



Anabaptist World

Mennonite news, inspiring stories

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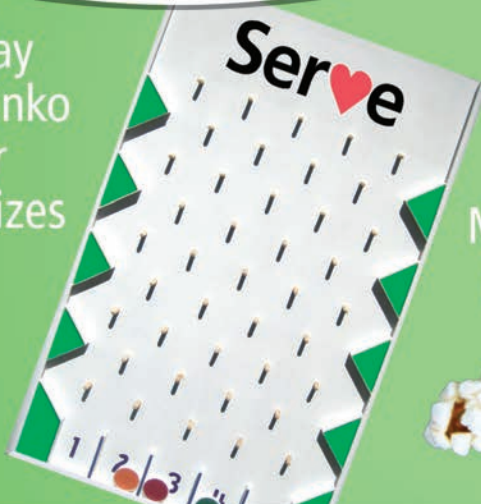
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ON THE COVER: In Kikwit, Democratic Republic of Congo, Benedicte Masamba fills Kabandi Regine's water container as Jacqueline Kafuti looks on. Regine is a displaced person. Kafuti is part of a committee overseeing boreholes (deep wells) in Kikwit. **Photo by Justin Makangara/MCC/Fairpicture**

BY DANIELLE KLOTZ

Unity and belonging

Belonging is being accepted for you. Fitting in is being accepted for being like everyone else. — Brene Brown

I HOPE BRENE BROWN is not a stranger to you. Her work as an author, speaker, academic and researcher has been widely applauded. She studies courage, vulnerability, shame and empathy. Probably her best-known book is *The Power of Vulnerability*, with teachings on authenticity, connection and courage.

As I reflected on this issue's theme of unity, I found myself going back to Brown's work. To me, the ideas of unity, belonging and fitting in can get knotted up together or at least bump up against each other.

I've wondered: What is the value of unity without belonging? When we talk about unity, do we really mean conformity — or fitting in, as Brown names it? How much difference is acceptable within unity?

The answers to these questions will vary from person to person. For myself, I hope that if unity is what we strive

for, it is the kind of unity that cultivates belonging.

By allowing and encouraging each other to be our genuine selves, we create glimpses of the divine. As we are created in God's image, we most accurately reflect God when we can show up in joy, safety and authenticity.

And yet, I'm not convinced unity should always be the goal. I think there are valid reasons for separation. I don't claim to know when and how to define those reasons. But I think it takes great courage and wisdom to know when to step away or to release someone else.

May we find unity that brings true belonging and trust that the Holy Spirit is at work even in spaces where we choose not to be. ●



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RAWtools runs marathon all month

RAWtools and its network of blacksmiths and artists across the country are holding a blacksmithing marathon during Gun Violence Awareness Month totaling over 44,000 minutes of labor in remembrance of more than 44,000 individuals lost to gun violence in the United States in 2022.

Dismantled gun parts are being transformed into garden tools, art and jewelry to be sold to support RAWtools and its affiliates. The livestream event at rawtools.org/live began May 31 and runs until June 30. At least one blacksmith or artist is transforming a donated firearm each day of June.

RAWtools celebrated its 10th anniversary of working to disarm hearts, forge peace and cultivate justice in February.

— RAWtools



A revolver is cut with a saw during a RAWtools event. PHOTO: RAWTOOLS

2nd Commandment or 2nd Amendment?

The Second Amendment of the U.S. Constitution has become an affront to the Second Commandment of Scripture, says Nathan Hollenberg, a Church of the Brethren pastor. Writing in *Messenger*, Hollenberg decries the idolatry of America's gun culture. "Despite the overwhelming biblical evidence that Christ calls us to peace, to simply question the obsession with guns is dangerous business for many Christian leaders," he says. "... It is frighteningly clear that our modern-day calf is made not of gold but of steel and aluminum. We must recapture the narrative of our faith. There is no faith argument in support of weapons that are built to kill other humans as quickly and destructively as possible. There is no faith argument in support of an unquestioning loyalty to a secular amendment."



The grumpy church

Canadian Mennonite columnist Troy Watson thinks he's figured out why a lot of church people seem kind of grumpy: They're obsessed with what they are against. (He sees this on both the right and the left.) Movements may gain strength by identifying an enemy or a threat. But their members' loyalty is based on "fear, suspicion, judgment, self-righteousness, self-protection and even hatred." This is not the kind of movement Jesus inaugurated. Rather, Jesus taught:

- Our enemy is not human.
- Our enemy has already been defeated.
- The real battle is in our own hearts and minds.

Retreat seeks a queer vision

Sixteen queer and transgender Mennonite leaders and allies gathered recently at Camp Friedenswald in Michigan for a Queer Mennonite Visioning Retreat. Writing in *Connector*, the newsletter of Central District Conference of Mennonite Church USA, six participants said they were "encouraged to hear that conference leadership was seeking concrete ways to express lament over past harms to the queer community." Three Mennonite congregations in Goshen — Assembly, Eighth Street and Silverwood — and Southside Fellowship in Elkhart provided meals "as a way to extend care and repair" to LGBTQ Mennonites. Participants hope to organize a gathering of the Anabaptist LGBTQ community in 2024.

LOAVES AND FISHSTICKS BY STEVE EDWARDS



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Letters & Comments

Write to: editor@anabaptistworld.org

Service is alive and well

I was surprised to read in “No longer a rite of passage” (May 26) that Anabaptist leaders wonder “whether a culture of service is waning in Anabaptist churches.” When I look around the church I pastor, I see an ethic of service. Two of our recent college graduates are pursuing advanced science degrees so they can help combat climate change. Another is devoting research toward preserving habitat for an endangered species. Another researches the gap in support for women pastors. Another works to support local farmers in sustainable practices. All around me I see not only an ethic of service but investment in careers committed to justice and peace.

I suspect that what the Anabaptist leaders who gathered for consultation are actually seeing is a decline in the number of students who take a year to engage in an Anabaptist service program. There are many merits to such programs. They can help people discover their vocation and can shape lives through communal living and relationships that form. And I know that the decreasing number of people pursuing gap-year experiences is in no way a reflection of the number of young people choosing lifelong commitments to serve our neighbors, communities and planet.

Melissa Florer-Bixler, Raleigh, N.C.

Different ways of singing

I beg to differ that *a cappella* four-part harmony singing is “a dying art form” (Letters & Comments, May 26). When our congregation began in-person worship after the COVID shutdown, our singing did sound quite weak, because we were out of practice. Attendance was not what it had been, and our worship space is large. It has taken many months of creative leadership, congregational willingness and enthusiasm, purposeful changes in approach and patience, but over time our singing is truly a vital part of our worship. We are using *Voices Together*, learning new songs as well as singing traditional favorites, and yes, new texts to familiar melodies. Although I’ve been hearing four-part harmony all my life, beginning in my mother’s womb, and enjoy *a cappella* singing, I also know that not all songs

lend themselves to this style. Expecting a congregation to sing all songs well in that style is inappropriate and discouraging. Not everyone has the same level of musical training and ability, so the use of guitar or piano accompaniment for some songs has helped us immeasurably.

In the past, I fear we idealized four-part *a cappella* singing to the point of idolatry and exclusion. And who does not swell with a bit of unholy pride when others comment about our beautiful *a cappella* harmonies! Let’s open our hearts and minds and raise our voices to make congregational singing such that all can participate and worship “in spirit and in truth.”

Verna Zook, Iowa City, Iowa

Songs for everyone

Like Paul R. Schlitz Jr. (Letters & Comments, May 26), I love *a cappella* music. I am also learning new unison songs in *Voices Together* and have come to love them. They have become some of my heart songs. They are not just heart songs but also have the capacity to feed me spiritually, just as much as *a cappella* songs do. I have heard that *Voices Together* is not just for me; it is not just for you; it is for everyone.

Martha Graber, Washington, Iowa

How hymns were chosen

Paul R. Schlitz Jr.’s letter invites a bit of sharing about the curation of *Voices Together*. I agree that giving hymnal editors purview to unilaterally slot in content — including their own work — would have been highly problematic. In contrast, each of the 1,069 entries in *Voices Together* underwent rigorous and prayerful committee discernment. Although *VT* text editor Adam Tice is the most widely published Anabaptist hymn writer of his generation, the committee approached his work with the same care as all content screened for *VT*: Everything that had not been published in previous Mennonite hymnals was reviewed anonymously. The identities of contributors were only revealed to committee members near the end of the compilation process. Because more than three dozen of Tice’s hymn texts had advanced (anonymously) to late stages of committee approval, the committee created a process for paring them back substantially. Readers interested in deeper dives into the *VT* committee process will enjoy perusing the resources at voicestogetherhymnal.org/resources.

I also agree that whether to sing in unison or parts requires congregational discernment. *VT*’s 415 four-part hymns (55% of the songs) will seem excessive for some and too few for others. Across many musical styles, I pray that worshipers

using *VT* will find challenge and comfort, formation and companionship, action and stillness, and the abiding love of God.

Bradley Kauffman, Goshen, Ind.

Kauffman was project director and general editor of Voices Together.

Cut by the barbs

Thank you to Jenny Gehman for lifting up our barbed wires (Columns, May 26). Many have felt the barbs but have not been brave enough to say, “Ouch, that hurt.” They’ve walked away from the church or the small group that could not listen. What can we do to help them feel safe? Listen to them, hug them, cry with them, pray with them, visit them, feel their pain. Walk with them, encourage them. Be Christ to them.

Ruth Willstead, Kouts, Ind.

Buying what we don’t want

Why do we taxpayers continue to pay for something we don’t want? While analysts estimate current military spending to be 40% to 50% of the federal budget, the results of a recent public Penny Poll in downtown Lancaster, Pa., indicated that the 84 participants wanted just 10% of their federal tax dollars to support the U.S. military and homeland security.

Last year, the average U.S. taxpayer spent \$2,375 on the military, of which \$1,087 went to military contractors. At the same time, individual taxpayers spent only \$1,691 on education, \$469 on transportation and \$88 on energy and the environment. Though the majority of Americans oppose further increases in military spending, President Biden has requested an even bigger military budget for next year — \$886 billion in 2024, a \$44 billion increase over 2023. The U.S. spends more on its military than the next nine countries combined — 39% of the world’s military spending.

Why does the Pentagon get more money every year when military might cannot take on the climate crisis or public health emergencies? In fact, military spending aggravates those challenges. Massive military budgets fund wars and covert operations that harm “enemies,” often civilians, while displacing funds needed for critical programs here at home. Let’s use our God-given consciences and pocketbooks to support life-affirming endeavors such as the Mennonite Church USA Peace Tax Fund.

Harold A. Penner, Akron, Pa.

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

The both/and church

Do Anabaptists reject the either/or mindset that drives Christians apart?

WE LIVE IN AN either/or world. The middle ground is shrinking. Polarized by politics, race or religion, rival factions compete in a zero-sum game of us-versus-them.

In an either/or world, we need a both/and church.

Anabaptists are equipped to embody a both/and version of Christian faith, one that avoids the either/or mindset that divides.

Christians generally recognize the both/and nature of our faith. Consider these examples:

- Jesus is both divine and human.
- The Bible is both the Word of God and the work of human authors.
- Faith consists of both belief and action (because faith without works is dead).
- God is both transcendent (distant and mysterious) and immanent (near and relatable).
- God's reign is both a present reality and a future hope.
- Human nature is both good (created in God's image) and sinful (fallen and needing forgiveness).
- Truths about the natural world can be expressed both metaphorically in Scripture and literally in science.
- Faith involves both head (thought, theology) and heart (emotion, spirituality).
- The church is both one universal body and many separate communities.

With a both/and mindset, Christians recognize that more than one thing can be true at the same time. We are not satisfied with either/or thinking. Affirming one side while denying the other distorts our understanding (which is always incomplete) and pits people against each other.

The healthy church is both historically rooted and deeply engaged in our



Mennonite Brethren in Brazil, where German-speaking and Portuguese-speaking groups overcame their differences.

PHOTO: AGÊNCIA MISSIONÁRIA DA COBIM

time and place. It needs both traditionalists, who preserve time-tested wisdom, and visionaries, who push for change when habits of thought and action need to be challenged.

Both/and thinking makes room for diverse points of view. Often those who disagree grasp different parts of truth. Sometimes we can learn the most from people we think are the least like us.

As people who reach beyond binary choices, third-way Christians are natural bridge-builders.

A both/and church is all about making connections. The church is the bridge that links people who otherwise might never find a common cause except in their love for Jesus Christ.

WITHIN CHRISTIANITY'S both/and vision, Anabaptists look for faithful steps on less-traveled paths. Ours is a third-way movement, sometimes defined as neither Catholic nor Protestant. Seeking peace, we try to avoid an us-versus-them mentality.

As people who reach beyond binary

choices, third-way Christians are natural bridge-builders. We want to connect our unique story to the larger story of God's people. We have taken steps of healing with Catholics and Lutherans, persecutors of Anabaptists centuries ago. But among ourselves, we are devoutly sectarian, far more likely to split than to reconcile.

In Galatians 3:28, Paul uses the language of neither/nor rather than both/and to describe the unity of believers. He says that in Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female.

Today we might use both/and language: We are both conservative and progressive, straight and LGBTQ, people of color and white.

While all are one in Jesus Christ, our distinct identities are precious. The church is not a melting pot that erases differences. Among our identities, "conservative" and "progressive" are strong ones. A both/and church needs them all — and centrists, too.

CHRISTIAN UNITY does not depend on uniformity. If it did, unity would be impossible, because we will never agree on everything. Spiritual unity means valuing relationships more than agreement on certain issues, even LGBTQ inclusion. Sometimes it means agreeing to disagree.

A both/and church does not lack conviction or try to keep everyone happy all the time. It is not lukewarm (as Revelation 3:15-16 warns us not to be). Members take a stand for what they believe and give others the grace to do the same.

Spiritual unity happens when believers with differences put their love for Jesus first. This is the unifying principle of both/and. This is the bond that connects Anabaptist churches in places like the Democratic Republic of Congo (page 8) and Brazil (page 17).

Are we a both/and church? ●

PEACE GROWS

**Congolese Mennonites and MCC
help people displaced by violence**

BY LINDA ESPENSHADE



IN KIKWIT



EVER SINCE SURVIVORS of brutal fighting in the Democratic Republic of Congo fled to the city of Kikwit in 2017, the Mennonite Brethren Church has been ministering to them with faith and action.

Survivors came with burns, wounds from machetes and babies about to be born. They were exhausted from walking for weeks or months from neighboring Kasai Province without much food or water. They carried emotional wounds from seeing family members and neighbors murdered in front of them.

The Mennonite Brethren Church of Congo — based in Kikwit and known by its French initials, CEFMC — saw their need. Members responded by taking people into their homes and giving clothing and food. CEFMC hospital staff provided medical care. Churches became temporary shelters.

But the needs were greater than the church could meet alone. Mennonite Central Committee, with initial support of donations from global Anabaptist organizations, followed by the Canadian Foodgrains Bank and MCC donors, is walking with CEFMC. A local committee is empowering displaced people to establish new lives in Kikwit.

General secretary Antoine Kimbila said the church is called to meet its people's holistic needs. When a person's spiritual and physical needs are met, they are more likely to experience peace.

"Peace is a synonym of shalom. When we say shalom in Hebrew, it is the total salvation of mankind," he said. "When what you [MCC] bring to us in the community as projects . . . is married with the word of Christ, that brings peace to humankind."

Peace didn't come to Kikwit immediately. The arrival of displaced people caused conflict, said Jacqueline Kafuti, the first CEFMC elder to invite people to live in her home. Other neighbors

People from CEFMC Kimpwanza Kikongophone parish in Kikwit gather after a worship service.

PHOTO: JUSTIN MAKANGARA/MCC/FAIRPICTURE

hosted people from Kasai too, but there were those who pushed newcomers aside because resources were already limited.

IN ADDITION, some displaced people acted out because of the trauma they experienced, said Kufutama Kafaire, a member of the CEFMC local committee who handles finances.

“Someone who is displaced because of war, his head is troubled. It looks as if the war has been following him even where he is,” Kafaire said.

Providing equal education was one way CEFMC helped strengthen the connection between the two groups. By providing school supplies for primary school students and secondary school fees for displaced teens, the burden on host families was lifted. CEFMC also provided trauma training for teachers.

Colette Koy Mazao, whose fourth-grade class doubled in size with the arrival of displaced children, said she struggled at first because displaced children self-segregated in the back of the classroom and did not speak the local language, Kikongo, or the academic language, French.

Some displaced children were violent. Others would sometimes cry when she called on them. When she asked why, they told her, “We are thinking about the situation that we have passed through.”

Through the training, Mazao and other teachers learned the importance of mixing students in the classroom, instead of allowing them to sit in separate groups. Teachers organized out-



Euphrasie Minzambi worships at CEFMC Kimpwanza Kikongophone parish in Kikwit.

PHOTO: JUSTIN MAKANGARA/MCC/FAIRPICTURE

side activities so students from both groups would be on the same teams.

In the classroom, Mazao learned to pay more attention to the emotional needs of displaced children by drawing them aside when they looked upset. If a student is absent often or sick, she visits the student’s family to see if there is a problem she can help resolve.

Mazao also has learned to be less serious in the classroom.

“It has helped not only the displaced

children but all the pupils to live in peace with everybody,” she said.

She’s happy that one of the displaced children is at the top of the class academically. He helps her monitor classroom behavior when she is absent.

“Things didn’t change so quickly,” Mazao said. “We worked progressively. Now there is a change.”

AT THE CEFMC hospital in Kanzombi, staff struggled initially with the behavior of displaced people. Jacques Tangudiki, a member of the CEFMC local committee who is responsible for health care, said displaced people demanded to be treated first and tended to be violent and noncompliant with treatment. This created tension between nurses and patients.

“Imagine your father was murdered in front of you; your mother was raped in front of you. They were living with all of this,” the doctor said. Sometimes they would express anger when there didn’t seem to be a reason for it.

Tangudiki said nurses have learned



Antoine Kimbila, general secretary of the Mennonite Brethren Church of Congo, speaks during a service at CEFMC Kimpwanza Kikongophone parish in February.

PHOTO: JUSTIN MAKANGARA/MCC/FAIRPICTURE



to understand this trauma response and how to help people deal with emotions through trauma training MCC provided. The hospital also provides free primary care to displaced people, including disease prevention and medication for common ailments such as malaria and waterborne diseases.

CEFMC has worked with MCC to lower the rate of waterborne diseases by drilling two deep wells. Potable water from a borehole drilled in Kanzombi significantly reduced waterborne diseases treated at the hospital.

Clean water has improved the health of thousands of people in Kikwit. It also reduces fighting at remote springs where youth, whose parents expected them to get water multiple times a day, would fight over who could access the single water pipe first.

Now that water is available near where people live, adults can get water throughout the day. They have time to work together in fields CEFMC provided to the most vulnerable displaced people and their host families.

“Without water, there’s no life,” Kimbila said. Clean water helps treat diseases; education helps people to understand things; agriculture helps

Once-strained relationships have been resolved as groups worked together to meet the needs of displaced people.

them to eat. “So all of these projects need water to help humans survive.”

He compared CEFMC’s holistic work with the people who were hungry and tired while listening to Jesus preach. He fed them by distributing one boy’s fish and bread to the crowd.

Jesus “came not just to save the soul but the body,” Kimbila said. “God takes care of us, not just spiritually, but physically, too. For this reason, we as the church work with partners to save people holistically. It’s difficult to bring someone who is hungry to peace.”

IN TSHIKAPA, a 10-hour drive from Kikwit, the Mennonite Church of Congo is implementing projects similar to the Mennonite Brethren Church.



Above: Pharmacy attendant Esperance Milonga Mawusa gives Angele Kingenzi free medication for malaria at Kanzombi Secondary Hospital. PHOTO: JUSTIN MAKANGARA/MCC/FAIRPICTURE

Below: Colette Koy Mazao, a sixth-grade teacher at Malwanu Institute in Kanzombi, stands beside student Angele Kingenzi. She has learned to adapt her classroom into a peaceful place for displaced children and children from the host community. PHOTO: JUSTIN MAKANGARA/MCC/FAIRPICTURE

The Evangelical Mennonite Church in Kabwela also carried out projects with MCC for years. Once-strained relationships among the denominations have been resolved as groups worked together to meet the needs of the displaced people.

With MCC training and former representative Mulanda Juma’s conflict-resolution skills, local committees in each denomination are equipped to respond to crises.

Women have trained together to learn peacebuilding skills that equip them to resolve conflicts among family, friends and community.

As a result of all the peacemaking work — humanitarian and spiritual —

displaced people are gradually settling into life in Kikwit.

“Since they came here, they completely lacked a lot of things, but now they have first the joy because many have become members of our church, an important step,” Kimbila said. “Because they are at our side, they feel there are people who love them, with whom they can live.” ●



Linda Espenshade is Mennonite Central Committee U.S. news coordinator.

BY S. ROY KAUFMAN

CHANGING MINDS OR FOLLOWING HEARTS?

Rural South Dakota near Freeman, the author's home community. PHOTO: S. ROY KAUFMAN

Beliefs and practices matter. Love matters more.

HAVE BEEN A pastor for over 50 years, and the question of LGBTQ inclusion has been on the agenda of the church for all those decades. I've served rural congregations — the power brokers of the past — where most people held traditional views on sexuality. They didn't think LGBTQ inclusion was "their issue." But it was always on the agenda of Mennonite Church USA and its predecessors. At national conventions, LGBTQ people and their advocates persistently worked for change. It was a classic power struggle, and each side claimed God was on their side.

Eventually, the power dynamics shifted. At MC USA's special delegate session in 2022, the inclusionists prevailed. Delegates approved an LGBTQ-affirming resolution. Now, in a reversal of roles, some of the traditionalists, many from congregations like those I served, are wondering if they should leave and find a place where they would feel more welcome. Too many have been leaving.

Is this really what anyone wants? Is the church no better than secular institutions, where the majority imposes its will at any cost? Have we embraced former outcasts only to create another group of outsiders? If the church is to be a redeemed community, can we turn our backs on brothers and sisters on either side? All are seeking to follow Jesus based on their understanding of God's intention for the human family.

I believe we should stop trying to change minds and instead follow our hearts. This would mean making decisions based on our relationships with

Jesus and each other, not on maintaining or changing the beliefs and practices of the church or its members. Many of us are already doing this.

If they were following their hearts, traditionalists would, I think, say something like this to LGBTQ people seeking or wishing to retain mem-

Uniformity of belief, or enforced purity, yields an arid church devoid of life and love.

bership in a congregation: "We aren't convinced same-sex unions reflect God's intention for the human family, yet we see that you love Jesus and want the best for yourselves and your families. We love you as brothers or sisters in Christ (and perhaps as our sons or daughters). We want you to be a part of the church, and we pray that the Holy Spirit will guide us all to a fuller

understanding of God's will."

I think this is what parents who are not altogether comfortable with same-sex relationships have been saying to their LGBTQ sons and daughters for decades. The relationship matters more than agreement and more than who is right or wrong.

At the same time, LGBTQ people at the church door might say something like this to traditionalists: "We are not asking you to change your beliefs about what God intends for the human family. But we love Jesus and are seeking to be faithful to him. And we love you as members of this church (and perhaps as our parents). We, too, are on a journey as followers of Jesus, and we would like to walk with you."

POWER STRUGGLES rarely, if ever, produce redemptive change. Trying to change minds only produces winners and losers. People are hurt; relationships are broken.

Having lived in six congregations and studied church history, I have seen that the church is most vital when everyone, despite perceived or actual deviation from the stated practices and beliefs of the church, follows their hearts and continues to worship and fellowship together.

Uniformity of belief, or enforced purity, yields an arid church devoid of life and love. This doesn't mean beliefs and practices don't matter, only that love matters more.

Love, following our hearts, would seem to be the one thing that potentially differentiates the church from other institutions. If all of us, traditionalists and inclusionists alike, followed our hearts and agreed to love each other as brothers and sisters in Christ, the church might have something to offer a world of exclusion and division.

PERHAPS A STORY from my family's history could point the way toward addressing the question of LGBTQ inclusion redemptively.

When I was a teenager, my oldest brother and his wife divorced and married the divorced partners of another marriage. My father was deeply hurt and offended. My brother withdrew his membership in the church where he was baptized. This preserved the "purity" of the church, which seemed to be

my father's primary concern. Both new marriages succeeded and endured until death separated the new partners.

To his credit, my father did not disinherit his oldest son, despite the divorce and remarriage. And, to his

If traditionalists and inclusionists agreed to love each other as brothers and sisters in Christ, the church might have something to offer a world of exclusion and division.

credit, my brother did not turn from his parental home in disgust. He continued to attend family gatherings with his new family, despite those first visits being exceedingly uncomfortable for all. Eventually the family grew to accept and love the new family my brother brought to us.

My father never changed his belief that divorce, and particularly remarriage, is a sin. Nor did my brother ask him to. They both decided to stop trying to change each other's minds and instead followed their hearts. I believe they both reflected the best of what it means to be a follower of Jesus, even though that wasn't my brother's intention at that point in his life. ●



S. Roy Kaufman is a retired pastor and author in Freeman, S.D. His most recent book, *The Drama of a Rural Community's Life Cycle: Its Prehistory, Birth, Growth, Maturity, Decline and Rebirth* (Wipf and Stock, 2020), is the story of his home community at Freeman and the three Anabaptist cultures that came to settle there from Ukraine in the 1870s. As an agrarian theologian and historian, Kaufman has spent a lifetime seeking to understand and to preserve the agrarian heritage of the Mennonite church and the rural congregations he served.

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Moses Akot, a student in South Sudan, proudly displays his MCC school kit supplies. (Loreto Schools Rumbek photo/Herbert Orwa)



Elephants & mice

If we made peace among ourselves, we could tackle bigger problems

BY HARVEY YODER

There can be no peace among nations without peace among religions. — Hans Küng

WE MIGHT PARAPHRASE Küng’s words to ask, “How can we spread a gospel of peace without demonstrating peace among ourselves?”

While nice folks like us might not be openly unpeaceful, we are all too prone

to give up on each other and go our separate ways. In that sense we (peacefully?) “ex-communicate” one another — usually not by actually expelling congregations with whom we disagree but by withdrawing from them and no longer “communicating” in fellowship.

I once asked a member of a congregation that left Virginia Conference of Mennonite Church USA if those of us who stayed would still be welcome at their communion services.

“Of course!” he assured me. “We will always welcome you to the Lord’s Table.”



ELEPHANT PHOTO BY DAVID CLODE ON UNSPLASH
MOUSE PHOTO BY KANASHI ON UNSPLASH

Here is the kind of Christ-based, covenant-bound unity I pray for.

“What?” I asked. “You’re not OK with working with us in conference assemblies, but you would welcome us to be one with you in the most sacred part of your church life?”

To me it felt like a divorcing couple announcing they could no longer tolerate being in the same household but would be OK with occasionally spending an intimate night together.

Here is the kind of Christ-based, covenant-bound unity I pray for:

- That we maintain God-given unity of the Spirit while continually striving — forever, if necessary — for a greater unity of the faith.
- That we commit to no longer “excommunicate” (break fellowship with) whole groups of congregations with whom we differ but seek to add to our circle of congregations.
- That where past separations have occurred, that we keep the door open to becoming reunited and reconciled.
- That as congregations, conferences and denominations we see ourselves as bound together less by our constitutions and bylaws, as in a *Gesellschaft* (an organization operating by Robert’s Rules of Order), and more as sisters and brothers in God’s beloved *Gemeinschaft* (a community seeking consensus in the spirit of Acts 15).
- That we be willing to regularly review our structures, constitutions and Confessions — perhaps every Jubilee (50th) year — and wait prayerfully for Pentecost-style rebirths, earnestly seeking new wine and welcoming new wineskins.

Further, I pray that we would not allow the issues we treat as “elephants in the room” — a loss of trust in church structures, or disagreements about how to include LGBTQ members — to distract us from the threats we may overlook as mere “mice in the room,” such as:

- The hold of Mammon — money and material wealth — that threatens to choke the spiritual life out of us. Our families, congregations and church institutions are claiming the right to ever more privilege, status, state-of-the-art accommodations and lifestyles that create widening gaps between us and a world in need.
- The grip of media on our lives: the barrage of pornography, propaganda, seductive advertising and other distractions from a life of following Jesus.
- An astonishing lack of concern — by heterosexuals and non-heterosexuals alike — about a sexual permissiveness that elevates eros over agape, short-term pleasure over covenant commitment and promiscuity over fidelity.
- A plague of violence, fed by divisive rhetoric that divides our communities and congregations, that amplifies our fears and animosity toward

“enemies” and feeds the flames of military madness.

- Overconsumption of natural resources and fossil fuels, contributing to climate change and threatening the very survival of our children and grandchildren, who will deal with increased famines, wildfires, floods and extreme weather.

These are the real elephants in the room. Meanwhile, let’s all pray that the unity of the body of Christ becomes a reality here on earth as it will ultimately be in heaven. ●



Harvey Yoder is a licensed counselor and pastor of Family of Hope Mennonite Church in Harrisonburg, Va. He was a pastor at Zion Mennonite Church in Broadway, Va., for over 20 years and taught Bible and social studies at Eastern Mennonite High School.



And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

—Colossians 3:14, NIV

Harmony and helplessness

Church is like a choir — and an addiction-recovery group

BY ANGELA J. KAUFMAN

DO I DARE to hope for unity among followers of Jesus? I believe such a grand spiritual state is possible if we can harmonize like a choir and support each other like an addiction-recovery group.

As a musician, I experience unity by singing in harmony. Harmony requires listening to each other and blending together. Each part is different, but the collective outcome is beautiful.

The act of singing implies that we have agreed to join in an act of worship. We merge not only our voices but also our thoughts as we dwell on the message of the lyrics. We understand our purpose. The musical bond frees us to arrange each part in accordance with the composer's intent.

As we make the song our own, we adjust to each other's voices. The leader may request a compromise from the sopranos to sing softer as the basses bring out the melody. Sometimes the leader requires us to create differences in dynamics or diction.

Yes, differences. How can we find unity if we don't accept diversity?

Like a polished song, unity doesn't just happen. It takes work. Rehearsals do not always sound wonderful. (Ask any choir director!) Practicing how to work, live and worship together as believers has moments of discord and disagreement. But the goal remains the same: unity of purpose.

JUST AS THE Apostle Paul had moments of frustration with the early church, Christ's family today has a challenging time getting along. The glue that held the fledgling church together centuries ago was active love. Meeting together, eating together, sharing possessions, helping anyone in need — this was the attractive message, without words.

What holds us together today? Another type of gathering may give us clues.

Because my husband works in the field of addiction, I have been privileged to attend Alcoholics Anonymous conferences. These meetings have felt welcoming and accepting, even though the people in attendance did not know each other.

Why such unity? Unity comes from the strength we gain when hanging out with those who understand us.

The first of AA's 12 steps is to admit that one is powerless over alcohol and that life has become unmanageable. Step 2 is to confess the need for God. Step 3 is to turn one's life over to God.

Why do we join together in the church? Is it not to admit our sin and our need for God?

We need help, and we need each other. We need to spend time with those who understand our struggles and our shortcomings. Sin is a form of addiction. Alone, we are powerless against it.

We will gain unity if we remember our shared experience of sin. There is no need to point fingers or compare faults. There is no hierarchy of wrongdoing. Together we acknowledge that we are desperate and struggling. The power of God's love is our source of hope and healing.

We need God. We need each other. This is our purpose and our unity. ●



Angela J. Kaufman of Sioux Falls, S.D., is a former music teacher turned author who is awaiting the publication of her book, *Lying Sheep: from Butting Heads to Breaking Bread*, regarding our interactions as believers.

Above: An international ensemble led singing at the Mennonite World Conference assembly in Indonesia in 2022.

PHOTO: KRESNA KURNIAWAN/MEETINGHOUSE

Two streams flow as one in Brazil

Traditional and charismatic Mennonite Brethren have much in common

MENNONITE BRETHREN IN Brazil represent two distinct cultures and approaches to theology and worship. Still, the Convention of Evangelical MB Churches in Brazil has learned how to walk together as one.

Conference leader Paul Duck told the Mennonite World Conference General Council during a resourcing session in late 2022 about how the conference ultimately determined its unity was more important than each position.

“We agreed to create a path or a highway, not too narrow but also not too wide, where both groups could live peacefully,” he said.

MB immigrants from what is now Ukraine settled in 1930 in Brazil and formed a church conference in 1948. This German-speaking conference began planting churches among Portuguese-speaking Brazilians in 1960, ultimately forming a second association. Over time, some differences in language and culture diminished, and the two groups merged in 1995.

The conference counts about 11,000 members in more than 80 congregations today, providing services to neighbors locally and sending mission workers to Angola and other countries in Africa where Portuguese is spoken.

Some congregations were historically Anabaptist and predominantly Germanic. Others were Brazilian with strong influences from Pentecostalism. Because of their differences, the groups



The mission agency of the Convention of Evangelical Mennonite Brethren Churches in Brazil hosted an event in September. PHOTO: AGÊNCIA MISSIONÁRIA DA COBIM

seemed headed toward a split, which would have reversed the 1995 merger.

However, representatives from both groups agreed to talk together. Over meetings that spanned six months, they agreed to “recognize Christ in one another.”

“We started with the definitions of what the Bible teaches about the topic,” Duck said. “Each group had the opportunity to share about their understanding and the practical living of the explained topics.”

They used a process to learn from each other, staying in conversation.

As a result of the discourse, “those in the traditional group agreed to be more open to the moving of the Spirit, while those in the charismatic group agreed that they could be more focused on the Word,” Duck said.

Unity within the church was maintained peacefully, based on coming together around God’s Word, with openness to continually revising understandings. ●

‘Radical act of wealth redistribution’ gives Seattle MVS house new life



Seattle Mennonite Church held a gathering in 2019 to commemorate the closing of the Mennonite Voluntary Service unit. (PHOTO: SEATTLE MENNONITE CHURCH)

WHEN SEATTLE MENNONITE Church purchased a house in what a member of its property team described as “a pretty undesirable part of town” about 45 years ago, the Mennonite Church USA congregation never dreamed it would eventually be worth \$2 million.

While the house served as a home base for many Mennonite Voluntary Service workers and other volunteers since then, its Capitol Hill neighborhood gentrified, developing into one of the city’s major nightlife scenes.

By 2020, the property was assessed at \$2 million as a teardown. It was around this time that SMC took a sabbatical from running the MVS unit, which was receiving fewer volunteers, creating space for the house’s purpose to evolve.

Following years of discernment, the predominantly white congregation decided to give the property to the Trans Women of Color Solidarity Network, free with no strings attached.

TWOCNS described this as a “radical act of wealth redistribution” and an “act of accountability toward the BIPOC trans community.” The group had already begun a \$2 million capital campaign to fund its vision for a “House of Constance” that would create housing and support services for

Black and brown transgender people.

When Seattle Mennonite celebrated its 50th anniversary several years earlier, the congregation adopted a theme of Jubilee, based on the biblical call to redistribute resources.

“We decided, let’s look at our wealth through the lens of Jubilee and do some listening together for what God’s invitation might be at this, the Jubilee year of our community,” said Pastor Megan Ramer. “One of the focus areas was ‘pathways toward reparations.’ I think this helped prepare us to think

The neighborhood has become less of a safe space for populations who can be very vulnerable, like trans women of color.

— Lisa Bade

about how the huge wealth that we owned in the house was an opportunity to do some repair.”

The congregation dug into the history of the Capitol Hill neighborhood and realized how it represented the city’s history of racial inequity.

Congregational chair Greg Thiessen

said it was important to ground the process in the story of how the church acquired the property.

He cited the congregation’s study on dismantling the Doctrine of Discovery, a historic framework that was used to justify displacing Indigenous people from their lands. The MVS house property sat on unceded ancestral lands of the Coast Salish and Duwamish peoples.

Seattle Mennonite learned the property was just north of Seattle’s historic “redline” that banks used to deny lending to people of color. The neighborhood used covenants preventing the sale or rental of property to people of color. When Seattle Mennonite used a loan from the Mennonite Church to buy the house for \$24,000, banks repeatedly denied loans to nearby Black churches.

Capitol Hill was also a historically LGBTQ neighborhood.

“In the extreme gentrification of Seattle, the neighborhood has become less of a safe place for populations who can be very vulnerable, like trans women of color,” said Lisa Bade, also a member of the Seattle Mennonite property team. “There was an awareness of how that safe space was being taken away.”

Violence against trans people has risen in recent years. An unprecedented wave of anti-LGBTQ bills has been proposed across the U.S., with 150 aimed at restricting the rights of trans people since the beginning of 2023.

Ramer said the congregation came to understand that they owned the land through “the poisoned fruits of settler colonialism” and “the benefit of systemic racism.”

In spring 2021, Seattle Mennonite formally agreed that the house was an opportunity to make a reparative act. The congregation commissioned a property team to consult with local BIPOC community leaders.

Not only did TWOCSN have an immediate need for a house that aligned with SMC’s values, but the group had already raised money that could go toward the house’s needed repairs.

“We had complete unanimous consensus from everybody, either affirmation or trust,” Ramer said. In the spiritual discernment process the congregation uses, to vote “trust” is to express that though someone may not have chosen this individually, they trust the discernment of God’s call.

OTHER CONGREGATIONS have also taken steps toward mutual aid and community engagement with properties.

“It is inspiring to witness how many of our churches across the denomination are responding to the Spirit’s call toward repair by not only sharing but releasing their resources to their communities,” said Sue Park-Hur, MC USA director of racial/ethnic engagement. “This work of release is good news for all involved.”

It is inspiring to witness how many of our churches . . . are responding to the Spirit’s call toward repair not only sharing but releasing their resources to their communities.

— Sue Park-Hur

She emphasized the importance of moving from learning and confessing about injustice toward action.

“Confession and acknowledgment are where we begin, but it is incomplete if we do not work toward concrete steps of restoration and repair,” she said.

Shalom Community Church in Ann Arbor, Mich., collected over \$100,000 for disbursement as a reparative act to “communities dealing with the legacy of stolen land and stolen people.” The International Guest House in Washington, D.C., was sold for \$1.35 million in 2020, and Allegheny Mennonite Conference redistributed these funds to MC USA’s Justice Fund and Allegh-

eny congregations. San Antonio Mennonite Church developed its property into a hospitality house for asylum seekers released from detention.

Where there were once 150 MVS units, five remain that continue with strong community investment.

Marisa Smucker, interim executive director of Mennonite Mission Network, which sponsors the MVS program, pointed to the “ripple effect” that takes place in the MVS houses that are still going strong, as well as those that shift and change like Seattle’s.

“Every time someone comes into a place, it changes the character of the place and, reciprocally, the person is changed,” she said. “Conditions change, people change — that’s transformation, that’s growth.

“As an organization and as individuals, we honor the past and the good work that has been done and, as we see cultural changes and needs, we try to respond in a way that fulfills what God is calling us to do.”

Seattle Mennonite officially gave their former MVS house to TWOCSN at the end of 2022.

“It’s really exciting now that the Seattle MVS house is becoming the House of Constance and has this whole new life ahead of it,” Ramer said. “In some ways, it will be doing the same thing that it has done for decades, which is to create a home for people to live in community with one another and support other local movements for justice and peacemaking and service.” ●



Members of Seattle Mennonite Church made a quilt that was given to the Trans Women of Color Solidarity Network when keys to the house were handed over officially at the end of 2022.

PHOTOS: SEATTLE MENNONITE CHURCH

Returning land, repairing relationship

Indigenous community, descendants of settlers form a partnership in Minnesota



Makoce Ikikcupi Governing Council members James Rock and Sisoka Duta and past Governing Council member Wóokiye Win at the celebration of land recovery on March 21 in Mountain Lake, Minn. PHOTO: BERTHA KLASSEN



Judy and Steve Harder, who sold their farm and community-supported agricultural operation for use by Dakota people, at the celebration of the return of this land to Dakota people on March 21. PHOTO: JAMES ROCK

IS REPAIR BETWEEN Indigenous communities and settler communities possible? The people of *Makoce Ikikcupi* think so, and a recent recovery of land in rural Minnesota is an example of the power of returning land and repairing relationships damaged over centuries.

Makoce Ikikcupi, which means “land recovery” in the Dakota language, is a movement to recover land, build homes and a community that is authentically Dakota.

“Our cultural survival depends on it,” is how the organization describes the stakes of this endeavor.

Over the past several years, Mennonite families — descendants of colonists — have connected with the vision of *Makoce Ikikcupi* in response to this invitation toward repair.

Makoce Ikikcupi invited the Mennonite-affiliated Coalition to Dismantle the Doctrine of Discovery to join them in land return and land restoration. (The Doctrine of Discovery is a historic framework that was used to justify displacing Indigenous people from their lands.)

Makoce Ikikcupi is the vision of a group of Dakota/Lakota/Nakota

people led by Waziyatawin, a writer, teacher and justice advocate from the *Pezihutazizi Otunwe* (Yellow Medicine Village) in southwestern Minnesota.

A governing council made up of Dakota, Lakota, Ojibwe and others connected to the *Oceti Sakowin* (Seven Campfires) homelands is charged with the strategic vision of this growing network of communities.

Right now, two villages are being developed on Dakota/Lakota/Nakota

Luke Black Elk shares the vision to create a new way of living rooted in the lands and traditions of the Dakota people.

homelands in Minnesota. Luke Black Elk, a member of the *Makoce Ikikcupi* Governing Council, shares the vision to create a new way of living rooted in the lands and traditions of the Dakota people.

“We looked to our ancestral territories and began to imagine where we

could live a more natural, connected lifestyle,” he said.

The challenge is not just the concept of individual land ownership brought by colonists centuries ago but also corporate land ownership and federal land ownership.

“Out of that current reality, we’re trying to create safe space for our people to live in a way that works with how our bodies, minds and hearts connect with the world,” Black Elk said.

The homes and other structures being built at the first village, *Zani Otunwe* (Village of Wellbeing) are earth lodges using construction techniques the Dakota have practiced over hundreds of years.

The communities will be places where villagers can practice traditional wild-ricing, sugar-bushing, hunting, foraging and growing food in gardens. They will also practice traditional forms of governance, spirituality and education.

“It’s about living closer to the earth and listening to what the earth has to say,” Black Elk said. “It’s about living in justice and making sure it’s not just justice for me, it’s justice for everyone.”

How does the Coalition to Dismantle

tle the Doctrine of Discovery connect with efforts like *Makoce Ikikcupi*?

“We’re working toward dismantling oppressive structures and specifically the Doctrine of Discovery through a lens of decolonization,” said Sarah Augustine, the executive director.

The coalition aims to join in and partner with Indigenous groups who are working toward these goals.

“There’s a difference between partnership and charity work where you remain in a position of power,” Augustine said. “We’re trying to dismantle systems of oppression, and we do that through partnership — collegial or sibling partnership — with Indigenous groups.”

In Minnesota, a partnership unfolded with coalition members and others living on Dakota ancestral lands.

THE SEED OF THE PARTNERSHIP was planted in 2012 when John Stoesz and his family had some decisions to make. His grandparents’ farm near Mountain Lake needed to be sold. Stoesz was, at the time, executive director of Mennonite Central Committee Central States.

“When my family sold my grandparents’ farm, I consulted with the Indigenous leaders about what to do with the proceeds,” Stoesz said. “Eventually, I decided to return half of my share to Indigenous people working for land justice.”

Through that process, he was intro-



John Stoesz returned half of his share of the proceeds from the sale of his grandparents’ Minnesota farm to Indigenous people working for land justice. PHOTO: JAMES ROCK

duced to the work of Waziyatawin and the *Makoce Ikikcupi* project.

Learning more about *Makoce Ikikcupi* and connecting with the coalition, Stoesz went on to form the Mountain Lake Repair Community, part of the coalition’s Repair Network, which invites faith communities to join in the work of decolonization.

The Dakota group plans to use the farm and CSA as a food resource for the interconnected villages that it expects will continue to grow around the region.

The local Repair Community consists of about 15 people mostly from three churches in Mountain Lake: Bethel Mennonite, First Mennonite and Community Bible.

THE MOST RECENT work toward repair concerns the second village, located in Mountain Lake. This community is called *Hohwoju Otunwe* (Village of Vibrant Growth). In December, *Makoce Ikikcupi* settled on this property, an organic farm and community-supported agriculture operation. The Dakota group plans to use the farm and CSA as a food resource for the interconnected villages that it expects will continue to grow around the region.

Judy and Steve Harder were ready to put their organic farm and CSA property on the market but were wary about selling to just anyone. They didn’t want this land, valuable in the marketplace, turned into something antithetical to its recent history as an organic CSA.

While considering their options, the Harders recalled a man raising money for land return by bicycling across the state.

“I remembered John Stoesz years ago had done this cycling fundraiser,” Judy Harder said. “We had no idea who he was, but we decided to look him up.”

Stoesz quickly saw the potential of this land and put the Harders in touch



Kathy Harder, a member of the Mountain Lake Repair Community, at the celebration of land recovery on March 21 in Mountain Lake, Minn.

PHOTO: JAMES ROCK

with the *Makoce Ikikcupi* Governing Council.

“We’ve met with them about four times or so,” Steve Harder said. “And each time there was a spiritual element. Luke Black Elk and his wife, Linda, talked about how this land now holds the memories of what you’ve done here for 30 years.”

This land holds the memories of when *Oceti Sakowin* people moved freely, the memories of colonial occupation and, most recently, how the land was stewarded by the Harders.

Luke and Linda Black Elk have now made *Hohwoju Otunwe* their permanent home. Linda is finished teaching at Sitting Bull College in North Dakota. They plan to put their knowledge and skills in the use of plants as food, medicine and materials to create a hub for feeding the *Makoce Ikikcupi* communities and providing education to the wider community.

As the Vatican recently issued a papal document rejecting the Doctrine of Discovery (papal bulls from the 1400s were the origins of the Doctrine of Discovery), communities of faith throughout the Americas have the opportunity and obligation to consider pathways to repair in relation to the traditional Indigenous lands where they now live and worship. *Makoce Ikikcupi* provides an example of Indigenous-led pathways to repair. ●

MDS turns old store into base camp

Goshen College students serve, learn about Native American culture in Minnesota

ELEVEN GOSHEN COLLEGE students spent two weeks in May helping convert an old grocery store into a base camp for Mennonite Disaster Service in Red Lake, Minn.

Part of the college's Environmental Disaster and Response course, the students were in the northern Minnesota community to help MDS get ready to receive volunteers this summer to repair homes damaged by a tornado in 2021.

They were welcomed by Robert Neadeau, director of emergency services for the reservation of about 8,000 people. He had only been in his job for three months when the tornado hit.

"The hail was as big as a softball," he said. It damaged roofs and siding and broke windows.

The project got started in February when small groups of volunteers came from



Standing Cloud

Kansas, Missouri, Minnesota, South Dakota and Iowa to start preparing the old grocery store to become the new center of operations. This included some Amish volunteers from Missouri who framed out the bedrooms and hung the drywall.

For Neadeau, who had never heard of Mennonites, MDS's involvement seemed miraculous.

"Creator works in mysterious ways," he said. "It's all in Creator's timing."

The Goshen College students sanded, painted, built bunk beds, laid carpet and did plumbing and electrical work.

The group was led by Kendra Yoder, who teaches sociology and women's and gender studies.

"Not all of our students can go overseas for a semester due to cost, time or documentation issues," she said of how the college traditionally has sent



Goshen College student Cameron Comadoll paints in an old grocery store that will be the MDS center of operations in Red Lake, Minn.

PHOTO: JOHN LONGHURST/MDS

"Creator works in mysterious ways. It's all in Creator's timing."

— Robert Neadeau

students to other countries for service and cross-cultural learning experiences. "We knew we needed more shorter-term domestic options. That's where MDS comes in."

Through MDS, students can learn about other cultures closer to home, she said. Previous groups served in Florida and Texas.

For Cameron Comadoll, a nursing student, the trip was a way to learn about Native American culture. She considered it a privilege to attend a powwow on the reservation.

Regan Shepline, who is studying education, learned about Native American customs and ceremonies and how they see the world. The time spent in

Red Lake "will make me a better teacher," she said.

Jeff Koller, MDS Region Three operations coordinator, said the students' work will make it possible for MDS to repair as many as 60 homes on the reservation.

"I treasure the relationship that has developed between MDS and Goshen College," he said.

RED LAKE TRIBAL COUNCIL member Eugene Standing Cloud is looking forward to meeting and engaging volunteers while MDS is in Red Lake, sharing with them about Native American history, culture and ceremonies.

This will also include countering the traditional narrative about the westward "expansion" of white settlers.

"We call it the invasion from the east," said Standing Cloud, noting the tribe is still fighting to regain territory lost during treaty negotiations in the 19th century.

The Red Lake project is not the first time MDS has worked with Native Americans in the United States. Previously, volunteers served in Native American communities in South Dakota, Montana and Louisiana.

In Canada, volunteers have served Indigenous people in Brantford, Ont., and also renovated an office for the MCC Ontario Indigenous Neighbours program in Timmins.

In Red Lake, fixing exterior damage to homes caused by the tornado is expected to take place through the summer and into early fall.

MDS could also be involved through the winter doing interior repairs to homes from water damage that resulted from the storm.

"Right now, we don't know how long MDS will be there," Koller said. "It could be a year, or maybe two years."

MDS will leave behind the renovated grocery store for use as a community or youth center. ●



Eastern Mennonite School students build a porch in April on a house constructed by Mennonite Disaster Service in Hurley, Va., following flooding and mudslides that destroyed 60 homes and damaged 200 others in 2021. PHOTO: EASTERN MENNONITE SCHOOL

MDS class builds walls and future volunteers at Virginia school

STUDENTS IN THIS SPRING'S Mennonite Disaster Service class at Eastern Mennonite School in Harrisonburg, Va., built 10 exterior and 18 interior walls for a new home in Hurley, Va., a community still recovering from an August 2021 flood.

The project is a culmination of a trimester's work for 14 students, most of whom had no construction experience when they registered for the new elective last winter.

Before the students used nail guns and other power tools, they practiced skills on projects such as cutting boards, a birdhouse, a folding table and building a shed on school grounds.

"I never would have thought I could do what I'm now confident doing," said Fortuana Chipeta. "I know I'll use these skills for the rest of my life. I love knowing I've been part of creating a new home for people who suffered so much loss a few years ago."

"I love knowing I've been part of creating a new home for people who suffered so much loss."

— Fortuana Chipeta

The course came together with input from Woody Driver, chair of the Shenandoah Valley MDS unit; MDS executive director Kevin King; high school principal Justin King; and Paul Leaman, head of school.

Kevin King and Justin King — father and son — brainstormed the idea for several years as a possible way to develop a younger MDS constituency and pilot a program that might be of interest to other Mennonite secondary schools.

The class revived activity in the school's former shop, which has

evolved into robotics class space in recent years and left some equipment lying dormant.

MDS pays for the supplies and teacher, and EMS provides the students, structure and space.

"It's a win-win-win because our students come away with knowledge about MDS and practical skills," said Justin King. "MDS comes away with a new generation of volunteers."

Kevin King is in discussion with other Mennonite schools about similar classes.

Every April, EMS students in grades 6-12 participate in a week of experiential learning. An EMS group returned to Hurley this year to help with MDS projects. While the walls constructed at EMS will be transported to Hurley later this summer, the students found a sense of accomplishment in building a porch and framing another house in the four days they worked in April. ●



Iglesia Menonita Hispana gathers at Iglesia Sonido de Alabanza in Cicero, Ill. PHOTO: ULISES ARENAS/IMH

IMH gathers for first in-person conference in years

The theme for the first in-person gathering of *Iglesia Menonita Hispana* (IMH, Hispanic Mennonite Church) after almost three years of pandemic emphasized connections.

"*Conectados*" took place May 5-6 at *Iglesia Sonido de Alabanza* (Sound of Praise Church) in Cicero, Ill.

Participants joined in praise and prayer, seeking God's direction in every decision. Pastor Juan B. Ferrera opened the assembly by sharing the word of God. Pastor Alberto Parchmont gave a finance report, and IMH sought to establish an action plan for the next two years.

Outgoing IMH executive director Ulises Arenas, former pastor of *Iglesia Buenas Nuevas* in San Juan, Texas, was recognized for his service. He presented his resignation and said his farewells. He also blessed the outgoing board of directors for their two years of work integrating the conference, especially during the pandemic's tough times.

New Executive Board leaders were welcomed: moderator Josué González, moderator-elect Suhelen Cazares, secretary Rosa Solís, treasurer Sergio Navas, and Misael Araujo, music.

IMH is a racial-ethnic group of Mennonite Church USA. — *Adriana Celis, MenoTicias*

MC Canada grants aim to boost church facility efficiency

Mennonite Church Canada is providing grants to congregations to upgrade facilities with the goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

The multiyear Emissions Reduction Grant will fund 50% of the cost to reduce carbon emissions from church buildings,

up to \$6,000, through improvements such as better insulation, window and door upgrades, energy-efficient heating and cooling systems and appliances.

The idea for the fund surfaced in MC Canada's Sustainability Leadership Group in 2022.

Climate action coordinator Sandy Plett is heading up the project.

"When we reduce emissions, we have an impact on how much heating will happen on the planet. And every bit matters," she said. "Emissions reduction is an important act of mitigation."

MC Canada executive minister Doug Klassen said the \$100,000 seed money for the fund comes from a church building fund established by a donor, as well as a self-imposed carbon levy on MC Canada staff and volunteer travel.

"But anyone can donate to the fund," he said, encouraging congregations to use the grant fund. "We know that many congregations do want to make the changes, and that's a good thing. The sooner we can reduce carbon emissions, the greater the benefits will be."

The deadline for the first round of applications is Sept. 30.

Plett expects to fund four or five grant applications in 2023. Information is available at mennonitechurch.ca/climate-action. — *Mennonite Church Canada*

MWC begins dialogue with Reformed Church

Representatives of Mennonite World Conference have begun dialogues with representatives of the World Communion of Reformed Churches, beginning a process of reconciling differences between two movements that began in the 1500s in Zurich, Switzerland.

Four MWC representatives and three

WCRC representatives began dialogues at Camp Squeah, B.C., for several days in March alongside MWC Executive Committee meetings.

Historically the Reformed movement had "lethal hostility toward Anabaptists over baptism, the nature of the church and the use of the state to further and enforce the Reformation," said Thomas Yoder Neufeld, MWC Faith and Life Commission chair and a member of the dialogue group.

However, there are many ways "in which our paths of commitment have converged," he said. "Our dialogue becomes not a re-litigating of the past . . . but a shared sense of the need to live into the unity Christ has created among often still estranged and even hostile members of the body of Christ."

The dialogue group will work on a statement that includes remembering a shared past, confession and commitment to living into unity in Christ. The 500th anniversary of Anabaptism in Zurich in 2025 forms the immediate focus of these efforts.

"We are grateful to see sharp disagreements of the past make way for mutual learning and encouragement in living out a gospel witness in our complementary traditions today," said César García, MWC general secretary. "It will be a blessing to mark this 500th anniversary in Zurich amid this reconciling spirit of dialogue with the Reformed church."

There is a potential for dialogue to continue beyond 2025 with a focus on how Mennonite commitments to peace and the Reformed commitment to justice can find expression in shared work and witness.

— *Mennonite World Conference*



Representatives of Mennonite World Conference and the World Communion of Reformed Churches gathered in March in British Columbia. In front are Hanns Lessing of Germany, Meehyun Chung of South Korea and Gerardo Obermann of Argentina. In back are Rafael Zaracho of Paraguay, Anne-Cathy Graber of France, John D. Roth of the United States and Thomas R. Yoder Neufeld of Canada. PHOTO: KARLA BRAUN/MWC

Doctor who served in Taiwan dies at 92

CARL EPP, a medical doctor who served at Mennonite Christian Hospital in Hualien, Taiwan, from 1972 to 1991, died March 6 at age 92.

Epp founded the hospital's internal medicine department and oversaw training programs for medical students, interns and residents. Its library is named in his honor.

Founded in 1954 and staffed by North American Mennonite medical



workers, the hospital was fully staffed and operated by Taiwanese healthcare professionals by the time Epp left in 1991. Today it is the largest Mennonite hospital in the world, with 500 beds and more than 1,000 staff.

A native of Saskatchewan, Epp practiced medicine in Winnipeg, Man., after returning from Taiwan until his retirement in 2001.

Survivors include his second wife, Madeleine Enns, and four children. He was preceded in death by his first wife, Hilda (Schroeder).

A celebration of life was held at Fort Garry Mennonite Fellowship in Winnipeg. ●

Pennsylvanians protest gun violence

Members of at least six Mennonite Church USA congregations gathered for a Gun Violence Awareness Day witness walk May 21 in Lansdale, Pa.

More than 260 participants walked to honor people lost to gun violence and to support stronger and more effective gun laws and regulations.

The event included a "Memorial to the Lost" T-shirt display in memory of local victims of gun violence, remembrance moments by faith organizations and an opportunity to sign letters to Pennsylvania state legislators in support of four bills.

A few days later on May 24, the Pennsylvania House of Representatives passed two of the bills, which would require background checks for private sales of long guns and allow judges to use emergency orders to have law enforcement temporarily seize firearms that belong to someone in crisis.

The event "gave people a sense of empowerment," said Dave Greiser, lead pastor of Salford Mennonite Church in Harleysville. "When we sit around and talk about mass shootings, there's a corporate helplessness. To get out on the streets, to hold signs, to protest and to show that we can do this peacefully for the good of our communities is important."

Other participating congregations included Plains Mennonite Church in Hatfield and Zion Mennonite Church in Souderton. Members of Blooming Glen Mennonite Church, Souderton Mennonite Church and Spring Mount Mennonite Church also joined the walk.

— Mennonite Church USA



Salford Mennonite Church interim associate pastor Karen Bergey and associate pastor Andrew Zetts, center, and members of other local Mennonite churches walk May 21 near Trinity Lutheran Church in Lansdale, Pa., to honor people lost to gun violence and support stronger gun laws.

PHOTO: JOEL ALDERFER/SALFORD MENNONITE CHURCH

Facing new obstacles, asylum seekers fear a return to unsafe places

ON MAY 11, the Biden administration ended a set of immigration restrictions known as Title 42, a section of federal public-health law that the Trump administration used at the onset of the pandemic to restrict immigration to the United States.

Based on the premise that migration would spread the COVID-19 virus, the policy denied migrants the right to seek asylum. Since March 2020, the policy was used to expel asylum seekers at the border more than 2.8 million times.

Now that Title 42 has ended, migrants are hoping to enter the

U.S. and request asylum as they did prior to 2020. However, the Department of Homeland Security recently announced a new regulation that will present new and unnecessary obstacles.

We need to consider the new regulation through the eyes of Jesus, who asks his followers to welcome the stranger, love their neighbors and take care of the physical needs of the most vulnerable. We need to oppose key aspects of these changes on humanitarian and faith-based grounds.

The new policy is built on the premise that migrants are ineligible



for asylum unless they meet one of three criteria. The first way to become eligible is to apply for and be denied asylum in a country they have passed through.

Applying for asylum in a country such as Mexico is problematic: The government does not have the capacity to process large numbers of asylum seekers; migrants may not have family to stay with as they do in the U.S.; they are likely to have difficulty accessing legal counsel; their lives may still be in danger due to insecurity in Mexico.

The U.S. Department of State's country summary on Mexico says "violent crime — such as homicide, kidnapping, carjacking and robbery — is widespread and common in Mexico." Recent incidents like the death of nearly 40 people in a Juarez immigrant detention center fire highlight the inability of officials in Mexico to humanely process migrants.

If migrants do not first apply for asylum in another country, the new regulation gives a second option: Use a smartphone app called CBP One to request entrance to the United States and a screening appointment with immigration officials. If migrants have access to a smartphone and know how to navigate digital technology, they still enter an asylum equivalent of a lottery, hoping to be chosen for one of a limited number of appointments.

ACCORDING TO Abraham Díaz Alonso, Mennonite Central Committee Central States immigration program coordinator in Texas, those who are not able to obtain an appointment will continue waiting in one of the many migrant



Mennonite Central Committee Central States immigration program coordinator Abraham Díaz Alonso, right, speaks with a family at Senda 2 encampment in Reynosa, Mexico, on March 31.

PHOTO: BECKY TIEWES/MCC

encampments, often sleeping in makeshift sheds and tents until they are granted an interview where they can state their case for asylum.

Díaz Alonso recounted the testimony of Moisés, a husband and father whose real name has been changed for his protection: “We’ve waited months in this encampment to apply for asylum. We have traveled miles and months to get here. We cannot just give up and turn back. It just isn’t a real option. We return and we face persecution and

A husband and father said his family would face “persecution and even death” if they returned to their home country.

even death. Who would expose their children to these options?”

Those who get an appointment for a screening will have to show that they are in danger of persecution due to their race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group or political opinion and that they followed the new rules for eligibility.

According to the Department of Homeland Security, the screenings will occur rapidly in a process known as expedited removal. This accelerated process, also used by previous admin-

istrations, can result in inaccurate assessments of asylum eligibility and decrease the likelihood that migrants will have time to consult with legal counsel. Migrants who fail to meet the burden of proof will be subject to removal and unable to re-enter the country for a minimum of five years.

These arduous burdens will prevent otherwise eligible people from finding safe refuge. Many will be sent back to communities where they are unsafe.

The third way to gain eligibility for asylum is a new “humanitarian parole” program for migrants from Cuba, Honduras, Nicaragua and Venezuela that will allow 30,000 people per month up to two years of lawful status in the U.S. if they are able to acquire a sponsor, submit the required documents and fly to the interior of the United States. Communities of faith, working with refugee resettlement agencies, are looking at ways to assist migrants who qualify for the program.

ONE IMPORTANT WAY to get involved is to pray, says Rachel Diaz, an immigration attorney who works with MCC, providing legal assistance to immigrants in South Florida.

“Pray for God to work in miraculous ways for each person and family at the border,” she said. “He is the God of the brokenhearted and the repairer of broken systems.”

We can also pray for policymakers in Washington and appeal to members of Congress and to the White House to show compassion toward migrants.

The following policy changes could make a big difference for asylum seekers at the U.S.-Mexico border. The U.S. government should:

- Expand staffing and increase access to trauma-informed asylum processing at ports of entry.
- Communicate with faith-based and other nonprofit organizations at the border regarding planned or recent changes, offering grants to support their financial needs.
- Increase legal pathways for migration, including humanitarian parole, visa access and refugee capacity, thus reducing the need for crossing without documentation.
- Shift resources away from inhumane, for-profit detention and instead invest in community-based asylum case management, adjudicating cases in a timely manner.
- Address the root causes of migration throughout Latin America, the Caribbean and other countries where immigrants originate.

While we have a long way to go in reforming the U.S. immigration system, there is hope that public awareness is higher than ever. People of faith are aware of the extreme needs of migrants as well as their own ability to call for positive change. ●

Galen Fitzkee is a legislative associate for Mennonite Central Committee U.S. National Peace and Justice Ministries.



Senda 2, an encampment in Reynosa, Mexico, with a capacity for 1,700 people, contains about 3,500 asylum seekers. On March 31, when this picture was taken, some had been waiting more than three months to get an appointment via the CBP One app. PHOTO: BECKY TIEWES/MCC

Mennonite enrollment still declining

Fewer Mennonites are studying at MC USA-affiliated colleges and universities

MENNONITE ENROLLMENT is down at Mennonite Church USA colleges and universities, as a decade-long decline shows few hints of rebounding.

Mennonite Education Agency's annual enrollment report revealed earlier this year that the numbers of Mennonite-identifying full-time undergraduate students at MC USA-affiliated colleges and universities are between one-third and half the levels they were a decade ago.

The number of such students decreased from 773 to 502 between fall 2017 and fall 2022 — a 35% drop. The 2022 number is about one-third of the 1,504 Mennonite undergraduates who were enrolled in MC USA's five higher education institutions in 2008.

The number of students specifically from MC USA congregations is lower still. There were 358 MC USA undergraduates at MEA schools last fall, representing 12.5% of the overall enrollment. MC USA students numbered 1,021 a decade earlier in the fall of 2013, when they made up 31.5% of total enrollment.

At Hesston College, 44 Mennonite students were enrolled last fall, down from 145 in 2013 and 223 in 2008.

Sara Hadaway, Hesston's director of marketing and communications, said the vast majority of faith-based colleges and universities in the U.S. have experienced enrollment declines within their denominations. MC USA membership decreased by more than half since it formed in 2002, from 112,688 to about 52,000 today.

"The higher education enrollment cliff is knocking at our doors," she said. "Every year in America, there are fewer people turning 18 years of age, and in turn, a smaller class of prospects from which to recruit."

Representatives from Bethel College and Goshen College echoed the fact that there are fewer Mennonite stu-



Bethel College students Rachel Geyer, Peter Buller, Seth Rudeen and Stephany Meyer lead singing during a chapel service in November. PHOTO: CHASE DEMPSEY/BETHEL COLLEGE

dents to go around. Bethel reported 74 full-time Mennonite students last fall, down from 139 in 2013 and 198

Mennonite-identifying full-time undergraduate students at MC USA-affiliated colleges and universities are between one-third and half the levels they were a decade ago.

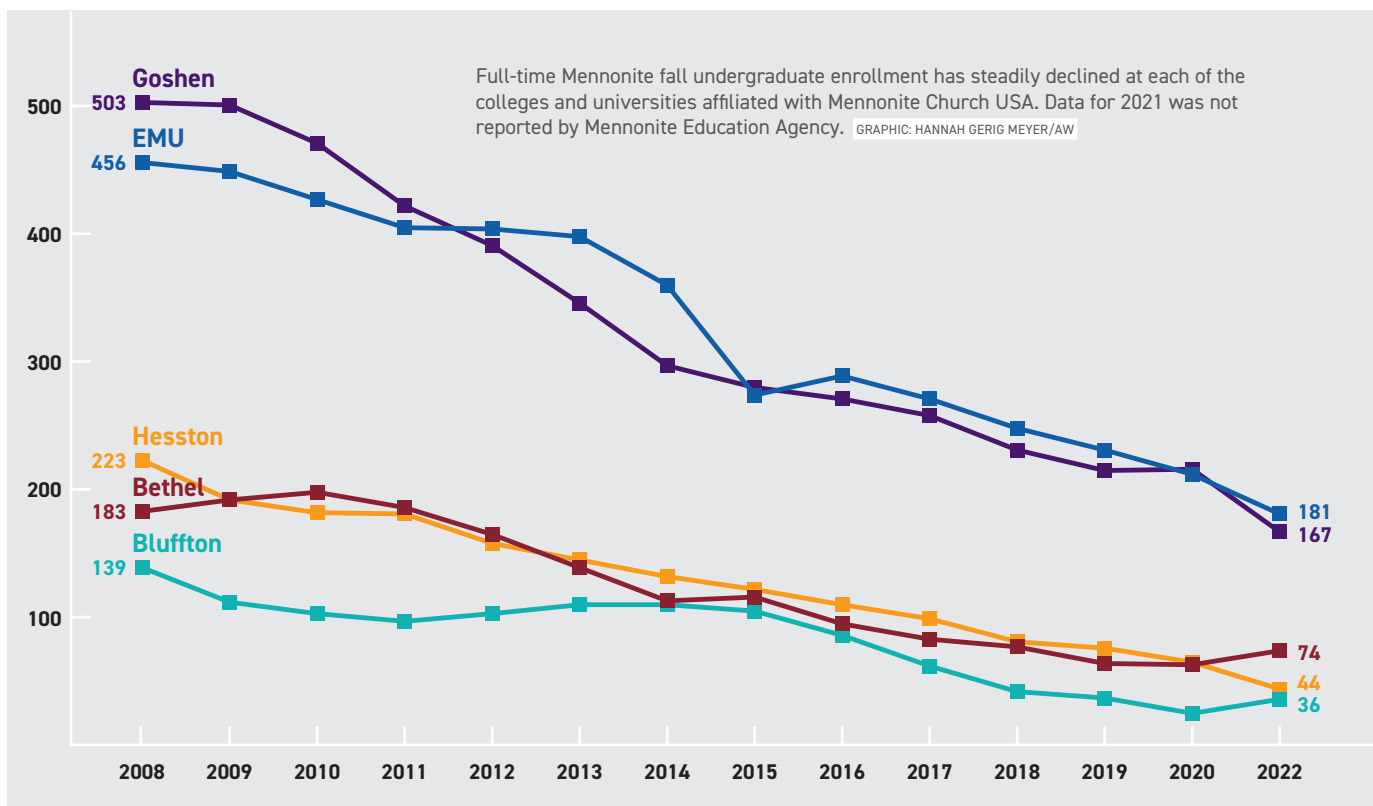
in 2010. Goshen counted 167 such students in 2022, down from 346 in 2013 and 510 in 2009 — the most of

any MC USA college or university in the past 15 years.

MC USA-affiliated institutions Bluffton University and Eastern Mennonite University did not respond to requests for comment. Bluffton had 36 Mennonite students in the fall 2022, down from 139 in 2008. EMU went from 456 Mennonite students in 2008 to 181 in fall 2022.

Jodi Beyeler, Goshen's vice president for communications and people strategy, noted that because the denomination is aging as well as declining in membership, the number of college students could be decreasing faster than overall membership.

"This may explain the additional 10% difference between Goshen College Mennonite enrollment decline and MC USA membership decline,



though we can't confirm that without better demographic data from MC USA," she said. "We do not have reliable information about the number of college-going Mennonite students, which would give us a more accurate picture of the Mennonite enrollment pool.

"The MEA Youth Census [which used to share congregations' contact information for potential students with colleges] has been discontinued because of data privacy concerns. Poor response rates and lack of broad congregational representation make the historical youth census data unreliable."

Private school "sticker shock" — the overall cost before financial aid — may also play a role.

"While the actual price of a private college might be the same or even less than a state school, many families do not even consider a private or Mennonite college because of the sticker price," Hadaway said.

ALL THREE COLLEGES that responded to questions pointed out that the decrease in Mennonite students has

resulted in more diverse campuses.

"Bethel College has benefited from the greater diversity of backgrounds and experiences of our students," said Eric Preheim, Bethel's director of admissions. "I don't believe we have done anything to become less attractive to Mennonite students. We still have great support from our Mennonite students and families for the values we espouse and the Mennonite connec-

tions that exist at Bethel."

In rare exceptions to the trend of decline, Bethel and Bluffton each added 11 Mennonite students last fall.

"We work hard to recruit students who would be a good fit for Bethel College," Preheim said. "Enrollment went up again for the college, and we're happy to say that our increase in Mennonite students was part of that growth." ●

Mennonite Brethren enrollment sinks as well

Mennonite enrollment at Mennonite Brethren higher education institutions in the United States is a small fraction of what it was a decade ago.

MB and Mennonite enrollment at Tabor College was 68 students in 2022-23, based on student-reported information at enrollment, or 12% of the student body last fall. There were 155 MB and Mennonite students enrolled 10 years earlier, making up 25% of total students. Of those numbers, 18 non-MB Mennonite students were enrolled in 2012, compared to 10 students this year.

Numbers were lower at Fresno Pacific University, where MB enrollment has decreased to a greater degree than overall enrollment. Across all programs, 28 MB students were enrolled in fall 2022, down from 161 MB students a decade earlier in fall 2013. MB students were 4.4% of the student body in 2013, but are now .9%, with the highest numbers in traditional undergraduate (16) and graduate (11) programs.

MB enrollment at Fresno Pacific Biblical Seminary went from 17 of 157 students in 2013 to only one of 111 students last fall. — *Tim Huber*

AMBS symposium unites Jews and Mennonites to counter antisemitism

JEWISH AND MENNONITE leaders and scholars gathered May 8-10 in Elkhart, Ind., for conversations on Scripture, faith and theology at a symposium hosted by Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary.

“Jews and Mennonites: Reading the Bible After the Holocaust” brought together eight rabbis and Jewish scholars and 14 Mennonite pastors and scholars seeking to grow in mutual understanding, build relationships and counter antisemitism together.

“This symposium broke new ground in Mennonite-Jewish dialogue with compelling content, relationship building and frank discussions,” said Rabbi Noam Marans, the American Jewish Committee’s director of interreligious and intergroup relations. “Even as we learned more about one another, there was no avoidance of the most challenging issues.”

The event was the second in a series of gatherings following the 2017 adoption of the “Seeking Peace in Israel and Palestine” resolution by Mennonite Church USA delegates in Orlando, Fla. One of the resolution’s commitments is to “seek deeper relationships with Jewish communities and actively oppose antisemitism.”

A first conference, “Mennonites and the Holocaust,” was held March 16-17, 2018, at Bethel College and resulted in the 2021 publication of *European Mennonites and the Holocaust*, edited by Mark Jantzen and John D. Thiesen, in association with the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. Discussions are underway about potential future gatherings.

Jackie Wyse-Rhodes, AMBS associate professor of Hebrew Bible, appreciated being able to strategize with rabbis and Jewish scholars about ways to avoid anti-Jewish readings of Scripture.

“I have no doubt that this remarkable symposium will serve as a touchstone for AMBS going forward



Andy Brubacher Kaethler, associate director of the Institute of Mennonite Studies, welcomes participants to “Jews and Mennonites: Reading the Bible After the Holocaust” on May 8.

PHOTO: JASON BRYANT/AMBS

“[AMBS is] training our students to call out and condemn latent and overt antisemitism in some streams of Christian biblical interpretation and in our communities.”

— Jackie Wyse-Rhodes

as we pursue and prioritize interreligious dialogue,” she said. “What we learned in our three days together is already helping us develop additional strategies for training our students to call out and condemn latent and overt antisemitism in some streams of Christian biblical interpretation and in our communities.”

Rabbi David Sandmel, chair of the International Jewish Committee for Interreligious Consultations, expressed

hope that Mennonites will continue the symposium’s work.

“It is heartening that some in the Mennonite Church are seriously addressing these important and difficult matters, and especially that they have chosen to do so in a dialogic process with representatives of the Jewish community,” he said. “The biggest challenge is ensuring that the fruits of these discussions are disseminated and come to inform the daily life of the entire Mennonite community.”

AMY-JILL LEVINE opened the symposium with a public plenary address, “Misunderstanding Judaism Means Misunderstanding Jesus and Paul.” Levine is Rabbi Stanley M. Kessler Distinguished Professor of New Testament and Jewish Studies at Hartford International University for Religion and Peace and professor emerita at Vanderbilt University.

Levine presented reasons why Chris-



Participants in the “Jews and Mennonites: Reading the Bible After the Holocaust.” Seated: Amy-Jill Levine, Reni Dickman, Jackie Wyse-Rhodes and Mary Schertz. Standing: Yehiel E. Poupko, Joel Miller, John Kampen, Matthew Thiessen, David Sandmel, Barbie Fischer, Ted Hiebert, Max Weiss, Mark Jantzen, Lisa Schirch, Jamie Gibson, Sarah Tanzer, Paul Keim, Malinda Elizabeth Berry, Noam Marans, Drew Strait, Isaiah Friesen, John D. Roth and Andy Brubacher Kaethler. PHOTO: DEANNA RISSER/AMBS

tian sermons and teachings continue to perpetuate antisemitic impressions and discussed common mistakes Christian preachers and teachers can make about the Jewish contexts of Jesus and Paul. She encouraged Mennonites to profess a “high Christology,” in which Jesus’ uniqueness is expressed for Christians in terms of his divine identity more than in terms of his ethical teachings, which can be found in Jewish sources as well. She told Christians they “need not make Judaism look bad in order to make Jesus look good.”

John Kampen, distinguished research professor at Methodist Theological School, presented “Neighbors, Strangers and Tragic Consequences: Background to Jewish-Mennonite Dialogue.” He traced the relationship between Jews and Mennonites from the 16th century to the present and referenced a meeting held in 1980 at AMBS, “The Shalom Consultation of Jewish and Christian Pacifists.”

The symposium addressed topics for dialogue and provided opportunities for conversations. Sarah Tanzer, professor of New Testament and early Judaism at McCormick Theological Seminary, and Ted Hiebert, Francis A. McGaw Professor of Old Testament Emeritus at McCormick, led a discussion on the Law versus grace/faith based on a course they have co-taught, “Biblical Foundations of Jewish and

Christian Difference.” They invited participants to consider how and why Paul polarized the Law and faith. They also discussed the roles that Torah, or the Law, played for the writers of Deuteronomy and the rabbinic interpreters.

John D. Roth, project director of MennoMedia’s Anabaptist Community Bible initiative, said the gathering was an opportunity to get acquainted with Jewish scholars and “to be reminded of the Jewish context of the New

“This symposium was the first time I have ever felt there was true hope that I could be wholly accepted as a Jewish Mennonite.”

— Barbie Fischer

Testament and the various ways that Christian interpretations of the New Testament can easily slip into anti-semitism.”

BARBIE FISCHER, executive director of Restorative Encounters in the Philadelphia area, moderated a panel on Jewish and Mennonite expectations for the future of religion in North America and beyond. Fischer partic-

ipated in the symposium as a Jewish Mennonite.

“As someone raised in the Anabaptist tradition with Jewish heritage who found a home in the Mennonite church, this symposium was the first time I have ever felt there was true hope that I could be wholly accepted as a Jewish Mennonite,” she said. “My biggest joy in being interfaith is the complexity and beauty my Jewish heritage brings to understanding Christianity and Christian Scripture.”

The symposium concluded with discussion about future conversation topics for Jews and Mennonites, such as messianic Judaism; Mennonite and Jewish understandings of Israel, Zionism and the land; what Mennonites and Jews can do to combat the resurgence of antisemitism in the United States and beyond; how Mennonites can reckon with their history of involvement in Nazism; and how to include more Black, Indigenous and other people of color in conversations between Jews and Mennonites.

“The issues discussed in this symposium have direct implications for pastors and congregational life,” said Joel Miller, pastor of Columbus Mennonite Church in Ohio. “Understanding Jewish readings of Scripture, the significance of Israel for Jewish peoplehood and ways Jews are engaging their local communities helps us be better Mennonites.” ●

Brown, singer and ambassador of peace, was ‘a light to many’

TONY BROWN, whose baritone voice inspired audiences around the world in a ministry of peacebuilding with Hesston College, died May 22 after a brief illness. He was 74 and had been living near Pittsburgh.

A 1969 Hesston graduate, Brown returned to campus in 2000 to teach sociology and anthropology and serve as artist-in-residence.

Over the next nearly 20 years, he taught, counseled and encouraged students and became a mentor and role model. He worked with former President Loren Swartzendruber and former alumni director Dallas Stutzman to create a platform for a ministry of music as an ambassador of peace.

Brown founded the Peacing It Together Foundation, which supported his travel to interact with and sing for people in places of conflict.

“Tony’s gift to the world was his ability to bring together known enemies through the gift of his music and storytelling,” President Joseph A. Manickam said. “Tony’s love for all humans and his ability to easily connect across barriers was a rare trait.”



Tony Brown: “He found the joy in everything.”

PHOTO: HESSTON COLLEGE

Born in Pittsburgh, Brown graduated from Goshen College in 1971, earned a master of social work degree from the University of Pennsylvania and taught at Goshen from 1980 to 1983. He spent 17 years as assistant director of the counseling center at the University of Washington while also working as a psychotherapist.

Returning to Hesston on what was initially a one-year sabbatical, he reconnected quickly with the college

community as his love for the people of Hesston reignited.

Former Bible professor John Sharp noted that a song by Alia Gonzales, “Each Other’s Light,” became Brown’s signature song. “He was a light to many of us,” Sharp said.

With Sharp, Brown developed “Common Threads,” a show that shared the experiences of African Americans and the early Anabaptists.

Through concerts and lectures, Brown advocated for human rights and worked at reducing tensions in Northern Ireland, Bosnia, Moldova, Russia, China, Japan, South Korea, Uganda, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Thailand, Vietnam, the Philippines and Colombia. The Anthony Brown Baritone Comprehensive School was established in Uganda to serve formerly abducted child soldiers, orphans and other vulnerable children.

Stutzman said Brown “found the joy in everything, and that’s why we all cared for him so much.” He is survived by a brother, Daniel Brown; a sister, La Verne Diggs; and his companion of 16 years, Erika Shinya. ●

When Tony Brown sang, it seemed peace was possible

“WHEN I GROW UP, I want to be like you.” This was one of Tony Brown’s ways of inserting humor into conversations. It made me laugh, because he was nearly 70, and I was in my 20s.

I first met Tony in 2017 in Cali, Colombia, where Tony was exploring doing a concert in gang-surrounded neighborhoods. Tony had been a professor of my brother Daniel at Hesston College, and they continued their friendship. Through the Colombian nonprofits *Justapaz* and *Edupaz*, we went to listen and share tools for peace in the midst of violence while making a documentary, *Liderando la*

Paz (Leading Peace), which is available on YouTube.

In Colombia, wherever we went, Tony had a way of connecting with people, despite not knowing the language. As soon as he opened his mouth, the trembling sound of his voice captivated the audience, and people would instantly turn their heads in his direction.

One of Tony’s songs was “I Am a Small Part of the World”:

*I am a small part of the world.
I have a small hand which to hold.
But if you stand by my side,*

*And you put your hand in mine,
Together we can be so strong and bold.*

He sang this song in one of the most dangerous gang territories in Cali. While he was singing, it seemed peace was possible. This song is also special because Tony sang it on my brother’s wedding day.

I am also a musician, and because of this we had a special connection, despite our age difference. Tony planted a seed of love in people’s hearts. Now I can surely say: When I grow up, I want to be like you, my dear friend, Tony.

— Juan Moya, AW digital strategist



Meserete Kristos Seminary celebrated the graduation of 101 students in May. PHOTO: MERCY M.H. ABIY

Ethiopian seminary: All are invited

MESERETE KRISTOS SEMINARY in Bishoftu, Ethiopia, awarded 101 diplomas during a graduation ceremony May 20.

Seven earned a master of arts in theology and global Anabaptism, offered through a partnership with Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Mennonite Mission Network and Mennonite World Conference.

Desalegn Abebe, president of the Meserete Kristos Church, encouraged the graduates to advocate for equity, equality and justice in a world that often experiences division. This is accomplished through broadening one's horizons and an open-minded and tolerant attitude, he said.

Beverly Lapp, AMBS vice president and academic dean, and Daniel B. Grimes, former vice president for enrollment and advancement, represented AMBS at the graduation. Lapp, the keynote speaker, encouraged the graduates to continue learning.

"God delights in your learning," she said. "May your true evangelical faith manifest itself in all righteousness and in works of love, and may unity in Christ be your greatest joy and source of peace."

MKS is expanding its training to international students. Among this year's graduates were two students from Kenya. The seminary has also had students from Djibouti, Eritrea and South Sudan.

Gishu Jebecha Ebissa, MKS principal, extended an invitation to students and teachers from anywhere in the world.

To strengthen the relationship of

the fast-growing Anabaptist church in Ethiopia with sisters and brothers in the Global North, Abebe and Ebissa are making a fraternal visit to North America in June and July. ●



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More to offer than IQ: ‘You’re a person with a soul and a spirit’

SCHOOL’S OUT for the summer, and college seekers have probably already decided where they will attend, with the most desired institutions opening their doors to those with good grades and high IQs.

Some time ago, I read an article by Amy Julia Becker, mother of a teen daughter with Down syndrome, that challenged our society’s — and my own — assumptions of value. In her essay, “When Merit Drives out Grace,” Becker points to the danger of societies that emphasize personal achievement. Meritocracies engender high rates of suicide, substance abuse, clinical anxiety and depression, she writes. Her daughter has taught her a new way of being that doesn’t prioritize achievement.

A speaker at a fundraiser for genetically impaired people said something else that got me thinking. “We often place the focus on ourselves,” he said, “by asking, ‘How can we help these children?’ But they also help us.”

Wanting to understand more about worth beyond achievement, I talked to two women: Becca Coblentz, a twin to Deborah Petersheim, who has Down syndrome; and Joyce Zimmerman, big sister of Regina Yoder, who also has Down syndrome.

“What has your sister given you?” I asked them. Here’s what they said.



Lucinda J. Kinsinger writes from Oakland, Md. The author of *Anything But Simple: My Life as a Mennonite and Turtle Heart*, she blogs at lucindajkinsinger.com.

Teaches care for others. As a child, Becca often entertained her twin by swinging with her on their double-seated swing, a chore she dreaded. But learning the joy of caring for others is what propelled her into nursing school as a young woman. Now she is thankful to live next door to Deborah, believing their relationship will help her own children to learn the gift of making space for everyone.

Teaches that everyone has something to give. Becca says her mother set the tone for Becca and her siblings to think of Deborah as just another member of the family, so much so that Becca never thought of Down syndrome as odd or a hardship. As the family watches Deborah’s sweet spirit and loving relationships, they have all learned that everyone has something to give, regardless of looks or talents.

Inspires family togetherness. When Joyce Zimmerman learned, at age 14, that her baby sister had Down syndrome, at first she wondered what her peers would think. But the whole family soon fell in love with baby Regina. They worked together at teaching her, and every development, from waving bye-bye to walking to reading, became a milestone to be celebrated. Becca says her family also became teammates while caring for Deborah.

Accepts others. Both women talked about the acceptance their sisters give to others. “She’ll love you whether you’re covered in tattoos and piercings or whether you look like a very pious person,” Becca says. A high school student who used to ride the bus with Deborah wrote a letter telling the family how special she felt when Deborah laid her head on her shoulder.

Perceives thoughts and emotions. People with Down syndrome often seem especially tuned in to other

people. Joyce remembers Regina’s schoolteacher saying, “She can read personalities like the back of her hand.” Regina tells many stories to her favorite doll, inserting real-life circumstances and friends and family — with names changed — into her stories.

A person with Down syndrome doesn’t see whether you have a good career or financial or academic success.

“Just listen,” Joyce says, and you will discover she has everyone around her all figured out.”

Models trust. Joyce often struggles to trust God and is amazed by her sister’s faith. Regina handled the death of their mother with a simple belief that she was in heaven, and when the time was right, Regina would go, too. “When she prays, I often have to hold back the tears at her honesty,” Joyce says. “When she’s wrong, she tells God about it like he’s just simply a friend.”

Is poor in spirit. In a sermon once, Becca was struck by Jesus’ words, “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” She thought of Deborah. A person with Down syndrome doesn’t see whether you have a good career or financial or academic success, Becca says. To them, “you’re a person with a soul and a spirit, and that gives you value.” Their view of life is pure and untouched by pride. “They teach us so much simply because of who they are,” Becca says.

Yes, people with Down syndrome, as well as those with other impairments, have gifts to offer. When we open our hearts to these beautiful people, we too can be recipients of their giving. ●

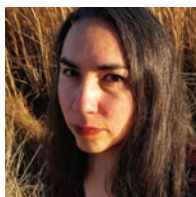
These students prove I am not alone

IT IS SPRING on the farm where I live on the lands of the Yakama Nation. An invisible community of microbes is at work in the soil, making it possible for grass seeds to germinate and flourish. The fields that surround me are bright green with grass shoots. The water table is high, and ducks and redwing blackbirds are building families in the wetland a few steps from my front door. Mosquitoes are in full flush, feeding the flocks of swallows nesting in the barn. Calves are playing and bucking through the warm sunny days, exploring and then returning to their mothers.

Our mutual dependence with the elements of creation is clear in this ecosystem I am blessed to live with. My elders taught me that my well-being depends on the health of my relatives that live around me, both human and plant, insect and animal. Even the invisible communities I don't understand are crucial — the fragile microbial community in the soils, the cleansing cycles of the aquifer.

The choices I make impact all of those around me, and the ability for those around me to thrive impacts my ability to thrive.

This same logic is true in our human family. The choices we make impact those around us. For my family to thrive, I must be invested in the health of all families.



Sarah Augustine, a Pueblo (Tewa) woman, lives with her family in White Swan, Wash. A member of Seattle Mennonite Church, she is co-founder of Suriname Indigenous Health Fund and executive director of the Dismantling the Doctrine of Discovery Coalition.



Arleth Martinez and Manny Villanueva lead the One Circle student club at Goshen College.

PHOTO: COURTESY OF SARAH AUGUSTINE

A GROUP OF YOUNG PEOPLE demonstrated this recently in Goshen, Ind. On May 11, a delegation from the Goshen College One Circle student club held a community event where they explained to their community that they have requested to meet with Indiana Attorney General Todd Rokita.

Arleth Martinez and Manny Villanueva, the leaders of One Circle, explained that they want to understand why Indiana joined a federal lawsuit challenging the Indian Child Welfare Act. They have requested a meeting to ask the attorney general why Indiana is siding against Native American tribes.

The Indian Child Welfare Act, passed in 1978, strengthens the legal rights of Indigenous families and specifies that when Native children are removed from the care of their families, priority placement is in the care of extended family members, families in their own tribe or Indigenous families from another tribe. It also supports tribal communities by helping them to build capacity through their family, community and culture to prevent abuse and neglect.

Most important, it gives tribal governments the legal right to be party to child welfare decisions.

The case is before the Supreme Court now.

The One Circle club at Goshen College is committed to solidarity with Indigenous peoples. These young people are committed to caring for the health of Indigenous children and Indigenous families. They understand that they may not be able to impact the hearts of the Supreme Court. But they are still asking the leaders in their state to be accountable for participating in a challenge that may hurt Indigenous communities.

Arleth Martinez explained that she feels connected to the plight of Indigenous children. She was undocumented as a child and felt constant fear of being taken away or deported.

“I felt shame toward my culture. I faced racial discrimination throughout school,” she said. “When we can connect to our culture, it helps have pride in ourselves and a sense of belonging. That’s what ICWA stands for.”

PUBLICLY STANDING with Indigenous communities, Arleth and Manny see their actions connected to their commitment to peacemaking. They are seeking shared understanding and acknowledgment of how our decisions impact each other’s lives.

The actions of Manny and Arleth have lifted my spirit, because I know that I am not alone. Others share my cares.

Paul says in 1 Corinthians 12, “The eye cannot say to the hand, ‘I have no need of you,’ nor again the head to the feet, ‘I have no need of you.’ On the contrary, the members of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable. . . . If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it.”

When we show up for each other, when we acknowledge our mutual dependence, we are all strengthened. We know that we are not alone. We are honored, and we get to rejoice. ●

Some can't sidestep war's hard choices

RUSSIA'S INVASION of Ukraine on Feb. 24, 2022, marked a major escalation in a war that began already in 2014. Since then, those of us in North America have looked on in horror at scenes of cities laid waste, families fleeing their homes as refugees, waves of newly deployed weapons and caskets lined up in rows.

Most news agencies report that at least 50,000 combatants and civilians have died in the conflict, with perhaps 300,000 suffering injuries.

Barely remembered amid the carnage unfolding in Ukraine are violent conflicts in far-flung places like Afghanistan, the Central African Republic, Somalia, South Sudan and Syria.

Like most contemporary wars, the violence in Ukraine does not demand a personal moral decision for those of us in North America, at least not in the form of military conscription. Superpowers today tend to fight their wars by proxy. What they need is expensive equipment — missiles, drones, advanced electronics — not massive armies. They need our tax dollars, not our bodies. Draft cards, conscription lotteries and alternative service are receding memories.

But for many in the global church, moral questions raised by war and violence are urgent and consequential. Recently, the Church of the Brethren in Nigeria commemorated its 100th anniversary, with church members and

guests across the country gathering for worship and celebration. As they gathered, they also remembered the lives of more than 8,000 members who were violently killed in recent years. Nearly 100 of the 276 Chibok schoolgirls kidnapped by Boko Haram in 2014 are still missing.

For many in the global church, moral questions raised by war and violence are urgent and consequential.

In 2013, a member of the South Korean Mennonite Church was sentenced to 18 months in prison for refusing to report to military training. Though the laws are slowly changing, military service is still mandatory in South Korea. In a country where the military is a crucial component of citizenship, identity and coming of age, the decision not to participate comes with great social, economic and psychological costs. Conscientious objectors who elect alternative service — which is generally limited to prison work — must serve twice as long as military conscripts.

THE EVANGELICAL Mennonite Church in Burkina Faso is also facing a moment of profound testing. Once known for its political stability, the West African nation is confronted with a host of serious security issues. Deadly attacks by radical armed groups and violent responses by local militias and government troops have led to massive internal displacement, instability and widespread school closures. Nearly 1,000 civilians were killed in the conflict in 2022, and even the national army has been implicated in several horrific massacres of civilians.

In response to the growing insecur-

ity, religious organizations are among those who have made large voluntary financial contributions to the government's "Patriotic Support Fund." This spring, the Protestant Federation — which includes the Evangelical Mennonite Church among its members — informed each church of the expected amount of their donation. Mennonite church leaders have requested prayer support from the global church as they meet with Protestant leaders to courageously protest this demand and communicate their refusal to contribute to this war fund based on their Christian convictions. It remains unclear whether the general draft announced by the government in April will include a provision for conscientious objectors.

At its most recent meeting in Abbotsford, B.C., the Mennonite World Conference Executive Committee adopted a "Declaration on Conscientious Objection" to offer encouragement to brothers and sisters in the global church who are facing pressure to support military solutions.

"We as Mennonite World Conference," the statement reads in part, "are dedicated to Jesus and his example and understanding of peace. . . . His example forms the foundation for our understanding of conscientious objection — objecting to participation in mechanisms, systems and actions that lead to war, violence, and death."

PRAY FOR THE churches in Burkina Faso, South Korea, Nigeria, Colombia and elsewhere who face daily pressure to conform to the logic of violence. Pray for our churches in North America who are drawn to the seductions of Christian nationalism. And ask how you and your congregation can respond creatively, courageously and compassionately to the suffering of innocent people, even as we bear witness to the resurrection claim that life is more powerful than death. ●



John D. Roth is project director of MennoMedia's Anabaptism at 500 and secretary of Mennonite World Conference's Faith and Life Commission.

A stressed-out preacher, ‘Get the hell out!’ and a neighbor waiting for Jesus

AS WE PREPARED TO MOVE, our future neighbors warned us about Cliff and his family. They never came out of their house. They dressed in black. Cliff drove a loud truck. No one knew where they came from. It was the typical stuff that people say about others who are different.

We love to figure out people without taking the time to actually figure them out.

Stereotypes save time, because once we have labeled people we can get back to the business at hand while keeping an eye on them in case we need to call the police.

We moved, and many of the observations we had heard turned out to be true. But the innuendos and privileged narrative that lay beneath turned out to be false, as is usually the case.

Stereotypes are only partial truths and usually the part that is least relevant to the whole.

Jesus took time for the whole and refused to accept the half-truths about Mary Magdalene, the woman at

the well with multiple husbands, Zacchaeus the little bandit and just about everyone else he met — except for the Pharisees, who wore their half-truths on their sleeves and for whom the half-truths usually turned out to be the whole truth.

Those who are full of themselves usually don't have a very complex narrative. It is all right there for everyone to see. What bothered the Pharisees was that Jesus wasn't impressed with them or their accomplishments. He was much more interested in what was inside. And these religious leaders didn't have much going on inside.

ONE DAY I CAME HOME from a stressful day at church and just wanted to escape. But what I heard was Cliff and his family having another hard day. It sounded like a painful conversation for everyone.

Without thinking too much, I stepped over the fence that divided our homes, walked across the lawn and knocked on the door.

What I heard next was “Get the hell out of here!” I didn't hesitate.

A week or so later I was outside working, and so was Cliff. I yelled out to him. He looked up and said, “Was that you who came by our house last week?” I nodded.

He went on: “I'm sorry for what I said. We were having a hard day.”

“That's OK,” I said. “I was just thinking maybe I could help sort things out for you. You know, as a pastor . . .”

“Oh my God, you are a pastor?”

“I am.”

“I am so sorry. My wife and I've been really struggling, and I started reading my Bible just a few weeks ago. And I'd like to come to church.”

Cliff didn't necessarily look like

church material — stained white T-shirt and always a black top hat with a little ponytail.

But Cliff was waiting to be led to Jesus, as much as the Ethiopian eunuch was. And Cliff, like the Ethiopian, was reading his Bible, too.

I'm pretty sure the Spirit plopped

We only hurt ourselves when we write people off because they don't look like church material.

me into Cliff's life just as Philip was dropped into the eunuch's, even if there isn't biblical evidence to suggest the eunuch used the h-word to welcome Philip up to his chariot.

But the results were the same. Both eunuch and Cliff found Jesus. Both the eunuch and Cliff were baptized.

CLIFF BECAME an active member of our congregation. Every Sunday, until he and his family moved out of town two or three years later, he sat beside me and Heidi in the second row from the front of the church.

I miss Cliff. He became one of my best friends. He grew in his understanding of what it meant to follow Jesus. He reconciled with family. He made peace where there had been division.

He reminded me that we only hurt ourselves when we write people off because they are different and don't look like church material. These saints don't wear their accomplishments on the outside. But wow, are they ever beautiful on the inside. Believing the stereotypes never lets you in on that little secret. ●



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Don't forget the cattle

POP QUIZ: What animal(s) appear in the Book of Jonah? If you answered “a large fish,” you’re half right. (And yes, it’s a “large fish,” not a whale.)

To get full credit on this quiz, you would also need to mention the cattle.

If that last sentence has you scurrying for your Bible to check this claim, you’re probably not alone. In fact, given the drama with the large fish, even the most careful reader could easily miss the cattle.

After narrating the episode with Jonah and the large fish, describing the repentance of the people in Nineveh and recounting Jonah’s anger at what has transpired, the book ends with a remark from God that Nineveh contains many people worthy of care “and also much cattle” (Jonah 4:11, in several translations).

Why the cattle? In a book that seems to be intended to highlight the importance of human repentance, why should the author choose at the last minute to mention cows (although some translations simply say “animals”)?

The remark about cattle might seem misplaced. Yet, when read alongside the account of Genesis 2, with its description of the creation and commissioning of the human creature, the remark in Jonah about cattle might be more understandable.

This comment might demonstrate the ways in which the God of the Bible is portrayed as one who cares passion-



Jonah, the fish and Nineveh, stained-glass window at the Church of St. Mary the Virgin, Norfolk, England. PHOTO: HOLMES GARDEN

ately about the created world — and wants humans to care deeply about it as well.

IN GENESIS 2, the second story of the world’s creation, the Creator charges the human with an important task: serving the created order (Genesis 2:15). I am struck by the particular language the narrative uses here: the Hebrew word *‘avad*. While some translations render this verb as “to keep,” “to watch over” or “to take care of,” the most literal translation is “to serve.”

The same word is used elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible to describe unequal power relations between humans, in which one human operates in servitude to another. When read here in Genesis 2:15, then, the use of *‘avad* suggests that humans are not just to keep the Creator’s creation operating according to the status quo. Rather,

the human is to act as though the nonhuman creation has a higher status than humans.

The image that emerges in Genesis 2 is that of a Creator who wants humans to prioritize care for the nonhuman creation. When this passage is read alongside the depiction of God in Jonah, suddenly the seemingly random comment about Nineveh’s cows seems less accidental. Rather, both texts support an image of God as one who cares for the nonhuman creation and who hopes humans will participate in such care as well.

Serving creation can take many forms, and the remark about cattle at the end of Jonah may be a good reminder of this. Although most of the story describes human actions, the final comment about the cattle reminds readers of the inextricable link between human and nonhuman creation.

When the people of Nineveh repent, they save themselves from almost certain destruction. This allows them to continue to care for, feed — and, yes, even serve — the cattle identified in the book’s final verse.

The Ninevites have not only fulfilled the spiritual task of repentance. They have also worked toward fulfilling Genesis’ commission to humans to serve nonhuman creation.

WHAT MIGHT IT MEAN for us to take a cue from Genesis and Jonah by serving nonhuman creation?

Most of us don’t interact with cattle on a daily basis, but there are ways we can fulfill our Creator’s mandate to serve creation in other ways. Watering plants, weeding a garden, feeding chickens, even walking family pets could be ways to serve nature and the creatures God made.

As the summer months provide an opportunity to revel in the created world, may we be attentive to the ways we can serve God’s creation in its many forms. ●



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What do we mean by ‘inspired’ Word?

ONE HUNDRED AND ONE years ago, on May 21, 1922, the prominent liberal pastor Harry Emerson Fosdick preached his most famous sermon, “Shall the Fundamentalists Win?” He addressed three issues that fundamentalists insist are essentials — or “fundamentals” — of the Christian faith: the virgin birth of Jesus, the inerrancy of Scripture and the second coming of Christ. Fosdick didn’t so much argue against these ideas as against the idea of excluding from the Christian faith those who don’t adhere to them.

I first read this sermon in a church history course at the evangelical seminary I was attending. “According to Fosdick,” the professor exclaimed, “all of us are fundamentalists!” We laughed at the notion. We were evangelicals, not fundamentalists.

In his new book, *Godbreathed*, Zack Hunt goes on the offensive against the fundamentalist approach to biblical inerrancy. According to Hunt, fundamentalists commit the sin of bibliolatry — worshiping the Bible alongside the God revealed in it. They approach the Bible as a divine answer book instead of as the grand narrative of God’s liberation of humanity and all creation.

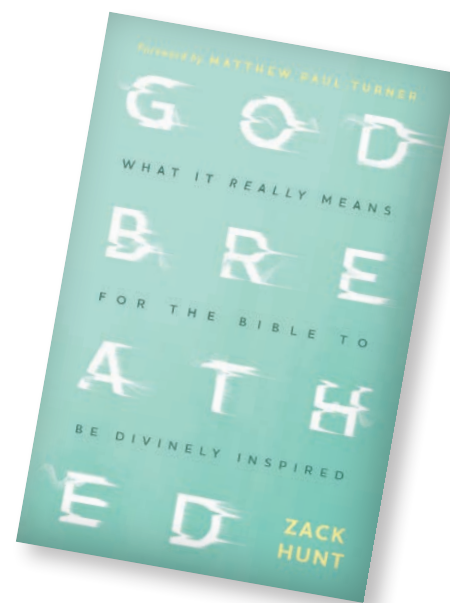
In rejecting the inerrancy of Scripture, Hunt is not rejecting the inspiration of Scripture. Rather, he is charting a different understanding of inspiration than that of the fundamentalists. In place of “verbal plenary inspiration” — in which God directly communicated the exact words of Scripture to its human authors — Hunt proposes a view of inspiration in which “the writers of the Bible were inspired to write their stories because those stories had inspired them.” For Hunt, “true inspiration — biblical inspiration — is the Spirit of God coming to dwell within us and within our world.” Rather than viewing inspiration as a way to defend doctrine, Hunt proposes viewing it as a way of entering into a story that stretches back to the earliest biblical authors.

Hunt recounts the rise of fundamentalism in the United States (including a nod to Fosdick’s sermon) and tells of his own upbringing as a fundamentalist and how he was led out of it. This story involves Hunt coming to grips with the fact that there are errors in the Bible — not just scientific and historical errors but even errors in moral judgment. (For instance, Hunt discusses the Old Testament command to carry out genocide, the New Testament prohibition of women speaking in church and the endorsement of slavery that appears in both testaments.)

Since the point of reading Scripture, for Hunt, isn’t to get all the answers right, errors are not to be explained away. Instead, following the third-century African theologian Origen, Hunt argues that biblical imperfections can drive us to seek a deeper meaning underlying the literal meaning. He suggests we follow the lead of the fourth-century African theologian Augustine, who argued that a faithful reading of Scripture must be guided by love of God and neighbor. Hunt proposes this “Origen/Augustine framework” as an alternative to a fundamentalist reading that leads to damning anyone who disagrees with one’s doctrines.

HUNT’S RECOVERY of these approaches to biblical interpretation as an alternative to fundamentalism is to be commended. At the same time, his book raises several questions that remain unanswered. First, how is it that the exemplars of Hunt’s approach, Origen and Augustine, were led to such radically different understandings of the faith? Origen’s reading of Scripture led him to embrace Christian pacifism and the hope of universal reconciliation. Augustine’s reading led him to justify killing in war and to develop a doctrine of hell that many fundamentalists would happily claim.

Second, does inerrancy entail fundamentalism? Fosdick didn’t believe so. “We should not identify the Fundamen-



Godbreathed: What It Really Means for the Bible to Be Divinely Inspired, by Zack Hunt (Herald, 2023)

talists with the conservatives,” Fosdick stated in his sermon. “All Fundamentalists are conservatives, but not all conservatives are Fundamentalists.” Hunt repeatedly suggests that those who hold to inerrancy believe that those who disagree with them will burn in hell for eternity. This may be true of the fundamentalists he encountered, but it is not what I have experienced among many nonfundamentalist evangelicals, even as I have moved away from adhering to inerrancy myself.

Finally, in Hunt’s approach, what makes biblical inspiration unique? Hunt proposes that we are all “god-breathed,” or inspired, to live out the story of God’s people, just as the biblical authors were. While this view is inspiring, one need not be a fundamentalist to believe the Spirit had a role in inspiring Scripture beyond breathing life into its human authors. ●

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What is Christian nationalism?

Seeking power, some don't want to let democracy get in the way of God's will

JULIE GREEN had good news when she stood up to speak during the ReAwaken America Tour's latest stop in May at the Trump National Hotel Doral near Miami. God had told her that Joe Biden was on his way out, she said, according to videos of the event. And God's people were going to win.

"We're in the greatest battle for the soul of the nation this nation has ever been in," said Green, an Iowa pastor known as a charismatic prophet and fervent supporter of former President Donald Trump.

God's people, as Green's theology makes clear, are her fellow Christians. And they would win, she added, because they would not give up: "You're not quitting on what is rightfully yours," she told the audience.

Green's comments captured an essential element of Christian nationalism: The idea that America belongs to and exists for the benefit of Christians. Green's fellow ReAwaken America Tour speakers — disgraced former Lt. Gen. Michael Flynn, Roger Stone, Eric Trump and MyPillow CEO Mike Lindell, alongside pastors and prophets — are some of the loudest and best-known proponents of the ideology, which helped fuel Trump's rise to the White House and has made national headlines since the Jan. 6 riot.

But its ubiquity and the charge it carries in the current political debate have made Christian nationalism a malleable term — directed at times at anyone who supports Trump and adopted by some who call themselves Christian and take patriotic pride in their country.

As a result, few people actually understand what Christian nationalism is, said University of Oklahoma sociol-

ogy professor Sam Perry, co-author with Andrew Whitehead of *Taking America Back for God: Christian Nationalism in the United States*.

Perry and Whitehead define Christian nationalism as "a cultural framework that blurs distinctions between Christian identity and American identity, viewing the two as closely related and seeking to enhance and preserve their union."

Perry contrasted that view with "civil religion" — such as when Martin Luther King Jr. invoked the promises of the Declaration of Independence or President Barack Obama led a grieving congregation in singing "Amazing Grace." These moments combined spiritual ideas and political moments.

Christian nationalism, Perry said, is more about who should be in charge.

"The difference between Christian

About a third said the government should stop enforcing the separation of church and state.

nationalism and civil religion is Christian nationalism says this country was founded by our people for a people like us, and it should stay that way," he said.

IN 2022, THE PEW Research Center found that 60% of Americans surveyed agreed the nation's founders intended the country to be a Christian nation. Forty-five percent agreed the U.S. should be a Christian nation. But even among those who say the country should be a Christian nation, only about a quarter said the country should be declared a Christian nation (28%) or should advocate for Christian values (24%). About a third said the government should stop enforcing the separation of church and state.

Matthew D. Taylor, a Protestant scholar at the Institute for Islamic-Christian-Jewish Studies in Maryland, says the idea of dominion over all areas of life is central to what he refers to as Christian supremacy, a term he prefers to Christian nationalism.

Christian supremacy, he said, is more about Christians ruling over others. He said existing research into Christian nationalism is concerned with beliefs about the history and identity of the United States but misses



Ingersoll

the idea that "Christians should be privileged in society and should exert a coercive effect on society."

Sarah Posner, author of *Unholy: Why White Evangelicals Worship at the Altar of Donald Trump*, recalled seeing Christian nationalist themes in 2011 at a God-and-country prayer rally organized by then-presidential candidate Rick Perry. "It was definitely 'we need to take back America,'" she said.

But before the Trump era, that meant using democratic means. Since 2020, the focus has been on rejecting the results of elections. "Before Trump, no one had permission to stage a coup," Posner said. She believes the arguments over definitions of Christian nationalism can overshadow the movement's main focus, which is power: "They have said that America is a Christian nation. How much clearer do they have to be?"

Julie Ingersoll, professor of religious studies and author of *Building God's Kingdom: Inside the World of Christian Reconstruction*, stresses that when Christian nationalists say their candidate or party was chosen by God, they really mean it. And they may not be willing to let democracy get in the way of God's will. ●



Perry

Opinion: Pope Francis brings credibility as mediator in war

POPE FRANCIS has launched a peace mission aimed at finding a settlement of the Russia-Ukraine war, upsetting Ukraine's allies with his refusal to insist that Russia leave Ukraine as a starting point for negotiations. For their part, the Russians simply ignore the pope.

Western supporters of Ukraine accuse the pope of moral equivalency, treating both sides as equal. This is nonsense. Just four weeks into the war, in March 2022, the pope condemned the “the violent aggression against Ukraine” and the “senseless massacre where every day there is a repetition of slaughter and atrocities. There is no justification for this!”

The Vatican has always said it wants a “just peace.” When America Media's Gerard O'Connell asked Archbishop Paul Gallagher, the Vatican's foreign minister, what a just peace meant for the Vatican, Gallagher said it meant a withdrawal of Russian troops from Ukrainian territory.

Francis has also noted “the interest in testing and selling weapons” to combatants in the war. There is no question that the American military-industrial complex is profiting in Ukraine, financially as well as strategically: The Russian war machine is being severely degraded without the loss of a single American life.

“While we witness the ferocity and cruelty of Russian troops,” Francis told *La Civiltà Cattolica*, “we should not forget the problems, and seek to solve them.”

The pope is not cheering on either side in this war, which is an essential quality needed in a mediator. The pope has appointed Cardinal Matteo Zuppi as a special envoy for peace

in Ukraine. Both sides have used the Vatican for facilitating exchanges of prisoners, which is a good sign.

WITH UKRAINE UNWILLING to give up any of its territory — including Crimea, which Russia annexed in 2014 — is there something else that would allow Putin to save face in defeat? I think there is: nuclear weapons.

The West has always feared the Red Army sweeping into Europe. This is the reason NATO exists. Because the U.S. and Europe were unwilling to pay for enough conventional weapons to stop what they considered a formidable force, they relied on tactical nuclear weapons to deter the Soviet Union and now Russia.

We now see that the Russian army is more show than substance. If Ukraine alone can hold off the Russians and score victories, NATO would wipe the floor with them without using tactical nuclear weapons.

This military reality calls for a rethinking of NATO's nuclear policy. As part of settling the Ukraine-Russia war, NATO and the U.S. should do two things: First, swear off the first use of nuclear weapons in Europe. Second, negotiate the elimination or at least reduction of tactical nuclear weapons in Europe.

Ukraine will have to agree to not “officially” join NATO. The war has already made Ukraine part of NATO unofficially. Ukraine would continue to receive weapons, but no NATO troops could be deployed on Ukrainian soil.

Putin, as an authoritarian autocrat, can continue this war indefinitely. The West must give him something to get him to stop. He could save face by telling his people that the war succeeded in forcing NATO into this deal.

There is a temptation to let the war go on as long as Russia suffers huge military losses, in the hope that the war's failure will bring down Putin. But Ukraine is also suffering both

military and civilian losses.

The pope reminds us to look at “the human side of the war” — the deaths, the refugees, the widows and orphans. The war cannot be examined only in terms of geopolitical calculations. Too many people are dying. The pope is right in calling for peace. Giving up tactical nuclear weapons in Europe would be a small price to pay for it. ●

Thomas J. Reese is a Jesuit priest and longtime journalist who formerly edited *America*, a Catholic journal of opinion published by the Society of Jesus, commonly known as the Jesuits. Founded in 1540 by St. Ignatius of Loyola, the Society of Jesus is a religious order of clerics noted for its emphasis on education, social justice and human rights. Pope Francis is a Jesuit.



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New books highlight women's leadership in New Testament

EMERGING FROM the narrow entrance to a cave south of Jerusalem, scholar Joan Taylor found herself saying a blessing for Salome.

Salome is described in the Gospels as following and ministering to Jesus and is named as one of many women present at his death and at his tomb after his resurrection.

Ancient Greek graffiti inside the cave asks “holy Salome” for mercy, suggesting to Taylor and her travel companion, scholar Helen Bond, that Salome may have been remembered as a healer in the early centuries of the church, just as many of Jesus’ male disciples were.

“These early women disciples of Jesus should be celebrated,” Taylor said, sitting outside the cave in the British Channel 4 documentary *Jesus’ Female Disciples: The New Evidence*. “They were as important to the early Jesus movement as the men were. They are clearly there in our texts, and to forget that is a shame. If it’s all about men and the 12 men around Jesus, we’re forgetting the other half of the story.”

Taylor and Bond — who also wrote *Women Remembered: Jesus’ Female Disciples*, to be published in July — aren’t the only scholars working to restore the picture of Jesus’ first female followers. Several new books are taking a fresh look at the roles of women in Jesus’ ministry and in the early church.

Nijay Gupta — professor of New Testament at Northern Seminary and author of *Tell Her Story: How Women Led, Taught and Ministered in the Early Church*, released in March — said that while in seminary he reconsidered his belief that the Bible forbade women from leadership in the church. He had been warned to stay away from women studying for a master’s degree in divinity because they were being “disobedient.” He ended up marrying one.

The more women he met in seminary, the more he realized they be-



Several new books take a fresh look at the roles of women in Jesus’ ministry and the early church.

PHOTOS: RELIGION NEWS SERVICE

lieved the same things he did about the truth of the Bible. Two years of research into what the Bible said on the topic started with him writing a paper on why women shouldn’t be in ministry and ended with him writing a paper on why they must.

In the New Testament, Gupta encountered Nympha (Colossians 4:15), who not only hosted a church in her home but is described in the same way church leaders are described elsewhere. When writing about her in *Tell Her Story*, he was tempted to name the chapter “The Most Important Early Christian You’ve Never Heard Of.”

He also reencountered Mary, the mother of Jesus, whom he always envisioned frozen in time as a teenager in the Christmas story. But, he realized, she was there throughout Jesus’ life, at his death and even afterward among the disciples when the Holy Spirit arrived at Pentecost.

OTHER SCHOLARS have focused their attention on individual women who receive passing reference in the New Testament. Phoebe, whose name appears in a list of greetings from the apostle Paul at the end of Romans,

takes center stage in Susan Hylen’s *Finding Phoebe: What New Testament Women Were Really Like*, published in January. The two verses about Phoebe (Romans 16:1-2) describe her as “sister,” “deacon” and “benefactor.”

Hylen, professor of New Testament at Emory University, uses those lines as a jumping-off point to investigate some of the “vague clues” the New Testament gives about the lives of the women in its pages. She offers historical context to help readers reach their own conclusions about the roles women played in the early church.

“I sense right now that there are a lot of churches where it hasn’t been conventional for women to have leadership roles, but people are open to it,” she said.

Much of what is being written now about women in the New Testament “is really an evangelical phenomenon,” said popular author and public scholar Diana Butler Bass. “I think these questions have been, by and large, explored very thoroughly, and pursued with great success, in Catholic and liberal Protestant circles for more than four generations already, but now evangelicals are just finding them.” ●

Keller bridged divisions among evangelicals

TIM KELLER, an influential Presbyterian Church in America minister who bridged divisions among evangelical Christians, has died. He was 72.

Known for his brainy and winsome approach to evangelism, Keller founded Redeemer Presbyterian Church in Manhattan in 1989 and grew the congregation into a hub for a network of churches in New York City. His 2008 book, *The Reason for God: Belief in an Age of Skepticism*, reached *The New York Times* bestseller list. His books have sold more than 3 million copies.

Born Sept. 23, 1950, in Allentown, Pa., Keller pastored a Presbyterian church in Hopewell, Va., and taught at Westminster Theological Seminary before moving to New York to plant

Redeemer. The church became known for its traditional worship style and for Keller's sermons, which he delivered in a suit, appealing to the mind as well as the heart. It eventually grew into a congregation of more than 5,000.



Keller

Author Jonathan Rauch became friends with Keller in recent years. Despite their differences — Keller was a conservative evangelical pastor while Rauch is Jewish, atheistic and openly gay — Rauch never doubted his friend's love.

"Though he was a man of profound

learning, he always expressed it with curiosity and humility," Rauch said. "Though he was devoted to the church and a builder of institutions, he never forgot that individuals come first. Tim's pastorate was universal, a gift to believers and unbelievers alike. When I hear the term 'Christlike,' I'll think of him."

Known for his conservative but non-confrontational approach to ministry, Keller came under fire from critics who said his winsome approach to engaging with culture no longer works in such a polarized time.

Keller was part of a 2017 closed-door gathering of evangelical leaders who met at Wheaton College to try to figure out the movement's future in the age of Donald Trump.

"As the country has become more polarized, so has the church, and that's because the church is not different enough from modernity," Keller said at the meeting. "There's now a red evangelicalism and a blue evangelicalism." ●



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There's power in the ordinary church

Hillsong was extraordinary. My church is the antithesis of Hillsong.

THE FIRST TWO EPISODES of the recent FX documentary, *The Secrets of Hillsong*, detail the downfall of the church in New York City and around the globe. First, we watch Hillsong NYC and its pastor, Carl Lentz, rise to power and influence. Over the course of a decade, tens of thousands of people, including young people from diverse backgrounds who had abandoned or never attended church before, flocked to hear Lentz preach. Justin Bieber got baptized. Selena Gomez showed up.

Hillsong NYC was a cultural phenomenon. It looked like a rock concert, with a buff, tattooed and yet emotional pastor pacing the stage amidst crescendoing worship songs and powerful words of prayer. All the cool kids lined up outside in their ripped jeans and leather jackets, waiting to attend one of the seven weekend services.

But soon we learn what was happening behind the scenes: abuse of power, abuse of finances, sexual misconduct, disregard for women and racial/ethnic/sexual minorities. According to the documentary, this is an Icarus-like fall. Carl Lentz flew too close to the sun of Brian Houston, his mentor and founder of Hillsong who couldn't stomach the degree of adulation and attention surrounding his protégé. Instead of arranging a cover-up, as Houston did in the case of other potential scandals, he seems to want to oversee Lentz's disgrace.

But the problem of Hillsong NYC goes deeper than the scandals surrounding a few celebrity pastors. The problem of Hillsong arises with the desire to be an extraordinary church led by extraordinary communicators and extraordinary musicians creating an extraordinary experience. When it comes to church, we don't need to be entertained. We don't need to be wowed. We need ordinary churches with ordinary people doing ordinary



Hillsong Church London holds four services, attended by 8,000 people, every Sunday at the Dominion Theatre. PHOTO: HILLSONG CHURCH LONDON

There are plenty of places to be impressed and entertained. Church does not need to be one of them.

work in communion with an extraordinarily loving God.

FOR 11 YEARS NOW, my family has attended a very ordinary church. The building is nondescript, with clean, old red carpet, furniture donated when members were upgrading their living rooms and various works of mediocre spiritual art. The service is standard, with a call to worship and a prayer of confession and some hymns that soar and others that stumble. The people are your everyday sorts, with teachers and plumbers and electricians and

secretaries sitting in the pews.

I write that it is all ordinary, but of course, as C.S. Lewis once put it, "There are no ordinary people." The only people we encounter are those created in the image of God, those formed and shaped with the purpose of participating in God's work of redemptive love in and among us. And so, when those very ordinary people gather for an ordinary service in an ordinary building on an ordinary Sunday morning, it can become something quite extraordinary.

Our pastor was out of town a few weeks ago, so she asked me to lead the service. I stood up front and looked to the pews as Joan, age 89, passed communion to our daughter Marilee, age 12. Nearly eight decades apart, they looked each other in the eye before they shared the broken body and blood of Christ.

When I stood in the pulpit to receive

people's prayer requests, I noticed a visiting family with a daughter with Down syndrome. Our daughter Penny is 17, and she also has Down syndrome. In the past few years, our congregation has welcomed a toddler with autism and other teenagers with intellectual disabilities.

And here a new family sat, another unexpected indication that after years of this church welcoming Penny without any fanfare or special programs, other families with kids with disabilities might find this a safe and welcoming place, too.

I gazed out upon the congregation and I saw the single moms. I saw the older man who was told as a child that he wasn't smart, the one who is now reading through the Bible on his own and soaking in the story of God's big, wide, long love for humanity. I saw the stories of loss and the stories of hope.

WE ARE THE ANTITHESIS of Hillsong, in part because we are situated in rural Connecticut with an aging population. But ordinary churches can thrive in cities, too. The recent death of pastor and author Tim Keller (page 43), founder of Redeemer Church, also in New York City, underscores this truth.

Yes, Keller's preaching was extraordinary. And yet Redeemer worked hard not to become an extraordinary church. Keller himself was shaped and formed as a pastor in Hopewell, Va., with a small congregation of blue-collar workers. The spirit of that community carried to Redeemer, where Keller preached from behind a music stand wearing nondescript clothing flanked by traditional prayers and hymns. Keller established multiple churches throughout the city rather than one central megachurch dependent upon his presence.

Ordinary churches can be liberal and conservative in their theology. They can be found in cities and suburbs and on rural country roads. But they are all places where people find simple ways to connect to a transcendent, loving, guiding power outside of themselves. They are places where an unexpected community of diverse ages, abilities and backgrounds gathers to provide support and friendship and care. They are places going through

the ordinary motions of reading the Bible, serving communion, praying, eating together, caring for one another and caring for their community and expecting the Spirit of God to show up in their midst.

There are plenty of places to be impressed and entertained. Church does not need to be one of them. And let's be clear: Ordinary, non-impressive churches have plenty of flaws, but they are less likely to develop narcissistic leaders and toxic cultures. They are more likely to be dependent upon the work of the ordinary people.

The power of the gospel is not made manifest through celebrity sightings or auditoriums flooded with hipsters. The power of the gospel is made manifest when people gather in ordinary spaces to participate in God's extraordinary work of love in this world. ●

Amy Julia Becker is the author of four books, including *To Be Made Well: An Invitation to Wholeness, Healing and Hope* (Herald Press, 2022).

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EMPLOYMENT — CHURCH

North Lima Mennonite Church in northeastern Ohio is looking for a half-time associate pastor. The church is affiliated with LMC, a network of Anabaptist congregations that seeks to be a Spirit-led movement to make disciples of Jesus. The pastor will serve the church primarily in the areas of pastoral care, administration and by preaching once a month. The Mennonite salary guidelines will be used to determine a support package. Direct inquiries to nlmennonite@att.net or 330-549-2333. (8-9)

Bethel College Mennonite Church, North Newton, Kan., invites applications for a full-time co-pastor to join a pastoral team in collaborative leadership. This welcoming, inclusive congregation desires to follow Jesus, corporately and individually. We seek a pastor who is firmly grounded in Anabaptist faith and who has gifts in preaching, planning and facilitating intergenerational, creative worship and providing leadership to a committed team of lay leaders and noncredentialed staff. Inquiries should be directed to Kathy Neufeld Dunn, Associate Western District Conference Minister, Kathynd@mennowdc.org. (7-8)

First Mennonite Church of Morton, Ill., seeks a full-time lead pastor. The lead pastor is the shepherd of our congregation, teaching and equipping our congregants in partnership with church leadership. The lead pastor will serve by providing pastoral care, preaching and leading administrative duties in partnership with church leadership and staff. Salary is commensurate with LMC guidelines. For more information, please contact Brayton Boss at braytonboss@yahoo.com. (6-8)

Deep Run East Mennonite Church in Bucks County, Pa., is seeking a Senior Pastor to lead our multistaff ministry. More information about our church and a job description can be found at deepuneast.org. If interested, contact Mosaic Conference Minister, Josh Meyer, at fmc.joshmeyer@gmail.com. (5-12)

EMPLOYMENT — GENERAL

Eastern Mennonite Missions seeks full-time Hub 450 ministry director to lead a self-sustaining community/ministry center with services for immigrants in Lancaster, Pa. Requires cross-

\$1.50 a word. Send ads to classifieds@anabaptistworld.org. For information about display ads or online advertising, see anabaptistworld.org/ads. To inquire about display ads or online advertising, email advertising@anabaptistworld.org or call 316-283-3670.

cultural and leadership experience and strong team-building and communication skills. Responsibilities include operations, partnership/volunteer development, and grant writing/fundraising. Apply by June 23 at emm.org/ employment — start in August. (8)

Western District Conference seeks half-time Business Manager beginning July 10, at North Newton, Kan., office (some remote work possible). Responsibilities include financial management, bookkeeping, reporting and payroll. Qualifications include accounting or bookkeeping experience, computer and communication skills. Position description and application form at mennowdc.org/wdc-staff-position-opening. Please submit application form and letter of interest to heidirk@mennowdc.org. (7)

EMPLOYMENT — SCHOOL

Canadian Mennonite University seeks an experienced, human-skilled, student-centered academic leader to serve as Registrar. The Registrar is a key member of the CMU's academic leadership team, reporting directly to the Vice-President Academic. Providing leadership to enact the academic vision of the institution, the Registrar will work closely with the Dean of Student Life to ensure a cohesive student experience across academic and non-academic programs and student services. View details at cmu.ca/employment. (8-9)

TRAVEL

This Christmas in Europe! Register Today! Holiday trip of a lifetime to Germany and Austria! Dec. 5-13, 2023: Scenic Alps, Lodge in 12th-century castle, "Silent Night" Chapel, Christmas Markets and Concert in Vienna. \$2,969 plus air. See a video at vimeo.com/790944746 and facebook.com/groups/847981909644550 on Facebook for more information. Brochure and registration at pilgrimtours.com/groups/martensgroup2023.htm or contact Pastor Weldon Martens, weldon.martens@gmail.com; 402-202-9276. (6-10)

2024 Greece tour and cruise — Following the footsteps of Paul. Details coming soon! Join the interest roster. Contact Pastor Weldon Martens, weldon.martens@gmail.com; 402-202-9276. (6-16)

COMING EVENTS

50th anniversary, New Creation Fellowship Church, Newton, Kan., Oct. 7-8, 2023. We want to include as many participants as possible as we celebrate God's faithfulness. For those who cannot attend, send memories. Please contact nfcoffice.assistant@gmail.com or jeanne.houser@gmail.com or write 221 Muse St., Newton, KS 67114. (7-8)

LODGING

North Newton guest housing — 316-283-5231; vadasnider@cox.net. (10-9)

Hesston, Kan., guest housing — 620-217-1187; andrew.sharp@hesston.edu. (7-8)

Obituaries

obituaries@anabaptistworld.org

Faye Marie Nyce

Faye Marie Nyce, 89, of Landis Homes, Lititz, Pa., died April 29, 2023, at Hospice and Community Care in Mount Joy.

Born near Goshen, Ind., she was the daughter of Levi G. and Ruth Tyson Hochstetler. She was married to Donald J. Nyce for nearly 62 years. He preceded her in death on Nov. 30, 2021.



Nyce

She was a lifelong member of the Mennonite church, since 1996 at Landisville Mennonite Church. She attended Goshen College. After high school she was recruited as the first secretary at Mennonite Mutual Aid (now Everence) in 1952. She spent several weeks teaching summer Bible

school in North Dakota and Minnesota. In 1956 she entered voluntary service with Mennonite Board of Missions. This took her to Grants, N.M., where she worked in a clinic, serving Navajo people and others. For two years she worked at the Credit Bureau of Grants.

Faye and Don were married in Grants in 1960. Later in life, with her husband, she spent a year in Americus, Ga., volunteering at the headquarters of Habitat for Humanity International. In 1993 they spent three months doing volunteer work in northern Brazil with Faye's brother and sister-in-law, Otis and Betty Hochstetler. Interspersed with these events, she worked at Messiah College in Grantham, Pa., as a secretary and at Holy Spirit Hospital in Camp Hill, Pa., as a licensed practical nurse. In earlier years, Don and Faye were youth advisers as well as Sunday school teachers at the church they then attended. Faye was also the church treasurer. She wrote many worship materials, as well as articles published in magazines.

She is survived by sons Edward of Ephrata and Douglas (Dawn) of Harrisonburg, Va., and son-in-law Rodney (Sheri) Yoder of Mountville. She was preceded in death by a daughter, Pam Nyce Yoder. She is also survived by five grandchildren; Sheri's two children; and a brother, Otis Hochstetler of Brasilia, Brazil. She was preceded in death by sisters Gladys Hochstetler, Lois Miller and Fern Begly and brother Ernest Hochstetler.

A memorial service will be at 11 a.m. June 24 at Landisville Mennonite Church.

Joan L. Gingrich

Joan L. Gingrich, 89, of Lititz, Pa., formerly of Landisville, Pa., died May 9, 2023. Born in Lancaster County, she was the daughter of Clarence R. and Martha Longenecker Nissley.

She graduated from Eastern Mennonite High School, Harrisonburg, Va., in 1951 and later attended Eastern Mennonite College.

She married James M. Gingrich in 1955. Two years later, they and their 9-week-old twin daughters began a four-year term of service with Eastern Mennonite Missions in Honduras. Returning to the United States, they settled in Landisville, where she raised her growing family and volunteered with local church organizations.



Gingrich

In later years, she was employed by EMM as a receptionist, where she enjoyed meeting new people every day. An active member of Landisville Mennonite Church, she was a Sunday school teacher, a leader of the women's sewing circle and served in outreach to young families. In

retirement, she and Jim spent quite a few winters in Phoenix, volunteering with local service organizations.

Joan lived and shared her core values — compassion, generosity and service — with her family and all who knew her. She was caring and patient and had a beautiful, genuine smile for all. Her hands were rarely still. She delighted in hosting guests in her home and was a superb cook and baker. She was an excellent seamstress and outfitted her four young daughters. Later she used her skills to create beautifully knitted shawls and quilts.

Fun-loving and adventurous, she was always curious and interested in the people and places she visited. Classical and a cappella music touched her soul and in recent years became a vehicle of expression when spoken language was no longer possible. Throughout her long journey with Alzheimer's, she maintained a gentle and loving spirit.

She is survived by her husband; four daughters, Trula Gingrich of Lititz, Twila Gingrich of Lititz, Jonelle Shenk (Elvin) of Lancaster and Alicia Gingrich (Kirsten Peachey) of Oak Park, Ill.; a grandson; and three siblings, John Nissley (Faith, deceased) of Lititz, Reba (Mervin Hess) of Lititz, and Nancy (Paul Hess) of Willow Street.

Phyllis Hershey Carlson

Phyllis Carlson, 92, of Overland Park, Kan., died May 29, 2023. She was born Aug. 22, 1930, in Upland, Calif., to Laona Pearl Book Hershey and Charles Hershey.

Shaped by her baptism in the Brethren in Christ church, she enrolled at Messiah College in Pennsylvania, where she met Bob Carlson. In 1953 she married Bob, graduated with a degree in education and started her first teaching job. She then made the difficult decision to abandon the Brethren head covering and conservative attire. In 1959 the young family, with two children, moved to the District of Columbia,

where Bob was chaplain at a youth residential center. Then the family moved to Newton, Kan., where Bob was the associate pastor at Bethel College Mennonite Church in North Newton.

After taking early motherhood in stride, her creative and instructive spirit pulled her back to the classroom. She earned a master's degree in educational psychology from Wichita State University in 1969.



Carlson

In the '60s and '70s she was deeply stirred by the women's movement. Her energy for equality drove her to lead her sixth-grade class in a protest against gender discrimination

that nearly got her fired, but her petition to allow girls to sign up for shop class and boys for home economics was successful. In Newton, she created a women's investing club and years later forged a community for women by starting a lunch group at Rainbow Mennonite Church in Kansas City. A charismatic and inventive teacher, she taught fifth and sixth grades in the Newton public schools for 18 years and was the first Newton teacher to use a computer in the classroom. In 1991 she received the "woman of the year" education award in *The Newton Kansan*.

At Bethel College Mennonite Church she was the first woman chair of the congregation. She also served on the Bethel College Board of Directors for 12 years.

In 1991 Phyllis and Bob moved to Tokyo, Japan, where for four years she taught sixth grade at Nishimachi International School. In 1997 they moved to Overland Park. In retirement, she found a spiritual home at Rainbow, served on church committees, led small groups, taught writing classes at Lansing Correctional Facility and was immersed in her community.

Artistically, spiritually and physically active throughout her life, she was a skilled wheat weaver and quilter, won a wind-surfing contest, sailed, biked across Kansas and climbed Mount Fuji. She and Bob traveled to 47 states and over 18 countries. She defined herself as "always a searcher."

She is survived by her husband; children Steve Carlson, Chris Ashby and Beth Carlson; five grandchildren; and son-in-law Shawn Ashby.

Send obituaries to obituaries@anabaptistworld.org or Anabaptist World, PO Box 568, Newton, KS 67114. From your text, we will prepare an obituary, up to 350 words, compliant with our style. The fee is \$50. Send check or pay online at anabaptistworld.org/obituaries.

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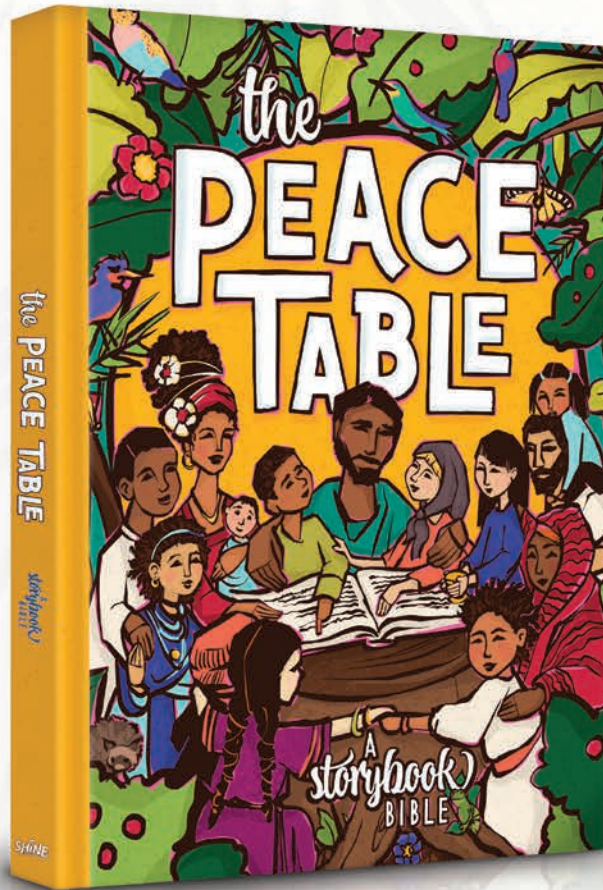


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