of this principle in the art world. Imitation is not copycatting or cloning. It does not require the denial of one’s unique identity and personality. It does not mean adopting an ancient, first-century worldview or social order. Rather, as the 16th-century Anabaptist Pilgram Marpeck emphasized, it means adopting the style of Jesus through embodying the Spirit/spirit of Jesus in our modern culture.

Disciples have an intimate, trusting relationship with Jesus. It requires appreciative evaluation of his style (spirit) and loyal commitment (faith). In some evangelical circles this is referred to as a personal relationship, but personal must mean more than pietistic or romantic intimacy. One apprentices oneself to him with the intent of learning his lifestyle. This was the longing of the apostle Paul when he wrote, “I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the sharing of his sufferings by becoming like him in his death” (Philippians 3:10). A disciple subjects her or himself to Jesus as master teacher and example dedicated to acquire his outlook and style.



*C. Norman Kraus is a member of Park View Mennonite Church in Harrisonburg, Va.*

**We are called to be peacemakers in a gun culture.**

# Blessed are the peacemakers

by Ronald E. Holland

## **The absence of peace**

When you Google “Peacemakers,” two major categories pop up. The first is Matthew 5:9 from the Beatitudes. The second is the popular name of a 45 caliber six-shooter originally manufactured by Colt for the U.S. Army in the 1800s. This article is intended to prevent your confusing the two.



Tucson shootings memorial | wikimedia.org

This article is personal, theological, societal and both time sensitive and eternal. It's also somewhat political. Let me start with the personal. Of our six grandchildren, one is a kindergartner, one is in first grade, one is in second grade and one is in third grade. They have names. I don't want their names on the news or on memorials or on tombstones. Sandy Hook invaded my numbness on gun-weapon-firearm-violence issues. I'm all in and I'm tenacious.

First, let me tell you about my shotgun. It's a Winchester Model 12 (for 1912). It's a pump shotgun and was designed and manufactured for the U.S. Army for trench warfare during World War I. That version is on display in the World War I Museum in Kansas City, Mo. Beginning nearly a century ago, that gun was a military weapon, also used by riot police, and was used for those purposes for more than 50 years. It was used through the Korean and the Vietnam wars. It is still carried by some domestic riot police.

The gun will hold six shells. It was also manufactured and sold for hunting. For hunting migratory waterfowl, such as ducks, by federal law you can have only three shells in the gun. More than 30 years ago, my NRA gun safety instructor taught me how to make and use a plug for the magazine of my shotgun. The magazine must be disassembled to insert the plug, essentially a smoothed wooden dowel that displaces what would be an illegal number of shells. The plug makes the gun legal for hunting ducks.

For hunting ducks you have three shells in the gun. Not 100. Not 30. Not 10. Not six. Three. Please don't try to tell me that you can't restrict the size of gun magazines. The hypocrisy is that we protect our ducks better than we protect our children.

### **Let me introduce you to a hand puppet.**

This hand puppet is designed as a fuzzy green bullfrog. I call him Wayne. Wayne LaPierre, executive vice president and CEO of the National Rifle Association (NRA). Just to be sure you get it, this puppet is my bullfrog handgun puppet. You may arrange those nouns and modifiers in any order you wish: bull, frog, hand, gun, puppet. Wayne is nervous because he's never been in a peace church context before. You can't negotiate with a puppet. You can't reason with a bullfrog.

Wayne's real puppet masters are not visible. About half the income for the NRA comes from memberships. The other half comes from firearm, ammunition and "accessory" manufacturers. In addition, the Political Action Commit-

tees of the NRA have sources that our Congress in its wisdom has allowed to be hidden from public scrutiny. The NRA and its PACs are puppets for a whole other world of political pressure. How else could an organization with only 4 million members in a U.S. population of 314 million have so much control?

There are seven church denominations that have significantly more members than does the NRA. The Roman Catholic Church has 68 million members, then come the Southern Baptist Convention, the Mormon Church, the Church of God in Christ, the National Baptist Church, the United Methodist Church and the Evangelical Lutheran Church. With only 4 million members, how does the NRA control half the U.S. Senate, the majority of the U.S. Congress and majorities in the legislatures of the red states? How else could they raise that much money? Who else would profit from this massive domestic arms race? The answer is, the military industrial complex.

**The hypocrisy is that we protect our ducks better than we protect our children.**

**Dwight David Eisenhower warned us** about the military industrial complex. Eisenhower warned us about political pressure from groups like the NRA and their puppet masters. That was half a century ago, in 1961, just as Eisenhower was turning the presidency over to John F. Kennedy, who became a victim of gun violence.

Here's part of Eisenhower's speech (1961): "Until the latest of our world conflicts, the United States had no armaments industry. American makers of plowshares could, with time and as required, make swords as well. But now we can no longer risk emergency improvisation of national defense; we have been compelled to create a permanent armaments industry of vast proportions. Added to this, 3.5 million men and women are directly engaged in the defense establishment. We annually spend on military security more than the net income of all U.S. corporations.

"This conjunction of an immense military establishment and a large arms industry is new in the American experience. The total influence—economic, political, even spiritual—is felt in every city, every statehouse, every office of the federal government. We recognize the imperative need for this development. Yet we must not fail to

comprehend its grave implications. Our toil, resources and livelihood are all involved; so is the very structure of our society.

“In the councils of government, we must guard against the acquisition of unwarranted influence, whether sought or unsought, by the military industrial complex. The potential for the disastrous rise of misplaced power exists and will persist.”

## I will not forget the intrusion of the military industrial complex into our domestic society here in the United States.

For me, this is also personal. I kick myself for being so numb to a half century of the rising power of the military industrial complex. Sandy Hook got to me in a way that all the other gun massacres did not. It was cumulative. I'm not the only one who's been numbed and silent. Numb no more. In my grief, I will never forget Sandy Hook Elementary School. In my double grief, I also will not forget the intrusion of the military industrial complex into our domestic society here in the United States.

### **Being a peacemaker**

Now let's get creatively theological. The Beatitudes of Matthew 5 are among hundreds of beatitudes scattered through the Scriptures. A beatitude is an invocation of God's blessing on a person or a thought or a belief or a behavior. “Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called children of God” (Matthew 5:9). That blessing is placed by Matthew on the lips of Jesus. What is it we don't understand about being a child of God? What is it we don't understand about being peacemakers? Not the Colt six-gun kind of Peacemakers, the Jesus kind of peacemakers.

1. In the April 5 issue of *Mennonite World Review* John E. Sharp, instructor in history at Hesston (Kan.) College, offers a perspective on the origins of the Second Amendment. He sees it as a compromise offered by James Madison to allow slave states to keep their slave suppression militias. Weapons and the Second Amendment and oppression linked? Yes. There's a lot of talk abroad about the Second Amendment.

2. Get on the Internet and do your homework. Read the NRA's material on your senator and

congressman's web page. Find out where they get their contributions.

3. On the Internet, tell your senators, representatives and state legislators what you think. Remember that you have company: 90 percent of us at least want to close the loopholes on background checks. Get with other peacemakers to brainstorm and organize.

4. There's good news: In April 1999, the voters of Missouri (a red state) turned down a concealed carry referendum. Later, the legislature overrode a gubernatorial veto to pass it over the voters' heads. The NRA doesn't win referendums. They control legislators.

5. There's good news: The recent gun-weapon legislation in the U.S. Senate did get a majority of the votes of the Senate (54 percent). The bullfrog puppet is losing its teeth.

6. When will peacemakers sponsor a gun buy-back program?

7. Historical peacemakers. In 1948 in Johnson County, Kan., the South Park School was built for white kids. It's still there but now used for a church. Black kids were left in the old school, with outdoor privies and all the leftovers. Esther Brown, a 30-year-old Jewish white woman, led the black parents in forming a chapter of the NAACP. They brought attorney Elisha Scott and his sons from Topeka, Kan., and won in court—a precursor to *Brown vs. Board of Education*. One person like Esther Brown can do a great deal.

Peacemakers are neither silent nor passive. Peacemakers are creative and active and speak out. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.



*Ronald Holland is interim pastor at Rainbow Mennonite Church in Kansas City, Kan.*



Names scratched on a bedroom wall

# Roll of honor

by Jonathan Larson

In a back bedroom of a concrete block dwelling at the edge of Gabarone, Botswana, two beds crowd the room. One is occupied at this late morning hour by an old woman. The other by a teenage girl. A visitor to the household who shows any concern at all would be invited to greet and perhaps pray for those who lie there in the shadows and in weakness. Those shadows are long and deep, for this is a season of AIDS. A household member, like some attending angel, stands silently by in the shadows.

You may note the dinginess of the walls or the joyless belongings, the rumple of blankets. The mustiness of the room begs for sunlight. You may note the helpless waiting of those who cannot afford the care of a western doctor or the miracle cures in the city pharmacies.

While you linger with these sobering thoughts, a song begins. “Morena, naya tumelo.” (“Lord, give us faith.”) What else, good Lord, do they have? A prayer is spoken, remembering the faithfulness of heaven. It recalls that though others may not know, hear or care, there is an ear pressed to the ragged edges of life, listening for the whisper from the shadows. The prayer dies away, and parting greetings are murmured.

Then, as the visitor turns to leave, a tiny shaft of light from the window reveals a telling detail on the wall. Written carefully there in pencil on the plaster is a short list of names and telephone numbers. The names are those they might call if

ever a desperate need arises. They are names of those to whom it would mean something if they were ever in trouble. It is too dim to read them all, but one name I recognize: a friend of mine who is also known to this household.

There is a roll of this kind written somewhere in the beyond. It is not a long list, but it includes those who have shared heaven’s compassion for the poor who lie in back bedrooms.

There is a roll of this kind written somewhere in the beyond. It is not a long list, but it includes those who have shared heaven’s compassion for the poor who lie in back bedrooms. It is a list of those who are not so consumed with schedules that they may still be summoned at an hour of need by those who are not their own. The names are of those who are available not just in time but in heart.

That graffito on a dingy bedroom wall has left me with a yearning. It is my ambition that my name be written somewhere on such a wall.



*Jonathan Larson, author of Making Friends Among the Taliban (Herald Press, 2012), lives in Atlanta.*

Advice on how to prepare for retirement

# Essentials for a good retirement



© Marcia Widmer | 2012 TM photo contest entry

by Edgar Stoesz

Being good stewards  
of the body God has  
given us is our  
Christian responsibility.

**R**obert Browning said it so poignantly: “Grow old along with me. The best is yet to be, the last of life, for which the first was made. Our times are in his hand who saith, ‘A whole I planned, youth shows but half; Trust God: See all, nor be afraid.’ ”

This article is for those who are retired and those who have the foresight to plan for retirement.

Retirement is one of life’s realities, yet it is often ignored. Many dread it with such vehemence that in the end a premature death denies them of it. We can prepare for crossing over the abyss into that no man’s land some call retirement and in so doing make those golden years productive and enjoyable. My friend had it right when he said, “Edgar don’t put off retirement. You are at your best for the Lord after you retire.” So it was for him. So it is for me. And so I pray it will be for you.

**Health:** Health takes its rightful place at the head of the list. With health, we have options. Some comic has said, “The secret of long life is in choosing good parents.” Genes play a role in longevity, to be sure, but it is still true that many shorten their life span by neglect or misuse. Being good stewards of the body God has given us is our Christian responsibility. We can go only as far as our bodies will take us. We know what makes for good health; the secret is in mustering the discipline to do it.

**Attitude:** If health has a rival, it is attitude. Most of us are about as happy as we make up our minds to be. “A cheerful heart is a good medicine, but a downcast spirit dries up the bones” (Proverbs 17:22). A sign in some physical therapy departments speaks to us: “It is not what you’ve lost; it’s what you have left.” If we dread retirement, dread is what we are sure to get. If we plan for it, the retirement years can be the Indian summer of our life. In retirement we have the time to do the things we have long wanted to do. Make a list of them and then start doing them. And while you are doing them, more will appear.

**Financial freedom:** Financial freedom in the retirement years is the reward for having practiced discipline throughout life. Many think that when the funds are exhausted before the month has ended that the problem is on the earning side of the ledger. So they get a second job and in the process often also increase their expenses, leaving them with little net gain. My finding, and I have lived on a church salary all my life, is that the problem is as likely to be on the expenditure side. Your expenses, it has been said, must not exceed your income or your upkeep will be your downfall. It is as simple as that. There are exceptions, and I sympathize, but for most of us, a little self-denial together with a measure of God's blessings can bring financial freedom in the senior years—and how freeing that is!

**Activity:** We need something to do, something that motivates us to wrestle that bed off our backs in the morning. The loss many feel at retirement can be likened to chopping off a tree. Finished. We miss it terribly. But after a year or two some new shoots are seen growing from the remaining stump. Select one and foster it; it can become the next tree. We have gifts our job or career have not uncovered. In retirement they have space to grow. For some this can lead to a mini career, as it did for me. A sign over my desk reads, "Keep on using me, Lord, until you use me up." As Yogi Berra said, "It ain't over until it's over." Age is just a number.

**Family and friends:** We need family and friends in retirement more than ever. We have invested a lot in these relationships, especially our children. For long our role was to do things for them. Now we reach a stage in life where we must also learn to be graceful recipients. A moment I cherish is when, after a restaurant meal, my son looked me in the eye and said, "Let this be my treat." My challenge was to receive his gesture with gratitude so he could enjoy being a cheerful giver. Isn't it great to learn to know our children as adults and to treat them as equals?

**From doing to being:** Other challenges that await us in our senior years include seeing value not only in doing but in being. I do not know how to respond when my grandson says, "Grandpa, you are my hero." Hero? Me? For what? What have I done to deserve that huge complement? I think he is trying to tell me, "Grandpa, relax. I love you for being who you are."

**Humor:** "Humor is another of the soul's weapons in the fight for self-preservation," said Victor Frankl. Aging goes a lot better when we

can see life's unpleasant realities with a measure of humor. When President Lincoln was accused of being two-faced he replied, "If I had two faces, do you think I would be wearing this one?" Humor can brighten an otherwise dreary day. It can turn a scowl into a smile or even a laugh. Cultivate it. It is a gift. A hearty laugh is medicine for the soul.

## Aging goes a lot better when we can see life's unpleasant realities with a measure of humor.

**Lifelong growing:** Aging undeniably carries with it losses—loss of physical strength, loss of memory, loss of friends through death. Failure to replace these losses with something of equal or greater value is what is known as aging. A live organism keeps on growing. So we make new friends. I planted a peach tree, not knowing if I will be here to eat its fruit. I read the classics I never had time to read, or if I read them they have receded in my memory. I learn to bake bread. Even in old age, "Our reach should exceed our grasp, or what is a heaven for?"

**Faith:** Many of us live with the thought—Or is it an illusion?—that we grow more spiritual, more Godlike, with age. I am not finding that to be the case. Some years ago I commissioned a sign to be placed above my desk that says, "Be patient, God is not finished with me yet." Though now having exceeded my biblical quota of three score and 10, I still feel unfinished. I feel the need to mature spiritually. In his helpful and readable book *Falling Upward*, Richard Rohr suggests that in the second half of life we hear the "deeper voice of God." We build a more mature spirituality on the failures and disappointment of the first half.

With the hymn writer we ask for "a faith that will not shrink. Though faced by many a foe. That will not tremble on the brink, of any earthly woe." We are emboldened to face our senior years with the promise, "I will never leave you or forsake you." What could be plainer?

Ah yes, Browning got it right. God planned a whole, "youth showed but half. Trust God: See all, nor be afraid."



*Edgar Stoesz is a member of Akron (Pa.) Mennonite Church.*



# Walking with the Trinity

**It all comes down to movement.**

by Ken Gingerich

We are part of something wonderful and awesome that reaches back beyond the Big Bang or whatever we imagine the beginning of our reality to be.

I pretty much stopped believing in the Trinity a long time ago—at least in the traditional sense—where God is a white-haired old man who with his son Jesus and the Holy Ghost make up the Godhead. I can understand the discomfort Jews and Muslims have with it all. It didn't make sense to second-century Jews and later to eighth-century followers of Mohammed. It didn't make sense to the Deists who founded our country and whose spirituality was nourished by the 18th-century enlightenment—despite the wishes of modern-day revisionist Christian fundamentalists who claim the founders were something different.

It doesn't make sense in postmodernity, in the world of physical science and human psychology. It doesn't jibe with our dualistic, pluralistic and materialistic mindsets. It doesn't make sense to the Unitarians who worship up the street from Albuquerque (N.M.) Mennonite Church. It doesn't make sense to today's create your own religion, post-Christian, post-whatever sensibilities either.

But maybe that's not the purpose of it all anyway.

Just down the block and around the corner from the Taos casita I stayed in one month last year is a streetside holy place. It has little altars and memorials scattered among the trees and bushes. Fading signs and mottos are strung from low-hanging branches. Candles, faded flowers, statues, rock circles and other artifacts remind visitors that this unassuming empty lot is indeed a sacred space dedicated to the honor of the Holy Trinity.

I passed "Holy Trinity Park" on my daily morning and evening walks and felt within the rhythm of my breathing, my heartbeats and my footsteps the challenge that maybe a three-dimensional approach to understanding the nature of God actually does make some sense. Perhaps our experience of the holy can be known in three basic levels. When I was a kid, my mom suggested one way to comprehend the Trinity was to consider the way we perceive the properties of water, which we can recognize in different forms: as a frozen solid, as liquid and as vapor—it's still all water. Our spiritual ancestors simply used the realities and worldviews they had access to describe the almost indescribable. If I insist on using a literalist understanding of their reality, I'm missing an awesome and wondrous perspective.

### **Creator (the solid ground of our being)**

Something made us—and the universe. Something cannot come from nothing. It is both other—beyond us—and within us. We may recognize this as the ground of our being or the unified field. Sometimes we call it holy—so holy in fact the Hebrews could only ascribe consonants to the word used to describe this “most high,” YHWH. No wonder they took offense at Jesus’ sense of familiarity with the Creator. Abba? Daddy God? Yet there is a longing for a reconnection with the mind that created us that we humans have intuitively understood since the dawn of consciousness, when we became aware of our individuality, of our separateness. It’s called religion (“religar” in Latin means to reconnect). We are part of something wonderful and awesome that reaches back beyond the Big Bang or whatever we imagine the beginning of our reality to be. We are part of creation, too. Perhaps our essential task in life is to return, to draw near and remain under the protective wings, as it were, of our Creator. St. Augustine understood this impulse with his famous confession: “You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it rests in you.”

### **Child/man (washed in the flow of the Jordan)**

In the person of Jesus we at the very least have an archetype that allows the Creator to draw near. We only know this as we “do” the following of Jesus. I understand this as a kind of kinesthetic spirituality. We only “get it” when we move (as he did). No matter what one thinks about Jesus or what powers we ascribe to him, there is an undeniable connection (for me at least) that he gives me to what lies “beyond.” There will always be arguments about the nature of Jesus/Christ—from prophet to savior, to messiah, to cosmic connection and numerous other possibilities in between. It may not really matter what we believe. I think it matters more in whom we trust. And if we really trust in what Jesus said and who he is; if we simply allow him to carry us, we are more able to make contact with the primordial ground of all that is. It is so much greater than the structural paradigms of Christianity (Christendom) we’ve created through the centuries. So much of what we (the church) have built over the past two millennia is a construct that actually denies the one Jesus represents and the truly radical and grace-filled life we have been invited into. Once the paradigms have been shattered, Jesus can actually become a (hu)man/savior for our age.

### **Spirit/wind/baruch (the vapor of energy)**

The life force that ties it all together, that gives

breath, that is essentially present in everything, I usually call Spirit. For me it is creativity pure and simple. It is unity. It is love. It is the power that combines 6 billion-year-old molecules or stardust into cells, muscles, skin, teeth, senses and intelligence to make us human, and to create so many other creatures and nature in general, no matter the process. Joseph Rael is a Picuras Pueblo holy man who teaches about the animated universe or the reality of vibration/life within everything—of every material aspect in the universe. It’s not unlike the emerging chaos theory concept in physics that recognizes disorder, spontaneity and movement as a vital part of the creative force.

**If we really trust in what Jesus said and who he is; if we simply allow him to carry us, we are more able to make contact with the primordial ground of all that is.**

And it’s true, scientifically, that everything we see contains movement of some sort, from subatomic particles rotating around a nucleus to the internal composition of the granite rocks and magma rumbling beneath our feet to the billions of stars streaming through the universe. Everything moves. Everything is imbued with spirit. All creation is animated.

So we are all part of this incredible creation, and despite our physical demise, we will return to dust. We’ll continue on in some form as part of the mountains, the skies, the stars—the universe—until we’re drawn back into the arms of our creator in some fantastic future dimension. Everything is holy, including our whole selves, everything seen and unseen, what is tangible and what cannot be known or touched. It is an unfathomably deep mystery. I can only weep when I think about it.

It all comes down to movement. So maybe I can take the Holy Trinity and walk it out. Maybe I can feel the connections and reality of a three-dimensional perspective as I listen to the simple sound of my footsteps in the silence of the starry night.

Padda pum, padda pum, padda pum.

Someday I may even be willing to talk to a Unitarian about it.



*Ken Gingerich is a member of Albuquerque (N.M.) Mennonite Church.*

## Our church's commitment on health-care access



**Larry Miller,** Goshen, Ind., is CEO of Everence, an agency of Mennonite Church USA.

Our church has been concerned for over 20 years about the problems that exist in our health-care system.

**F**or the past two decades our church has been concerned about access to health care in the United States. Mennonite Church USA delegates approved six resolutions on health-care access between 1992 and 2009.

Our concerns are rooted in biblical concerns for both healing and social justice. Our 2005 Health-care Access Statement said the following:

**Because health is a gift from God and our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit** (1 Corinthians 6:19), we seek to be better stewards of our health.

**Because our life together in Christian community is a foretaste of the kingdom of God** (John 13:34-35; Acts 2:37-47; 4:32-35; James 1:18-27), we commit ourselves to work toward adequate access to health care for all our brothers and sisters, including our pastors, in Mennonite Church USA.

**Because health and healing are part of God's mission to redeem brokenness in the world,** we will work with diligence as stewards of the gospel to provide better health-care access for our neighbors.

**Because the scriptural test of a just nation is how it treats its weakest members** (Micah 6:8; Amos 5:24; Jeremiah 5:26-29), we will be clear and consistent advocates to policymakers on behalf of public health matters and access to health care for everyone.

A primary concern is for the estimated 50 million people under age 65 who aren't covered by an employer-sponsored health plan and are uninsured. Many have medical conditions or lack financial resources.

In 2010, President Obama signed the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (PPACA). It represents the most significant government expansion and regulatory overhaul of our nation's health-care system since the passage of Medicare and Medicaid in 1965. This health-care reform aims to increase the number of people covered by health insurance and reduce health-care costs.

Many reform provisions affecting individuals become effective Jan. 1, 2014. What do they mean for church members and our neighbors? Here are the primary changes:

- Insurers will be prohibited from denying coverage due to existing medical conditions.
- People who don't get insurance will be

charged an annual penalty.

- In participating states, eligibility for Medicaid coverage will be expanded based on income.

- Health-care exchanges will be created to sell insurance to individuals who may receive subsidized coverage, depending on their income.

- Employers with more than 50 employees will be required to provide coverage to employees or pay penalties.

It remains to be seen if health-care reform will be successful. Whether PPACA will lower costs is unknown. Here are other unknowns:

- Will church plans like our denomination's Corinthian Plan qualify as an exchange that offers subsidies? Everence is working with the Church Alliance on this. The Corinthian Plan will continue to cover pastors and church workers in 2014.

- Will employers drop health-insurance benefits, especially those with fewer than 50 employees? These employees will be able to still access coverage on exchanges.


Many things remain basically unchanged:

- Medicare and Medicare supplement coverage for older adults;

- partially self-insured health plans of many larger employers, including those administered by Everence and used by many church institutions, including The Corinthian Plan.

Our country has made many changes in health-care access and cost structure. Now it is taking a step to provide health-care access to those uninsured and to make coverage more affordable. Everence will help our members meet these changing insurance needs, including assistance for those with our individual and small group policies who are moving to new insurance plans.

Over 60 years ago, Everence began offering mutual aid plans so church members could help each other with medical costs. Over the years, church members changed how they accessed coverage, increasingly through employers, Medicare and individual policies. We changed our products and services to align with changing needs.

Our church has been concerned for over 20 years about the problems that exist in our health-care system. We are going along with the changes in our country, realizing they do not solve all the problems but hopefully move us forward in accomplishing better health-care access. 

## MHS Alliance: A different perspective

The April editorial on Mennonite Health Service Alliance's "homecoming" sure triggered a host of memories. I served under Mennonite Central Committee and the Mennonite Board of Missions and Charities (MBMC) from 1943 (Civilian Public Service) until 1979 and on the board of directors of Mennonite Mental Health, Mennonite Mutual Aid and MCC's developmental disabilities committee for many years. So I am pleased with this proposal and with the tone of Everett Thomas' editorial.

But for me the facts behind the separation in the early 1980s are far more complex than Gene Yoder's statement that "it had everything to do with creating a firewall." This may not be completely accurate—at least it's not the whole story. I do not have the full picture either and wish some of our historians would piece some of this together for us.

**The issues are deep** and go way back and with changing understandings and values. Even the births of MBMC and MCC were not easy. It took the great famine in India to mobilize the church to concern itself with "outsiders." Then concern for the needs of our own aging brought forth the Mennonite Benevolent Board. By 1908, the Evangelizing Board and the Benevolent Board merged and became MBMC. But there remained a tension between those who thought the primary task of the church was to "evangelize" (i.e., save souls), "preserve the faith" (a more Amish position) or "serve the needy" (our own and/or our neighbors).

Then came World War II, Civilian Public Service and MCC. Out of the CPS experience came a whole new vision or maybe a whole new understanding of who we were and the place of the body of Christ in the world. This, coupled with the new understandings of science and faith and an expansion of higher education, brought new tensions and anxieties. But we also found we could work with each other (Mennonite Church, General Conference Mennonite Church, Mennonite Brethren, Conservative Mennonite and other faith groups).

Out of the CPS experience came a whole new understanding of who we were and the place of the body of Christ in the world.

An underlying concern was what the church should "do." Is it to "save souls," "preach and proclaim," "pass out tracts" or "simply serve (respond to human need)"? We were almost schizophrenic—we wanted to serve and help relieve human suffering, but some questioned the value of having a person go to hell with a "full stomach." Should the focus be on "saving the soul first"?

I had the wonderful privilege of working with some great leaders—John Moseman, J.D. Graber, Ernest Bennet, Ori Miller, Herman Andres, Vernon Neufeld and others—who somehow managed to work across some of the fault lines. I know little of the progress east of Ohio but did work closely with Allen Erb and know of some of the criticism he faced as he worked so hard to get the church to back a "community" hospital in La Junta, Colo., and started the School of Nursing there.

**While the need for a firewall** might have trig-

gered the separation, there was also a strong push-back to the zeal and new vision of those who served in CPS and particularly the mental hospitals. The health-care institutions and the new highly trained health-care workers (including physicians, nurses, chaplains and administrators) had become too many, too sophisticated and the institutions too large to understand and control. And MBMC opted to become Mennonite Board of Missions—without the "Charities"—once more in the early 1980s.

I'm glad for the careful work done that I hope will bring the orphaned programs back into the fold, should the Phoenix delegates so decide.

Let me add that I chose to leave MBMC as Secretary of Health and Welfare in 1979 for two reasons—our aging parents in Oregon and my own felt need to allow new, better-trained people to lead—which they have done well, and I salute them. In Oregon I was privileged to serve as director of a fine retirement facility, serve as conference moderator and help start an MCC-related program for the developmentally disabled. What a privilege it has been! **TM**



**Luke Birky** is a member of College Mennonite Church in Goshen, Ind.

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



This interactive map on Mennonite Church USA's website identifies towns and cities where churches were planted from 2008-2013.

## 85 new congregations in last five years

### Area conferences support new faith communities across Mennonite Church USA.

In recent years, examinations of Mennonite Church USA demographics have focused on declining membership. But a recent list offers a new perspective.

A “snapshot” inventory compiled in March by Mennonite Church USA shows 85 new congregations since January 2008. The inventory, which is based on information shared by 17 of 21 area conferences, includes new church plants as well as several established congregations that have joined area conferences. It does not include memberships transferred among conferences.

Ervin Stutzman, executive director for Mennonite Church USA, says new churches effectively invite new people to follow Jesus in fellowship with the church.

“Over time, nearly all churches adopt ways of doing things that keep them from being relevant to some of the people in their communities,” Stutzman says. “New worshipping communities can connect with their contexts in creative ways. Newer churches and older churches have a lot to learn from each other.”

Mauricio Chenlo, denominational minister of church planting—a staff position shared between Mennonite Mission Network and Mennonite Church USA's Executive Board, identifies three main types of new Mennonite congregations:

- Immigrant congregations: Nearly half of the 85 new congregations are involved in bilingual or non-English ministry. Chenlo says these new Mennonites often have converted in the United States and tend to be more evangelistic.

- Congregations led by Baby Boomer Mennonites who were often previously involved in international service with Mennonite agencies. These congregations, Chenlo says, often focus on outreach toward the marginalized.

- Explicitly postmodern congregations that seek radical discipleship, inclusion and a strong desire for justice.

Warren Tyson, in his leadership roles with Atlantic Coast and Eastern District conferences, has been part of Atlantic Northeast Conferences (ANEC) of Mennonite Church USA—eight Mennonite conferences informally organized to support church planting. Tyson says leaders of new faith communities tend to exhibit passionate spirituality with an appreciation for risk-taking. Because of their commitment to Anabaptist theology, today's church planters apply themselves in their communities, creating connections and offering services that fulfill local needs.

For example, when a massive earthquake struck Haiti in January 2010, Bernard Sejour already was part of Philadelphia's Haitian immigrant community. After the quake, Sejour visited hospitals, agencies and neighborhoods in Philadelphia, offering help and support as newcomers dealt with their post-traumatic stress. He did not usually mention that he was starting a congregation: Solidarity and Harmony Church in Philadelphia, part of Eastern District Conference. People came anyway.

“As a peace church, an Anabaptist church, we embrace the idea of service to the community,” Sejour says.—*Ryan Miller for Mennonite Mission Network and Executive Board*

# Delegation visits Capitol Hill May 12-15

## Meets with Congressional representatives, advocates for immigration reform

On May 14-15, a delegation of Mennonite leaders with firsthand experience with the U.S. immigration system gathered in Washington, D.C., to meet with congressional representatives to advocate for just and humane immigration reform.

The delegation was cosponsored by Mennonite Church USA and the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Washington Office.

“It was a historical event on many different levels,” says Virgo Handojo, senior pastor at Grace Indonesian Christian Fellowship, Sierra Madre, Calif., and a participant in the delegation. “Personally, visiting Capitol Hill and knowing how our ideas and opinions can change the law of the country was really a humbling experience.”

“The excitement was great in seeing all the gears and cogs of the American political machinery moving toward the long-awaited and much-needed immigration reform,” says delegation participant Jaime Lázaro, pastor at Iglesia El Centro, Colorado Springs, Colo., which joined Mountain States Mennonite Conference in August 2012. “I was proud and awed to witness my denomination’s genuine concern and involvement in these matters.”

Iris de León-Hartshorn, director of transformative peacemaking for Mennonite Church USA, noted the threefold importance of the delegation: It provided an opportunity for immigrant leaders to delve into the legislation and name concerns, give voice to immigrants, who are directly affected by the legislation and speak directly into the legislative process through meetings with congressional representatives.

Cristina Rodríguez Blough, a Mennonite Church USA intern who organized the gathering with de León-Hartshorn and Tammy Alexander, senior legislative associate for the MCC Washington Office, describes the delegation as a “powerful experience.”

“We shared food, laughter and also deep concerns regarding our congregations, families and friends,” she says. “I was humbled by the stories and wisdom that leaders brought to the table and before congressional representatives. To see such a diverse and lively group listen to each other and rejoice and mourn together gives me hope that people of faith will come together and speak up to encourage a common sense and compassionate immigration reform.”

Participants spent the first day in the MCC Washington Office learning about the legislative process. A bipartisan bill for comprehensive immigration reform—S. 744: Border Security, Economic Opportunity, and Immigration Modernization Act—is under consideration in Congress. Alexander gave presentations on immigration reform proposals and



Photo provided

From left: Saulo Padilla, director of the Office on Immigration Education for Mennonite Central Committee U.S. Peace and Justice Ministries; Brandon Waggy, domestic policy intern for the MCC Washington Office; and Cristina Rodríguez Blough, participant in Mennonite Church USA/MCC’s May 14–15 immigration delegation to Washington, D.C., outside the office of Senator Joe Donnelly (D-Ind.).

broader church advocacy opportunities. MCC Washington Office staff members helped delegation participants identify talking points and issues to present to their congressional representatives and role-played visits with them.

On the second day, delegation participants visited offices of the Senate and House of Representatives to let their representatives know what they would like to see in the immigration reform bill and why.

**I was humbled by the stories and wisdom that leaders brought to the table and before congressional representatives.—Cristina Rodríguez Blough**

“The initial training and coaching were excellent, enabling me to understand the real talking points in the bill,” says Rev. Olufemi Fatunmbi, pastor of Royal Dominion International Church in Los Angeles and a delegation participant, adding that the lobbying role-plays led by MCC staff helped him “face the officials and make remarks not only with confidence but also respect and boldness.”—*Annette Brill Bergstresser of Mennonite Church USA*

# AMBS grads challenged to speak language of love

**Nineteen graduate from Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary on May 25.**

Mary E. Klassen



A commencement tradition for Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, Ind., is for graduates to ring the brass bells they receive. These are replicas of the bell on the campus, which originated 145 years ago at the first Mennonite institution of higher learning in the United States.

Scripture was read in Greek and English, but graduates were challenged to speak in the language of love at the Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary commencement service on May 25 at College Mennonite Church, Goshen, Ind.

Lydia Neufeld Harder, Th.D., used 1 Corinthians 13 as the foundation for her address, asking how graduates can share the message entrusted to them without becoming a noisy gong or clanging cymbal. She used a metaphor from theologian Walter Brueggemann to recommend that graduates learn to be bilingual, speaking different languages in different conversations.

Graduates have immersed themselves in the language of their faith community, knowing its power to shape them into disciples of Christ, Harder said. Now, as they move into different communities—in a new profession or new school or continuing in ministry with a new status as a graduate—Harder asked, What language do they borrow for the conversation beyond their spiritual home?

The pastor and former director of Toronto Mennonite Theological Centre answered the question from her own experience: “What I have gradually learned is that the language of love transcends differences ... because it urges us to listen.” Harder challenged graduates to listen deeply and

respectfully in the communities where they will serve. “The language of love creates mutual learning and true exchange of wisdom and insight,” she said.

Twelve of the 19 graduates earned the Master of Divinity degree, four the Master of Arts: Theological Studies, two the Master of Arts: Peace Studies, and one the Certificate in Theological Studies. Two of the graduates who completed the Master of Divinity degree also earned a Master of Social Work degree at Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Mich., in a dual-degree program coordinated by the two schools.

One graduate has already returned to Ethiopia, where he oversees around 50 congregations and teaches at Meserete Kristos College. One graduate is originally from Ecuador and one is from Canada. The remaining graduates are from the United States. Six graduates have or are seeking pastoral ministry placements. Five have or are seeking ministry with church agencies and organizations. Two are pursuing Clinical Pastoral Education through the next year, and three are involved in ministry for people with health or disability issues. —*Mary E. Klassen of Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary*



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# Bethel grads told to 'move the world'

**Eighty-five of 108 Bethel College graduates are from Kansas.**

**W**eather forced some changes to Bethel College's 120th commencement May 19 in North Newton, Kan., but also put the newest capital improvement to the test, which it passed easily.

A large tornado menacing Wichita, Kan., and the accompanying severe weather 30 miles away in North Newton, right at the time scheduled for commencement, meant the 108 members of the Class of 2013 had to forgo both ceremonies in Thresher Stadium and the traditional march around the Green.

Maintenance staff carted one of the college's threshing stones into Memorial Hall, so the graduates could touch it, according to tradition, as they processed to their seats.

Up until the time it moved to Thresher Stadium, in 2008, commencement had been held for decades in Mem Hall, producing generations' worth of memories of the heat and humidity of a full auditorium.

Earlier this spring, however, the college installed air conditioning in both Mem Hall and adjacent Thresher Gym. This was its first use with a capacity crowd, and it worked perfectly.



Vada Snider

Because of the stormy weather, Bethel College, North Newton, Kan., commencement had to be held indoors this year, making it harder for the graduating seniors to take their last touch of the threshing stone, but most managed it—here, from left, Nicholas Nyagah of Wichita, Kan., and Nathan Murphy of Newton, Kan.

Douglas Penner, Topeka, Kan., Bethel president from 1995 to 2002, who recently retired after 10 years as president of the Kansas Independent College Association and Fund, gave the commencement address, which he titled "You want to move a heavy boulder?"

Penner quoted the Greek mathematician Archimedes: "Give me a lever and a place to stand and I will move the world."

"Leverage, applied properly, dramatically [increases] your strength," Penner said. "The impact of a the best kind of college education, such as the one you got at Bethel, is that it's where the lever and the place to stand are developed."

The lever, Penner said, comes from classes in major and minor disciplines, electives and extracurriculars, that give students "the knowledge and the powerful tools to make a difference that you didn't have when you arrived."

However, he continued, "any good undergraduate institution can and should serve that lever function." What makes Bethel "distinctive from anywhere else you'd have chosen to study" is the second piece of the Archimedes quote, Penner said—the place to stand. It's shaped by Bethel's four core values of scholarship, service, discipleship and integrity.

Brad Born, vice president for academic affairs, introduced the Class of 2013 by citing a number of its characteristics, including the fact that 85 of the 108 graduates are from Kansas and that at least eight are taking voluntary service assignments starting within the next several months.

—Melanie Zuercher of Bethel College

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# Love of animals part of academic pursuits

**Bethel College students conduct 'companion animal' research.**

Courtesy photo



Shayne Runnion, student at Bethel College, North Newton, Kan., with one of the many horses she's trained, starting at age 10.

Spring is senior seminar season at Bethel College, North Newton, Kan. For some students, this spring was also a chance to apply their love of animals to both scholarly pursuits and the desire to help people. It's not unusual, of course, for animals to be part of senior research—from microorganisms to zebra fish to tons' worth of beef cattle. What was different this year was having “companion animals”—specifically horses, dogs and/or cats—as a vital component.

Shayne Runnion (above), a social work major, grew up on a farm/ranch near Phillipsburg, Kan., where she has been riding horses since she could walk and training them since she was 10. For her project, she studied five developmentally disabled clients of Horses to Humans of Wichita, which has a mission to help people “discover their own paths to healing and betterment through partnering with horses.”

Her results, she says, proved her hypothesis that clients would appreciate this kind of therapy and recommend it for others.

Ashley Klein (right), Newton, Kan., is completing a double major in psychology and natural sciences. She set up the project with “the intention to look if the preference dogs have for their owners, in other studies, is toward humans in general or the owner specifically, compared to how they react in a situation with a stranger dog or another dog.”  
—*Melanie Zuercher of Bethel College*



Vada Snider

Ashley Klein works with a Doberman mix puppy named Sadie at Caring Hands Human Society on behavior issues related to food aggression.

# Ark of Salvation finishes construction

**Everence loans money needed for Fort Myers, Fla., church to complete building.**



Mark Farwald

Children eagerly await their servings of cake as worshippers gather for fellowship and a meal after a dedication service for Iglesia Menonita Arca de Salvación's new church building in Fort Myers, Fla.

**D**avid and Madeline Maldonado weren't sure how the new church building they'd planned and hoped for was going to be finished.

The congregation they co-pastor—Iglesia Menonita Arca de Salvación in Fort Myers, Fla.—was building a new worship facility after getting a loan through Church Extension Services.

Construction started in the spring of 2011 but stopped a few months later when the loan money ran out with only a shell of the structure built.

As they talked with Church Extension Services about the need for more funding, the Maldonados were advised to ask Everence about a church loan. Since then, Everence Association took over the administrative responsibilities of CES.

Everence agreed to loan the amount needed to finish the building to Ark of Salvation, as the church also is known, and managed the construction project. Everence is experienced in loaning money to churches for expansions, new buildings or other specific needs. When people buy annuities from Everence, they're supporting the church loan program.

Work resumed on the Ark of Salvation building in February 2012. The church's new home was ready in time for this year's Easter services.

The fact that David is a licensed commercial contractor helped when he and Madeline approached Everence for a

loan, says J.B. Miller, Everence vice president of investment products.

"We worked closely with him and the congregation to assess the cost of finishing the project. We came up with a number," Miller says.

Madeline and David are deeply involved in Mennonite Church USA and in outreach in their community, which made this particular church loan all the more gratifying from the Everence perspective.

Ark of Salvation is "very engaged in the community," says Michael Horn, Everence director of charitable products and church loans. That emphasis on helping local residents with their day-to-day needs in addition to their spiritual lives was a factor in Everence granting the construction loan, Horn says.

Miller says, "The congregation will be a real anchor" in its neighborhood—even more so now because of the new building. Miller and Lehman were among those on hand for a dedication service at the new building on April 28. The congregation was formed in the mid-1980s. Worshippers formerly met in a house on the property where the new church was built. Weather permitting, services often took place outdoors. "It's nice to be able to put them in a building that can serve their needs better," says Horn.—*Jim Miller for Everence*

# Proposed drone center draws protests

**Three Mennonites from Lancaster, Pa., join witness in Horsham, Pa.**

H.A. Penner



Three Mennonites, one Church of the Brethren and one nondenominational person from Lancaster, Pa., participated in a protest at the proposed drone command center on the grounds of the Naval Air Station Joint Reserve Base at Horsham, Pa.

The Pennsylvania state Department of Military and Veterans Affairs announced on March 19 that the Pennsylvania Air National Guard's 111th Fighter Wing, located at Horsham Air Guard Station, will take on ground control for the MQ-9 Reaper unmanned aerial system starting Oct. 1. On May 25, five people from the Lancaster, Pa., area joined dozens more to protest this development.

Sponsored by the Brandywine Peace Community, American Friends Service Committee and other peace and anti-war group, the rally was held at noon at the proposed drone command center on the grounds of the Naval Air Station Joint Reserve Base at Horsham, Pa. Many held signs near a traffic light at the corner.

The names of over 100 children who have been killed by U.S. drone attacks in Pakistan and Yemen were read. A bell was tolled for the victims.

A 10-foot replica of the MQ-9 Reaper drone stood next to the intersection, shaking in the strong gusts of a cold wind.

The Reaper, which operators are scheduled to pilot remotely from Horsham, can be armed with four Hellfire missiles and a 500-pound bomb. This new drone command center is being promoted as adding a total of 250 military and civilian jobs to help the local economy. The next witness was scheduled for June 29 at noon.—*H.A. Penner*



H.A. Penner

Richard Boshart of Lebanon, Pa.

## Miller serves as police chaplain in Lancaster, Pa.

**Mellinger Mennonite Church pastor sees role as a 'welcome challenge.'**

Photo provided



Pastor Joe Miller (right) and officer Sam Dillman of the East Lampeter Township Police Department in Lancaster County, Pa., on bike patrol. Miller serves as volunteer police chaplain.

Joe Miller, pastor of Mellinger Mennonite Church, Lancaster, Pa., has served as the volunteer police chaplain for the past nine years.

His work with the police department primarily involves accompanying officers on death notifications and relating to police officers.

Joe rides along with officers on patrol as a way to build relationships with members of the department.

He says that being a pacifist and a police chaplain has been a welcome challenge to think concretely about the use of force and especially lethal force.

“Hanging out with police officers has challenged me to live within the complex struggle between Jesus’ call to love our enemies and to turn away from violence while also experiencing police officers as friends who are also struggling with the place of force in dealing with people who are violent,” Miller says.

Miller continues: “When the police chief invited me to be their chaplain I told him I was a pacifist and would understand if he thought it would be better to invite another pastor to serve. The chief replied that he was open to a pacifist serving as their chaplain.”—*Mellinger Mennonite Church*

## Phillies catcher meets Mennonite students

**Philadelphia Mennonite High School students hear Erik Kratz’ advice.**

Philadelphia Phillies catcher Erik Kratz, who hit a home run against the Cincinnati Reds in May, visited Philadelphia Mennonite High School on May 30.

Kratz grew up in Telford, Pa., and graduated from Mennonite schools.

He played baseball at Penn View Christian School, Souder-ton, Pa., and Christopher Dock Mennonite High School, Lansdale, Pa., and Eastern Mennonite University in Harrisonburg, Va.

He told the students in Philadelphia to be humble, pursue their dreams and practice, practice, practice.

“I am here today because of God’s grace and because I worked hard. But I also know it could all be gone in an instant,” he said.

He also spent time sharing about his wife and children.

Afterward, Erik signed autographs and spent time joking and laughing with students.—*Ron Tinsley of Philadelphia Mennonite High School*



Ron Tinsley

From left to right: Fred Kauffman, Philadelphia Mennonite High School board member; principal Barbara Moses; Phillies catcher Erik Kratz and two PMHS students

# Byler and Muñoz bonded by renewal

## Intersection of two lives sparks six weeks of praise at end of his life.

Photo provided



Connie Byler (front row, far right) enjoys spending time with her friends from La Encina.

Living in the same city, Connie Byler and Ramón Muñoz were strangers with different pasts but had more in common than one might guess: the need for renewal.

Muñoz lived in a community home called La Encina, “The Oak.” He soaked up every household activity and learning workshop he could—except on the days he spent resting. His weakened immune system, a result of a life with AIDS, often kept Muñoz a prisoner of his bed.

La Encina is a home for people living with AIDS. Surrounded by a caring community, regular meals and medical attention, residents slowly improve their quality of life, although their brains or limbs may be permanently damaged. Although the AIDS virus doesn’t directly attack the brain and limbs, it affects their health and function over time.

**On the other side of town live** Connie and Dennis, her husband. The couple has served with Mennonite Mission Network in Burgos, Spain, for the past 32 years. Connie provides spiritual companionship to people living with AIDS and serves as an elder at Comunidades Unidas Anabautistas, the United Anabaptist Communities in Burgos. Dennis is a writer and teaches in a Protestant seminary.

For years, Connie Byler had suffered from pain. Initially thought to be brought on by aging, doctors discovered that fibromyalgia and a degenerative disk disease were the actual causes. Skin cancer was another concern.

The effects of Muñoz and Byler’s illnesses were more than physical. “I was figuratively ‘going through hell while looking for heaven,’” Byler says, reflecting over the past years.

When she answered the phone one day, she learned that a man who lived at La Encina was dying. Byler volunteered there on Thursday mornings, and although she did not know the man well, she went immediately to the hospital.

It was Ramón Muñoz. Surrounded by his two sisters in the hospital bed, Muñoz was semicomatose and white as a sheet. Byler knew she had little time. After some small talk, she got down to the point.

“Ramón, are you ready to die?” Byler asked.

His eyes shot wide open in terror, and he cried out, “¿Estoy moriendo? Am I dying?”

“Ramón, you have time to seek God,” Byler explained. “The Bible says that if you seek God to be close to him, God will seek to be close to you.”

Muñoz was ready to live but not ready to go “home.”

When Byler visited Muñoz two days later, he was sitting on the edge of his hospital bed, impatient to leave. Byler asked permission to pray with him, so they held hands and prayed together, thanking God for saving Muñoz from death.

**Muñoz suddenly interrupted Byler** and started praising God with fervor, full of thankfulness and joy. “God, no one has ever taught me to pray before,” cried Muñoz, who had never been to church. “If you teach me, I will teach others.”

Muñoz had encountered God; his immediate response was worship.

“I will never forget that moment,” says Byler, who credits this experience with whetting her spiritual appetite for the Holy Spirit’s movement in her life in a new way.

Through her encounter with Muñoz, Byler believes that God wants to remind Christians to move beyond the church walls.

“Sometimes, it’s not about taking [people] to church to encounter God there, but as Christ is in us, people will have encounters with God on the streets and wherever they are,” says Byler. Muñoz only lived six more weeks. Each day, he packed a sandwich and boarded a city bus that took him to a park bench downtown. From there, Muñoz watched the world go by. He enjoyed living but quickly became exhausted and spent the afternoon recuperating.

Each Thursday, Byler and Ramón prayed together—time that each valued. When Muñoz passed away, his life was celebrated with a quiet funeral planned by his peers at La Encina. To Byler, Muñoz’s encounter was like seeing the “manifest glory of God” on earth. She is grateful to have been a part of it and hopes that bringing Christ’s kingdom to earth will always be her passion.—*Kelsey Hochstetler of Mennonite Mission Network*

# Couple creating home for 'war children'

**Congregations in Spain respond to call for help from Ivory Coast.**



Photo provided

Francisco (Paco) Castillo and Annette Zingbé and their children—Ariel, Tika and Daniel—are in Ivory Coast laying the groundwork for a home to welcome children who have grown up during a decade of civil war.

Annette Zingbé Castillo makes a home for children wherever she goes—often amid desperate conditions. Her current commitment is to bring healing to a generation of children whose lives have been ravaged by Ivory Coast's civil war, a conflict that spans the past decade.

Zingbé started working with homeless children 17 years ago in the West African country of Burkina Faso. In 2000, a year before beginning their biological family, Zingbé and her husband, Francisco (Paco) Castillo, opened the doors of La Casa Grande, a home in Benin, Burkina's neighbor to the south. In April, Zingbé began her trip home in a deeper sense. She returned to Ivory Coast, her birth country, to fulfill a ministry to which she was called as a child.

"I kept begging the Lord to allow me to gather abandoned children together and care for them," Zingbé says.

**As a young girl growing up in the city of Man**, located in the western part of Ivory Coast, Zingbé longed to reach out to street children in a way that would make a lasting difference in their lives. However, her family and her church community, where her father served as pastor, did not have the financial resources for such a ministry.

After four decades, God is answering Zingbé's childhood prayer. She, with her husband and their three children, are on their way to Man to make a home and provide vocational opportunities for those who have not known peace in their lifetimes.

"There are other agencies in Man helping educate and train 'war children' now that the wars are seemingly over. However, [we] are of the opinion that lives are not being changed, because Jesus is not part of the answer," Zingbé says.

**Zingbé and the children arrived** in Ivory Coast's capital, Abidjan, in March, and Castillo joined them in early April. They have spent the past months completing mountains of paperwork required by the Ivorian government to register CerÁfrica, the agency through which they will work.

CerÁfrica, a not-for-profit organization, began three years ago when congregations in Spain responded to a call for help from the evangelical churches in Man. Comunidades Unidas Anabautistas (the Mennonite church in Burgos), a Mennonite Mission Network partner, is one of CerÁfrica's founding bodies. While waiting for the bureaucratic wheels to grind out documents, Zingbé is reaching out to kids through a neighborhood children's club on a mission station in Abidjan, located near a refugee camp.

Zingbé is not alone in feeling God's call on her life; Castillo also senses a clear leading to reach out to children without families. "After living in the hell of the drug world, I absorbed the love of God through the ministry of Christians," Castillo says. "Having been ... healed by God, I received a vivid summons to work among marginalized people." —*Lynda Hollinger-Janzen of Mission Network*

# Infants born to HIV-positive mothers protected

## Mennonite Central Committee offers storytelling workshop in Indonesia.

Tia Sumihe



Ira Sianturi holds baby Ania, who does not have HIV, even though her mother had the disease. Sianturi, a volunteer with the Jayapura Support Group in Indonesia, a Mennonite Central Committee partner, helped Ania's mother adjust to her status.

In Papua, Indonesia, where indigenous people have been marginalized in their own land, learning to tell stories is one way to strengthen the voice of the people.

That's why Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) offered a storytelling workshop for 15 people selected by Papuan partner organizations last year. One of the people who took the storytelling class was Ira Sianturi, a pharmacist at a Papuan hospital, who is familiar with the growing problem of HIV and AIDS in Papua.

Although Sianturi is not indigenous, she works with indigenous people by volunteering with Jayapura Support Group, an MCC partner that supports people living with HIV and AIDS and helps educate people about the disease.

**After Sianturi took the storytelling workshop**, she wrote the following story about her work with the support group. MCC Indonesia staff member Tiya Sumihe translated the story, and MCC edited it for a western audience:

"When Fika went to the hospital to have her baby, she went through an HIV screening. Fika was HIV positive. The hospital recommended a Cesarean section to reduce the chances of transmitting HIV to the baby. (Fika's last name is not being used to protect her privacy.)

"For six weeks after she was born, baby Ania was given antiretroviral medicine to protect her from the virus she may have contracted, in spite of the precautions, during delivery or through breastfeeding. Then Fika had to bring Ania to me

at the hospital pharmacy for medicine every two weeks for one year. As a volunteer for Jayapura Support Group, I wanted to help her.

"At first, it was very hard for me to approach her. There was a big wall between us. She did not want to talk about her HIV status or about her husband's status. I tried to break the wall between us by holding Ania, not only because I wanted to get her mother's attention but also because that little girl always smiled. I liked to hold her.

"From the attention I gave Ania, her mother began to open up. Fika talked about Ania and her other three children. Suddenly, we could laugh together about little things. Ania was getting bigger, healthy and so cute.

"When Fika sent me a text message asking for information, I knew there was no longer a wall between us.

"I introduced Fika to other women with children who had completed the medication program and did not develop HIV. I wanted Fika to see that the program has results and [that] a true hope is there. One year is not a short time to give the medicine to Ania. Fika needs a friend who knows her status and still accepts her.

"After [Fika spent] a single year in the support group, no one thought [she] would become brave enough to tell her husband about her status and to ask him to have an antibody test, but she did.

"Although Fika's husband's test result was negative, I saw he was not upset with her. They learned from the hospital HIV counselor that by staying on medicine and using protection, one partner can avoid giving it to the other. After they left, I even texted Fika to ask, and she said her husband could accept her.

"A few times after that I saw Fika and her husband walking together in Jayapura, holding hands like a couple falling in love. Once, I surprised them, and they shyly let go their hands.

"The relationship I have with Fika and her husband is not just as a patient-nurse but as brothers and sisters. I like this relationship.

"After a year, their little girl with round eyes and curly hair had an antibody test. The result: HIV negative. Ania is the 10th child who made it through the hospital's Mother to Child Transmission program without becoming HIV positive.

"I hope there will be more success stories and that all women will go through HIV screening before they deliver their babies. As the Jayapura Support Group logo states, 'From Fear to Hope.'

"Is HIV scary? Of course, but everything is possible. Ania proved it."—*Mennonite Central Committee staff*

## 20,000 women benefit from Penner Fund

### Grandparents' bequest inspires a new generation of philanthropists.

**W**omen farmers in Ghana and international development interns will gain new opportunities to earn an income to support their families and to enhance their career prospects with a recent legacy gift to Mennonite Economic Development Associates (MEDA) from the estate of Willard and Elsie Penner.

Part of the \$1.1 million bequest will support MEDA's GROW (Greater Rural Opportunities for Women) project in Ghana, aimed at improving food security for farmers in northern Ghana by helping women increase availability, access and use of nutritious food.

**The six-year project will reach out to 20,000** women and their families. The Penner gift will also fund five much-needed internships for U.S. students.

Internships provide graduating students with critical field experience for their chosen career. They are also an important talent pipeline for MEDA—seven current staff members began as interns.

The family is also creating the Willard and Elsie Penner Family Legacy Fund, to be invested for long-term impact. MEDA's Saron Risk Capital Fund provides early stage capi-

tal, an important source of funding for young companies. SRCF invests in promising companies in developing countries with prospects of not only financial success but economic benefit to poor communities.

Last year, SRCF helped 14 million clients served by microfinance institutions and enterprises where MEDA has an investment.

**They believe in its mission of helping people support themselves rather than giving free donations.—Matthew Penner**

“Both our parents and grandparents have been members and supporters of MEDA,” says Matthew Penner. “They believe in its mission of helping people support themselves rather than giving free donations. As a farmer, I’m now inspired to learn more about how farmers in North America can reach out to farmers in developing countries to help them on the road to prosperity.”

His sister, Elizabeth, who is starting a residency in internal medicine at Cornell University, recalls how her parents’ and grandparents’ commitment to help others through MEDA impressed her at a young age.

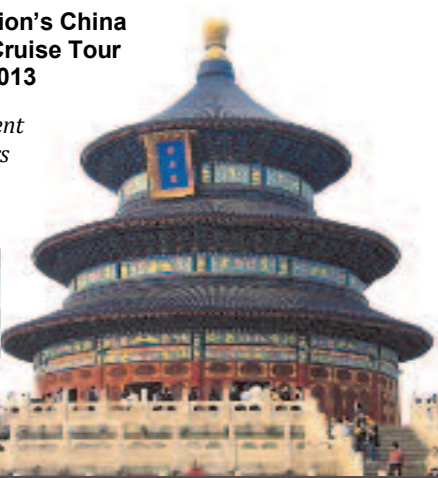
Upon graduating from high school, Elizabeth gave some of her graduation money to MEDA. “Even then, I felt that I had been very fortunate, and knowing what I did about MEDA, I felt it was a very admirable organization with a great cause.”

The children of Willard and Elsie—Mary Scheve, Ann Foodman and Roland Penner—hope that sharing the story of their family’s bequest will encourage others to consider how they, too, can make a gift that will keep working long after they’re gone to rid the world of poverty.—MEDA

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# Five developments that shape our witness

## Friesen: Build discernment of social issues into the rhythms of the church.

For the young, time is dynamic and pregnant with possibilities. The lyrics of Bob Dylan said it well for my generation:

*Come gather 'round people  
wherever you roam.  
And admit that the waters  
around you have grown.  
And accept it that soon  
you'll be drenched to the bone.  
If your time to you  
is worth savin'  
then you better start swimmin'  
or you'll sink like a stone  
for the times they are a-changin'.*

As we grow older, the drama of change recedes to the hum-drum of routine. Time seems to flatten out and lose its dynamism. We are apt to join the writer of Ecclesiastes in saying,

*What has been is what will be  
and what has been done is what will be done;  
there is nothing new under the sun.*

**The times of Jesus:** Ecclesiastes isn't the only biblical text to express caution about getting caught up in the world's hype. In the Second Psalm, the writer describes God as laughing at the plans and conspiracies of kings. And some would even cite the words of Jesus in support of a flat view of time:

*But about that day and hour no one knows,  
neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son,  
but only the Father.—Matthew 26:36*

What is often overlooked in the quoting of those words, however, is the three-chapter discourse in which they are embedded. There, Jesus clearly tells his disciples that the times are changing. What has been is not what will be; life will not go on as it has been. And Jesus wants his disciples to get ready.

The setting for this teaching is Jerusalem and Jesus' prediction that the temple will be destroyed. The disciples ask when this event will occur. Jesus does not answer precisely but describes the social and political developments that will precede and follow that terrible day. As he continues, Jesus speaks more generally about the importance of watchfulness, diligence, preparation and risk taking. He ends with a description of the last judgment, when the nations of the earth will gather before the Human One in his glory.

As Jesus predicted, the temple was destroyed by the Roman Empire in 70 A.D. Many residents of Jerusalem were killed and most of the remainder dispersed. Matthew, writing soon after this calamity, tried to help distraught believers

make sense of it all. Quoting apocalyptic words from the prophets about stars falling from the sky, Matthew validated the distress they were experiencing. But he also recalled these words from Jesus:

*Then the sign of the Human One will appear in  
heaven,  
and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn,  
and they will see the Human One coming on the  
clouds of heaven  
with power and great glory.*

Much of what has made Mennonites distinctive through the centuries is rooted in our conviction that what Jesus promised in these words has already begun. That is, the glory of the crucified Human One is not only for the future but is here among us now, revealing deception, bringing down thrones and lifting up the lowly. By and large, this remains our conviction. But as we have become more fully integrated into the broader society, we are tempted to avoid specific applications that may be politically controversial.

**Discerning developments in our time:** In the course of his teaching in Matthew 23-25, Jesus said this:

*From the fig tree learn its lesson:  
as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts  
forth its leaves,  
you know that summer is near.  
So also, when you see all these things,  
you know that he is near, at the very gates.*

These are words for the church. Notwithstanding the risk of controversy, Jesus is telling us to discern the times in which we are living and ready ourselves to participate in the glory of the One who has made this world his own. Where to begin? Among the many possibilities, I suggest five broad historical developments that for good or ill are shaping our witness to Jesus Christ.

**1. Globalization:** Our heightened sense of economic interdependence and the declining importance of international borders have opened the way to improved living conditions for many. One indicator is increased life expectancy; infant mortality has dropped by more than half since 1990 due to a sharp decline in malnutrition and infectious disease. Another positive indicator is the decline in the number of people living in severe poverty (less than \$1.25 per day), dropping from 1.8 billion to 1.2 billion over the past 20 years.

But globalization also is fueling income inequality and the loss of local sustainability. Since 1992, over half of total income growth in the United States (52 percent) has been captured by the top 1 percent of households, according to economist Emmanuel Saez. During the recovery of 2009-10, the share of income growth captured by the top 1 percent

was an astonishing 93 percent. And globalization has been devastating for many independent producers, such as Mexican corn farmers or Egyptian textile makers, who find it impossible to compete in markets dominated by multinational entities. For these producers, prosperity can be achieved only by giving up their independence and accepting the terms and conditions of broader corporate structures.

**2. Digital revolution:** As digital technology becomes less expensive to produce, it is reaching into every corner of the world. Now anyone can be a reporter, anyone can have a bank account, anyone can be an entrepreneur. The benefits flow beyond the individuals involved; open communication lines and shared knowledge are powerful forms of social capital that make communities more resilient and local economies more productive and free of corruption.

The digital revolution also is driving a new generation of smart machines into the workplace. Dr. Jay Parrish, a Mennonite who teaches classes in drone-related technology at Penn State University, described aspects of this development in two 2012 lectures in Lancaster, Pa. While acknowledging the terror that weaponized drones have injected into Afghanistan, Pakistan and Yemen, Parrish also noted the many benefits “flying robots” can provide in agriculture, natural resource management, disaster and fire response, architectural restoration and even pizza delivery. The FAA projects that as early as 2020, 30,000 drones will be flying in U.S. skies.

**3. Continuous war:** Speaking generally, the times we are living in are much less violent than the first half of the 20th century. Steven Pinker, author of *The Better Angels of Our Nature—Why Violence Has Declined*, suggests we may be living in the most peaceable era in human existence. The primary exceptions to this generalization over the past 20 years are Muslim nations: Palestine, Bosnia, Kosovo, Chechnya, Afghanistan, Iraq, Pakistan, Sudan, Somalia, Yemen, Libya, Iran and Syria.

Nevertheless, the mentality within the United States, equipped by half the world’s military capacity, has shifted toward a more aggressive military stance. An official state of emergency has been in place since 9/11, and both recent presidents have emphasized we are at war and will continue to be for the foreseeable future. Given traditional U.S. reluctance to become enmeshed in international disputes, national elections during times of war have usually produced a “peace” candidate. But that wasn’t the case in 2012, as both major party candidates seemed eager to demonstrate their warmaking resolve. Increasingly, the preferred method of military engagement involves covert operations conducted in league with shadowy militants who behave much like “terrorists” (depending on who is doing the describing) to effect “regime change.” Often what remains after the change in leadership is a failed state that cannot protect its own citizens but is ready and willing to conduct business with Western corporations.

**4. Erosion of the rule of law:** In the post-World War II era, Western democracies took pride in holding the powerful accountable to established standards of conduct. During the past decade, however, this commitment seems to be waning, at least in the United States. No one has been held accountable for the security failures on 9/11, the anthrax attacks or illegal Iraqi war that followed, or the Wall Street fraud that nearly pushed the world economy over the brink. Meanwhile, the United States continues to imprison a higher share of its ordinary citizens than any other country in the world.

In Congress, legislators of both parties have lined up to pass laws authorizing the military to detain U.S. residents indefinitely based solely on the order of the President. Congress also has authorized secret government agencies to monitor our communications without first obtaining a warrant. While similar powers have been authorized previously in our history during times of crisis, they have always been rescinded promptly after the crisis passed. Now, vague references to “terrorism” are sufficient to justify making such powers permanent.

**5. Global warming:** After a decade when discussion of global warming was marginalized, extreme weather is pushing the debate back to the fore. While a few continue to insist that the warming of the earth is “natural,” the focus for most has shifted to what we can do to slow the rise in temperature. Here technological innovation offers a significant opportunity to decrease our use of fossil fuels and move toward sustainable sources of energy.

Bill McKibben, the environmentalist who launched [www.350.org](http://www.350.org), describes the urgency of this shift. It entails not merely burning fossil fuels more slowly but leaving 80 percent of proven reserves locked away permanently underground. If we burn those reserves, as the energy companies are betting we will, much of the earth will become uninhabitable by the time today’s children reach retirement age. Already, we see some of the super-rich preparing for such a dystopian future by seceding from the responsibilities of citizenship and retreating into private worlds of their own.

**Making it happen:** Discerning the times isn’t a solitary task; it requires a communal process that draws on a range of experiences and perspectives. It shouldn’t be an ad hoc endeavor, dabbled in occasionally and without accountability. And because it invariably touches on matters of political sensitivity, it isn’t for the fainthearted. Yet for a missional church—one convinced that only the power of the Human One can save us—discernment can contribute mightily to the watchfulness, diligence, preparation and risk taking to which Jesus has called us.

When we gather in Phoenix in July, the convention agenda could include a plan to build discernment more intentionally around broad social developments into the rhythms of the church. Given all that is at stake, the time has come for such a step.—*Berry Friesen of Lancaster, Pa.*

## Zulu and Afrikaans pastors develop friendship

**Anabaptist Network in South Africa opened space for honest sharing.**

An emerging friendship between Mzwandile Nkutha, a black Zulu pastor, and Cobus van Wyngaard, a white Afrikaans pastor, through the Anabaptist Network in South Africa (ANiSA), demonstrates in a small way the hopeful possibility of overcoming deeply rooted racial prejudices in South Africa.

“ANiSA opened up a space where we could talk, share about our backgrounds in an honest and open way, [more] than perhaps we could elsewhere,” Nkutha says.

Nkutha grew up just outside Johannesburg in Soweto, the largest black township in South Africa, while van Wyngaard grew up in Swaziland and South Africa. Although van Wyngaard’s family challenged apartheid, as white people they benefited from their place of privilege. Today, official restrictions no longer require segregated living. However, post-apartheid South Africa continues to wrestle with the residue of its historical mind-set.

Both Nkutha and van Wyngaard were formed by faith. Nkutha is now a pastor of a Vineyard church. Van Wyngaard is a minister in the Dutch Reformed Church, which wrestles with its historic affiliation with the apartheid government and its policies—thus, in historical conflict with the black evangelical church.

**Given South Africa’s history and its ongoing** reality of interracial relationships, there are several hurdles in the way of reconciliation, let alone friendship, between Nkutha and van Wyngaard and others like them. The two pastors met at the first ANiSA Dialogue in April 2011. Listening to one another’s stories sparked openness between them.

“As we got to know one another, we found ourselves living out a similar story,” Nkutha says. “We have been exploring what it might look like to have the church demonstrate something different within our society.”

Nkutha and van Wyngaard find themselves moving outside their theological traditions, discovering common ground

within the Anabaptist story, witness and theology. According to Nkutha, the South African church finds itself in a compromised position, given its historic and ongoing relationship with the state.

“The Anabaptist story [provides] an alternative model as to what it means to live as kingdom political people instead of tying itself with the political agenda of a particular party or state,” Nkutha says. Van Wyngaard was drawn to Anabaptism because of its strong emphasis on nonviolence. Yet as he continues his journey, he has come to recognize that Anabaptism has provided an alternative way for people to think and believe and alternative ways for the church to relate to the state. These ways do not allow the status quo of injustice and oppression to continue.

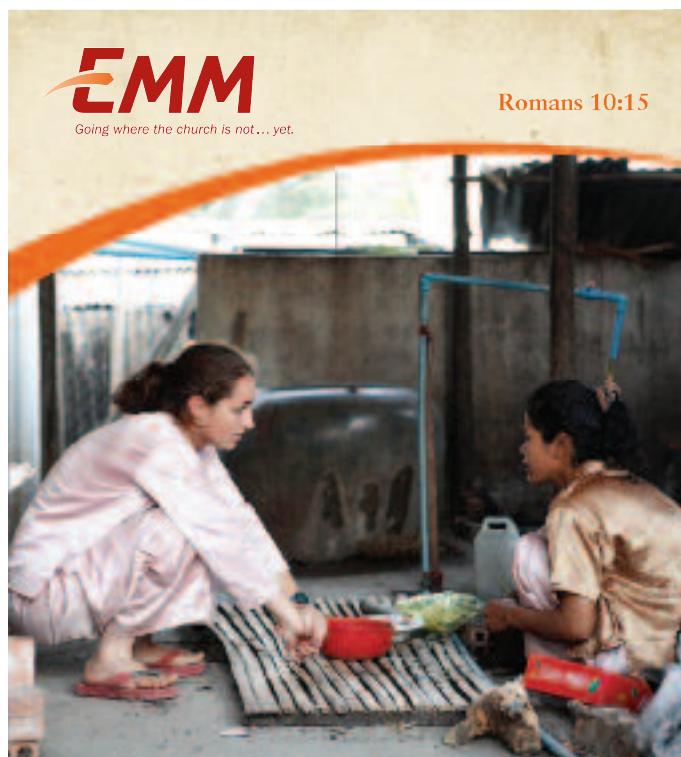
“In the new South Africa, we are all supposed to like each other. However, we are not supposed to interact with each other,” van Wyngaard says. “ANiSA provides a space that connects people.”

ANiSA, an initiative of Mennonite Church Canada, is supported by a partnership that includes Africa Inter-Mennonite Mission and Mennonite Mission Network.—*Andrew Suderman of Mennonite Church Canada*

### All-Inclusive Icon Painting Workshop at Shenandoah Art Destination

The icon painting workshop is for any artist, from the beginner to the professional. The course covers the essentials of egg tempera painting and goldleaf application as used within the tradition of Orthodox sacred icons. Meals, lodging and materials for seven days are included. See Sacred Doorways page at [www.ShenandoahArtDestination.com](http://www.ShenandoahArtDestination.com)

Where: Lexington, Virginia  
When: September 22-29, 2013  
Call to reserve spot: 612-221-1140



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## CALENDAR

Jubilee Celebration: **First Mennonite Church of Champaign-Urbana, Ill.**, is planning a **50th anniversary reunion weekend** on July 26-28. All former attendees are warmly invited to return for a weekend of fellowship, worship, service, and music. Check out information on [www.fmc-cu.org/](http://www.fmc-cu.org/) or call the church at 217-367-5353.

The **annual public meeting of The Casselman Historians** is scheduled for Sept. 20 and 21 at Maple Glen Mennonite Church. Karl Westmeier will be dealing with the Amish of Waldeck and related areas in Germany in the Late 1700s and early 1800s. James L. Yoder of Grantsville, Maryland, will speak on the connections of those immigrants from Waldeck and the surrounding area who came to or passed through the Casselman Valley of Somerset County, Pa., and Garrett County, Md. The public is invited to these sessions. For further information, including schedules and introduction to speakers, contact Alice Orendorf at 301-245-4326 or 301-501-4326 or [abcdefor@verizon.net](mailto:abcdefor@verizon.net) or The Casselman Historians, PO Box 591, Grantsville, MD 21536.

## WORKERS

**Sensenig, Kenneth**, was ordained for ministry with Mennonite Central Committee at Red Run Mennonite Church, Denver, Pa., on April 28.

**Brody, Robert**, was licensed as lead pastor at New Danville Mennonite Church, Lancaster, Pa., on June 2.

**Lehman, Philip Ray**, was ordained as minister of music and outreach at Waynesboro Mennonite Church, Waynesboro, Va., on May 5.

## OBITUARIES

**Beck, Elizabeth Schrock**, 88, Goshen, Ind., died April 3. Spouse: Orval Beck (deceased). Parents: David and Mattie Yoder Schrock. Children: Gregory, Duane, Max, Kathleen Martin, Nedra Gnagey; 15 grandchildren; 34 great-grandchildren. Funeral: April 10 at Holdeman Mennonite Church, Wakarusa, Ind.

**Blosser, Glenn**, 87, Bluffton, Ohio, died April 22. Spouse: Mary Rich Blosser. Parents: Paul and Grace Hostetler Blosser. Children: Gary, Larry; three grandchildren. Funeral: April 25 at First Mennonite Church, Bluffton.

**Gehman, Gladys M. Lehman**, 92, Mount Joy, Pa., died May 4. Spouse: Harold M. Gehman (deceased). Parents: Walter and Anna Lehman. Children: David E., Edward D., Rachel Dawn Gehman, James, John; four grandchildren; four great-grandchildren. Funeral: May 17 at Andrew T. Scheid Funeral Home, Millersville, Pa.

**Goering, Emil Leslie**, 85, Topeka, Kan., died Jan. 7. Spouse: Lavina Mae Ediger Goering (deceased). Parents: Jonathan J. and Katie Zerger Goering. Children: Beth Tanner, Michael, Les, Thomas, Jonas; 10 grandchildren; two great-grandchildren. Memorial service: Jan. 19 at Southern Hills Mennonite Church, Topeka.

**Gratzer, Elisabeth Andres**, 98, Bluffton, Ohio, died March 20. Parents: Franz and Elisabeth Riess Andres. Child: Heidrun Awad; two grandchildren; two great-grandchildren. Funeral: April 20 at First Mennonite Church, Bluffton.

**Hampton, Lillian Ely**, 99, Weyers Cave, Va., died April 16. Spouse: Wade Kenneth Hampton (deceased). Parents: Harry and Elsie Ely. Children: Susan B. Hampton, Leonard; three grandchildren; one great-granddaughter. Funeral: April 19 at Kyger Funeral Home Chapel, Harrisonburg Va.

**Heisey, James Wilmer**, 89, Harrisonburg, Va., died May 5. Spouse: Velma Climenhaga Heisey. Parents: Paul Wolgemuth Heisey and Katie Musser Hess Heisey. Children: Paul, Nancy Heisey Longacre, Mary Jane Heisey Harnden; four grandchildren; three great-grandchildren. Memorial service: May 8 at Harrisonburg Mennonite Church.

**Hunsecker, Wilmer Aidin**, 93, Walkersville, Md., died March 30, of complications following a stroke. Spouse: Dorothy Elizabeth Lehman Hunsecker. Parents: Charles Norman Hunsecker and Mary Emma Ebersole Hunsecker. Children: Phyllis, Linda, Carol Ann; five grandchildren; six great-grandchildren. Funeral: April 14 at Chambersburg Mennonite Church, Chambersburg, Pa.

**Janzen, Henry H.**, 92, Newton, Kan., died May 11. Spouse: Laura Balzer Janzen (deceased). Parents: Rudolph and Matilda Schmidt Janzen. Children: Sandra Lanzrath, Susan Shelley; six grandchildren; three great-grandchildren. Funeral: May 14 at Grace Hill Mennonite Church, Whitewater, Kan.

**Keim, Ray**, 87, Goshen, Ind., died April 20. Spouse: Clara Bontrager Keim. Parents: Abe and Susan Troyer Keim. Children: Paul, Mark, John, Beth Ropp, David; 13 grandchildren. Funeral: April 28 at Sunnyside Mennonite Church, Elkhart, Ind.

**For the Record** is available to members of Mennonite Church USA. Births and marriages appear online at [www.themennonite.org](http://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](http://www.themennonite.org) and use the "For the Record" button for online forms. You may also submit information by email, fax or mail: [Editor@TheMennonite.org](mailto:Editor@TheMennonite.org); fax 316-283-0454; 3145 Benham Ave., Suite 4, Elkhart, IN 46517.

**King, Carol Jean Short**, 80, Archbold, Ohio, died May 6. Spouse: Marlin King (deceased). Parents: Sylvan R. and Pluma Yoder Short. Children: Terry, Patsy Unruh, Rhonda Nafziger, Jill, Kurt, Kay; 10 grandchildren; 18 great-grandchildren. Funeral: May 11 at West Clinton Mennonite Church, Wauseon, Ohio.

**King, Ivan W.**, 87, Archbold, Ohio, died May 6. Spouse: Shirley Graber King. Parents: Clarence L. and Emma Wyse King. Children: Jane Sauder, Cheryl Grime, Sandu Cowell, Lori Aeschliman; 11 grandchildren; eight great-grandchildren. Funeral: May 9 at West Clinton Mennonite Church, Wauseon, Ohio.

**Krahn, Jacob P.**, 75, Reedley, Calif., died May 12. Spouse: Kathleen Cairns Krahn. Parents: John and Helen Krahn. Children: Robert, Karey Krahn-Benner; three grandchildren. Funeral: May 17 at Reedley MB Church.

**Lais, Larry Eugene**, 80, Hesston, Kan., died April 30. Spouse: Thelma Brennehan Lais. Parents: Mary Lais. Children: Lynn, Cindy Lais, Randall; seven grandchildren. Funeral: May 22 at Hesston Mennonite Church.

**Lehman, Sharon A.**, 54, Harrisonburg, Va., died May 20. Spouse: Michael Lehman. Parents: Carroll and Sandra Hook Sacra. Children: Ashley Lehman, Amy Lehman, Chad Lehman. Memorial service: May 23 at Harrisonburg Mennonite Church.

**Luginbuhl, Darvin**, 91, Bluffton, Ohio, died April 26. Spouse: Evelyn Johnson Luginbuhl. Parents: William and Fannie Steiner Luginbuhl. Children: Gregg, Bill; five grandchildren; one great-grandchild. Funeral: May 3 at First Mennonite Church, Bluffton.

**Miller, Blaine Edward**, 78, Springs, Pa., died May 17. Spouse: Mary Catherine Stanton Miller (deceased). Parents: Myron and Grace Moser Miller. Children: Mitchell. Funeral: May 21 at Springs Mennonite Church.

**Neuenschwander, Beth Anne**, 51, Archbold, Ohio, died April 19, of cancer. Spouse: Steve Neuenschwander. Parents: Bill and Marilyn Liechty Grieser. Children: Shay Neuenschwander Rufenacht, Shem, Shannon, Abram. Funeral: April 24 at Archbold Evangelical Church.

**Nofziger, Marjorie F. Gerig**, 89, Lebanon, Ore., died April 18, of heart-related problems. Spouse: Alfred E. Nofziger (deceased). Parents: Henry and Bertha Boshart Gerig. Children: Karen Martin, Nadine LeFrancis, Laurence, Cheryl Berkey, Mark, Jolene Rich; 12 grandchildren; five great-grandchildren. Funeral: May 11 at Lebanon Mennonite Church.

**Sawatzky, Maurine Catherine Bauer**, 93, Goshen, Ind., died May 22. Spouse: Reynold Sawatzky. Parents: Ernest and Catherine Bauer Stieglitz. Children: Renee Sawatzky, Nila Sawatzky. Funeral: May 28 at College Mennonite Church, Goshen.

**Schlabach, Raymond Cecil**, 89, Kalona, Iowa, died May 18. Spouse: Barbara D. Schlabach. Parents: Noah and Bertha Miller Schlabach. Children: Linda Tones, Lou Miller, Kathy Schlabach; two grandchildren; three step-grandchildren. Funeral: May 21 at East Union Mennonite Church, Kalona.

**Schmidt, Erna Ruth Duerksen**, 83, Topeka, Kan., died April 13, of cancer. Spouse: Orlando "Orie" Schmidt (deceased). Children: Beverly Schmidt, Yvonne Unruh, Barbara Banman, Chuck, Emily Blackburn, John; 15 grandchildren; nine great-grandchildren; two great-great-grandchildren. Memorial service: April 16 at Southern Hills Mennonite Church, Topeka.

**Showalter, Roy Samuel**, 82, Harrisonburg, Va., May 6. Spouse: Mary Katherine Kack Martin Showalter. Parents: Peter Samuel and Leanna Hartman Showalter and step-mother Wilda Swartz Showalter. Children: Roy Samuel Showalter, Jr., Joan Showalter Alder, Judi Martin Leake, Jenny Showalter Graber; 11 grandchildren; one great-granddaughter. Memorial service: May 9 at Harrisonburg Mennonite Church.

**Stockburger, Roger E.**, 64, West Unity, Ohio, died April 18. Parents: Claire and Beulah Stamm Stockburger. Funeral: April 27 at Lockport Mennonite Church, Stryker, Ohio.

**Swigart, Gladys A. Stoltzfus**, 92, New Holland, Pa., died May 11. Spouse: Melvin G. Swigart (deceased). Parents: Jacob S. and Rebecca K. Stoltzfus. Children: Philip G., Dirk M., Rebecca K. Boyer, John M.; five grandchildren. Funeral: May 17 at Forest Hills Mennonite Church, Leola, Pa.

**Trissel, Catarina Winter**, 68, Harrisonburg, Va., died April 17. Spouse: Larry D. Trissel. Parents: John and Anna Friesen Winter. Children: Anita Trissel Lunsford, Jonathan Lantz-Trissel, Derik Trissel; four grandchildren. Funeral: April 20 at Harrisonburg Mennonite Church.

**Wease, Irma Virginia Breeden**, 96, Harrisonburg, Va., died April 27. Spouse: Edward W. Wease (deceased). Parents: Matthew Breeden and Addie Dean Breeden Haney. Children: Leroy Wease, Martha Blizzard, Lynn Wease, Robert "Bobby," Mary Jane Staples, Gary; 14 grandchildren; four step-grandchildren; 15 great-grandchildren; six step-great-grandchildren. Funeral: May 1 at Harrisonburg Mennonite Church.

**Weaver, Cleo W.**, 91, Harrisonburg, Va., died May 8. Spouse: Edith Metzler Weaver (deceased). Children: William E. "Bill," Larry W., Richard L., Kenneth C., Susan M. Weaver Funk; 12 grandchildren; nine great-grandchildren. Funeral: May 19 at VMRC Detwiler Auditorium, Harrisonburg.

**Wiebe, Abram G.**, 94, Altona, Manitoba, died March 5. Spouse: Tina Wiebe. Parents: John H. and Maria Ginter Wiebe. Children: Myrna, Wes, Elbert; four grandchildren. Funeral: March 9 at Bergthaler Mennonite Church, Altona.

# Blush

A MENNONITE GIRL  
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Coming September 2013

by Shirley Hershey Showalter

## From the book:

"Look at this big fella!" my father said. We all turned to see him take off his Eby's Feeds cap, exposing his white forehead in contrast to the dark red of his cheeks. Dangling from his other hand was the plumpest neon-green tobacco worm I had ever seen. It was about three inches long and half an inch wide. As it writhed in Daddy's hand, I felt the little hairs on the back of my neck stand up. We all made faces.

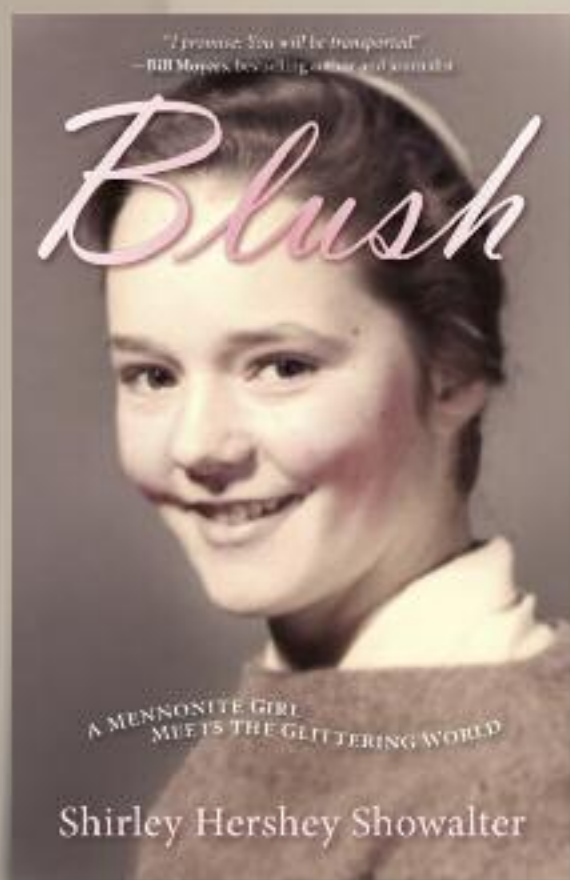
I could tell that Daddy was expecting more reaction, so I briefly considered letting out my best scream but instead decided to try another tack. I pretended to take a scientific interest in the little black tentacles under the accordionlike sections of the bright green body. Daddy looked at me observing the worm, so cool and calm. Then he did something rare. He spoke spontaneously, recklessly.

"I'll give you five dollars if you bite this worm in two," he said.

\* \* \*

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## RESOURCES

**Educating All God's Children: What Christians Can—and Should—Do to Improve Public Education for Low-Income Kids** by Nicole Baker Fulgham (Brazos Press, 2013, \$17.99) explores what Christians—and everyone—can and should do to help improve our public schools. It paints a picture of what is possible for America's public school children and offers a road map for getting there.

**Liturgy as a Way of Life: Embodying the Arts in Christian Worship** by Bruce Ellis Benson (Baker Academic, 2013, \$17.99) explores how the arts inform and cultivate service to God, helping the church not only think differently about the arts but also act differently. Benson contends we are all artists, that our very lives should be seen as art and that we should live liturgically in service to God and neighbor.

**The Petals of a Kansas Sunflower: A Mennonite Diaspora** by Melvin D. Epp (Resource Publications, 2012, \$54) weaves a montage of stories, photos and personal reminiscences around the collected poems of Epp's mother, who raised eight children as a farm wife on the Kansas prairies.

**Two Feet at the Altar: Four Love Stories and Five People** by

Mildred Martens-Unruh and Roy Unruh (CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2011, \$11.99) tells the story of two couples who were friends. After two of the spouses were killed in accidents, Mildred and Roy later married. The book is available at [createspace.com/3489405](http://createspace.com/3489405) or at [amazon.com](http://amazon.com).

**Homemade Year: The Blessings of Cooking, Crafting and Coming Together** by Jerusalem Jackson Greer (Paraclete Press, 2013, \$21) celebrates the rhythm of family life as well as the liturgical year from Advent to Easter and beyond, marking God's love in our lives in practical, beautiful, fun ways. It includes color illustrations, recipes, crafts and entertaining ideas.

**Learning to Dream Again: Rediscovering the Heart of God** by Samuel Wells (Eerdmans, 2013, \$18) is designed both for Christians who have been to church for years but long to ponder the ambiguities and hard questions of faith and life and for new Christians who are just beginning to investigate how the gospel connects to their most searching questions.

**Creating a Scene in Corinth: A Simulation** by Reta Halteman Finger and George D. McClain (Herald Press, 2013, \$17.99) draws readers back to Chloe's house church, which has just received a letter from the Apostle Paul. The book draws on research to show how the gospel penetrated the Roman Empire.

# Attention pastors

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**Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society** is seeking a **full-time director of development**. Primary responsibilities include building a development program, cultivating relationships with individuals, congregations and businesses and managing capital campaigns. The person should have experience and training with development activities in nonprofit organizations. Applicants must embrace Anabaptist-Mennonite faith and be active in an Anabaptist congregation. Application form and job description are available in pdf format at [www.lmhs.org/home/about/employment](http://www.lmhs.org/home/about/employment). Submit application and resumé by email to Dorothy Siegrist by July 12 at [jobs@lmhs.org](mailto:jobs@lmhs.org) or by mail to LMHS, Attn: Office Manager, 2215 Millstream Road, Lancaster, PA 17602.

**Staff accountant. Mennonite Disaster Service (MDS)** is seeking a part-time staff accountant (25–30 hours) based at the Lititz, Pa., office. Primary responsibilities include: month-end closing and preparation of monthly financial statements, reconciliations, general ledger, fixed assets and assistance with preparation and analysis of budgets. Working in an Excel and Quickbooks environment. Applicants must be active in an Anabaptist church and committed to the Anabaptist faith and peace position. See the full job description at <http://mds.mennonite.net/about-us/employment>. Resumés may be sent to [jobs@mds.mennonite.net](mailto:jobs@mds.mennonite.net) or MDS, 583 Airport Rd., Lititz, PA 17543, Attn: Human Resources. Review of applications begins immediately. Recruitment continues until the position is filled.

**Spruce Lake's Internship Program** placements open in **retreat center programming, outdoor education/ministry, adventure programming, food service, maintenance/groundskeeping, marketing/social networking and operations**. Program includes required courses, mentoring relationship. Housing, food, stipend, all materials provided. Contact Sarah Kauffman (cell) 570-369-3982 or [intern2013@sprucelake.org](mailto:intern2013@sprucelake.org). See [www.sprucelake.org](http://www.sprucelake.org).

**SpringHaven Counseling Center** ([www.springhaven.us](http://www.springhaven.us)) seeks an **executive director**, beginning Jan. 1, 2014. Located in rural north central Ohio, we are a faith-based outpatient mental health facility that serves our community, including Amish. We are a growing organization with a \$1 million budget, 18 employees and several developing specialty fields. Qualified candidates will have an ongoing commitment to personal spiritual journey, active clinical mental health license and administrative experience. Email resumés to Krista at [wenleh@hotmail.com](mailto:wenleh@hotmail.com).

**Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary** is seeking a **professor of peace studies and Christian social ethics**. Qualifications include a Ph.D. with interdisciplinary competence in peace studies and Christian theology or social ethics and international and cross-cultural experience. Responsibilities include teaching in areas such as environment, power and anti-oppression analysis, war and violence and conflict mediation and advocating for the integration of peace and justice with the mission of the church. By Sept. 15, send letter of application, CV and list of references to Dr. Rebecca Slough, Academic Dean, 3003 Benham Ave., Elkhart, IN 46517 or electronically to [rslough@ambs.edu](mailto:rslough@ambs.edu). Full job description at [www.ambs.edu/about/Job-openings.cfm](http://www.ambs.edu/about/Job-openings.cfm).

The **Fransen Family Foundation is accepting applications from 501(c)3 organizations for micro-grants**. See details at [fransenfamilyfoundation.org](http://fransenfamilyfoundation.org). Submission deadline is July 31, 2013.

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**Virginia Mennonite Missions** seeks to fill the full-time position of **President/CEO**, who is responsible for the overall mission program. Qualifications include: devoted Anabaptist follower of Christ; commitment to Virginia Mennonite Conference leadership and congregations; significant cross-cultural experiences; strong administrative, fiscal and budget management gifts; skills in advancement, communications and personal relationships. Available to begin Dec. 1, 2013. See [vmmissions.org](http://vmmissions.org) website for more details. Send resumé to: [lois.maust@vmmissions.org](mailto:lois.maust@vmmissions.org)

## BIPOLARgenetics

RESEARCH STUDY

Researchers are looking for genes that may affect a person's chances of developing bipolar disorder.

You can participate in this research study if you are over 18, have a bipolar diagnosis, or have a family member with bipolar disorder. This study includes a telephone interview (2-4 hours) and a blood sample (bloodwork from your physician.) **Contact Diane Kazuba 301-496-8977, 1-866-644-4363, email: [kazubad@mail.nih.gov](mailto:kazubad@mail.nih.gov) TTY: 1-866-411-1010** or Write to Diane Kazuba, National Institute of Mental Health, Building 10, Room 3D41, Bethesda, Maryland 20892-1264

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Department of Health & Human Services [www.clinicaltrials.gov](http://www.clinicaltrials.gov) Protocol No: 80-M-0083

No travel necessary. No cost to participate. Financial compensation provided.



**Jon Heinly** is youth minister for Lancaster (Pa.) Mennonite Conference and Lancaster Mennonite School.

## Washing away our self-sufficiency

As we sat in their living room, the feeling of warm hospitality overwhelmed us, but this feeling first arose before we arrived on their doorstep. They were there to welcome us at the door. We stepped inside, and they took our coats. They invited us to sit, and we sank comfortably onto the sofa. Finally, they offered us hot tea.

Their hospitality began with an email sent to us when they became aware of a difficult experience that we were going through. We needed it so much, and it came so unexpectedly, that the invitation alone brought tears of gratitude to our eyes. The timing of this simple act of welcome touched us deeply.

The couple that invited us into their home is the age of our parents. We knew them only casually, but well enough to have great respect for them as Christian leaders. That night, along with tea and a seat on their sofa, this couple offered us three hours of their time—three hours full of wisdom, peace, counsel, encouragement and their own stories of experiencing life’s difficulties. It was a sacred space, and it was an encounter of grace and hospitality.

**Later I thought of that evening** in relation to a story of Jesus. As he enters the most trying hours of his life, he extends hospitality to his disciples. The Gospel of John says that Jesus “got up from the table, took off his outer robe, and tied a towel around himself. Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples’ feet and to wipe them with the towel that was tied around him. He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, ‘Lord, are you going to wash my feet?’ Jesus answered, ‘You do not know now what I am doing, but later you will understand.’ Peter said to him, ‘You will never wash my feet.’ Jesus answered, ‘Unless I wash you, you have no share with me’” (13:4-8).

It is almost as if Jesus is responding to Peter’s pride by saying, “You know what Peter? You need this from me. This act goes deeper than the grime left around your sandals.” To have our feet washed, literally or figuratively, is a humbling thing. We find ourselves vulnerable and exposed, but it is in that very vulnerability that we can ex-

perience the healing ministry of hospitality. When I participate in footwashing, I am much more comfortable washing another person’s feet than having my own feet washed. Likewise, it is easier to serve another person than to receive another’s service. I don’t really mind the dirt on another person’s feet or the brokenness in his or her life, but God forbid anyone need to touch my dirty feet or see into the broken areas of my life. That’s far too embarrassing. It’s no wonder Peter responded the way he did. Not only was his master about to touch his filthy feet, but he also knew that Jesus could see into the very depths of his being, a

place more embarrassing than the dirtiest pair of feet.

Even now, Jesus continues to wash the feet of his disciples, but he does it mostly through other people. In a figurative but profound way, Jesus washed our

feet as we sat in that living room. Like Peter, the vulnerability of our experience was devastating to our pride and healing to our souls.

**Hospitality is an intrinsic element** of Christian faith, which is demonstrated throughout Scripture. For example, years before Jesus washed the disciples’ feet, as a bookend to this last act of earthly ministry, his first public miracle aided in lengthening a wedding celebration in Cana. As the early church began embodying the teachings of Jesus, they gathered regularly in homes and around the table. Acts of hospitality are listed as key parts of Christian life from the very inception of the church.

As I reflect back on my experience at that couple’s home and examples of the ministry of hospitality in Scripture, especially the story of Jesus washing the disciples’ feet, I am challenged to actively extend hospitality to people around me. Creating a welcome space may seem like a simple thing, whether on a living room sofa or an open seat on a park bench, but it sets up the opportunity for the powerful ministry of hospitality to bring peace and healing. Perhaps more importantly, I’m challenged to receive the hospitality of those around me. In that vulnerability, I may be surprised to realize that Jesus is kneeling there, washing away the grime of my self-sufficiency and bringing healing to my brokenness. **TM**

I’m challenged to receive the hospitality of those around me.

## FILM REVIEWS

**The Great Gatsby** (PG-13) is the most recent treatment of F. Scott Fitzgerald's beautiful novel. While Leonardo DiCaprio gives a fine, nuanced performance of the rich, mysterious title character, the film lacks nuance and instead goes over the top at every turn, even insulting viewers' intelligence by overexplaining plot points. —*Gordon Houser*

**Before Midnight** (R) is the third in a trilogy of films about a couple who meet on a train bound for Vienna in *Before Sunrise* (1995) and reunite in Paris in *Before Sunset* (2004). Here they are in Greece with their twin daughters. All three films consist mostly of dialogue yet engage us with their characters and the issues they address. Here they touch on the nature of marriage, the differences between men's and women's perspectives, parenting and work. Many couples will recognize their own struggles in this brilliant film. —*gh*

## BOOK REVIEWS

**The Mystery of God: Theology for Knowing the Unknowable** by Steven D. Boyer and Christopher A. Hall (Baker Academic, 2012, \$19.99) steer a course between an overly rational denial of mystery and an irrational acceptance by exploring its meaning in Scripture and church history. "While the mystery of God is by definition beyond rational comprehension," the authors write, "the *appeal* to mystery need not be." While technical in places, the book is written for lay, particularly evangelical, readers. —*gh*

**The Blessed Virgin Mary** by Tim Perry and Daniel Kendall (Eerdmans, 2013, \$18) examines the church's diverse thinking about Mary, the mother of Jesus. It discusses Mary's relationship to her Son, her relationship to the corporate faithful and her relationship to individual believers. The authors, an evangelical Anglican and a Roman Catholic, agree that "Mary is a model disciple for all believers." —*gh*

## Who needs reporters?

This title of an op-ed piece by Frank Bruni in the June 1 *New York Times* caught my eye, since I sometimes serve in the role of reporter. But it also raises an important issue we all should address: the role of reporting the news in order to hold leaders of various kinds accountable to their constituents.

Bruni notes that in recent months, Michele Bachmann, Anthony Weiner and Hillary Clinton used carefully made online videos to make important announcements.

You may ask, What's the big deal? It's one more example of politicians trying to control their image so they look good. And it follows the example of corporate America, which has been doing this for a long time.

"But corporations answer only to shareholders and customers," Bruni writes. "Politicians answer to all of us, and have a scarier kind of power, easily abused. So we must see them in environments that aren't necessarily tailored to their advantage."

Someone needs to point out where the Emperor has no clothes. Someone needs to question the pretense or the image being manufactured. These leaders are accountable to us citizens? The Fourth Estate (the press) is one major way they are held accountable.

Such need for accountability applies to many other contexts, including Mennonite congregations, conferences and Mennonite Church USA. We are to hold each other accountable, by whatever method works best. That aligns with the Anabaptist "rule of Christ" (Matthew 18:15-20).

Unfortunately, reporters are becoming a rarer breed and losing influence. An editorial called "Empty Calories" in the May/June issue of *Columbia Journalism Review*, addresses the growing popularity of social media for getting news.

The Pew Research Center reports that 72 percent of all U.S. adults say

the most common way they hear about news from family and friends is through "word of mouth." And 23 percent of 18- to 29-year-olds say they primarily get news from family and friends via social media.

Many people get their news from social media, from bloggers and those who scrape together items from various sources. But what kind of news are they getting? How do they know what's true? asks the editorial. "How can they get beyond the superficial updates about Justin Bieber's monkey or Kim Kardashian's pregnancy?"


As "more and more journalism shops that underwrite enterprise reporting are starting to lock their wares behind paywalls," says the editorial, "someday, in the not-too-distant future, it seems, there will be very little credible news for the bloggers and scrapers to aggregate."

A key word there is "credible." Reporters are trained to ask probing questions and get quotes from various perspectives in order to try to get as accurate as possible description of an event.

Social media may provide this at times, but how do we know? Or do we just go to those sources who agree with our point of view? This is what Eli Pariser has called a "filter bubble."

Too much of what's out there, says the editorial, consists of "empty calories." But "general-interest media, at least, take [readers] beyond the bubble (they might come for Kim but then discover Syria)."

As we seek to find what's credible and hold our leaders accountable, let's pay close attention to the news we consume and where it comes from.

We all need reporters. 

*Gordon Houser is associate editor of The Mennonite.*



(Continued from page 4)

ized content leading to passivity, lack of empathy, desensitization to violence present not only on the screen but in action toys, clothing and food packaging.

Screen technologies are drastically changing the lives of children. Behavioral research shows that the more time young children spend with screens, the more they watch later on and the more difficulty they have turning off screens as they become older. New neuroimaging techniques provide biological evidence of the addictive properties of some screen media.

But we can choose screen activities carefully with developmentally appropriate time limits for children beyond toddlerhood accompanied with consistent monitoring. We digital immigrants must not forget that developing children thrive when they are talked to, read to and played with.—*Kathryn Aschliman, coordinator of the Mennonite Early Childhood Network*

### What to do with confessions?

When I was reading Everett Thomas' editorial "Should We Censor History?" (June), a tangential memory cropped up for me. I was taken back 30 years to a discussion I had with bishop John E. Lapp of the Franconia Conference. I was in my mid-20s and working as the archivist for the Franconia Conference and Eastern District. John was retired from his many years as pastor, conference and denominational leader. John had given the archives his extensive papers and now had arrived holding one more box of papers. He told me that inside the box were the signed letters of confession that people had given him over his years of ministry. He had a question for me: Should these letters of confession be placed in the archives or destroyed?

That is a hard question for a historian. I felt humbled and honored and unworthy to give bishop John E. Lapp such important advice. But John just sat there waiting for me to answer. The information would be a rich re-

source for future historians as they worked to understand the faith and culture of our Mennonite church. But confessions by fellow church members seemed like a sacred thing that should not be seen by others. I told John that my view was that he should destroy the letters. John thanked me and took the box of letters out the door.—*Joe Miller, Lancaster, Pa.*

### Good deeds and verbal witness

"Let Us Pray for Revival" by Myron Augsburg (June) felt like a fresh breeze from God's Spirit. It reminded me of the importance of a repentant spirit and "enjoying the fullness of Christ." It is refreshing to be called to "a new obedience to the Word of God" and a renewed focus on biblical preaching.

In the same issue, Loren Horst, in "Deed and Word," reminds me to do good deeds and match that with a verbal witness for Christ. Putting these two challenges of enjoying Christ and speaking for him together should make me a dynamic witness for the Lord Jesus. A witness that is not "ashamed of [Jesus] and [Jesus'] words in this adulterous and sinful generation." I'm making a note to remind me to also pray for revival and speak a word of witness for my Lord.—*Simon Schrock, Catlett, Va.*

### Article not appropriate

This morning I physically tore up my copy of *The Mennonite* and threw it away—not in anger at some theological vantage point that made me afraid and that I confused with anger but at the words, "Each bonnet is stored alone in its own container" (June).

These fateful words appeared in an article about Claire DeBerg and her modeling career. I'm sure that DeBerg is a lovely person and as the new editor of *Timbrel* should be covered in some capacity in *The Mennonite*. But here's a suggestion: Why not interview DeBerg about her hopes and dreams for the magazine? What perspective does she hope to bring to light as a woman in the

Mennonite church and its unique position in the broader Christian landscape? What are her dreams for my daughter, who is growing up in a rapidly changing world where she will continue to need to fight back against society's attempt to see her as one dimensional and only approve of her if she is easy on the eyes?

I feel *The Mennonite* owes DeBerg (and *Timbrel*) such an interview. The world of selling products for Corporate America and the high drama of Amish Romance are of course fascinating but belong in their own container—one not labeled *The Mennonite*.—*Curt Weaver, Milwaukie, Ore.*

### Many have blessed the church

Mennonite Church USA moderator Dick Thomas asked a question in "Why We Gather" (April): Will we gather believing the best about each other? He states that we want to make Spirit-led decisions of faithfulness that help all of us in the diversity of our geographical settings and multiplicity of educational, theological experiences. This covers a huge core of values.

How do we—in love—make the necessary decisions to carry on the accomplishments of our church? Are we acquainted enough with each other to have a united bond?

The cover of the May issue was a pleasing surprise to me. Rachel Kreider's centenarian life has been a blessing to so many individuals beyond the interest of genealogy. There is no subject that she is lacking to be able to enjoy a visit with her.

The June issue had Lyle Yost on the cover. Farmers who are dedicated to feeding the world would certainly have missed the blessings of the production of Hesston Machinery.

In his article, Thomas mentioned some from Goshen, Ind., including Mary E. Bender, Sanford Yoder and Guy Hershberger. They blessed the Mennonite Church at large in witnessing to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.—*Mary Helen Wade, Sterling, Ill.*

## God sightings in new churches

*While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." Then after fasting and praying, they laid their hands on them and sent them off.—Acts 13:2-3*

Just as the Holy Spirit spoke to a group of worshippers in Antioch many years ago, the Holy Spirit speaks today—calling and commissioning people to new ministries. This is happening in an exciting way through the planting of new “kingdom communities” in Mennonite Church USA. These communities bear witness to God’s work in the world, serving as a foretaste of God’s kingdom of righteousness/justice, peace and joy. Over the past five years, we have seen the birth of 85 new fellowships in 17 area conferences across the United States.

Along with about 60 other church planting leaders from Mennonite Church USA, I attended an ecumenical gathering called Exponential 2013 in late April of this year. The meeting brought together more than 5,000 people (with another 20,000 people online) committed to planting new churches. While not every presentation resonated with Anabaptist theology and practice, my heart for the church was strengthened by the strong emphasis on being and making disciples for Jesus Christ. This focus must undergird any sustainable movement for church planting. Planting new churches (and launching new groups in established churches) can be an effective way of reaching new people for the kingdom of God.

**The Exponential conference** was a God sighting for me, reminding me of what God has been saying to and through the Mennonite church for years. Too often, we have neglected this call, demonstrated in five “disciple shifts” from the pervading church culture.

1. A disciple shift enables us to move away from simply reaching new people toward a relational disciple making that invites new people to be apprentices, learning the ways of Jesus Christ.

2. A disciple shift occurs when church leaders move away from a focus on leading toward a focus on being Spirit-led, being alert to God sightings and showing the way forward.

3. A disciple shift takes place when church leaders move from simply being teachers to being examples of what Jesus did and taught.

4. A disciple shift helps churches move from assimilating new members into our church programs toward creating missional communities.

5. A disciple shift helps churches change the emphasis from drawing new groups of people toward sending equipped followers of Jesus to new groups of people.

**These five disciple shifts** work best when they are supported at all levels of church fellowship—small discipleship groups, congregations, districts or area conferences, and in national or world conferences.

As executive director of Mennonite Church USA, I am committed to do all within my power to keep us focused on the main thing—being and making disciples of Jesus Christ. Everything else that a church needs to do will grow out of this commitment.

As denominational staff, we are committed to the planting of peace churches that disciple new people all across this country. Led by the Spirit, we will work closely with area conferences and their congregations to assist them in calling, equipping, sending and networking church planters.

In recent years, Mauricio Chenlo and Kuaying Teng (shared staff with Mennonite Church USA Executive Board and Mennonite Mission Network) have worked alongside many area conferences, envisioning new church plants as well as helping to secure funding and training opportunities for leaders. Mauricio worked with area conferences to compile a list of the more than 85 church plants initiated in the past five years—now listed on the Mennonite Church USA website.

My heart leaps with joy when I look over this list of new churches. It is a sign that God is at work in Mennonite Church USA. Let us enthusiastically join God in that work. **TM**



**Ervin Stutzman**  
is executive  
director of  
Mennonite Church  
USA.



## Digital dieting



Anna Groff

It is possible to be so gluttonous with our digital diet as to need a “digital detox.” This is what journalist Daniel Sieberg told Associated Church Press members in Indianapolis in April. His point: use of social media needs balance, restraint and intentionality.

Sieberg began by confessing about his former technology addiction as a CBS news correspondent. It came to a head in 2009, when he realized that he was completely out of touch with the people he cared about. Sieberg found that he spent more than 30 solid days (725 hours) on social media in 2007. He felt anxious without cell phone reception or Internet connections.

Sieberg still uses social media. But he resists the urge to let it define or shape him, as he writes in his book *The Digital Diet: The 4-step Plan to Break Your Tech Addiction*. Despite his lifestyle changes, his past still haunts him. He describes “social network echoes,” in which something “happens in my life and I catch myself formulating how I’d write a status update or a tweet ... it seems stupid and trivial, yet I used to obsess about it.”

### The first person to reach for their phone ‘loses’ and buys everyone coffee.

It is these feelings and urges that prevent us from embracing the present and feeling grateful for what we have. Instead, it can breed insecurity and restlessness.

Some of us may relate to Sieberg’s feelings while others might wonder incredulously: How could you ever spend an entire hour on Facebook? Regardless, Sieberg’s book offers suggestions relevant to the tech-addicted, the tech-dependent and those with friends in need of a digital diet.

One suggestion includes finding your “virtual

weight index” by adding up and evaluating all the devices, websites and services you regularly use and even putting those devices in a box for a short period of time during the first phase of the detox.

After reading the book, I made two small changes. First, I went back to using an alarm clock instead of my iPhone. At night I charge my phone in my office away from where I sleep. Second, I continue to use my phone to listen to music while running, but I now turn it on to airplane mode to avoid calls or texts during jogs so it’s just me and my dog.

Sieberg, who now works for Google, was quick to state that technology is not all bad. “The digital diet is just like food,” he said in April. “Love your technology—just not unconditionally.”

In fact, he described several applications that he claim use technology to our advantage. One is Slife, a program that tracks and reports your online activity and allows you to set an “egg timer” while on certain websites.

Positive computing is another growing movement. An example of positive computing is a program that gathers all your positive and encouraging emails so you can read them before a stressful meeting or job interview.

Phoenix 2013 offers a setting for us to practice healthy technology use. For example, try an exercise when eating out with friends where everyone places their phone in the middle of table. The first one to reach for their phone “loses” and buys everyone coffee.

On the positive side, technology and social media also allow those not attending the Phoenix convention to experience elements of the gathering. *The Mennonite* staff, along with other agencies, will be posting regularly on social media sites. Moderator-elect Elizabeth Soto Albrecht (see p. 12) will blog about her sojourn to Phoenix.

As we prepare to gather, let us be conscious of our tech diet and grateful for what it offers.—*ag*