The Mennonite

End of an era

Inside:
- Finding Jesus at camp
- The effects of SB 1070
- How work-friendly is your church?
- A different kind of power
- Books on spirituality, science, politics

June 2011

www.TheMennonite.org
Volunteers are needed to build small furniture, display podiums and conference room tables for the Mennonite Church USA Elkhart Office project.

Architectural designs and wood provided.

Please e-mail Volunteers@MennoniteUSA.org or call toll-free 1-866-866-2876, ext. 23043.
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ON THE COVER: Insert: 1957 photo from Mennonite Publishing House archives. Background photo by Dee Birkey
LETTERS

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

—Editors

Wait until next convention
Regarding “Pittsburgh Experiment’ May Mean Few Resolutions” (April): Since it is a dramatic departure from accepted practice, and since it will be difficult to ensure that all Pittsburgh 2011 delegates will have sufficiently integrated the impact of the proposed “Pittsburgh Experiment,” it would be more prudent to wait until the following convention to discontinue the practice of passing resolutions. Also, groups that intend to network with others of like mind from distant locations across the national conference may find prohibitive the logistics of getting consensus from their group to draft a joint resolution ahead of time. Since the impact on the Delegate Assembly is akin to a constitutional revision, two years are warranted to implement such a major course correction.”—Eber Rice-Smucker, Goshen, Ind.

Saddened and distressed
Regarding “Spaulding Dismissed From Worship Council” (May): I don’t understand the denominational polity. We would be wise to be aware that this stance of the church is on the wrong side of history. It will eventually change if I and others who hold a different view stay in and work for change—just like the change in our dress, women having a voice, slavery and divorce. Change is inevitable in any church that will survive. Every change begins with someone who has thought deeply about their faith. We are all made in the image of God, and God has no favorites. Jesus, who we say we believe is the embodiment of God, hung out with and welcomed into his circles the ragamuffins of his time, the prostitutes, tax collectors, drunkards and, I suspect, those of a different sexual orientation. And Jesus said, “Go and do likewise.” And so I will. It is sad that Mennonite Church USA has said “go” to such a gifted, spiritual man. I offer prayers.
—Rebecca Sommers, Goshen, Ind.

I am distressed by the decision of Mennonite Church USA Executive Leadership to remove Randall Spaulding from membership on the Binational Worship Council. As a member of the Hymnal Supplement Committee, I observed Randy grow into his role as a denominational music and worship leader. His collaborative spirit, theological clarity, wise pastoral insight and superb musicianship were great gifts to the committee, but perhaps more than these, his vision for what the church needs to sing in such challenging times helped all of us make the choices that have made the hymnal supplements such a treasured resource in the church.

When it came time to form the Binational Worship Council, it was clear to everyone that Randy’s voice was needed. He has served there with distinction and would have helped lead the way in the creation of new worship and music resources for the church. I mourn the grievous loss of his voice, energy and wisdom. In the midst of this struggle, I am grateful for the grace God has given Randy and his congregation to continue to be kind, generous and compassionate toward all of us.
—Marlene Kropf, Elkhart, Ind.

Some medication not necessary
“Be Careful What Drugs You Take” by Gordon Houser (April) caught my attention. It was a surprise to find an article of this nature in The Mennonite, but I was glad to see it. It confirms my thinking for quite some time as to why doctors think senior citizens need mul-
Tragic results in the church
When I left the farm to spend four years in two of our church colleges to prepare, in mid-life, for pastoral ministry, I would often come home from class and say to my wife, “What will become of the church when what is taught in class today is in leadership?”

Now in my 80s, I have seen some of the tragic results. Whatever became of the old fashioned good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ and the teaching by the Holy Spirit that is available to all who know him and not just highly intellectual professors?

Theology doesn’t make one a Christian; a relationship with Jesus does. A true relationship with him will change your life and way of living. It is all about a relationship, not theology or an issue.—Percy Gerig, Lebanon, Ore.

Troubled by some letters
Thank you for publishing the Virginia winery article (January). You fulfilled your mission to be a forum for the church to discuss faith and life issues. Hopefully we can pass the test of “agreeing and disagreeing in love.”

I was troubled by some of the March letters that attacked The Mennonite for being, as I believe, the forum for Mennonite Church USA.—Maurice Brubaker, State College, Pa.

Disagrees with letter writers
I’ve been feeling sorry for the beating Everett Thomas has taken over what I regarded as extremely temperate remarks about alcohol (“Mennonites and Alcohol,” February). In the letters published in the May issue, Thomas’ words were branded as “cavalier,” “glib” and “fickle.” They were anything but. In fact, Thomas’ editorial seemed to me quite careful: respectful of tradition, on one hand, and the need for discernment by each succeeding generation on the other.—Roger Martin, Lawrence, Kan.

Mennonites and alcohol
Editor’s note: This is the third and final issue in which we will publish letters that comment on the February editorial. The following letters are published in the order they were received:

I was appalled, shocked and disappointed by the February editorial giving sanction to drinking alcohol. This is a gross contradiction of my long-held perception of Mennonites: a holy people untainted by worldly standards. They have historically “come out from the world,” refusing to “touch the unclean,” as the Scriptures define those whom God receives. Citing an increase in Mennonite drinking and seeking validation from New Testament culture, in the jargon of my college debating experience, is “begging the questions.”

This is not merely a cultural issue. It is a moral issue, giving approval to imbibing our nation’s greatest evil and supporting the nefarious liquor industry. It is a sad day when the leadership of the church mistakes evil for good. This has been the modus operandi of the mainline denominations, much to their spiritual demise. But when the conservative, biblical, evangelical church allows the world to reshape its moral values instead of changing our (Continued on page 62)
ROSS T. BENDER, EDUCATOR, PASTOR, ADMINISTRATOR, DIES
ELKHART, Ind.—Ross T. Bender, dean emeritus of Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS), died April 21 in Goshen, Ind. In his 81 years of life, he devoted himself to service and leadership in the Mennonite church, including congregational, denominational and global ministries.

Much of Bender’s service was in seminary teaching and administration. He was professor of Christian education at Goshen (Ind.) Biblical Seminary and AMBS, Elkhart, over a span of 34 years. He also served as director of the Institute of Mennonite Studies toward the end of his tenure at AMBS. He was named dean emeritus of AMBS when he retired in 1996.

Bender was pastor of congregations in Waterloo, Ontario, and Lansdale, Pa., and was principal of Rockway Mennonite High School before beginning his seminary teaching. From 1961 to 1971, Bender served with the Mennonite Mission Board. During a two-year leave from the seminary, 1972 to 1974, he was the first executive secretary of Mennonite Board of Congregational Ministries. During a later leave, 1984 to 1989, he was pastor of Glennon Heights Mennonite Church, Lakewood, Colo.

Bender was moderator of Mennonite Church General Assembly from 1981 to 1983 and president of Mennonite World Conference from 1984 to 1990. He also served on committees for the Mennonite Church, the World Council of Churches and the Association of Theological Schools.—AMBS

EANES NAMED EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF MENNONMEDIA
HARRISONBURG, Va.—Russ Eanes, director of finance and operations for Mennonite Publishing Network, will become executive director of MennonMedia on July 1. He will move to Harrisonburg, where the head office of the new agency formed by merging MPN and Third Way Media will be located.

Eanes has served MPN from Scottdale, Pa., since 2007. He played an integral role in the joint staff team that developed the business plan for MennonMedia and is currently engaged in laying the groundwork for the merger.—Mennonite Church USA

LANDIS ENDS SERVICE AS PEACE AND JUSTICE HEAD
ELKHART, Ind.—After 16 years in leadership with the Mennonite Church and Mennonite Church USA, Susan Mark Landis of Orrville, Ohio, has moved on from her position as denominational minister for peace and justice as of mid-April.

In September 2002, Landis and the MCC Washington Office initiated a “prayer and faxing” campaign that collected 17,400 signatures—enough to earn J. Daryl Byler (then executive director of the MCC Washington Office), Jim Schrag (former executive director of Mennonite Church USA) and Landis a visit to the West Wing to advise the White House on possible nonviolent resolution before the Iraq War.

Landis also raised funds for Anabaptist churches in Colombia to purchase newspaper ads inviting Colombians to a celebration of “Pan y Paz” (bread and peace) in Bogotá on Sept. 21, 2002, the
EMM considers broad structural changes

SALUNGA, Pa.—Eastern Mennonite Missions (EMM) is in the midst of an organizational review that is looking ahead to strategic changes in its administrative structures.

President Richard Showalter explains that this review is driven by sweeping changes in the global Christian movement as well as a decline in general mission giving to EMM.

Showalter says, “Mission agencies in the West are being joined by local congregations and individuals who are eager for new roles in mission, and are less dependent on the institutional expressions of the past.”

Showalter explains that in 2012 there will likely be a drop in estate funding due to the termination of income from a large estate gift received four years ago. In addition, EMM continues to see a drop in undesignated contributions. Over the past 10 years there has been an annual decline of about 3 percent in undesignated giving to EMM—giving that undergirds both field programs and general administrative costs for EMM.—EMM

The Mennonite wins seven awards at ACP

CHICAGO—At the Associated Church Press’ annual awards ceremony April 29, The Mennonite received seven awards for journalistic excellence. The seven awards matches a previous record set by The Mennonite in 2009.

Editor Everett J. Thomas received the award of excellence for “Words for Worship,” his September 2010 profile of Marlene Kropf, and poet Tania Runyan received an award of excellence for her poem “After the Annunciation” (April 2010). Eileen Ahearn received the second place award of merit for “Helping Those in the Hell of PTSD” (November 2010). Honorable mention awards went to The Mennonite’s designer, Dee Birkey, for her July 2010 cover, “Love, Sex and Marriage,” Susan Ortman Goering for her devotional article “Unity” (October 2010), Penelope Adams Moon for her February 2010 faith story, “The Push and Pull of Faith,” and Katerina Friesen for her poem “An Ethiopian Mennonite Shares the Pulpit” (February 2010).

The Associated Church Press is the oldest press association for church publications in North America and has 110 members.—The Mennonite

Donors can text to give to new Bluffton building

BLUFFTON, Ohio—Judson Laipply of online “Evolution of Dance” fame and fellow alumni Ginny Buckingham, Tyson Goings, Daryl Dowdy and Lou Stokes have helped with a Bluffton University video shoot promoting the final push for funds for the new Health and Fitness Education Center on campus.

The video shows varsity and intramural athletes, fans and musicians sharing space in Founders Hall. Along with hosting varsity basketball and volleyball, Founders serves as the venue for academic presentations and large music performances. View the video at www.bluffton.edu/reach/txt.—Bluffton University

Good Friday witness in Seattle

Participants pray with symbolic blood on their hands April 22 at the Federal Building in downtown Seattle. Seattle Mennonite Church pastor Weldon Nisly and associate pastor Sarah Klaassen led the Good Friday worship and witness. Eleven were arrested.—Weldon Nisly
Mary for Mennonites

Mistress Mary, quite contrary,
How does your garden grow?
With silver bells, and cockle shells,
And pretty maids all in a row.

The sassy lass of the silver bells and cockle shells was my first Marian acquaintance. I thought it rather bold to have “contrary” and “pretty” in the same nursery rhyme. She was someone spunky I might like to know, who’d join me in my own cantankerous ways.

As a girl, I also met Mary mother, meek and mild—the one who gave birth to Jesus—and I didn’t find her nearly so intriguing. Content to sit in my family’s crèche sets each December, she whiled away the remainder of the year in the musty basement. Her bowed image—receiving the word of Gabriel or hovering over the manger—left me flat.

Instead of quietly praying, “Let it be,” I strove for courage, justice and compassion. I would not bow like Mary. There was too much masculine power concentrated in the church, and I didn’t trust that what the church asked of me was also what God asked of me.

And I wasn’t going to accept mother Mary as a consolation prize for centuries of iniquity. I wanted a Trinity that looked more like I did—female, young, active—and more like the gifted women I saw all around me in the church and beyond. And I still do.

I didn’t trust that what the church asked of me was also what God asked of me.

As I grew into adulthood, I heard leaders in the Mennonite church caution against “Mary worship.” Perhaps these leaders worried that Christians who show devotion to Mary were less devoted to Jesus. Perhaps they—and I, too—wanted to protect Jesus from competition for our allegiance and affection. We wanted Jesus alone as our mediator, not a meek bystander to the Divine.

My heart leaned toward the contrarians in the Bible: Jacob the wrestler, the Psalmists and prophets who demand justice and mercy for all, and, often, Jesus.

Re-enter Mary.

A Mary who, before she says, “Let it be,” says, “How can this be?”

A Mary who, bursting at the seams spiritually and physically, lets loose a poem to her relative Elizabeth that is as rabble-rousing as ancient Hebrew prophets and modern hip-hop poets (Luke 1:46-55).

A Mary who gives birth to a son, rears him in faithfulness and wisdom, attends weddings with him and eventually accompanies him to the cross.

A Mary who sounds a lot like the mother eagle who “spreads its wings, takes [its young] up, and bears them aloft on its pinions” (Deuteronomy 32:11).

A Mary who mothers her son so that he might later mother Jerusalem: “Jerusalem, Jerusalem. … How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!” (Matthew 23:37 and Luke 13:34).

A Mary who, after all, does say yes to God’s plan for her.

A Mary who is full of grace: a sorrowing mother and a friend to many.

This is the Mary, “the first disciple,” so many Christians love and encounter in surprising places. Her image is painted onto chapel walls and plastic dashboard figurines. She has even begun to come out of the closets and off the shelves of some Mennonites. Prophet and witness, she is mother of God and part of the communion of saints that surround us.

Hearing stories of profound encounters with Mary reminds me that God conforms Godself “to suit our sight,”* as one poet puts it, whether filtered through the ever-faithful presence of Mary or through the words of a friend.

Mary’s re-entry into my imagination has meant a re-evaluation of her character—and my own. Perhaps the contrary and the meek are not in opposition, as I once supposed, but are brought together in the courageous persons of Jesus and his mother Mary.

May we join with Mary in proclaiming:

My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior

*From “The Blessed Virgin Compared to the Air We Breathe” by Gerard Manley Hopkins
The people of my poems love each other indirectly. Not receiving too much credit. Like the man at work today who answered “How are you?” with “Blessed.” I thought, That’s not an answer to the question. Afterward, I spent the day remembering: I’m alive and breathing, drinking tea with cinnamon. All day that was beautiful. Later afternoon, the crew team spuming wings of mist beyond me on the Mississippi, each man’s stroke and strain of back a promise to his boat-fellows, a steady line to shore. Someone else can speak about the heart of love. I’ll keep its faithful offerings. Blooming sky this evening, and footsteps at the door.

*Emily K. Bright lives in Menomonie, Wis.*
Too much information leads to bad decisions

Maybe you’ve had experiences like mine. I go to the grocery store with instructions to get cottage cheese, or yogurt or bread. I get to the shelf and find a dozen varieties of bread, half that many of cottage cheese or yogurt. Should I get low-fat, nonfat, small curd, large curd? Or I go to a coffee counter and come face to face with dozens of various kinds. My gaze gets blurry. “I just want coffee,” I tell the clerk. Fortunately, she’s encountered a dullard like me before and simply asks, “What size?” I say, “Small.” Oops, small is really “tall.” Go figure.

Do I sound like an old fogey, longing for simpler times when you were lucky to have a choice other than white bread, and no one had heard of decaf coffee (other than Sanka)? At last I have some science on the side of my complaint about too many choices.

In the article “How Mental Meltdown Comes from Information Overload” (Spirituality & Health, May-June), Stephen Kiesling refers to Barry Schwartz, a professor of psychology at Swarthmore College, who noted several years ago that having more choices does not make us happier. In fact, “increasing the number of possible choices not only makes decisions more difficult, it makes us less happy with whatever we finally choose.”

Schwartz’s article, “Can You Say No to Too Many Choices?” (Spirituality & Health, May 2007), made the following observations (among others):

• As the number of potential partners people encounter in an evening of “speed dating” increases, the number of matches they make decreases.

• As the number of retirement plans available increases, the chance that people will choose any plan declines.

• As the number of job possibilities available to college seniors increases, their satisfaction with the job search decreases. Job seekers who want the “best possible” job, although they get more and better offers than seekers aiming for “good enough” jobs, are less satisfied nonetheless. They are more stressed, anxious, pessimistic, regretful, disappointed, frustrated and depressed.

Since this article was published, Kiesling reports, neuroscientists doing brain research have raised another serious alarm. Angelika Dimoka, director of the Center for Neural Decision Making at Temple University, says, “With too much information, people’s decision making makes less and less sense.”

Dimoka had volunteers take part in an experiment that involved trying to get the best price, given “a dizzying array of possible options.” She found that as the information load increased, so did activity in the dorsolateral prefrontal cortex (PFC), a region responsible both for decision making and controlling emotions.

Sharon Begley of Newsweek interviewed Dimoka and reports: “As the bidders were given more and more information, at some point the activity in the dorsolateral PFC suddenly fell off, as if a circuit breaker popped. … They start making stupid choices because the brain region responsible for smart decisions has essentially left the premises. For the same reason, their frustration and anxiety soar.”

Kiesling draws lessons from such research. One is empathy for those who have to handle large-scale disasters and face an onslaught of information. Another is how we face the onslaught of information we encounter each day. “The closer we stay plugged in,” he writes, “the closer we stay to that moment when the dorsolateral PFC shuts down, and all our decisions become bad ones.”—Gordon Houser

Pontius’ Puddle

Joel Kauffmann
We’ve come up with this idea that Muslims are our enemy and that Muslim terrorism and extremism are the most important enemies we should be combating. I think this is bogus.—Miroslav Volf, author of Allah: A Christian Response, in Christianity Today

The emotional and rational are intertwined
Researchers across an array of diverse fields—neuroscience, psychology, sociology, behavioral economics—remind us of a few key insights, writes David Brooks in a March 7 column. “First, the unconscious parts of the mind are most of the mind, where many of the most impressive feats of thinking take place. Second, emotion is not opposed to reason; our emotions assign value to things and are the basis of reason. Finally, we are not individuals who form relationships. We are social animals, deeply interpenetrated with one another, who emerge out of relationships.” He goes on: “We don’t only progress as reason dominates the passions. We also thrive as we educate our emotions.” This research is scientific, “but it directs our attention toward a new humanism,” he writes. “It’s beginning to show how the emotional and the rational are intertwined.”—New York Times

5 ways to save $1 trillion from the Pentagon
1. Reduce aircraft carriers: $15 billion for each of 11 carriers
2. Use more unmanned aircraft: $500 billion
3. Shrink missile defense: $60 billion
4. Reduce global presence: $287 billion
5. Trim spy spending: $112 billion
—Time

People of mixed races or ethnicities growing
The crop of students moving through college right now includes the largest group of mixed-race people ever to come of age in the United States, writes Susan Saulny in the New York Times (Jan. 29), and they are only the vanguard: the country is in the midst of a demographic shift driven by immigration and intermarriage. “One in seven new marriages is between spouses of different races or ethnicities, according to data from 2008 and 2009 that was analyzed by the Pew Research Center,” she writes. Multiracial and multiethnic Americans (usually grouped together as “mixed race”) are one of the country’s fastest-growing demographic groups. “Many young adults of mixed backgrounds are rejecting the color lines that have defined Americans for generations in favor of a much more fluid sense of identity.”—New York Times

No slaveholders allowed
On April 30, delegates to the Thomas Jefferson District of the Unitarian Universalist Association voted overwhelmingly to drop the name, with its slave-holding legacy. The district that spans North and South Carolina as well as parts of Virginia, Georgia and Tennessee will be known as the Southeast District.—Religion News Service

Unwelcome
In the United States since 1950, 13 million more people have been deported than were granted permanent residency. The number of deportees is up in the last 20 years and is accelerating thanks to the Secure Communities program designed to deport people with criminal records. In reality, this program is deporting undocumented immigrants guilty of petty crimes. For example, the Valenzuela brothers have received notice of deportation hearings. U.S. residents since 1955, both are Vietnam veterans suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder, which they claim led to their separate misdemeanors.—Christian Century

10 best things to do for animals
1. Rejoice we are part of the animal kingdom.
2. Respect all life.
3. Open our minds, in humility, to animals to learn from them.
4. Teach our children to respect and love nature.
5. Be wise stewards of life on earth.
6. Value and help preserve the sounds of nature.
7. Refrain from harming life in order to learn about it.
8. Have the courage of our convictions.
9. Praise and help those who work for animals and the natural world.
10. Act knowing we are not alone and live with hope.—Yes! Magazine

Farm subsidies
• Percentage of farmers in the United States who did not collect subsidy payments in 2007: 62
• Percentage of subsidies collected by 10 percent of farms from 1995 to 2009: 74
—Yes! Magazine
A century of publishing ends at Scottdale, Pa.

mention 606 to anyone nurtured in Mennonite congregations since the publication of the red 1969 *Mennonite Hymnal*, and the rich harmony and lively tempo of “Praise God from Whom All Blessings Flow” will come to mind. This “Mennonite anthem” of praise, often sung enthusiastically from memory, stirs the soul, renews the spirit and directs attention to God’s everlasting goodness and grace. Its harmony also serves as a metaphor for the strength of congregational identity and mission.

End of an era

by John E. Sharp
This hymn is a product of the Mennonite Publishing House, now Mennonite Publishing Network, which for 103 years has generated resources for Mennonite congregations and conferences in Canada and the United States. This publishing ministry of the church has been located on a hill in Scottdale, Pa., within sight of Laurel Ridge, the westernmost landform of the Allegheny Mountains. But the Scottdale era is coming to an end. Its operations will move to Harrisonburg, Va., this summer as it merges with Third Way Media to form MennoMedia. The end of the Scottdale era prompts this retrospective.

The Mennonite Publishing House (MPH) was founded in 1908 by a young cadre of visionaries who believed that a church with any promise needed to nurture its theology and shape its practice. As a representative publishing board of the “old” Mennonite Church, they consolidated the assets of two smaller, private publishing ventures and wrested control of the Herald of Truth, published since 1864 by pioneer publisher John F. Funk of Elkhart, Ind. They merged two papers, Herald of Truth and Gospel Witness to produce Gospel Herald, which served as the denominational voice until it merged with The Mennonite in 1998.

**Why Scottdale?**

When the Mennonite Book and Tract Society formed in 1892, its offices were in the home of the treasurer. When new treasurers were elected, the office moved from Elkhart, Ind., to Scottdale, Spring Grove, Pa., then back to Scottdale, where secretary-treasurer A. D. Martin lived. In 1905, Martin, Aaron Loucks and Jacob S. Loucks, all of Scottdale, organized the Gospel Witness Company with a board of nine, representing various Mennonite conferences. They published Gospel Witness, which they hoped could become the official periodical of the church.

Aaron Loucks was an entrepreneur and business leader, cofounder of numerous church institutions and pastor of the Mennonite congregation in Scottdale. Aaron’s father, Jacob, owned a large share of the land on which the town of Scottdale was built. The elder Loucks had donated the land for the Mennonite meetinghouse, built in 1893, and provided both land and finances for the Gospel Witness Company. The younger Loucks became the first publisher of the new denominational enterprise.

Clearly, the prior establishment of publishing ventures, the visionaries drawn by those ventures, the entrepreneurship of Aaron Loucks and the generosity of Jacob Loucks made Scottdale a sensible location for the new publishing house. Furthermore, Scottdale was located between the larger Mennonite populations in the East and the scattered and less developed communities in the Midwest and beyond. Daniel Kauffman, editor of Gospel Herald, said that more important than location was the right kind of institution, the character of the people who live and work there and economy. Indeed, Scottdale was promising. It was a prosperous town with a booming steel industry, beautiful homes, 13 churches, 15 doctors, four banks, two newspapers and eight daily trains.

**Daniel Kauffman,** editor of Gospel Herald, said that more important than location was the right kind of institution, the character of the people who live and work there.

**New life**

The Mennonite Publishing House, its managers and employees added to the prosperity of the town and brought new life to the Scottdale congregation. Mennonite settlers migrated to the region from Bucks County, Pa., beginning in 1789, attracted to the fertile land in the Jacobs Creek Valley. By 1850, 200 members worshipped in two meetinghouses on either side of Scottdale, at Stonerville and Pennsville. But by the end of the century, membership had dwindled to 12. Historians have attributed the decline to a number of factors, including westward migration, reluctance to make the transition from German to English in worship, and the influence of newfound wealth when coal was discovered and the coke and steel industries were developed. Evangelist John S. Coffman lamented the generation “who contended in all goodness of heart for the old ways.” The old ways were good, “but they failed to work in a way that kept the good old ways alive” and communicate them to new generations.

It was the Loucks family that had a vision for new vibrant expressions of the old faith. Grandmother Nancy Stauffer Loucks is given credit for fanning the spark into new flame. Two of her grandsons were ordained and charged with leadership—Aaron as minister and Joseph as deacon.
Coffman believed that Aaron would be an able leader. The fledgling congregation expressed its faith in a bright future by building a new meeting-house on the highest hill on the Loucks property.

The Mennonite Publishing House was a large part of the bright future. MPH became a magnet for talented and dedicated people who also served the congregation and the Allegheny Conference. They were active in its life and witness; they taught Bible school and Sunday school, preached, shared their faith in the community and started new congregations—North Scottsdale and Kingview.

**Intellectual center**

MPH’s mission was to promote reading, provide good things to read, “advance the cause of Christ and promote unity of faith in the church.” The publishing mission is important, said J. S. Shoemaker, the first chair of the publishing board and a preacher himself, because “more are being blessed through reading than through preaching.” In order to bless its readers, advance the cause of Christ, and promote unity, MPH attracted and recruited the brightest and the best: writers, editors, educators, administrators, press operators and support staff. They made Scottdale the intellectual center of the church. The writers and editors of Scottdale shaped the theology and practice of the church. They produced hymnals, periodicals, educational and devotional products, and teaching resources for every age and for every ministry, from Sunday school, Bible school and clubs to preaching, teaching and worship. As the nerve center of the church, MPH connected people to each other through its network of communication.
Scottdale also attracted new ministries. When the Commission for Christian Education was formed in 1937, its offices were in Scottdale. When Mennonite Youth Fellowship was organized in 1948 as a program of CCE, it was coordinated from Scottdale. When in 1953, the Mennonite Church appointed Paul Erb as its first general secretary, it made sense for Erb to remain in Scottdale, where he was serving as *Gospel Herald* editor. When Eugene Herr became director of Mennonite Youth Fellowship in 1958, he moved to Scottdale.

**Exiting Scottdale**

But that changed in 1971. That year, delegates meeting in biennial assembly at Kitchener, Ont., approved a new organizational structure for the binational church. The ministries of the new General Assembly would be carried out by five program boards, one of them new, and would be coordinated by a General Board. Amid rumors that there was too much power in Scottdale, the offices of the General Board and the new Mennonite Board of Congregational Ministries (MBCM) would locate elsewhere.

J. Lorne Peachey, then editor of *With* magazine, recalls a chart on a wall in a denominational office. The chart listed the qualifications for the location of new denominational offices. Of seven locations, Scottdale was last; every qualification for Scottdale was negative. The writing on the wall was clear. Scottdale would cease to be the center of power and influence. The General Board offices went to Rosemont, then later Lombard, Ill., with easy access to O’Hare Airport. MBCM offices, with a mandate to provide services to congregational education, evangelism, family life and leadership, were established in Goshen, and later Elkhart, Ind.

**A business or a ministry?**

“It is easy to become a publisher,” John A. Hostetler wrote in 1958, “but it is hard to remain one.” That proved to be true for MPH, as it did for many other publishers, but it would not become apparent for some time. A persistent question has been whether a denomination as small as the Mennonite Church could support a publishing enterprise. Publishers produce with the expectation that constituency will purchase the product and provide a return on investment. Markets change, technology changes, loyalties diminish. It was often said that if every Mennonite congregation would buy Mennonite-produced products, Mennonite publishing would remain strong. Beginning in the 1960s, congregations increasingly began shopping around—for something cheaper, more attractive, easier to teach or with a safer theology. Sometimes editors and writers stretched the limits of constituents’ tolerance with the fruits of historical-critical methods of Bible study. To write of three books of Daniel or to suggest that Jonah was an allegory was suspect. Higher criticism, the synoptic problem and the Wellhausen documentary hypothesis sounded dangerous.

During the process of merging General Conference Mennonite Church and Mennonite Church publishing agencies, the financial stresses of both agencies became apparent.

What editors and authors believed readers needed wasn’t always what readers were willing to buy. If sales of theology or history were low, was Herald Press, the book publishing arm of MPH, obligated to continue publishing the books? It was, as a service to the church. If readers wanted light reading on popular themes, more Amish novels and cookbooks, was it the role of a denominational publisher to provide them?

When in 1960 businessman-publisher Ben Cutrell followed A. J. Metzler as publisher, Cutrell asked the church whether it would subsidize publishing. The answer was no, publishing would have to pay for itself. It was difficult. Typically, the magazines struggled. Some books made money, many did not. When Provident Bookstores were added,
most became assets. In order to capitalize the enterprise and produce cash flow, MPH under Cutrell turned to debenture notes. The notes were loans from individuals, congregations and agencies for a specified length of time. Interest was paid during the term of the loan, usually slightly less than market value. When the loan expired, the lender had the option of calling in the loan or extending it for an additional term. These lenders were happy to invest in church publishing.

In 1978, MPH built a large warehouse. It raised about a fourth of the cost and borrowed the rest. At the time it made sense to build the warehouse, since it was better to print large runs and store them on the assumption that the product would eventually sell; reprinting was expensive. Now MPH had a large debt on the warehouse in addition to its debenture notes, and publishing was becoming more expensive. By the 1980s, MPH no longer had money to upgrade technology, equipment and offices. Leaders and employees, with a heart for the church, made the best of things, operated on shoestring budgets, jerry-rigged machines and renewed debenture notes. By 2001, there were 221 such notes worth $2.4 million.

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**Merger, demise, and restructuring**

During the process of merging General Conference Mennonite Church and Mennonite Church publishing agencies, the financial stresses of both agencies became apparent. Both were operating at a loss. In 2001, Faith and Life Press had an operating loss of $167,211, and MPH had a loss of $369,430. Combined losses in 2002 were $793,079. Included in the loss was an unusually large write-off of inventory previously counted as an asset. MPH initiated cost-cutting measures that included eliminating medical supplemental insurance for retirees, which raised a storm of protest. They also closed the Scottsdale Bookstore and suspended the development of vacation Bible school curriculum and the Mennonite Directory.

In 2001, J. Robert Ramer retired after 15 years as publisher. Dennis Good, who had been publisher of Faith and Life Press from 1997 to 2001, was named Ramer’s successor. Having worked in securities and investments, Good recognized a legal dilemma and refused to sign debenture note renewals. MPH leaders were not aware of changes in U.S. securities regulations. The Securities and Exchange Commission had set a limit of 35, after which it was necessary to register with the state department of corporations. Loans across state lines were also problematic. Good’s recognition of the legal dilemma set off a chain of events that ended in 2004 as a restructured agency. After a full audit disclosed operating losses and debts of $5.1 million, including the debenture notes, the Joint Executive Committee (JEC) assumed oversight of operations. The MPH board hired consultant Paul Silcox. When Dennis Good took a medical leave, Silcox became acting publisher with a mandate to restructure MPH. Silcox soon earned the reputation among employees as the “hatchet man.” Thirty-one jobs were eliminated, including about a third of Scottsdale’s workforce, saving $700,000 in payroll but creating an atmosphere of anxiety and mistrust. And there was the indebtedness. Mennonite Church USA borrowed $1.5 million from Mennonite Mutual Aid, and Mennonite Church Canada mortgaged property to back a loan of $975,000 to pay creditors, close a costly bank line of credit and fund current operations. In March 2002, the JEC, in an unprecedented move, dismissed the MPH board and assumed responsibility for operations, believing it necessary to restore credibility and to ensure a viable publishing future. Leaders of Allegheny Mennonite Conference, the regional conference that includes Scottdale, initiated a fund-raising campaign to retire outstanding MPH debt and urged the denomination to join the effort. As a result, a churchwide Barn Raising Campaign was launched to retire the debt and provide future funding. Also in March, a grievance committee called MPH to honor its commitments and restore the eliminated medical supplemental insurance benefit to retirees. In June 2002, Norman Shenk of Lancaster released the results of his thorough financial audit, the first complete audit since 1989. Shenk’s report showed a negative net worth of $67,000.

In July 2002, Phil Bontrager was appointed new acting chief executive officer to replace Paul Silcox. Bontrager’s mandate was to stabilize MPH operationally and financially, determine the appropriate resolution of the outstanding debe-
ture notes and work with the Publishing Transformation Team to implement their vision for a revised, viable publishing agency that was named Mennonite Publishing Network. Bontrager reported to the JEC members—Ron Sawatsky, Jim Harder and Ervin Stutzman—who guided the restructuring process to its successful conclusion in 2004. In September 2002, an unidentified organization made a one-year loan of $2.3 million to repay the debenture notes. Some note holders donated interest earned, and others contributed the principle.

Bontrager’s major challenges included building trust in a community that had experienced “profound change” and faced an uncertain future. He recalled recently that he attempted to walk with people in their pain, grief and anger while continuing to implement organizational changes. He found it challenging to balance the need for confidentiality with transparency, especially with news of the Enron, WorldCom and Global Crossing scandals, which generated suspicion and mistrust. MPH employees resented the parallels drawn in the church press to the fraudulent corporations. It was also unfortunate that the Scottdale community “frequently learned of decisions directly affecting them via the church press with limited context or additional information from the denominations,” said Bontrager.

Ben Sprunger followed Bontrager as yet another interim CEO and served for four months. In October 2002, the publishing board approved a “lean and clean” designed to inspire confidence and dramatically change publishing. The plan called for closing its printing operation and expected to save $82,000 a year, but it also eliminated 10 more jobs. On Feb. 1, 2003, Mennonite Publishing Network (MPN) completed its year-long restructuring plan, and in April, the interim board appointed Ron Rempel of Waterloo, Ont., as executive secretary. His start date of Aug. 1 coincided with the appointment of a new eight-member board of directors. In January 2004, the Barn Raising Campaign completed its mission by raising $1.3 million to pay more than half the short-term $2.3 million loan made by the anonymous organization. MPN planned to amortize the remaining $1 million over eight years, but in 2006 MPN sold the last of its 10 Provident Bookstores and paid off its remaining debt of $3.1 million. Finally it was free and clear.

In November 2010, after initial hesitation, Mennonite Church Canada joined Mennonite Church USA in approving MPN’s merger with Third Way Media and its relocation to Harrisonburg, Va. Rempel explained that the merged entity, to be called MennoMedia, would “be well-equipped for both print and electronic distribution.” The new agency is to serve Mennonite Church Canada as well as Mennonite Church USA, though Canadian leaders fear the reduction of MPN staff in Canada. They are also concerned that Third Way Media re-establish its services to Canada, since it has been a U.S.-based ministry of Mennonite Mission Network. From the mid-1950s to the mid-1980s, Third Way Media, then known as Mennonite Broadcasts, had staff and program in Canada.

Clearly changes were needed in recent MPH operations. But the demise of publishing in Scottdale was long in coming. The reorganization of Mennonite Church structures in 1971 and the subsequent exit of offices and ministries from Scottdale can be seen as the first sign. The changing nature of publishing, new technology, increased cost of publishing and declining denominational loyalty all figure in. So does the church’s demand for products that were not cost effective. Mennonite publishing is not alone. The list of other church publishers who have cut staff and services or have closed their doors is long indeed.

**New dreams**

When MPN leaves Scottdale, it will leave behind the 70,000-square-foot facility on the top of Jacob Loucks’ highest hill. Leaders of Scottdale Mennonite Church have written a letter asking church leaders not to abandon the building across the street but to explore possibilities for its continued service to the Scottdale community. Will they create a vision for a new ministry, just as an earlier generation did in 1908? The Scottdale business community is not thriving as it once did, but young people are coming back to Scottdale again.

Many more youth, some 200, have congregated in nearby Pittsburgh.

While we await new dreams, let us cherish what has been. When we sing 606, let us recall the contributions and dedication of the many who served the church’s publishing ministry during its 103 years in Scottdale.

**Disclaimer:** The Mennonite and one of its predecessors, Gospel Herald, were part of the publishing enterprise at Mennonite Publishing House until The Mennonite, Inc., formed a not-for-profit corporation in Indiana in August 2002.

**John E. Sharp teaches history at Hesston (Kan.) College and was pastor at Scottdale (Pa.) Mennonite Church, 1989-95.**
I counted off to my mother as I stuffed the contents into a duffel bag: “One flashlight, one tooth brush, toothpaste, a wash cloth, a towel and a Bible.” I was nervous and excited. It was the summer of 1972, and I had just finished the second grade. My friend Ellen had invited me to attend her church camp for a week, and much to my delight, my parents had given their consent.

Finding Jesus at camp

by Ann Minter Fetters

The writer’s cabin group at Camp Amigo. She is second from right in the back row. Photo provided
“No shorts or sleeveless shirts allowed,” the pamphlet read as I squinted at the small print near the bottom of the list. I refrained from mentioning this part to my mom and crammed some shorts and tank tops in with my other things. I couldn’t imagine they would make us wear pants or dresses while hiking through the Indiana woods in the sticky heat of July.

Once Ellen’s family dropped us off at the campground and we said our goodbyes, we were ushered over to the swimming pool to hear the camp rules from one of the adults in charge. My excitement soon faded as a wiry old woman lectured us. She had on a worn, plaid dress, her hair pinned up in a bun, as she told us what we could and could not do. As she went through the list, the crooked finger she had been waving in the air pointed itself right at me. “And there will be no one wearing shorts, like this young lady has on,” she scolded. “When you get to your cabin,” she said as she looked me in the eye, “you’ll be changing into long pants or a skirt.” I looked down at my pink knit shorts, humiliated at being made an example of. “And one more thing, kids,” she continued. “No peein’ in the pool.”

We campers departed quietly as we were matched up with counselors and made our way to our respective cabins. My counselor, Glenda, was a kind-faced young woman with long, honey-colored hair. Maybe this camp will be OK after all, I reassured myself, as Ellen and I picked our bunks and got settled.

I assume that we did the usual activities at camp that week: arts and crafts, canoeing, swimming, archery. I don’t remember much about our days, but I remember our nights clearly. Every evening after supper we gathered at the camp meetinghouse, sitting in our cabin groups on one of the long cement steps that rose before a concrete platform that functioned as a stage. A red-haired, lanky man known as Uncle Dave (we were to call all of the adults aunt or uncle), paced in front of us, telling us Bible stories and leading us in songs. Then, before he dismissed us, he asked for our attention and invited us “to be saved.” Night after night he warned us about the fires of hell and the certain Rapture to come. He told us that not even young children would be exempt from God’s wrath and that if we would only accept Jesus into our hearts as our Lord and Savior, we could escape from God’s punishment and live with him eternally.

“Somewhere in outer space, God has prepared a place for those who trust him and obey. Jesus will come again, and though we don’t know when, the countdown’s getting closer every day.” I remember this song especially well; a missionary lady with a gray permanent and a flowered, polyester dress flipped a spiral-bound songbook onto a page showing a drawing of Jesus, his hands spread wide, coming down from the clouds.

“Ten and nine, eight and seven, six and five and four, call upon the Savior while you may. Three and two, coming through the clouds in bright array, The countdown’s getting closer every day.”

Even though earlier that year I had made a decision to follow Jesus as my mother prayed with me by my bedside, I was afraid.

Whenever Uncle Dave extended this invitation, all shuffling stopped. The only movement was the moths fluttering around the light bulbs overhead. We were then dismissed to return to our cabins, while our counselors remained to visit with any of us who wished to make a commitment. Even though earlier that year I had made a decision to follow Jesus as my mother prayed with me by my bedside, I was afraid. What if that wasn’t enough? I thought to myself now. I’d better do it again, just to make sure. There were only two of us that stayed behind that first evening. Glenda scooted beside me and prayed with me as I again asked Jesus into my heart. The next night, too, I became afraid after hearing Uncle Dave’s preaching, and I stayed afterward. Again, Glenda prayed with me.

I remember several nights, after those meetings, when we were lying in our beds in the dark, a few flashlights shining circles around the cabin ceiling. Glenda lay in the bottom bunk of her bed, having just finished reading us devotions. “You girls need to think about where you are in your
commitment to Jesus Christ,” she said softly. “What if you wake up tomorrow and you’re the only one left in the cabin? Jesus said he will come like a thief in the night. What if the Rapture happens and you’re the only one left behind?” No one dared to say a word, although one night, after Glenda left for the bath house, I remember one girl quietly asking the rest of us: “Doesn’t this feel like a prison?”

That Sunday afternoon, as I climbed the cement steps of the meetinghouse after our closing worship session, my dad’s hand reached out to me from the top step, and I lifted my eyes to see him and my mother sitting there, waiting to take us home. The flood of relief I felt when I saw that hand was a feeling I’ll never forget.

It comes as no surprise, then, after my sixth-grade year, that I was reluctant to sign up for summer camp again. This time another friend asked me to join her for a week at Camp Amigo, a Mennonite camp in Sturgis, Mich. This was my church camp, so I knew I would feel more comfortable. I was older now, too, and figured I could handle the time away from home.

Again, our week was filled with the usual camp activities: water games in the lake, singing crazy songs on the way to the dining hall, the final talent show on Friday night. There was definitely a Christian presence, but it was totally different from what I had experienced earlier. We gathered as campers every night around a giant bonfire to sing camp songs and hear Bible stories, but the atmosphere was warm and inviting, not one full of threats and fear. This is the Jesus that I want to know, I thought then, if only subconsciously. I saw God’s love come alive in the way the staff treated us as campers. The time and attention they spent spoke convincingly of the concern and genuine care they had for us as young people. I had no doubt they were available for spiritual conversations, but that happened most often informally, both in our cabin and as we went about our daily activities. As the week came to an end, I can still remember saying goodbye to my counselor, Mary, a dark-haired beauty whose quick laugh and lively spirit had made a great impression upon me. “May God continue to bless your life,” she scribbled on the back of our group photo. “Remember, Jesus is the best friend you can ever have.”

As I look back on that first camp experience, I realize I was probably too young to be away from home for that long and that my homesickness probably colored my time there. But as the years have gone by, I have come to recognize increasingly that what was going on at that camp was nothing short of abusive. For adults to be instilling fear into the vulnerable hearts and minds of little kids, especially in the name of religion, was not only harmful at the time but surely had negative repercussions for many of those children for years to come. Fortunately for me, my other experiences growing up in the church did not reinforce that negative evangelistic approach. I don’t think I ever told my parents much about what happened that week; perhaps I needed to absorb it over time to understand it better. I am now critical of anyone who even talks about the idea of hell with a small child. And I hope that my own daughter can one day experience what I did that second time around.

The time and attention the staff spent spoke convincingly of the concern and genuine care they had for us as young people.
Boldly embody the love of Jesus

by Aaron Kauffman

A call to worship and witness

What is the most important task for the church today, with declining membership, a swiftly changing culture and a world in great need? Could it be something as simple as the love of Jesus?
When I was 17 years old I traveled to Kenya with my high school choir. One afternoon, our tour bus took us through an especially impoverished section of town. Overwhelmed by the sadness I saw on the faces through the bus window, I sent up a naïve but heartfelt prayer: “O Lord, show these people your love somehow.” Immediately the following reply resounded in my head and heart, “You show them my love.”

I shared this story with a small gathering of young adult seminarians and church leaders one weekend in November 2009. As we took turns telling our spiritual pilgrimages, we noticed that we all shared a love for Jesus, a concern for the church and a desire to be part of God’s mission in the world. These commitments have come to form the center of our identity as the Anabaptist Missional Project.

The first thing Jesus teaches about love is that it does not begin with us. Our love for God is always a response to the One who first loved us by taking on the weakness of human flesh and submitting to death on a cross. But the outstretched arms of Jesus on the cross say much more than simply, “I accept you the way you are.”


That response begins with an honest assessment of our sinful condition. Love doesn’t gloss over sin. The Son of God loved us enough to unmask our addiction to sin and take its consequences on himself. Jesus confronts personal moral failure and social injustice alike, calling everyone to repentance. We can’t love God if we refuse to admit our brokenness.

Confession and forgiveness are the first steps of response to God’s love. But the journey doesn’t end there. Jesus demands radical commitment from his followers, calling us to love God more than money (Matthew 6:24), our family (Matthew 10:37) or even life itself (John 12:25).

We prove our love for God not merely through promises and deeply held sentiments but also through simple obedience to Jesus’ commands (John 14:15). Chief among these is to love our neighbors and even our enemies, just as Jesus has loved us: truthfully, joyfully and sacrificially.

Jesus names our vocation of love most clearly in his summary of the Law and the Prophets: “‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself’ ” (Matthew 22:37-40).

But what do we mean when we say we love Jesus? We live in a society profoundly confused about the meaning of the word love. The word slides off our tongues so easily, expressing our feelings about a spouse or family member, our country, our favorite basketball team or even dark chocolate. We equate love with unconditional acceptance or “doing what comes naturally” when we feel attracted to someone.

Can Christians really use the term love and say anything meaningful at all? Or has it become like an old rubber band, stretched beyond any practical use?

One of my seminary professors urges restraint. He invites preachers to abstain from using the word love for at least six months. “If you can’t find some other way of expressing the idea,” he suggests, “perhaps you don’t really know what it means.”

We should probably say the same thing about love that Stanley Hauerwas and William Willimon have said about peace and justice: “The church really does not know what these words mean apart from the life and death of Jesus of Nazareth” (*Resident Aliens*, Abingdon Press, 1989). We must look to Jesus to know what love is.

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But there is good reason not to start with this command. We too readily assume we know what it means: “Believe in a benevolent Supreme Being and be nice to people, especially yourself.”

If we let Jesus define love, however, it should be clear that this double-love command means something more like this: “Love and serve God with the whole of your being in response to his offer of salvation; and pour out your life for your neighbor (and even your enemy), because that’s the kind of love Jesus lived.”

When it comes down to it, the love of Jesus is really about worship and witness. We worship the God who first loved us in Jesus Christ. We bear witness to that love by sharing the good news of peace with God, neighbor and creation through Christ. Worship apart from witness is empty, and witness without worship is impotent.

**What does it look like when we boldly embody the twofold love of Jesus today?**

First of all, we worship with other Christians on a regular basis. For followers of Jesus who love God with all their being, worship is not a commodity we consume but a vocation we assume. We gather with other believers to commune with God through prayer, song, Scripture, preaching, confession, Communion and celebration. Together we cultivate the habits of adoration.

This is especially important to remember as we become an increasingly activist church. I fear we have traded Jesus’ invitation to reflect his love for a Messiah complex. We think we’re the saviors of the world. Worship reminds us that the fate of the cosmos doesn’t depend on us. The Risen Lord rules from heaven, beckoning us to join in his reconciling work.

Secondly, we begin our witness at home and in the congregation. Loving our children as ourselves means winsomely sharing our faith with them. We tell them Bible stories about God’s faithfulness and testimonies of God’s people across the span of time and geography. We honor their questions and concerns but remind them that their lives are part of a drama whose central actor is the Triune God.

Too often we try to attract our wayward children through inclusion rather than conversion. It’s not enough for them to embrace Swiss or Russian Mennonite culture. Anabaptism is most centrally about radical faith in Jesus Christ. Love doesn’t substitute potluck dinners for costly discipleship.

Finally, we engage in mission that is specifically Christian. Everything Jesus lovers do, whether meeting human need, caring for creation, denouncing injustice or preaching the gospel, derives from and points toward our Lord. Mission is an integrated endeavor to embody the same love Jesus lived and taught.

We are eager to build homes, feed the hungry or protest militarism. But ask us to share our faith in Christ, and many of us develop momentary amnesia. For those who live by the double-love command, there is no dichotomy between social justice and evangelism.

Jesus issued the double-love command in response to a trick question. “Teacher,” probed the Pharisee, “which commandment in the law is the greatest?” Jesus’ response is ingenious. The greatest commandment is not one but two: adore God and cherish people. Worship and witness.

The simple elegance of this command does not make it easy to practice. Love demands everything of us. Yet we need not despair that our Lord has given us a charge we are ill-equipped to fulfill. He never expected us to be able to do it on our own. That’s why he has sent his earth-shaking, fire-breathing Spirit to embolden and empower us (Acts 2:1-4, 4:31).

As we seek to live the love of Jesus through worship and witness, let us recall the promise of our Messiah: “And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:20).

Worship apart from witness is empty, and witness without worship is impotent.

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**Aaron Kauffman** is a member of Zion Mennonite Church in Broadway, Va., and the global ministries director at Virginia Mennonite Missions. For more about the Anabaptist Missional Project, go to anabaptistmissionalproject.org.
The effects of SB 1070

A young couple in a car had their two little girls asleep in their car seats in the back. The mother and both children are citizens. The father was brought to the United States as a child, attended school here and works here but has no documentation. An officer pulled them over and asked for licenses, registration and insurance. The father could not get a license in Arizona. They gave the officer all the other documentation, and he went back to the patrol car. He returned and told them the father would be jailed, the car would be impounded and a licensed driver would have to pick it up. The mother asked if he could please tell them why he stopped them. He said, “The light on your license plate is out.” Then he noticed the kids in the back and shone his light on them. He threw the license and insurance papers at them and shouted, “Don’t you know you guys aren’t supposed to be driving?” Then he drove off. They sat there a long time, and when they were sure he wasn’t coming back, she got out of the car to look. The light on their license plate was on.
Stories about immigration told to members of Trinity Mennonite Church in Phoenix, Ariz.

Following are statements from leaders of Unidos de Gracia (the Hispanic church that meets at Trinity Mennonite on Wednesday evenings and Sunday afternoons) during a conversation with Hal Shadrer and Ron Faus:

State Senate bill (SB) 1070 is having a great impact on people with whom we minister. When Sheriff Joe visits one of our communities, our people, whether documented or undocumented, are afraid to leave the house. They don’t go to work or come to church. We view this as a grave situation, like that faced in earlier times by Jews and blacks … an issue of oppression and dignity.

The following stories were told to a participant at Trinity Mennonite:

I asked someone in the extended family of one of my clients to help me pick up a large outdoor table I had purchased. As we visited, he said he had worked for 30 years for the same employer in Arizona. Now he doesn’t know what to do or how to provide for his family. Lots of his friends have left for other states. He doesn’t know anyone in Mexico, and all members of his extended family are here.

I was talking to a colleague about the effects of the bill on families I was seeing. She said they had adopted a little boy from Guatemala, thinking that Arizona would be a good place to raise him. Now they’re not so sure. She said, Do you think I need to carry his adoption papers everywhere he goes? The answer is yes, since it would be required in SB 1070.

Do you know it is a crime to transport an illegal immigrant, with a fine of $1,000? And they can impound your vehicle for 30 days? Churches, charities and unsuspecting people are not exempt. Many charities have complained they will be unable to do their work, including taking people to doctor’s appointments. If you pick up your son or daughter’s friends, give someone a ride to church or drive kids to church camp, you may be committing a state crime without knowing it. There are many illegal aliens, including people from Canada, Ireland, England and other European nations who became illegal by staying after their visas expired. How will you know? Will you avoid transporting kids who have brown skin because you are worried about possibly committing a crime? What about people with a foreign accent? Will parents discourage their children from being friends with people of color or those with a foreign accent?

Some people were brought here without their consent because they were just kids when they arrived in the United States.

Will such actions teach racism to the new generation? When children are ill, can parents take the child to the emergency room without fear of being separated from their children (by being deported)? How many children will die at home because their parents are too afraid? What could we do to increase the crime rate more than prevent honest people from working, going to school or church or going to a doctor?

It is sad that this state is so racist. It’s affected me, family members and friends in such a dramatic way. It’s hard to say we can’t even go out to stores without getting weird looks because of the color of our skin. … Some people were brought here without their consent because they were just kids when they arrived in the United States. They didn’t have a choice; their parents brought them here to live a better life. Now, because of their parents’ mistakes, they have to pay for it? That’s unfair to them. I have family members and friends who are illegal in this country, but I can say they are not criminals. They work hard, pay their taxes and do the dirty work while getting underpaid. I agree we should punish the criminals who are killing or dealing with drugs. But why go after those who are good and work hard to raise their families and give them the opportunity they don’t have in Mexico? There should be a reform to the ones that have been here more than 10 years and have no criminal backgrounds. I forgot how human beings can be so ignorant and cruel. It hurt me a lot. I know I prayed hard and asked God to help us. And I thank him and only him for touching that judge’s heart and for blocking some of the law. I wish I could ask everyone one simple question. Do you really think God is only taking one particular color to heaven? God said love your neighbors, not hate your neighbors. I was raised in a Christian family and have uncles and aunts who are pastors. I do my best to follow God’s Word. I just wish the hate and racism would vanish and we’d all get
along. I ask you and your friends to pray for those that are in need of God’s love and forgiveness.

If people want to boycott Arizona because we are finally putting our foot down to secure our border and save our state endless amounts of money because our federal government is not doing its part, then so be it. It surprises me to hear people want to start mixing church and state only when it is convenient for them. ... Those who boycott Arizona do so based on little thought, not reality. They don’t deal with the everyday issues we do. They live in a fairy tale world, not like most working, middle-class Americans. They do not live with them as neighbors. [Illegal aliens] bring drugs into our and other states, steal from us and kill innocent people. When they are caught, they serve less time than our own citizens for the same crimes and are let out early and shipped back to Mexico, only to return again. I know of this firsthand. We drain our resources to make sure these people are taken care of, money that should be spent on our own homeless perhaps. ... I hesitated to give my opinion on SB 1070 because I believe we are all entitled to our opinion, good or bad. However, I am surprised that the boycott issue has even come up with Mennonite Church USA. People should come because that is what they had planned originally, not based on the opinions of others. How many people will they inconvenience because they decide to boycott and change plans? The rules have always been here but are just now being enforced because our state’s economy can no longer afford to continue down this road. It is in the best interests of all of us. I’m not saying they can’t come here, but they should come here the legal, proper way. (This is from a letter shared with a Trinity member.)

Those who boycott Arizona do so based on little thought, not reality.

I know a guy who was born and grew up in Mexico. His parents were U.S. citizens. He worked in the United States, driving a truck all over the country. Once he had a load to take to Vancouver, British Columbia. He had a U.S. license, but officials wouldn’t let him back into the United States, and Canadian officials detained him. After a short time, they said to him, “Why don’t you just give up your Mexican citizenship and become a Canadian citizen? Then you could get a visa to the United States.” He did this. He was young, and over stayed the visa in the United States but was afraid to apply for U.S. citizenship for fear of being deported. He has been here illegally for 27 years, and if he gets stopped, he will be deported to Canada.

I work with a family that was in the process of moving back to Mexico. The father and uncle went back to Mexico to find a place to live and get it ready. While they were there, they were shot and killed. The mother and daughter (13 years old) are still here and have nowhere to go. There is nothing to go back to in Mexico. They are dealing with a lot of fear and trauma but are afraid to come in for counseling for the daughter (a citizen) because they are afraid of being separated. I have many clients now who are too afraid to come in. Many of these clients are citizens. The problem is that one or both of the parents are not. My caseload used to be full, with a long list of those waiting for a bilingual counselor. Now only 40 percent of my clients are Hispanic.

SB 1070 was a welcome relief to me, since my politics are very conservative. If people want to live in this country, they need to come in legally, apply for citizenship and embrace America. If they are not legal, they need to go back to Mexico. I felt strongly about these beliefs and never questioned them until last week. My beliefs were shaken when I met a face in the crowd, which in this case happened to be two young Hispanic girls. They came to Glencroft to do community service to meet the requirements of their honor society.

These girls were assigned the responsibility of helping assemble 120 book bags with school supplies. This takes great attention to detail, since each bag is prepared for the gender and grade level of the child. These girls were amazing and paid attention to every detail. Maylea left after a few hours, since her high school had asked her to spend the day working as a mentor to incoming freshmen. This left Myra and me to work together. During this time it became evident we would need more supplies. I suggested lunch before our shopping trip. During lunch, I asked Myra if she was excited about her senior year in high school and what she planned after graduation. She explained she carries a 4.0 grade point average and would love to become a sports medicine doctor. I asked her about her family. She said her fa-
ther was in prison and that her mother supports the four children by cleaning houses. This has been hard in recent months since she only has four houses to clean instead of the eight she had previously. Myra explained that she could not get a job because she has no social security number, and neither does her sister Maylea. They are both in the country illegally, as is their mother. The younger sister and brother are legal because they were born here. Myra was 1-year-old when she came to Arizona, and Maylea was a month old. Neither has ties to Mexico; they are Americans who, if forced to return, probably would have to drop out of school. Both girls speak Spanish but do not write it, so they would be at a distinct disadvantage in a Spanish school system.

Suddenly I felt torn. The issue was not so black and white. Myra shared with me the fear they face daily and how her sister Maylea has nightmares they will be rounded up and sent back to Mexico. She sees the family being torn apart, since the two younger children would probably stay in Arizona.

This fear was not one sided, as I, too, suddenly became fearful. I was driving with an illegal person, a crime in Arizona. What if I were stopped? Would I go to jail? Would Myra be sent back to Mexico? It turned what should have been a joyous shopping trip into a nightmare. Suddenly I was reminded of the Holocaust and had the desire to hide Myra, Maylea and her mother in my basement or attic until proper documentation could be obtained, though this was not practical for many reasons, the biggest being Arizona has no basements or attics.

**SB 1070 has two sides.** For many years we chose to look the other way when having undocumented workers in our country? They were here in the good times to clean our houses, work as nannies for our children and maintain our yards. Now times are harder, the budget is tighter and there is new awareness because of escalating violence and crime. Many of these individuals are no longer welcome in our country.

There are many questions. How do we care for those who have been here for many years, eliminate the criminal and violent elements and stop the flow of new illegals from coming into this country? The problem is multifaceted, and the solution needs to be the same. There are many faces in the crowd. How do we provide a humane, practical and fair approach? Maybe we look to our potential leaders and cast our votes for those willing to work for a solution that addresses all the faces in the crowd.

I was driving with an illegal person, a crime in Arizona. What if I were stopped? Would I go to jail? Would Myra be sent back to Mexico?

My purpose in sharing these stories is to help us see this complex issue from many perspectives. There are areas of immigration about which many of us agree. Here are a few:

- Immigration policy in the United States is not working and needs to be changed.
- Immigration policy is complex, and no single solution will address all concerns.
- People of any legal status who commit crimes should be tried and punished accordingly.
- All human beings should be treated humanely and fairly.
- Because of the economic differences between the United States and Mexico, some limitation on immigration will need to be made.
- There needs to be a way to apply for a work permit (green card), legal status and citizenship with a clearly defined process and timelines that are reasonable. People who have been in the United States for years should be able to pursue legal status without fear of immediate deportation (otherwise no one can apply).
- U.S. Immigration policy changes based on the employment needs at various times in history.
- Anti-immigrant sentiment becomes more mainstream when people feel threatened economically.
- Fear and harassment is not the way to deal with human problems.
- There is a long history of the use of migrant farm workers and other undocumented workers in the United States.
- God is concerned about the oppressed and about injustice in our society and expects his children to be his hands and feet in the world.

May God lead and guide us as we seek to work for peace, justice and fairness for all people.

**Gayle Wiens is a member of Trinity Mennonite Church in Phoenix, Ariz.**
The two letters of the apostle Paul to the Corinthian church were written at a time of effervescent evangelizing, with conflicts accompanying this expansion. Like all first-generation churches, the church at Corinth was made up mostly of Hellenistic Judeans (see *Social Science Commentary on the Letters of Paul* by Bruce Malina). Many arguments found in the book of Acts and in the apostolic letters happened between Palestinian Judeans and exiled or emigrated Judeans who lived in a culturally Greek world and were known as Hellenists. As happened in Antioch, the Gentiles had converted to faith in Jesus of Nazareth, adding another cultural component to the church.
In such a context, the likelihood of conflict increases. Combine a diverse racial-ethnic mix finding their meeting point in a religious movement founded on the person and work of a rabbi named Jesus and the ideological elements specific to a culture in which politics, religion and kinship were one and the same, and there will no doubt be conflict and controversy. These controversies came to be important because they contributed to the emergence of theological affirmations that shaped the further development of the church and its reason to exist in the world.

**Consequences of the death of Christ**

In verses 14-15, the apostle refers to a historical event that is fundamental to the Christian faith: the death of Jesus of Nazareth, which Paul explains was of universal significance:

a. “One has died for all” (v. 14), “And he died for all” (v. 15).

b. “Therefore, all have died” (v. 14).

c. “And he died for all, so that those who live might live no longer for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised” (v. 15).

These affirmations, although extremely condensed, are one of the best summaries of the redemption and its results. And they reflect a radical change in Paul’s understanding of Jesus and his messianism. The effects of the death of Christ on the believer are clear and allow us to understand the full extent of 2 Corinthians 5:16-17: Transformed by the death of Christ, the disciples come to a new knowledge that is no longer “knowledge according to the flesh.”

Repeatedly after his Damascus Road experience, Paul states his conviction that his former opinions about Jesus and his disciples lacked substance. What he believed is no longer valid. Paul’s experience strengthened his conviction that Jesus was the Messiah. The disciples of Jesus are God’s new human creation (v. 18, 19). As a result, Paul acknowledges his change of perspective and feels compelled to proclaim that in his own life the old things have passed away, replaced by a new human being.

Unwavering in his conviction, he urges the Corinthians to remember that he has not closed his heart to them: “I speak as to my children—open wide your hearts also” (2 Corinthians 6:11-13). It is the voice of an agent of change, a passionate witness who wants to be faithful to the message of peace.

Verses 16-17 begin with the conjunction hste (“therefore”), which Paul uses to name the two consequences of the death of Christ. First, Paul has come to two conclusions about his own death and life (v. 14): he has died, and at the same time he has a new life; therefore, the worldly point of view that used to rule him is gone, corresponding with the ending of Jesus’ earthly life. What is clear is the new creation of God. Paul’s preconceptions about Jesus—whom he believed was acting out of a misguided messianic claim and whose followers he thought should be destroyed (Acts 9:1, 2; 26:9-11)—were erroneous.

Paul says that he has stopped making superficial judgments about people (v. 16). Because of this change he does not see anyone on the basis of external appearance or nationality. He has centered his Christian conduct on paying attention to the spiritual condition of those he encounters (v. 17). Thus, the differences or racial-ethnic separations and their resulting prejudices—between Judeans of Palestine and Hellenistic Judeans, for example, or between Jews and Gentiles—have become secondary or even insignificant issues.

The differences or racial-ethnic separations and their resulting prejudices—between Judeans of Palestine and Hellenistic Judeans, for example, or between Jews and Gentiles—have become secondary or even insignificant issues.

Second, Paul says that people and all human events must be viewed in the light of this new creation in Christ. “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold, the new has come” (v. 17). Because of the death and resurrection of Christ, whenever a person comes to be part of the body of Christ by faith, a creative act of God—a new creation—has happened. As a result of this new creation an old system of relationships disappears (paróletthen, aoristo), and in its place a new one is established (gegonen, perfect).

So, anyone who believes in Christ—whether Gentile, Jew, Hellenist, Samaritan, woman, slave or free—is a brother or sister, because he or she “is in Christ.” The case is different with those who do not believe in Christ, because they “are
without Christ.” The church is the congregation of a new people called to live in the fullness of life, which is inherent to the relationship they now have with the Lord of Life. This change in relationship signifies a change of attitude toward Christ and others. It is a conversion connected to a new understanding based on the cross and the passion of Christ. “For neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is anything; but new creation is everything! As for those who follow this rule—peace be upon them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God” (Galatians 6:15-16 NRSV).

Ambassadors who act in the name of Christ proclaim reconciliation that is already a benefit achieved by Christ.

From where does this blessing come? In verses 18 and 19 we are told that all things come from God. He is the one who reconciles people to himself through his Son. The verb “to reconcile” and the noun “reconciliation” are rare in Paul’s writings. They occur 10 times in all his letters; five of these references are in the passage we are studying, with the special purpose of naming the act of reconciliation between God and humans.

Reconciliation is not a future act; it is something that can be achieved right now. Reconciliation is not a polite way of ignoring or reducing hostility; in fact, it is a complete and effective removal of all hostilities (see 2 Corinthians in The Expositor’s Bible Commentary by Murray Harris). Also note the discontinuity existing between these two different orders—the old and the new. It indicates the need to be aware of the presence of the new and of its absence. Perfection continues to perfect itself.

The disciples as peacemakers

Christ is the agent of God, who reconciles (v. 19). The disciples are called to proclaim that victory by acting as “the aroma of Christ” (2 Corinthians 2:15, 16) and becoming, like their Lord, agents of reconciliation who proclaim peace (v. 19b). Ambassadors who act in the name of Christ proclaim reconciliation that is already a benefit achieved by Christ.

This new humanity is the one who must tell the world: “We entreat you on behalf of Christ: Be reconciled to God” (v. 20). This call is the way God establishes the connection between the objective work of reconciliation and its internalization or subjective appropriation. Because reconciliation is an act of removing hostility, only by being reconciled can one discover the benefit and inner joy of being reconciled. The disciples proclaim reconciliation, are makers of reconciliation and conduct themselves as reconciled people. Like their Lord, they are peacemakers—individually and corporately.

Making a pastoral connection

The study of this passage is captivating; the missional possibilities it contains are immense. It motivates us to rethink the commitment and the role of the church today. It raises questions about the relevance of the Mennonite church in the world. It helps us identify the temptations of generic Christianity and of taking care of the status quo that promotes passive accommodation. It puts us on guard against the secular ideal of a “melting pot” that hides hostilities rather than resolving them.

It exhorts us to avoid seeing and judging the world, events and people “according to the flesh” and neglecting the point that through the cross of Christ God calls us and invites us to true reconciliation. It clarifies the nature of community as witness of the kingdom of God and places the community as an ambassador of reconciliation and maker of peace. It encourages our hope for a new church—anti-racist, just and supportive. The word is clear and so is the request: “Open wide your hearts” (6: 12b).

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BRIDGES TO THE CROSS

This is the final of four Bible studies on 2 Corinthians 5:16-20 in The Mennonite leading up to Pittsburgh 2011, the next Mennonite C29hurch USA biennial convention, to be held July 4-9 in downtown Pittsburgh. The convention’s theme, “Bridges to (the) Cross,” is inspired by this text and by the many bridges that span the City of Three Rivers.
10 ways to affirm weekday ministers

How work-friendly is your church?

by Wally Kroeker

Churches expand God’s reach when they celebrate the Monday-to-Friday activities of their members. The church can breathe new life into daily work—even into whole careers—by helping members reclaim the work week for God. Here are some ideas to suggest to your pastor and worship planners to help make your church a work-friendly zone.

1. Map your city. Get a map of your community and mount it on a bulletin board. Use colored pushpins to show where members work (or where retired members used to work). You’ll have a visual display of your congregation’s Monday-to-Friday outreach.

2. Invite your pastor to drop in for coffee break or brown-bag lunch at your plant or office. Encourage a few friends to do the same. Your pastor will gain valuable insights into the part of life where you spend a lot of your time.

3. Volunteer to organize a series of workplace testimonies in which selected members explain “How I connect Sunday and Monday.” Have them talk about their job, the day-to-day issues they face and how their faith helps them witness while they work.

4. Many churches commission people for mission work or voluntary service. Why not encourage your church to do the same for Theresa the Teacher or Arthur the Accountant.

5. Plan a Sunday school elective on the theme of work. Use resources such as Faith Dilemmas for Marketplace Christians (Wipf & Stock), which is designed for a 13-week quarter. You’ll find that many people are energized to talk about their work in the context of the church.

6. If you have a church newsletter, suggest that it carry anecdotes featuring members’ jobs and the challenges they face Monday to Friday.

7. Work strikes a responsive chord in worship (and not just on Labor Day weekend). Here’s a suggestion for your planners: Ask members to show up some Sunday wearing their usual work garb to illustrate the diverse cultures the congregation penetrates every week. Imagine the sight as electricians, nurses, mechanics, firefighters, medical technicians, janitors, waitstaff and office workers sport their uniforms.

8. Offer to arrange a “tools of the trade” worship display to showcase goods and services put forth by members during the week.

9. Suggest a special benediction to signal that the work week is an important part of the Christian life. Sample: “Sisters and brothers in Christ, we are not dismissed; we are not just free to go—Christ sends us. Go forth into the world in the power of the Spirit; go to help and heal in all that you do.”

10. Post a sign over the main exit door that says “Service Entrance.” But post it on the inside, not the outside. That way it’s the last thing worshipers see as they leave, reminding them that they are heading out into the world to spend the next week as ministers.

Wally Kroeker, Winnipeg, is director of publications for Mennonite Economic Development Associates, which works in 40-plus countries to provide business solutions to poverty.
On participating in being God’s agent for change through prayer

THE EARTH handle with prayer

by Jan Johnson

As the plane descended that Saturday evening in 2003, I watched the forest fires raging over the place on the planet I call home: southern California. Fire after fire lined the eastern corridor to Los Angeles. Once home, I could see the sky lit up and the hills above us on fire. When the winds picked up the next morning, firefighters knocked on our door and told us to pack up to be ready to leave. But the fire receded and didn’t come back, so we went wandering toward the hills to gaze at it more closely. That’s when I did something odd. I shut my eyes and held up my hand toward the direction I wanted the wind to blow so that the fire would bypass our neighborhood and farther move back into the hills. My daughter’s friend quizzed me, “What are you doing?” With hesitant uncertainty, I offered, “Uh … I’m praying for the wind to shift.”

At the time, I thought that was odd. But now I’d probably say with resolve, “Peace, be still.”
What has changed is that my fledgling ideas about praying for our planet, its forces and our part in this drama have been nurtured by a not-so-ancient saint, Agnes Sanford (1897-1982), author of The Healing Light and Creation Waits. Living in similar circumstances along Los Angeles' eastern corridor some years earlier, she prayed, “Hear me, wind. ... You are to swing around now and blow from the west, bringing in mist and rain from the sea. Come now.” And it did.

**Partners not puppets**

I knew I’d found a pilgrim ahead of me on this journey when I read about how Sanford (an Episcopal priest’s wife well-known for her teaching about prayer) prayed about Southern California’s other natural disasters, earthquakes. According to Sanford, God’s creation mandate for humans is to be co-laborers—not robots or mere spectators. God could work wonders without anyone’s help, but God likes working with us as a team: “partners, rather than merely puppets.” Part of our labor is caring for the earth as “God’s agents upon this Earth.”

This responsibility as God’s agents goes against contemporary tendencies to either disregard creation or to manipulate it for our own purposes. For Jesus to be the Son of God meant showing self-giving, even self-emptying love; for me to be a child of God means showing self-giving, even self-emptying love instead of selfish exploitation. Can I let go of my manipulative ways, on the one hand, but also my unthinking, indifferent ways (“I’m too busy to recycle”) to be one with God enough to join God in tenderly caring for creation?

**Hearing the groaning of the Earth**

As God’s agents on earth, we are like estate managers so it behooves us to learn how to be more responsible and vigilant in caring for the Earth. One way we take responsibility is by praying for the Earth. While being partners in reconciliation may sound grand, we can be comforted that Sanford advised people to start small in all the ways of healing prayer. Schooled in these ideas as another round of fires came near our home, I asked God how to start small. The smallest of the nine fires was about 10 miles from me, so I began there. It went out in a day, but then it was a small fire. I’m not sure my prayers made a difference in the fire, but I loved participating in the gentle management of creation.

Then I received an email from a friend living in a distant community surrounded on three sides by fire. Would I pray? I focused on that community, and again it was spared (but a lot of people were praying for that one). I kept all this to myself, following another piece of wisdom Sanford offers: “There is often more power in prayer when we do not tell anyone our objective.”

With new awareness in my eyes and ears, I seem to see and hear the groaning of the Earth (Romans 8:19-23) as we go through a severe drought in southern California. This has caused coyotes and deer and rattlesnakes to appear on our streets and front lawns, desperately looking for water. I pray for unexpected rain to help these creatures. After a few days of praying this way, I found myself slightly annoyed by slow traffic on the freeway because there was unexpected rain. So I thanked God for the prayed-for but unexpected rain that inconvenienced me but helped the Earth and its creatures.

Some people prefer not to pray about things because if things don’t come out perfectly it will look like God has failed. We don’t pray in order to protect God’s reputation (as if God needs me to do this). People even ask, Where is God? But when homes and even lives are destroyed, I am still God’s agent. God is there because I’m there. God is a helper in these situations and invites my human mind and body to join by helping too, donating time and money.

I’m helped by Sanford’s counsel that the prayer of faith is one of expectancy. When facing a natural disaster or encountering intimidating creatures of the Earth, we tend to be afraid or worry or even become numb. But she insists these responses contradict the reality of our expectant faith: “The prayer that we see in our minds [fear, worry, numbness] takes precedence over the prayer [of faith] and renders it of no avail.” For me this means believing that God’s love and light in the universe can for this moment be focused on this creature or natural force in front of me. It’s at least being willing to ask. Besides, once we’ve participated in being God’s agent a few times, we love being a part of what God is doing and would never sit on the sidelines again.

With Earth prayers, for example, she asked God if she might pray that a certain brewing calamity be averted, but “this prayer was too great for me. ‘May I pray for it to be minimized?’ I asked, and quite distinctly I heard, ‘Yes.’” So she prayed for three days, and the ensuing catastrophe was much less than expected.

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Some people prefer not to pray about things because if things don’t come out perfectly it will look like God has failed.
Learning and looking forward

During the past four years, I have felt a special calling to help the Mennonite Church USA Executive Board and staff focus on our vision (see below) and our purpose of becoming a missional church at all levels. However, when I first agreed to accept the moderator-elect position, I did not understand the words “missional church” or anticipate how these words would shape my thoughts and actions during my term of service.

As a lay person, I admit I do not fully grasp the nuances of missional church theology. After learning from others, I have embraced five points as the foundation for my missional church thinking:

- God sent Jesus to the whole world.
- God is already active in and throughout the world.
- The congregation is God’s primary agent and strategy of mission.
- We are a sent people, not just a sending people.
- Participating in God’s mission is not a program of the church but the center of all that we do.

These concepts focus our efforts across all levels of our church toward the following:

- equipping and encouraging individual church members to be people through whom God’s healing and hope flow to the world;
- supporting congregational leaders as they equip every member to be engaged in God’s work in the world;
- discerning together God’s desires for us as we join in the transforming work of Jesus in the world;
- worshipping together in the Spirit, seeking the grace, joy and peace of God that come from participating in Christian community.

As Pittsburgh 2011 (our denomination’s next biennial convention) approaches, we hope you will experience how these missional-church-inspired efforts are shaping our work and will influence the work of the delegates at convention. Both before and at the convention, you will hear about how various groups and people within the church are working to clarify their vision and align their activities based on missional theology. The experience of Mennonite Church Canada in building capacity for working on difficult theological issues will continue to influence us as we discern the nature of Mennonite Church USA and of God’s desires for us.

At Pittsburgh, the table groups, the Conversation Room (see www.themennonite.org/issues/13-11/articles/Conversation_Room_at_Pittsburgh_2011) and the open-mic times will provide us with opportunities to speak with each other in loving, personal ways about our understanding of Scripture and the movement of the Holy Spirit. Members of the majority culture attending the convention will experience new ways of being the church together in anticipation of the day when all tribes, peoples, languages and nations join together in worshipping the Lamb as one body (Revelation 7:9). Finally, we hope delegates will adopt the so-called Pittsburgh Experiment, through which we will seek to discern together a purposeful plan for our church for the next two years (see www.themennonite.org/issues/14-4/articles/Pittsburgh_Experiment_may_mean_few_resolutions). In all of these things, we trust that delegates will be open to working together in new ways towards the same vision that has united us since its adoption in 1995.

It is clear we are asking for significant commitment and openness from our people across Mennonite Church USA. While all of us are painfully aware of our own limitations and the limitations of our church, our leadership group is confident that with the help of God, Mennonite Church USA can be fully engaged in God’s activities in being reconciled to the world and that the Pittsburgh 2011 gathering can be a step toward that end.

In closing, I want you to know that while the commitment required to serve as your moderator has been significant, filling that role has been a wonderful, life-changing experience. I have had the opportunity to observe our church at its best (as well as during less auspicious times). In each of those circumstances I have been inspired by the faith, devotion and commitment of our people to being faithful followers of Christ. I am confident in our church—in the leadership that has been called to service—and in the knowledge that together our church at every level will find ways to allow God’s healing and hope to flow through us to the world. Thank you for the opportunity to serve. 

Ed Diller
is moderator of Mennonite Church USA.

God calls us to be followers of Jesus Christ and, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to grow as communities of grace, joy and peace, so that God’s healing and hope flow through us to the world.
The cloud of witnesses locks in

When we’re young, we do younger-person things and when older we do older-person things. My early writings pondered young marriage, babies, children growing. More recently I’ve written my way through the decline and then death of both my parents. There is more to life than aging and death, and the day will come again to celebrate that. Yet for now I find the death of one more major mentor producing this column’s focus on being surrounded by a cloud of witnesses, as Hebrews 12:1 so memorably puts it.

A recent death was of key mentor Paul M. Schrock (see page 55). Paul taught me publishing. In the 1990s, with heavy heart, he downsized me from a financially distressed Herald Press. But he wrapped my termination in the ongoing support that contributed to my being able to own my own publishing company after leaving Herald Press. Then his support contributed to my becoming a seminary dean. But on April 18, after a fall in a library, working among the books he loved, he was gone.

As I mourned his departure amid gratitude for ways he had blessed me, his moving on intertwined with my parents’ departure. And it dawned on me that without intending to, I was visualizing Paul along with my parents and other departed loved ones in a kind of cloud, a cloud of those who had by faith “run with perseverance the race marked out” for them (Hebrews 12:1), a cloud of those who were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance, admitting that they were foreigners and strangers on earth. People who say such things show they are looking for a country of their own, longing for a better country—a heavenly one (Hebrews 11:13-16 NIV).

We do, if we feel the longing for that better country, seek to run our race toward it. As Hebrews puts it, we welcome the things promised from a distance, never fully experiencing them here. So there is always sorrow in the race, the sorrow of a destination not fully reached, a yearning not wholly fulfilled.

I suspect in addition to the grief of losing physical contact with those we love, our sorrow at funerals comes from awareness that neither the one we memorialize nor we ourselves when our time comes get as far as they and we would wish. Along with the here-were-the-wonderful-achievements parts, there are always the didn’t-get-there parts we wistfully ache for.

But precisely in regret over the country not reached emerges the power of the cloud of witnesses image. These witnesses, though within a mystery we can’t fully know, are now nearer that country. They become the cloud of those who know how impossible it is to get all the way to God’s country in this life yet whose vision of it far off shaped their lives on the way toward it. Then beyond their earthly race they’ve become our cheerleaders, those who have been there but have now handed us the baton with which to race on as faithfully and far as we can amid our own longings, which we also will not entirely satisfy.

A gift of many memorial services is the power to peel back the veil between those who have raced beyond death and those still racing here. At memorial services the barriers between those living and those dead, those past and those present, we as living beings versus the dead ones we will someday at our own funerals be, fade away. For precious minutes we live in God’s time, in God’s way of experiencing, as those by the finish line and those still racing toward it intertwine.

The cloud of witnesses is a way of celebrating that we’re all in this together.
Compassion for everyone

Many writers, not only Christians, are calling for compassion for less-fortunate people, often especially immigrants. They are right on this. Limiting the call, in effect, however, to any single group in any one era has the seeds of massive disasters. Others who are affected right now include low-wage workers, border residents and all of us facing more crowded roads, hospitals, schools, as well as more depleted sources of water, farm land, living space, mines, waste dumps and so on. This has been noted before, but comments that ignore these problems keep coming. We either have compassion for everyone on a future crowded and depleted Earth, or we show amazing short-sightedness, and self-centeredness can hit us all.

The related absolutely essential point is to let the Earth’s finitude sink in and act on it. Now, at least intellectually, we all know of its roughly spherical shape and therefore limited size, but many of us, eager to show our generous hospitality, clearly imply that we dare not mention finiteness. No way, however, can we actually continue as in the past, when there was enough space for continued growth for us humans. I’d much rather write about the many fantastic features of this, God’s universe, but first we simply must preserve our part of it for others.

One crucial point is that both crowding into finite space and the depletion of finite resources of all kinds have already caused many wars and will evidently cause more catastrophic ones and more numerous ones before long. Pacifists of any kind dare not ignore this; yet, sorry to say, we often do just that, putting immediate commendable hospitality above all else.

Some have claimed that it doesn’t matter environmentally whether people stay in Mexico, for example, or come here. This is clearly false. People come here for a higher standard of living, and this means more consumption. This is entirely understandable, yet honesty demands recognition of the facts in any true debate. All of us, including the earlier Americans, are immigrants or their descendants, but surely we know that new circumstances demand new responses.

The welfare of our own grandchildren, and certainly the immigrants’ grandchildren, too, must take a big place in our further discussion if we mean to be honest and truly compassionate. We need more compassion, not less. Well then, critics ask, what to do? Several comments are called for.

I am no expert on exactly which cultural and legal changes to encourage here and elsewhere. Before we go further, however, we must acknowledge the whole problem, including Nature’s limits. If we should challenge “our own people” first, we need to begin with fellow believers, as Jesus did, rather than with our more distant rulers. Then, if we can work together, let us look at just one legal point now. No Scripture requires that a temporary residence chosen for birth also be the permanent site of citizenship. If the Constitution is a “living document,” let it recognize this. To deny that current law is a “magnet” for breaking other laws is frankly not honest.

There must also be no prohibition whatever, for “political correctness” or otherwise, on urging each involved country to change some policies and customs. We may differ at times from Leonard Pitts Jr.’s columns, but regret with him when we can “no longer tell … conventional wisdom from actual wisdom” in any argument.

The charge of racism has been disproved elsewhere and is therefore not refuted here again, despite the repetition of the accusation. That label is not always false but is often abused in order to make even thoughtful dissidents cower and to censor, squelch and stifle honest discussion. The various well-known religious extremists and governments are not alone in this. Practicing Christians will, without being begged, love and respect our/their (rhetorical) enemies, not only our rulers’ enemies.

Please, then, let’s open up, truly care about everyone and everyone’s environment and begin to work hard together on badly needed real solutions.
García to become new MWC executive secretary

First Mennonite World Conference appointee from the global South

For the first time, a leader from the global South will become the general secretary of Mennonite World Conference (MWC).

On May 4, the MWC Executive Committee formally appointed César García of Bogotá, Colombia, as general secretary-elect, to succeed Larry Miller on Jan. 1, 2012.

“I am excited about the possibility of serving in the leadership of MWC with the purpose of praying, thinking and acting as part of Christ’s global church,” García said, following his acceptance of the call. “God is glorified when the multicultural interdependency of his church is evidenced in our way of doing theology, practicing ecclesiology and bearing Christian witness in the world.”

The appointment was one of the first actions taken at MWC Executive Committee’s annual meeting, held this year in Taipei, Taiwan, May 4-11.

“The affirmation of Cesar’s candidacy is a historical moment for us,” said Danisa Ndlovu, MWC president. “It is a recognition of our positive integration as a community of faith as we see the global South offering its richness to the global North.”

Also included in the Executive Committee action was the plan to move the location of the MWC head office from Strasbourg, France, to Bogotá. García will join MWC staff in August for a period of transition with Miller.

García, who was chair of the Iglesias Hermanos Menonitas de Colombia (Mennonite Brethren Churches of Colombia) from 2002 to 2008, is currently completing master’s studies at Fresno (Calif.) Pacific Biblical Seminary.

He also serves as secretary of the MWC Mission Commission and as a member of MWC’s task force on the creation of a new network of service ministries. In addition, he has been active in inter-Anabaptist and ecumenical endeavours in Colombia.

According to García, 39, the Colombian church and his local congregation, Iglesia HM Torre Fuerte (Strong Tower MB Church) in Bogotá, had sent him to California for studies in order to return and serve in Colombia, where he has been a church planter, pastor and professor of Bible and theology.

When the MWC leadership nominated him as a candidate in January 2010, García submitted the matter to an intense process of discernment with Colombian church leaders and with close church friends in Fresno. The process ended in unanimous and enthusiastic support.

“The fact that many people were involved in different interviews,” said García, “encouraged us to trust God’s leadership and gave us the courage to accept this calling.”

He added that his commitment to the Colombian church continues but in the context of this broader appointment. The location of the office in Colombia will allow him to maintain regular contact with the church there.

García is married to Sandra Báez, who is also completing studies in Fresno. They have two teenage daughters, María and Paula.—Byron Rempel-Burkholder of Mennonite World Conference

Core market manager

Everence (formerly MMA) is seeking a core market manager to provide leadership of all Everence activities within the Newton, Kan., area market. Responsible for developing the market so individuals and organizations have the opportunity to integrate their faith with their financial decisions. Qualified candidates will have an undergraduate degree or equivalent experience (MBA preferred); proven management experience, preferably in delivery of financial services; proven negotiation skills; and significant sales and distribution experience.

Everence helps individuals, organizations and congregations integrate finances with faith through a national team of advisors and representatives. We are an equal opportunity employer offering a competitive salary and excellent benefits. For more information about this position, visit our website, www.everence.com. Send cover letter and resume to: Everence, PO Box 483, Goshen, IN 46527; Fax: (574) 537-6635; e-mail: hr@everence.com.
Menno Village is refuge for quake evacuees

Japanese farmers may lose 18-generation-old farm because of contamination.

Signs of spring offer hope in disaster-stricken Japan. Blooming flowers and chirping birds signal nature’s restorative promise, but those signs are also reminders of an uncertain future as contamination from the crippled Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant spreads through soil and air.

About 450 miles north, outside the danger zone where, on March 11, a massive, 9.0-magnitude earthquake unleashed a deadly tsunami that slammed the nuclear plant, Ray Epp and Akiko Aratani, Mennonite Mission Network associates and directors of Menno Village, are among those who are offering neighborly help. The husband and wife team have made Menno Village, a Christian community involved in agriculture and education, available as a temporary home for evacuees.

"People have been wondering, ‘What could we do to help?’" Epp said via phone last month. "We could offer children a safe place to be. We can provide them with goods."

But evacuees have not come in droves, as perhaps refugees fleeing a war zone might, Epp said. There haven’t been many takers despite the alarming threat.

"Many people [near the epicenter] are waiting," Epp said. "They don’t want to leave until they have closure."

The March 11 earthquake and tsunami have left nearly 28,000 dead or missing. The epicenter of the quake was near the east coast of Honshu in the country’s northeast, and the destruction stretched along the coast more than 230 miles south to Tokyo and beyond. Powerful aftershocks have continued and added to the devastation, though cleanup and relief efforts are underway.

The government recently made it illegal to enter a 12-mile evacuation zone near the Fukushima nuclear plant. According to published reports, nearly 80,000 area residents have been affected. Many evacuees are living in gymnasiums in hopes of returning home sooner rather than later.

Epp said many of these residents are seniors who have farmed their entire lives. Meanwhile, many young people had moved away over the decades in search of jobs, as government policies emphasized modernization and urban living. The plant was built to serve the power needs of Tokyo’s urbanites. It was also intended to bring jobs to the rural areas. Now it has potentially made the area uninhabitable.

Among the younger generation that continues to farm but is considering evacuating are Yoshiki Kanno and Meiko, his wife, of Iitate Village, which is about 21 miles from the Fukushima power plant. Four months ago, the Kannos paid a visit to Menno Village to renew friendships dating back to when Yoshiki Kanno studied at Rakuno Gakuen University, where Epp and Aratani teach. They were not planning on returning so soon.

"God brought us back here this time," Yoshiki told Epp as he picked them up at the train station.

"I learned from the newspaper that the soil in our village is contaminated with high levels of the radioactive particle cesium, and we were very worried that it takes a long time to weaken the radiation because we are farmers with cattle and farmland," wrote Meiko last month via e-mail through a translator.

When the nuclear reactor blew, the wind was blowing in the direction of the Kannos’ town. Rain and snow carried radiation to their land.

At Menno Village, Epp escorted the Kannos and introduced them to townspeople in the surrounding area. They attended a local meeting where they shared their plight and stories of others surviving in and near the disaster area. The Kannos are 18th-generation farmers and, like many in their village, they do not want to leave their homeland.

"No one yet knows how long we could stay in the (Iitate) village or if we have to leave," Meiko wrote. “We all hope to continue to farm in the village, but if we have to leave for a long time, we think we have to find a place to farm during that period. ... We are very uneasy, but we will have to make a choice with a hope for our future and for our children.”—Wil LaVeist of MMN
Two months ago, Carlos and Maria* arrived in Ecuador with their son, daughter and nephew. During their first week in Quito, while seeking help in their difficult transition from a rural farm in Colombia to the capital city of neighboring Ecuador, they happened upon the Mennonite church.

When Carlos and Maria expressed interest in having me visit their home in a nearby small town, where they had moved because of cheaper rent, I jumped at the chance to hear their story. After a two-hour bus ride a week later, I found myself at their doorstep. Their warm faces were a happy contrast to their windowless, empty “new” house. As they welcomed me into their living space, we sat down on their only furnishings, two thin mats and two blankets, which covered the damp floor. These were gifts from the Mennonite church in Quito, where the five members of their family had found refuge after spending a week sleeping on scraps of cardboard. The stained, wet walls were sparsely decorated by a few pencil drawings—depictions of the farm in Colombia that Maria had inherited from her parents. The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC, a guerrilla group involved in countless kidnapings and acts of violence) had forcefully taken the farm from Carlos and Maria’s family just weeks before.

Carlos and Maria described how members of FARC accused the family of supporting the opposition paramilitary groups. After death threats and the attempted murder of Carlos, the family decided there was no other choice but to leave their beloved farm behind and flee to Ecuador. Thinking they could leave their problems in Colombia, the family had high hopes of a better life in Ecuador. However, a week into their time in Ecuador, they had been accused by an Ecuadorian store owner of stealing. They felt targeted because of their dark skin and Colombian accent. As the police interrogated and searched them, their daughter began to cry, thinking that the Ecuadorian police were members of FARC, who were going to take her father away.

A week later, when I called Carlos and Maria to follow up on their situation and see how things were going, they informed me that they were no longer living in the same house. The owners of the house had oddly decided to do repairs late at night above the room where Carlos, Maria and their family slept huddled together on their two mats. In addition to being repeatedly awakened by noise, the family was soaked by water that poured through the cracks of their wooden ceiling when the owners decided to wash the floor at 11 p.m. Carlos and Maria understood that they were no longer welcome.

It took Carlos, Maria and their children a few weeks to accept my invitation to be part of our church community, but one Sunday the family showed up at our church in Quito. I was moved as Carlos stood up during sharing time to express his gratitude for the mats and blankets we had given him so that his family no longer had to sleep on cardboard on the damp floor. But I almost broke down when Carlos expressed gratitude that his family was not alone in their struggle. They now had friends and a community—a foundation for beginning a new life in Ecuador.

Carlos and Maria are currently in a temporary shelter in Quito. Since moving, Carlos and Maria’s son, their son’s wife and their two children joined them in Quito—having been forced to flee persecution in Colombia. Their family, along with thousands of other Colombian refugees, continue to seek job stability, community, prosperity, freedom from discrimination and refuge from violence and persecution. The Mennonite community of Quito continues to seek answers to these large, complex problems, beginning with a helping hand and an open heart.—David H. Shenk, a Mennonite Mission Network worker living in Quito, Ecuador

*Names have been changed for protection.
Pakistan-based graduates of Eastern Mennonite University (EMU) say U.S. military policy in their country has fed extremism and that, sadly, such extremism may not subside with the death of Osama bin Laden. That was a major finding of EMU professor of peacebuilding Lisa Schirch, who was in Pakistan the last week of April, researching and consulting with Pakistani peace groups in Islamabad, south of the city where Osama bin Laden was killed on May 2.

Many of the Pakistanis consulted by Schirch previously studied at EMU’s Center for Justice and Peacebuilding and Summer Peacebuilding Institute in Harrisonburg, Va. Schirch’s Pakistani colleagues noted that thousands of innocent civilians in their country have been killed, contributing to widespread anger and, ironically, to more support for Al Qaeda and the Taliban.

“U.S. military experts agree that over the last 10 years Al Qaeda has increased its members and number of bases around the world despite hundreds of billions of U.S. dollars spent on the War on Terror,” says Schirch, who holds a Ph.D. from the Institute of Conflict Analysis and Resolution at George Mason University, Fairfax, Va.

Schirch says her friends and colleagues in Pakistan told her, “Yes, we have a mess in our country. But when you add the American policy mess to ours, it makes a disaster. It seems like the Americans don’t have a plan, just bombs.”

At one peacebuilding organization visited by Schirch, she saw a poster that read, “The more we sweat for peace, the less we bleed in war.”

Schirch says, “The Pakistani people themselves fund and carry out almost 90 percent of all the work for peace, development and human rights in Pakistan.”

Schirch says she is familiar with the following Pakistani-led peacebuilding efforts:

• interfaith dialogues and reconciliation programs between tribes;
• peace education programs in schools and madrassas;
• microcredit loan programs to help people develop viable livelihoods and
• media ads to stop harmful practices against girls and women; thoughtful videos produced on such topics as traditional Muslim men walking their daughters safely to school.

Schirch says many Pakistani Christians, belonging to a small minority of the population, take huge personal risks to protect the rights of all religious and ethnic minorities. Pakistanis welcome the United States playing a major role in diplomacy and development in the region, noting that these are the real solutions to the root causes of the problems, says Schirch. But she adds that many Pakistanis believe “America isn’t serious about diplomacy, only about its bombs and weapons.”

In interviews with diverse groups in Pakistan, Schirch found unanimous condemnation of American drone bombs targeting extremists, which have caused hundreds of civilian deaths. But there is also common ground, she adds. Many Pakistanis share Americans’ hope that bin Laden’s death will bring an end to the War on Terror and will lead to U.S. military withdrawal from these regions, she says.

“The wars in Pakistan, Afghanistan and Iraq impose costs on all of us,” says Schirch.

America isn’t serious about diplomacy, only about its bombs and weapons.—Lisa Schirch

Schirch traveled to Pakistan as part of her ongoing work as a research professor and policy expert with EMU’s Center for Justice and Peacebuilding. In April, Schirch received a $70,000 grant from the Rockefeller Brothers Fund to continue her work of educating Washington policymakers about grass-roots peacebuilding efforts and to bring the voices of civil society members in war-torn countries to the attention of policymakers.—Bonnie Price Lofton of EMU
North Korean visitors describe MCC as ‘family’

Two Korean men who work with Mennonite Central Committee visit Canada.

Two men from the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) visited Canada March 7-17, sampling Canada’s frigid winter weather, a smorgasbord of Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) programs and even tasting made-in-Canada kimchee, a staple Korean side dish of preserved cabbage.

Kim Chol Su, executive director of the Korea Canada Cooperation Agency (KCCA), which facilitates much of MCC’s work in the DPRK, also known to people outside the country as North Korea, and Ri Il Jun, an officer of the agency, were hosted at five MCC offices in Canada.

Their tour began in the east, visiting the MCC Canada Ottawa Office, meeting a member of Parliament and sitting in on a House of Commons question-and-answer session. They proceeded west to MCC Ontario offices in Kitchener-Waterloo, stopping to see a thrift shop, a Ten Thousand Villages store and an MCC Ontario program for homeless women.

Then it was on to Manitoba, where severe weather cramped plans to see some farms. They did get to the Mennonite Heritage Centre in Winnipeg and the Mennonite Heritage Village in Steinbach, however. Then they moved on to Alberta and three farms and, lastly, to the MCC British Columbia offices, a warehouse, thrift shop and gleaning program. The MCC-sponsored visit reinforced ongoing efforts to build bridges with people from a country that, “generally speaking, has been painted as ‘the enemy,’” says Kathi Suderman. From Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Suderman and her husband, Rod, serve as MCC Northeast Asia representatives, based in Beijing, China. Kathi, who works with KCCA on behalf of MCC, accompanied the men on the trip.

MCC began work in the DPRK in the 1990s in response to famine there. Its current focus is on sustainable agriculture and providing food and material aid to health-care facilities, mostly tuberculosis and hepatitis hospitals and rest homes, as well as orphanages.

“Most of what the DPRK has experienced in relation to the outside world over the past 60 years has been hostility,” Kathi Suderman says. She adds that political restrictions that limit interactions with people from the DPRK make it difficult to put a face to them and view them as humans. This adds to misunderstanding, making rare exchanges, like this one, all the more valuable in fostering relationships. Last year’s two serious artillery exchanges between the Koreas, which are still technically at war, reinforce the urgency of the need for communication bridges, she says.

The visit provided Kim and Ri a behind-the-cargo-container view of the material aid that arrives in the DPRK. At MCC Canada relief centers and warehouses, the two men saw volunteers assembling and/or packing blankets, health kits, newborn kits, school kits and canned meat. They saw volunteers dicing and dehydrating vegetables, then packing them into soup mixes.

The men were impressed that about one-eighth of MCC’s $81 million income in 2009 and 2010 was raised through the recycling of gently used clothing, books and household items in MCC’s 100-plus thrift shops in Canada and the United States, Suderman says.

Openly viewing MCC’s operations and meeting participants from all walks—directors to hands-on volunteers—helps build trust for the organization among DPRK partners. “The assumption can be that we have a hidden agenda,” says Joe Manickam, MCC area director for Asia. “We do have hope in the Korean people and long for the day when all of us can communicate with others in a less restrictive form.”

Kim spoke in terms of family ties. “There is a saying in Korean that one must visit family members often in order to be a family,” he said. The warmth with which MCC Canada received them makes MCC “like family,” he said, and they invited MCC directors to visit them in the DPRK.

KCCA also has issued an invitation to MCC to send two English teachers to work in a middle school in the DPRK. Teaching opportunities are posted at mcc.org/serve.––Emily Will for Mennonite Central Committee
Coffee cups and cameras clutter the newsroom as Goshen (Ind.) College students and other journalists piece together *mPress*, the daily newspaper for the biennial conventions of Mennonite Church USA. But amid the mess, seeds are planted in students to use their communications skills to serve the church.

For Jennifer (Rupp) Steiner of Goshen, volunteering for *mPress* at the Atlanta 2003 and Charlotte 2005 conventions were her first opportunities to write for the church. Today she is communications coordinator for Mennonite Central Committee Great Lakes.

“The experiences of being a part of *mPress* twice helped solidify that working in communications for a church-related organization was a good fit for me,” Steiner says.

Sheldon Good of Lansdale, Pa., also sees his *mPress* experience as “a stepping stone” toward his current job as assistant editor for *Mennonite Weekly Review*.

“My work with *mPress* [at Columbus 2009] put me in conversation with many church leaders I had only heard of or communicated with virtually,” Good says, remembering an interview with Jim Wallis (president and CEO of Sojourners in Washington, D.C.) before Wallis spoke during an adult worship service. “But just as important was the chance to experience and share stories from the local community where convention took place.”

Over three conventions, about 40 Goshen College students have served on *mPress* staff. Of those, at least five are working for the church: Anna Groff, associate editor of *The Mennonite*; Bethany Nussbaum, advancement director for Central Christian School, Kidron, Ohio; Sarah Schlegel, pastor at Howard-Miami Mennonite Church, Kokomo, Ind.; Good and Steiner.

*mPress* is published as part of a hands-on course, Religious Journalism, which is offered every other year at Goshen. After six weeks of study, students are put to the test during the week of convention.

“The nights are short, and the days are intense,” says Duane Stoltzfus, who serves as editor of *mPress*, working alongside Rachel Lapp Whitt, managing editor; both are Goshen communication professors. “Students may be used to staying up past midnight, but I’m not,” says Stoltzfus.

He says that he generally stays in the newsroom while students cover the convention news. “I look forward to having students excitedly report back on what they found,” he says. “They become the eyes and ears for many of us who wish we could be more than one person at a gathering like this.”

**The idea for *mPress* first came to Stoltzfus** at Nashville 2001, when he caught a glimpse of the power of student journalism in a convention setting in the work of *mVision* (Mennonite Vision), a nightly newscast produced by Goshen students. Stoltzfus imagined a print publication that would generate a similar level of energy and caliber of work. The agency that had been coordinating the convention newspaper was ready for a break, and Jorge Vallejos, then director of convention planning, quickly signed up a Goshen crew for the next gathering. The first issue of *mPress* rolled off the press at Atlanta 2003.

The print edition of *mPress* consists of four issues containing news, features, funnies and photos. One of the paper’s humorous traditions is a “Top 10” list for which convention-goers can submit entries. *mPress* also offers those not attending convention a way to stay informed about the event. At Columbus 2009, *mPress* provided a continuously updated website (www.goshen.edu/mpress), which attracted viewers from 33 countries—an average of 736 views each day. At Pittsburgh 2011, *mPress* plans to increase its web coverage, using students’ skills in video and audio production to introduce podcasts and videocasts.

**The team in Pittsburgh will include** 18 Goshen students, four high school interns and editors from *The Mennonite* and *Mennonite Weekly Review*. Professional staff will include photographers Vada Snider and Tyler Klassen, designers Rebecca Helmuth and Cara Rufenacht, and Michael Sherer, who will help with information technology.

High school students coming to convention with their youth groups can strengthen their journalism and communications skills by participating as *mPress* interns. For information on *mPress* internships at Pittsburgh 2011, contact Stoltzfus at dstoltzfus@goshen.edu. —Kelsey Shue, Becca Kraybill and Mennonite Church USA staff
In the spring of 2009, Christine Nofsinger spent two weeks in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) to attend a high school graduation in Kinshasa, the capital. While there, she was blown away by beauty.

“I fell in love with the colors,” she said. “I loved how women dressed.”

Nofsinger, a librarian and quilter, lives in Marcellus, Mich. “After I got home I started to turn some of the beautiful cloth I bought into a quilt,” she said. “It became my way of praying for Congo. Every stitch was a prayer.”

Nofsinger had been in DRC at the invitation of Suzanne and Tim Lind and their daughter, Rose, the high school graduate. The Linds represent Mennonite Central Committee in DRC and are members, with Nofsinger, of Florence Church of the Brethren-Mennonite near Constantine, Mich. Along with other members of a group called Michiana Friends of Congo, Nofsinger and the Linds came up with the idea of using the beauty of cloth to strengthen bonds between Mennonites in DRC and the United States. They called it the Congo Cloth Connection. Since 2003, Mennonite Church USA has been working at church relations with Congolese churches.

At Pittsburgh 2011, July 4-9, Mennonites will have a chance to participate in the Congo Cloth Connection.

A dazzling array of cloth will be for sale, $10 per yard, at a Congo Cloth Market. A quilt, comforter and wall hanging piece of Congo cloth will be stitched—“every stitch a prayer”—and auctioned at the convention. The Congolese director of a sewing workshop benefiting from these sales will be at the convention to meet U.S. Mennonites.

Profits from the sale of cloth will initially benefit two Congolese sewing groups: first, the BOMEN Sewing Training Center and Workshop, a new project of the Bondeko Mennonite Church in Kinshasa to train female heads of household, teenage mothers and unemployed young women in sewing; and second, a similar project in eastern Congo for women who have been victims of sexual violence.

A key link in the connection is Cisca Ibanda, a member of the Mennonite Brethren Church of Congo and of the Mennonite World Conference Executive Committee. Ibanda encouraged them to partner in prayer with American Mennonites through the Congo Cloth Connection.

Three congregations—the Florence church, Kern Road Mennonite in South Bend, Ind., and Silverwood Mennonite in Goshen, Ind.—formed Michiana Friends of Congo in 2007. Vicki Smucker of Goshen, a member of Kern Road, was part of a delegation from Mennonite Church USA that visited DRC in 2007 to foster relationships with Congolese Mennonite churches.

“I’m not a quilter,” Smucker said at a meeting of the Connection committee. “But I like the idea of connecting with Congo through beauty.” Smucker scanned several hundred lengths of cloth that had been brought to the U.S. in preparation for Pittsburgh 2011. She chose a rich pattern that she will make into a jacket she will wear when volunteering at the Connection booth in Pittsburgh.

“Congo cloth” refers to a style, not necessarily the origin of the cloth. Wax-print cloth, which came originally from Indonesia and was introduced in Congo in the mid-19th century, is the typical day-to-day dress. However, only some of this style of cloth is currently made in Congo, due to economic stress. Many Congolese church groups design cloth with symbolism for special occasions such as the October 2010 International March for Women in eastern Congo. These have been available in limited quantities.

Ways for people to take the Connection beyond Pittsburgh 2011 include:

- Inquire about hosting a Congo Cloth Market.
- Buy cloth and send a short description of how the cloth has been used, including a photograph, for the Congo Cloth Connection blog at congocloth@blogspot.com.
- Send a freewill contribution.
- Exchange prayer requests and greetings through the Congo Cloth Connection Facebook page.

—Nancy Myers

A woman sells Congo cloth in Kinshasa, DRC.
Elizabeth Martin’s “101 Years of Stories” on April 19 transported Eastern Mennonite Missions staff members back in time to an era of intense mission fervor in Lancaster (Pa.) Mennonite Conference churches.

Elizabeth, who along with her husband, Daniel, raised seven children while farming and homemaking south of New Holland, Pa., remembered when a special train of 10 cars transported Lancaster Mennonites to New York to see their first EMM missionaries off to Africa in 1934.

When those first missionaries, Elam and Elizabeth Stauffer, returned for their first home assignment in 1940, Martin remembered that the annual Mission Board conference at New Holland Mennonite Church was so packed the children had to sit on the platform of the pulpit to make room for adults on the benches.

Then it was even more exciting when Daniel and Blanche Sensenig, from their home church, New Holland Mennonite, left for Ethiopia in 1947.

“We always gave the children coins for church offerings,” Elizabeth said. “But on the EMM offering Sunday, the kids got more money to put in the offering.” Ray Martin, who assisted his mother with the chapel, said, “It is special for me to reflect on 101 years of family commitment to missions and the profound impact that EMM has had on our family.”

Elizabeth remembered how Daniel always began the day on the farm by taking the Bible off the clock shelf for quiet reading. Then he knelt by the sofa for prayer before speaking to anyone else. “I always knew I wasn’t the first person in his life,” she said. “First, he met God.”

Influenced by their parents’ deep vision for missions, it’s not surprising that five out of the seven Martin children or their spouses are ordained or licensed ministers. Five of the seven have also served overseas or domestically in church and mission settings, four of them in EMM programs.

Mary worked in the church with her bishop husband, Paul Zehr; Luke, with his wife, Mary Kauffman, served as an EMM worker in Vietnam; Grace, married to James Dickerson, served in the EMM VS program in Washington, D.C., and stayed on in the city. Bob, married to Sarah Martin, served as pastor at New Holland Mennonite and as chaplain at Mennonite Home.

Aaron, married to Ruth Parsons, was a mathematics and astronomy teacher, including several years at Lancaster Mennonite School, and they have been active with Habitat for Humanity. Ray, married to Luann Habegger, directs a network of Christian organizations and individuals working in global health called Christian Connections for International Health. He served with EMM in Somalia and Tanzania from 1961 to 1964 but spent most of his life working internationally with USAID and the World Bank.

Earl, married to Patricia Hostetter, served with Mennonite Central Committee in the Philippines and in Vietnam during the war and stayed behind when U.S. forces withdrew. For a month, the family had no word from him. When a reporter asked Daniel if he was worried about his son’s safety, he said, “The safest place to be is in the will of the Lord.”

Elizabeth loved penning letters to her own children and other missionaries she knew in far away places like Somalia or India. When she wrote to Ray out in the Somali bush, it took at least a month and a half to get an answer. “It took lots of faith, patience and prayer,” she said.

Norman Shenk, EMM’s former CFO and president, remembers Elizabeth and Daniel (deceased in 1976) as front-row fixtures in the Worldwide EMM Missionary Conferences held each summer in a large tent on the campus of Lancaster Mennonite School.

On the EMM offering Sunday, the kids got more money to put in the offering.—Elizabeth Martin

“They were always at the conferences,” Shenk says. “And they never missed a missionary commissioning either.”

Ray remembers a story that has become part of the family lore. “One year, when Pop didn’t have enough money to put in the annual mission offering because of the uneven cash flow of a farmer, he was so determined to support missions at the desired level that he borrowed the money to give EMM what they were asking for per member giving.” (EMM gave a suggested amount for each member.)—Jewel Showalter of Eastern Mennonite Missions
No disciplinary action for WDC pastor

Pastor performed a same-sex covenant service last September.

On May 6, Western District Conference minister Clarence Rempel sent a letter to WDC pastors about the actions of WDC’s Leadership Commission regarding Joanna Harader, pastor of Peace Mennonite Church in Lawrence, Kan.

The commission reviewed Harader’s credentials after she performed a same-sex covenant service last September and eventually found her credentials in order. No disciplinary action was taken.

Rempel’s letter states that this action is not meant to set a precedent. “It is not to be assumed that a future situation would have the same outcome,” he writes. “If another pastor should choose to conduct a same-sex covenant service, he or she will have their credentials reviewed by the Leadership Commission according to our present polity.”

Rempel goes on to quote Mennonite Church USA’s Membership Guidelines, which say, “Pastors holding credentials in a conference of Mennonite Church USA may not perform a same-sex covenant ceremony.”

In its review of the action, attached to Rempel’s e-mail, the commission’s members state that they recognize the authority of the 2001 Membership Guidelines for Mennonite Church USA and that “such action would be grounds for review of [pastors’] credentials by their area conference’s credentialing body.”

The commission also acknowledges that the latest word from Mennonite Church USA regarding how to be in relationship with LGBTQ people came on July 4, 2009, when the delegate body passed a resolution that recognizes that “current and ongoing debate exists over issues surrounding human sexuality and conference response to congregations at variance” and asked denominational leadership to “provide and encourage the use of resources which assist conferences and congregations to engage in this discernment.”

After spending “significant time in holy struggle of discernment through prayer, discussion, listening to how various responses by our commission would be received by differing congregations throughout our district,” the commission could not reach consensus and voted 4-2 to find Harader’s credentials to be in order.

The commission’s review includes a response by the majority and two dissenting opinions. The majority writes that Harader “spent time seriously engaged with God’s Word in this issue and was able to articulate what she heard through that discernment process to us. She then went to her congregational leadership for counsel, and then to the entire congregation, where Peace Mennonite Church gave consensus approval for her to minister in the way she did.” Their action, they write, applies to these specific circumstances and should not be understood to be “a blanket affirmation of the action of any and every WDC pastor who would choose to officiate at a same-sex union.”

One dissenting opinion, while arguing for disciplinary action, writes that “the church must make room for dissenting voices” but has failed to do this.

The second dissenting opinion states that “while Joanna tested her discernment in her local congregation before acting, at the same time her action circumvented the ongoing discernment process in the larger district and denominational faith community.”

In a May 13 interview, Harader said she is glad for herself and her congregation that she has retained her credentials. She said the process of discernment with the Leadership Commission “was respectful,” that she and her congregation “were heard and listened to throughout the process.”

WDC moderator Doug Penner, in a May 13 interview, said the process “reflects the governance arrangements [WDC] has in place.” He said he had hoped for consensus, but the commission “did its best to come to some resolution.” This process reflects “a strong congregational emphasis” and “the diversity in [WDC] on these issues.” He also emphasized that this is not a precedent.

Rempel’s letter notes that plans are to have this decision on the agenda for WDC’s annual assembly July 29-30. Penner added that WDC leadership is still deciding how to address the decision but that they will deal with it prayerfully.

In a May 13 interview, Terry Shue, director of leadership development for Mennonite Church USA, said, “We respect the authority of individual conferences, and the Leadership Commission did due diligence in understanding the membership guidelines.”

However, he added, “it’s likely to be a surprise [to other conferences] at the conclusion they came to.”

Since credentials are transferrable to other conferences, this will give pause to other conferences.

The fact that the same-sex couple involved are not members of a Mennonite congregation is not a factor, he said. “The guidelines don’t speak to who the couple is. It’s a statement to the pastor.” — Gordon Houser

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Phoenix decision: lessons in intercultural transformation

The discussion surrounding Convention 2013 in Phoenix was a polarizing issue, with race at its center. The discussion highlighted the fact that the perception of race within Mennonite Church USA is changing at a rate greater than our traditional church structures can handle. Antiracism has long been a priority within our church, but our perception of race today in North America is different from what it was when Mennonite Church USA was first formed in 2001.

In an article for the September 2010 issue of The Mennonite, titled “Racial Healing in the Church,” I wrote that our church is somewhere in between symbolic change and identity change on the antiracism continuum. To understand why the Phoenix decision was such a difficult decision for our leaders and constituency, one should understand what happens when a system designed for one culture tries to make decisions for a new and changing constituency. While noble, our antiracism efforts are still grounded in structures and practices derived from the norms and worldview of the dominant culture. Although many of our antiracism efforts have strongly focused on institutional racism, we have not given equal weight to the development of intercultural competence, or interpersonal relationships among people from different cultures.

**Sammy’s song:** A light bulb came on for me when I sat with a Goshen (Ind.) College student named Sammy. After almost a year of discussion and debate about whether or not to hold our 2013 convention in Phoenix, I finally understood it from a Hispanic point of view. I had been so focused about transformation at the institutional level that I forgot the work that might be needed at the intercultural and interpersonal level. Sammy spoke not only to my mind but to my heart. Sammy spoke out of his personal fear and anger, his reality.

During a trip to the Grand Canyon when Sammy was 16, he was arrested and held until his mother was able to bring his identification to the authorities. While talking with a multiracial group of Goshen College students in March, I reflected on the suggestion that we have a “white ally” for Latinos attending the 2013 convention. The theory is that to provide safety, whites would partner with Latinos while traveling to and within Arizona.

“It becomes more than a fear when you have to endure it,” Sammy said, “when you have to pass through it. All of a sudden I became this illegal immigrant, which I was not, I am not. I am a Puerto Rican. You need a white person to make you feel like you are secure? Who gives white people the right to feel like they are entitled to protect me? I don’t need a white person to protect me. It is not about Arizona. It is not about the issue of going to Arizona. Arizona is a symbol of hate; it is a symbol of fear. How can you worship God when you don’t feel protected? My biggest dream is to walk with my brothers and sisters in Arizona, but the reality is that I could get harassed. This goes way beyond our heads.”

**Head case:** “This goes way beyond our heads.” Even Sammy himself did not realize how profound a statement he made; I’m not sure I can adequately convey the “heart” of that statement. I am probably going to confuse people more. The song that Sammy’s heart sang to my heart lets me know that neither the convention planned for Phoenix in 2013 nor the laws of Arizona were ever the most significant issue our church needed to address. Sammy was in his own way echoing the prophetic voice of Revelation 7:9: “After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples and tongues, standing before the throne.”

**Yet there are things** that stand in the way of this vision. In a recent gathering of the Constituency Leaders Council, Ervin Stutzman, executive director of Mennonite Church USA, said, “Racism is a besetting sin of Mennonite Church USA. It is a problem of racism that affects how we all relate to one another.”

The problem is a collective set of systems, behaviors and cultures that benefits whites (those in the dominant culture) but doesn’t fully address the needs, concerns and fears of people of color who have been raised outside that system—or even within it. A sobering example of the flaws in our current system (and how it relates to people of color in leadership) was the public confrontation between racial/ethnic leaders that occurred at the Leaders’ Forum in Pittsburgh last September.

**The Leaders’ Forum was attended** by more than 200 people representing agency boards, Executive Board, constituency groups and area conferences. The Intercultural Relations Reference Committee was also present. The IRRC is a representative group of racial/ethnic leaders who speak to issues and policies of Mennonite Church USA as they pertain to people of color. The group consists of me as chairperson and two representatives each of the recognized racial/ethnic con-
The April 29, 2010, letter from IMH requesting that Mennonite Church USA “rethink” the decision to hold the 2013 convention in Phoenix created a widespread response across our denomination. Every level of the church was engaged in some way in trying to respond to the concerns expressed by IMH. A relational culture was trying to engage a results-oriented culture. For once this system that works well for those of Anglo and Swiss-German heritage was given a challenge that would test every aspect of its decision-making process.

How was a system that was interculturally inept going to respond to an issue needing deep intercultural understanding? It seemed the IRRC was the most appropriate forum to summarize and analyze several months of discernment and conversations and bring it to a close. After all, the issues involved people of color, so who could better analyze all of the information and make a recommendation to the Executive Board? Along with others, I felt that a statement should come from the collective wisdom of the people of color. So, just prior to the Leaders’ Forum, the IRRC met. In addition to our regular agenda, the Phoenix decision was on the table. Rightly or not, from the beginning I have seen my role as the director of intercultural relations as someone to help bridge the communication gap among the various cultures and races in our church.

We drafted a recommendation based on conversations with many church leaders of all races. We relied heavily on documents from IMH as well as conversations that took place during and after Mennonite Church USA representatives traveled to Phoenix in August 2010.

After two days of meeting, reflection and revisions, the IRRC created a document. Little did I know the document would send waves of sadness and pain through the members of the IRRC and those at the Leaders’ Forum. What seemed just a few hours earlier to be a consensus document fell apart in anger and confusion. Some members of the IRRC felt betrayed. Others felt as if their voice was never truly heard. Leadership roles in Mennonite Church USA, the IRRC and me as a black staff person. They felt that the fallout at the board and our executive staff. Through this painful experience, I learned that among people of color, there is great mistrust in our system.

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The white burden: At the time, some believed that instead of taking responsibility for making a decision, the church hid behind the IRRC and me as a black staff person. They felt that the fallout at the Leaders’ Forum was the logical end result of our racist practices and system. However, I never felt like this was my responsibility alone to bear. I felt great partnership and support throughout this process from both the board and our executive staff. Through this painful experience, I learned that among people of color, there is great mistrust in our system. Apparently they thought that as a person of color, my actions could only be justified through white people. White power is the only discernible power, even among people of color.

To deal with the misunderstandings that arose in the meeting, IRRC met together face-to-face in March. Since it was the first time we met since the Leaders’ Forum, we hired two mediators, a white woman and a Latina women, to help us discern what happened in Pittsburgh and to help our group rebuild community. After much reflection and time spent with the mediators, I now understand that what happened with the IRRC can be directly attributed to racism and the lack of intercultural competence. The IRRC should never have responded to agenda handed down by those in the dominant culture.

If the system was truly responsive to people of color, many of our decisions would be different. Some questions would never have to be asked; there are some things you just know when you have increased intercultural competence. Although there are many people of color in various leadership roles in Mennonite Church USA, the cultural competence is still not there. The IRRC consensus document fell apart for a number of reasons:

• **Pressure**: People of color cannot speak for their entire constituency any more than a white person can speak for the entire white race. It is an unfair burden that our society puts on people of color.

• **Culture**: Race is an illusion that is not easily definable; it is a powerful social idea that gives people different access to opportunities and resources. Terms such as Hispanic, African-American and Asian are generic terms that look great on surveys but do not adequately reflect the cultural and socioeconomic norms that represent a person’s beliefs and behaviors. Still, Mennonite historian Felipe Hinojosa reminds me that even though race and ethnicity are complex issues, “they help ground us and reflect our histories of struggle in this country.”

• **Communication**: Intercultural understanding and intercultural racism are the realities of people of color. We as people of color have to learn to understand one another and work with each other.

• **Power**: Well-intentioned white people who see themselves as allies often further the separation between races by rushing to demonstrate solidarity with one group while alienating another group. Even the reaction to people of color having a disagreement is somewhat paternalistic and racist.

• **Relationships**: The members of the IRRC went for results before we ourselves had established a covenant of trust with each other.

(Continued on page 48)
Sadly, the longer I work in my role the clearer it becomes that years of oppression, slavery, colonialism, Jim Crow laws and genocide affect how people of color deal with each other. Some still believe that “white is right.” Even people of color within our system operate with this in our subconscious mind. White people designed the system to benefit themselves. They created it, and those of us who have chosen to be a part of it have to deal with the lingering effects of white privilege and dominating power. But I do not believe it is up to white people alone to fix the problem. All of us have a role in helping the church become what God intends it to be.

**Intercultural competence:** Mark Twain once wrote, “Travel is fatal to prejudice, bigotry and narrowmindedness, and many of our people need it sorely on these accounts. Broad, wholesome, charitable views of men and things cannot be acquired by vegetating in one little corner of the earth all one’s lifetime” (*The Innocents Abroad/Roughing It*). The letter from IMH concerning Arizona sent the church on a journey it was ill prepared for, but it was a journey that forced the church to examine its core theology and its statements on immigration and anti-racism.

Exciting things are happening within Latino congregations, various African groups and the Indonesian community. But our systems and practices do not reflect these new realities. Not only have we failed to capture the energy in our racial/ethnic churches but we have also failed to capitalize on changes within our youth, urban congregations and women. The dominance of the white male, though still powerful, is waning. How does our church adapt? What does it mean to be Mennonite in 2011? Can it be tied to style of music, order of worship or a common European heritage?

Mennonite pastor Leonard Dow says it best: “There’s a high regard for our names, you know, Yoder, etc., … I can’t replicate that, but the Anabaptist [quality] that I really valued and received when I was in high school and college is the theology.”

**I am a man.** The Phoenix decision involved several groups who were trying to communicate with the love of Christ. But neither side could fully understand the other. Some spoke from the heart, and others listened with their heads. Some may say my opinion is biased or influenced by my being a staff person. I would say that it’s influenced more by my admiration of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and the cultural realities of being a black man in America. My default setting is to fight injustice and let the world know that “I am a man.”

No place in the United States should be off-limits to me or anyone else. If you say I can’t, then I will. If you try to stop me, I will press forward. If you tell me I am not good enough, I will prove to you that I am better. That is what has been passed on to me by a mother and father who grew up in Mississippi in the early 1900s and survived the racism of the Deep South, the Great Depression and two world wars. My context is different from that of other people of color. But all of us have ancestors who faced oppression as immigrants, slaves or people who were forced from their land.

**Intercultural transformation:** In Portland, Ore., at the Executive Board meeting in April, there was much discussion about the Phoenix decision, the lessons learned and the next steps for the antiracism work in Mennonite Church USA. We agreed together that the pain we had experienced at the Leaders’ Forum had taught important lessons about learning to listen to one another.

Ervin Stutzman also introduced a purposeful plan that outlines future priorities of Mennonite Church USA to be considered by the delegates at the July assembly in Pittsburgh. In keeping with this plan, the Executive Board agreed to expand the antiracism priority to include the much broader work of intercultural transformation. The goal is to create a transformative process that focuses on dismantling racism (systemic and personal), cultivating intercultural competence, healing racial divisions and leading the church toward the unity of diverse peoples depicted in Revelation 7:9.

**While much of the leadership** for this work will fall on Iris deLeon-Hartshorn, the new director for transformative peacemaking, this will truly be a process that mobilizes our entire church, no matter where we are organizationally on the continuum or where we are in our personal understandings and beliefs.

My brief conversation with Sammy at Goshen College helped me realize the need for intercultural transformation within Mennonite Church USA. I have come to realize more deeply that my view is not the only view. As a part of a bigger community I cannot afford only to see the world from my perspective and through my cultural lens.

There comes a time when to be truly in solidarity we must allow the love of Christ to pump through our hearts and listen to its beat. Thank you, Sammy, for speaking up to communicate with your heart and not only your head.—*Glen Guyton, associate executive director for constituent resources, Mennonite Church USA*
Four priorities may expand to seven

Executive Board proposes updating priorities for the next decade.

Delegates at Pittsburgh 2011 will decide on whether or not to expand and update the current churchwide priorities for the next decade.

The current four priorities include holistic witness, antiracism, leadership development and global connections. These four were adopted in 2001.

The Mennonite Church USA Executive Board drafted the new list of seven priorities at its meeting in Portland, Ore., April 14-16. The EB indicated the first three are always top priorities and that the next four priorities are for the next few years.

The new list includes these: Christian formation, Christian community, holistic Christian witness, stewardship, leadership development, intercultural transformation and church-to-church relationships.

According to the April 25 document, each priority will have subheadings beneath it that further describe the priority.

Under the priorities are tangible goals to implement. For example, under Christian formation is the following goal: “Designate a ‘Year of the Bible,’ providing resources to enable every congregation to increase its biblical awareness and faithfulness. We might want to make a list of ‘core scriptures’ that we own as a people.”

According to the document, “The goals identified under each of these priorities invite us to work shoulder-to-shoulder in the various levels of community across Mennonite Church USA.”

The EB’s discussion in Portland focused extensively on the antiracism priority and settled on the term “intercultural transformation.” The subheadings under that term in the working document include antiracism (dismantling individual and systemic racism), intercultural competence, healing racial divisions and envisioning Revelation 7:9.

These priorities are part of executive director Ervin Stutzman’s purposeful plan to update the 2001-2011 organizational strategy document adopted at Nashville 2001.

If individual delegates wish to give feedback, they may send an e-mail to Ervin R. Stutzman, Executive Director, at ErvinS@MennoniteUSA.org or send responses by post to Mennonite Church USA, 1251 Virginia Ave., Harrisonburg, VA 22802.—Anna Groff

RESOURCES


Setting the Agenda: Meditations for the Organization’s Soul by Edgar Stoesz and Rick M. Stiffney ( Herald Press, 2011, $15.99) offers practical advice on how to govern an organization from a spiritual vantage point. It encourages directors of boards to lift themselves out of the present and peer into the future. It also offers more than 90 meditations by a variety of writers that address different moods or challenges boards face in their work.

Dreamtime: Parables of Universal Law While Down Under, edited by Barbara Condron ( School of Metaphysics, 2010, $13), tells the stories of a dozen Americans who traveled to Melbourne, Australia, to attend the Parliament of the World’s Religions at the end of 2009. More than 5,000 Hindus, Buddhists, Taoists, Jews, Christians, Muslims, Jains and other devotees of religion from 75 countries gathered for a week. This book captures the experiences of people ages 3 to 63.

The Sacrifice of Africa: A Political Theology for Africa by Emmanuel Katongole (Eerdmans, 2010, $16) confronts the painful legacy of chaos, war and corruption and shows how it continues to warp the imaginative landscape of African politics and society. It demonstrates the potential of Christianity to interrupt and transform entrenched political imaginations and create a different story for Africa, one of self-sacrificing love that values human dignity and “dares to invent” a better future for all Africans.

Beneath the Cross by Cornelius Martens (Fast Publishing, 2010, $20), first published in German in 1928, has been reissued in English. This autobiography is set in southern Russia in the early 20th century, when the intolerant regime of the Czars was replaced by the even more brutal regime of the Soviets. In this setting, Martens became a traveling evangelist who faced persecution from villagers and bandits, the Orthodox Church and both Czarist officials and the communists who replaced them.

The Witness of the Hebrew Bible for a New Testament Church, edited by Christina Bucher, David Leiter and Frank Ramirez ( Brethren Press, 2010, $27.95), includes 13 essays that argue that the Old Testament, or Hebrew Bible, is an essential foundation for the church, including those that emphasize the centrality of the New Testament. It is available online at www.brethrenpress.com.
Colleges, universities, seminaries graduate 1,262

Speakers range from Berenstain Bears books author to human rights activists.

This painting, a gift to Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary from the 2011 graduating class and painted by graduate Rosanna McFadden, provided a backdrop for AMBS’ May 21 commencement service that included an address by Heidi Neumark (above), pastor of Trinity Lutheran Church of Manhattan, New York.

Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, Ind. 28 graduates, May 21

With words “God’s justice and God’s peace” from the first hymn in Hymnal: A Worship Book as a backdrop for the Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS) commencement service on May 21, speaker Heidi Neumark began her address with a well-known Old Testament story of injustice. Neumark, pastor of Trinity Lutheran Church of Manhattan, N.Y., used as a starting point the story from 1 Kings about King Ahab coveting Naboth’s vineyard. A vineyard takes many years to be fruitful, but Ahab wanted the land for a vegetable garden, she recounted. Then she compared the work of the vineyard to that of a seminary education.

“You have labored in a vineyard and come from a long heritage with deep roots,” she said, tracing those roots all the way back to the waters of Jordan River where Jesus was baptized.

AMBS is a seminary of Mennonite Church Canada and Mennonite Church USA.—Mary E. Klassen

Bethel College, North Newton, Kan. 94 graduates, May 22

The Honorable Kimberly J. Mueller, federal judge for the Eastern District of California, quoted from Robert Frost’s “The Road Not Taken” as she addressed the 94 members of Bethel College’s class of 2011 on May 22.

“Two roads diverged in a yellow wood. … I took the one less traveled by, and that has made all the difference.”

She was echoing the tone set in the morning baccalaureate worship service, based on words of Jeremiah 29 and William Jennings Bryan and centered on making choices. The three student speakers in the service touched on different ways the choices they made that led them to Bethel shaped their college experiences and determined what they would take with them into the world.

“We’re not here by chance—it was a choice,” said Greg Shelly, Lenexa, Kan. “Bethel has given us what we need to follow the path” to whatever comes next.

“You can assure yourselves that you have graduated from one of the finest small colleges in the country,” Mueller told the graduates. “If you so choose, with a Bethel education you can make all the difference.”—Melanie Zuercher

Bluffton (Ohio) University 268 graduates, May 8

Bluffton University gives its graduates “O.R.R.s,” along with the needed tools and supplies to extend them “into the waters of humanity,” Robert Hewitt, a Bluffton alumnus and retired social work educator, told the university’s class of 2011 during commencement May 8.

“The Opportunities, the Rights and the Responsibilities are now yours to be active, intentional, more powerful advocates for social and economic justice in your homes, churches, places of employment, communities and this world,” said Hewitt, a 1969 graduate and a professor emeritus of social work at Shippensburg (Pa.) University.

Hewitt, who earned his Ph.D. in social work from the University of Pittsburgh, noted this year’s civic engagement theme at Bluffton—“Living with Enough: Responding to Global Poverty.”

“Remember this,” he said, “no matter one’s social or economic station in life, within each of us lies a bone-deep longing for freedom, safety, hope, self-respect and the chance to
make an important contribution to family, community and the world. To live fully, we each need ways to express this powerful, natural longing.”—Bluffton University

**Eastern Mennonite Seminary, Harrisonburg, Va.**

**21 graduates, April 30**

Eastern Mennonite Seminary graduates Carl and Becky Van Stavern have spent the last three years juggling seminary and eight churches. Carl had five United Methodist congregations, and Becky had three. They drove three hours to EMS from their home in Weston, W.Va.

The Van Staverns were among 21 students to receive master of divinity degrees from EMS on April 30. The Van Staverns came to EMS because they knew seminary alumni Charles and Sharon Miller and Dallas Forren. All three are United Methodist pastors in West Virginia.

George R. Brunk III, dean emeritus and professor emeritus of New Testament at EMS, gave the commencement address, “Anointed for Ministry.”

“In ministry, are you anointed or are you appointed?” Brunk asked the graduates in his address. “Anything worthy of being called Christian ministry must put the priority on anointing—the Spirit empowerment that rests upon you.”—Laura Lehman Amstutz of EMS

**Eastern Mennonite University, Harrisonburg**

**451 graduates, May 1**

The more than 3,600 people gathered May 1 under a sea of colorful umbrellas at Eastern Mennonite University learned some lessons from bears, but not just any bears.

Michael Berenstain, author and illustrator of the popular Berenstain Bears children’s book series created by his parents, Stan and Jan Berenstain, gave the address at EMU’s 93rd annual commencement exercises. Berenstain’s son, Samuel A. Berenstain, was a member of the class of 2011. He received a bachelor of arts degree in environmental sustainability.

“My family’s special contribution to the literary bear clan has come to be universally identified with what are loosely called family values,” Berenstain said. “It was never our intention to take on this role of do-it-yourself family counselors, but people are always telling us that they like our books not because ‘they teach good lessons’ but because ‘they teach good stories.’”

“The ethnic messages of our books are not very original,” he said. “They lean heavily on such standbys as the Golden Rule and Love Your Neighbor—scarcely an innovation. Their appeal comes, rather, in the way in which the material is presented. We work hard to make our books funny and visually engaging, to make our characters full-dimensional, and we try to tell good stories.”

President Loren Swartzendruber conferred 451 degrees and certificates.—Jim Bishop of EMU

Goshen College graduate Allyson Uhey, a music major from Fort Wayne, Ind., gives a thumbs up as she walks into the ceremony.

**Goshen (Ind.) College**

**261 graduates, May 1**

Goshen College’s class of 2011 received degrees on May 1 after being challenged by president James E. Brenneman to have the courage to serve others and encouraged to bring hope and compassion to a broken world by 1969 Goshen graduate Marjory M. Byler, a human rights activist and organizational consultant. (Continued on next page)
(Continued from page 51)

Byler, who was born and raised in Argentina, worked with Amnesty International for more than 30 years and oversaw a wide range of programs, both in the United States and internationally. In her commencement address, Byler talked about her background, which led to a career in human rights work. She also offered advice on bringing the light of compassion and hope to a broken world.

“I believe that human rights are not just a set of rights—the right of association, expression, the right to shelter, to food, to education—but perhaps most importantly a framework through which to understand how to deal with a broken world and how to begin to help mend it,” Byler said. “One way to think about this is to think about the ideas of voice, access and engagement.”

Byler encouraged the graduates to broaden their concern for others and help others suffering from discrimination and oppression throughout the world. The class of 2011 had 261 graduates.—Richard R. Aguirre of Goshen College

Hesston (Kan.) College
139 graduates, May 8

Hesston College’s 139 graduates of the class of 2011 were encouraged during a May 8 commencement ceremony to go into the world with a spirit of love and unity.

Regina Shands Stoltzfus, professor in the peacemaking, justice and conflict studies and Bible, religion and philosophy departments at Goshen (Ind.) College, as well as adjunct professor at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary (Elkhart, Ind.) and mother of graduate Rachel Stoltzfus, addressed the graduates with the message “Rooted in Love, Sent Out in Hope.”

Stoltzfus’ message was based on Ephesians 3:20-21, which served as the Hesston College theme verse for the 2010-11 academic year.

She encouraged the graduates to embody that same spirit as they leave Hesston, go into the world and impact it with their talents and gifts.

Stoltzfus reflected on the struggles of the civil rights movement and her own experiences of growing up in a mixed-race church in Cleveland, Ohio, to illustrate how love can make a difference in the world.

“What impressed me was the ordinariness of it all,” she said in reflection of her early church experience. “It’s not like every day was a protest march. We were just ordinary people meeting together. We were learning to love one another not in spite of our differences but because we were a church together, and love is just what you do.”

Graduates Leah Rittenhouse of Mount Pleasant, Pa., and Alex Roth of Hesston, Kan., were nominated by their classmates to give the student address during commencement.—Rachel Schlegel of Hesston College

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CALENDAR

The Mennonite Children’s Choir of Lancaster (MCCL) is auditioning singers for their Carol and Concert choirs on the following Tuesdays: Aug. 2 and Aug. 9. The Carol Choir is for singers entering grades 2-5, and the Concert Choir is for those entering grades 6-8. The mission of MCCL is to train children and youth to glorify Jesus Christ through excellent choral singing. While there is tuition, cost should not be a deterring factor. Financial assistance is available. MCCL is a program of Lancaster Mennonite School. For more information go to www.mennonitechildrenschoir.org.

Faith Mennonite Church in Minneapolis, Minn., will celebrate our 50th anniversary Sept. 23-25 with a theme of “On the Banks of the River: 50 years of Invitation to the Water of Life (Jeremiah 17:7-8).” Join us for a weekend of stories, music, food, renewing old friendships and celebration of God’s faithfulness. Contact us at anniversary@faithmennonite.org or check out details at www.faithmennonite.org.

WORKERS

Gunderson, April Dawn, was licensed as associate pastor of care and counsel at Harrisonburg Mennonite Church, Harrisonburg, Va., on April 3.

Herr, Lee Ray, was licensed as deacon at Carpenter Community Church, Talmage, Pa., on April 17.

Martin, Stephen L., began a term as associate pastor at Parkview Mennonite Church, Reamstown, Pa., on March 27.

Rai, Shankarm, was licensed as lead pastor at Bhutanese-Nepali Church of Lancaster, Lancaster, Pa., on April 23.

OBITUARIES


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


Schmucker, Mildred Mary Sommers, 91, Louisville, Ohio, died April 29. Spouse: Elden J. Smucker (deceased). Parents: John and Bertha Taylor Sommers. Children: Ruth Anne Bontreger, Marcia Miller, Eunice Miller, Elva Block; eight grandchildren; 20 great-grandchildren. Funeral: May 4 at Beech Mennonite Church, Louisville.

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Paul M. Schrock, 75, long-time editor at Mennonite Publishing House, Scottdale, Pa., died April 18 at the University of Virginia Medical Center from injuries sustained in an April 15 fall. The accident occurred following a volunteer shift with the Menno Simons Historical Library at Eastern Mennonite University, Harrisonburg, Va. During a 41-year career with MPH, Schrock served as assistant to the editor of Gospel Herald, editor of the children’s magazine Words of Cheer (later On the Line) and founding editor of Purpose magazine. Later, he was book editor and vice president of publishing of Herald Press Trade Books. During a two-year stint in Harrisonburg, he produced “The Mennonite Hour” and “Way to Life” radio programs and taught at EMU. He also operated a stock photo business for many years. As book editor, Schrock shaped the publication of more than 750 books, including the best-selling More With Less Cookbook, the award-winning The Upside-Down Kingdom and the Believers Church Bible Commentary series. Schrock was born in Tangent, Ore., graduated from Western Mennonite School in 1954 and from EMU in 1958, and earned a master’s degree in journalism from Syracuse University in 1963. Paul was married for 53 years to June (Bontrager) Schrock, who survives, along with children Carmen (and Luke) Schrock-Hurst of Harrisonburg, Brent Schrock of Lititz, Pa., and Andrea Schrock Wenger (and Delbert) of Broadway, Va., and grandchildren Grace, Lucas and Caleb Schrock-Hurst, and Eli and Leah Wenger. A funeral was held at Park View Mennonite Church (Harrisonburg) April 21; memorial service and burial were held in Scottdale April 29. Memorial contributions may be made to Booksavers of Virginia, 731 Mount Clinton Pike #8, Harrisonburg, VA 22802-5463, where Paul was a regular volunteer.


Troyer, David W., 68, Shipshewana, Ind., died April 7 of heart problems. Parents: Glenn and Luella Christner Troyer. Children: Shari Troyer; eight grandchildren. Funeral: April 14 at Shore Mennonite Church, Shipshewana.


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Finance director at Pleasantview Home, a continuing-care retirement community in Kalona, Iowa. Responsible for all financial operations of $5.5 million budget. Competitive salary/benefits. Full-time but will consider part-time if highly qualified. Minimum four-year degree in finance or accounting. Additional financial and administrative education and experience preferred. Send resume or inquiries to pvadmin@pvhome.org or mail to David Heusinkveld, Pleasantview Home, 811 Third St., Kalona, IA 52247, or call 319-656-2421.

Answers to the page 61 puzzle

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

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A different kind of power

Kara Bender has been a resident of the Chicago area for four years. Recognizing the many privileges she carries by being white, educated and middle-class, Kara attempts to hold the complexity of that reality and wrestle with the responsibility that comes with those advantages. Choosing to live in a low-income community in one of the most racially diverse neighborhoods in the country was a conscious choice. Kara understands that all of life is connected and that she has a self-interest in working towards common liberation with those who are oppressed in society.

Kara has embraced a philosophy of “power with” her sisters and brothers (rather than power over or power for, others). For the past four years, Kara has been working with the Jane Adams Senior Caucus, a grass-roots organization of older adults working together to bring about positive social change. Although she is less than half the age of her counterparts, Kara works to organize the members around campaigns for more affordable housing. Her role as a facilitator allows her to create the space for conversation and decision making from those people directly affected by the issues, instead of coming into a community to tell the older adults what they should do. This enables the normal power dynamics to be converted as she asks questions, listens and follows the passion the community names. This is one practical way Kara is able to use her intellect and organizing capability in a nondominating role, where she does not exert her privilege over others but uses her skills to draw out the knowledge and energy already present in people.

“Power with” is not a philosophy encouraged in society but rather one drawn from her faith. Kara understands Jesus’ calling as toward liberation and reconciliation. Jesus came promoting an even-ing of society, where the high may be brought low and the low be brought high. He called into question the power structures in the religious and household practices of his time: choosing to heal on the Sabbath, turn over tables in the Temple and eat with the marginalized. Through nonviolent direct action and storytelling, he modeled a new way of being in relationship with each other, creation and God. For those with privilege, be it color of skin, wealth, education or nationality, this requires choosing not to take that privilege for granted but recognize its harmful side effects and the way it contributes to cycles of oppression. For Kara, this begins by building relationships and understanding how to be in solidarity with others.

Kara’s philosophy of “power with” also plays out in her daily life. She has posed a question on which to reflect for one year: How do I cultivate a lifestyle that connects me meaningfully with my creator, my self and the Earth’s rhythms in a way that is life-giving and sustainable for everyone? Kara relates to an intentional Christian (Mennonite) community where “power with” is played out not only in consensus decision-making but in sharing resources, including one’s finances. Kara bicycles frequently, eats as locally and seasonally as possible and promotes creative gardening (such as vertical and rooftop), effective in a dense urban area, to reduce ways her choices contribute to an oil-dependent and environmentally degrading lifestyle that translates into war, poverty, hunger and natural disasters for brothers and sisters across the world. Kara also is passionately involved in promoting and working toward racial justice in her local congregation—an area she would love to see Mennonite Church USA address better.

Kara is a great inspiration to me and challenges me to question my assumptions and my reliance on my personal privilege and power. Kara begs us to assume a position of critical analysis with our surroundings and our relationships. What systems of injustice are present in our communities? In Mennonite Church USA? Where do we see resistance and transformative work being practiced? How can we work to break the cycles of unjust privilege and power rather than acquiescing to their normalcy in our daily lives? For Kara, being a person of power and privilege is not an easy ride through life; rather it’s an ongoing struggle to do her own work of healing and participate with others in the process of breaking the chains of injustice and proclaiming liberation for all of God’s children.
Books on spirituality, science, politics

This semiannual perusal of new books shows how broadly our faith reaches—or needs to reach—as we seek to follow Jesus each day.

**Spirituality:** Richard Rohr is an outstanding preacher and teacher, and that shows in his books, which include many catchy sentences that sum up his helpful lessons about spirituality.

His most recent books are *A Lever and a Place to Stand: The Contemplative Stance, the Active Prayer* (Hidden-Spring, 2011, $15) and *Falling Upward: A Spirituality for the Two Halves of Life* (Jossey-Bass, 2011, $19.95).

While both books embrace themes common to many of Rohr’s books, these add their own emphases. *A Lever* summarizes Rohr’s integration of action and contemplation by calling for the need for “(1) a strong tolerance for ambiguity, (2) an ability to allow, forgive and contain a certain degree of anxiety and (3) a willingness to not know and not even need to know.”

Such characteristics also fit what Rohr labels “the second half of life.” This does not have to do with chronological age but spiritual maturity. In the first half, “we are usually on bended knee before laws or angrily reacting against them—both immature responses.” Our churches, he writes, often keep people in the first half and don’t call for real transformation.

What he calls “falling” is a letting go, a surrender to the mercy of God. This is difficult because “the human ego prefers anything … to falling or changing or dying.” But those who fall experience God’s “great outpouring.”

**Science:** Perhaps one of the more significant books to come out recently that addresses science and religion is *Darwin’s Pious Idea: Why the Ultra-Darwinists and Creationists Both Get It Wrong* by Conor Cunningham (Eerdmans, 2010, $34.99). Cunningham, whose expertise is in theology and philosophy, makes a thorough case arguing the thesis in his subtitle.

He attacks the “foolish wisdom” of many atheists and the “learned ignorance” of many Christians. He goes after the popular ultra-Darwinist Richard Dawkins, whose “veneration of selfishness, rendering it almost absolute, is also anti-evolutionary (just as creationism is antitheological).”

By exploring what Darwin actually taught and what scientists have learned about evolution, Cunningham uses simple logic to render the fundamentalist views of Dawkins and others nonsensical. “Evolutionary psychology,” for example, “involves a great deal of mythology, and a plethora of untestable, post hoc explanations,” he writes.

*The Trinity and an Entangled World: Relationality in Physical Science and Theology,* edited by John Polkinghorne (Eerdmans, 2010, $30), takes a different approach. It includes 13 essays by scientists and theologians that address the idea that, as Polkinghorne writes, “The universe is deeply relational in its character and unified in its structure, because it is the creation of the one true God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.”

**Politics:** Two new books engage us around political theology. *The Politics of Discipleship: Becoming Postmaterial Citizens* by Graham Ward (BakerAcademic, 2009, $25) is difficult but worth the effort. Ward examines the political nature of our postmodern world and calls the church to “perform Christ in every microcontext … to recognize and own the politics of discipleship.”

*Migrations of the Holy: God, State and the Political Meaning of the Church* by William T. Cavanaugh (Eerdmans, 2011, $18) is more accessible and urges Christians “not to invest the entirety of their political presence in [the ‘powers and principalities’ of our age].”

Gordon Houser is associate editor of The Mennonite.
These readers submitted answers

Mark Amstutz, Eastham, Mass.
Arva Beck, Archbold, Ohio
Mary L. Beck, Archbold, Ohio
Marlene Birky, Valparaiso, Ind.
Ruby Bontrager, Bristol, Ind.
Lovina Toner Brandt, Baltic, Ohio
Alice Buller, Henderson, Neb.
Hettie Conrad, Hesston, Kan.
Margaret Derstine, Lancaster, Pa.
Larry & Janet Dixon, Topeka, Kan.
Ginny Doehrmann, Stryker, Ohio
Leta Eichelberger, Lakewood, Colo.
Orlin Eigsti, Hesston, Kan.
Elmer L. Friesen, Henderson, Neb.
Katherine Garber, Elizabethtown, Pa.
Anna D. Gehman, Souderton, Pa.
Elizabeth & Lavina Gehman, Seville, Ohio
Sarah Glick, Belleville, Pa.
Evelyn Good, Urbana, Ill.
Lorene Good, Minier, Ill.
Edna Goossen, North Newton, Kan.
Rachel Graber, Parker, S.D.
Esther F. Hartzler, Harrisonville, Mo.
Rachel Hiebner, Henderson, Neb.
Harley & Margaret Himes, Kidron, Ohio
Carolyn Hochstetler, Wellman, Iowa
Ray & Joyce Hofer, Freeman, S.D.
Vileen Hostetler, Colorado Springs, Colo.
Rod Huebert, Moundridge, Kan.
Willard Hunsberger, Goshen, Ind.
Donald King, Goshen, Ind.
Faye J. Landis, Lancaster, Pa.
Ethel Lehman, Columbiana, Ohio
Phyllis Lehman, Mt Eaton, Ohio
Kathy Leichty, Wellman, Iowa
Anna V. Liechty, Berne, Ind.
Barbara Longoria, Greenwood, Ind.
Arthur Martin, Goshen, Ind.
Richard & Shirley Mast, Graham, N.C.
Erma Maust, Sarasota, Fla.
Sharon Meyer, Moses Lake, Wash.
Crist Miller, Goshen, Ind.
Lois Miller, Wauseon, Ohio
Marcile Miller, Goshen, Ind.
Frances Moser, Wooster, Ohio
Anne Moyer, Lansdale, Pa.
Ruth Mumaw, Wooster, Ohio
Pauline Musselman, Souderton, Pa.
Barbara Newcomer, Seville, Ohio
Peter & Shirley Neffziger, Archbold, Ohio
Edna Otto, Leonard, Mo.
Mary Rhoades, Goshen, Ind.
Odette Rolon, Archbold, Ohio
Bonnie Rufenacht, La Junta, Colo.
Marlin Rupp, Pettisville, Ohio
Elvira Schierling, Denver, Colo.
Stan & Alma Schloneger, Louisville, Ohio
Harlo Schmidt, Buhler, Kan.
Helen Schmidt, Goessel, Kan.
Wilbert Schmidt, Goessel, Kan.
Karen Schmucker, Milford, Ind.
Myron & Phyllis Schultz, Greeley, Colo.
Verlene Sebes, Hanston, Kan.
Ruth Shaum, Goshen, Ind.
Dorothy F. Shirk, Denver, Pa.
Ruth N. Showalter, Chambersburg, Pa.
Marilyn Stauffer, Elyhart, Ind.
Ruth W. Stoltzfus, Honey Brook, Pa.
Gabriel Stucky, Westover, Md.
Paul & Bertha Swarr, Harrisonburg, Va.
Maredith Vendenrele, Leo, Ind.
Peter Voran, North Newton, Kan.
Bob & Anna Mae Weaver, Lancaster, Pa.

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**Storage Issues**, poems, Susanne Kay Miller. “Might be Annie Dillard by way of Gerard Manley Hopkins . . . but in fact it’s Miller.”
—Albert Goldbarth. 108p $12.95


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

ACROSS
1. Israel’s last king; he murdered Pekah (2 K i. 15:30)
4. A Reubenite and son of Eliab who conspired against Moses and Aaron (Num. 16)
9. Israel’s 17th king, who killed Shallum, and was cruel to the people of Tiphsah (2 K i. 15:14-16)
10. Saul’s ___-bearer refused to kill Saul with the sword but then killed himself (1 Chr. 10:5).
11. Ninth king of Judah who embraced the gods of Edom (2 Chr. 25:14)
12. Cain fled to this land after murdering Abel
13. She betrayed Samson.
16. Samson killed a thousand Philistines in ____-Lehi with a donkey’s jawbone (Jud. 15:17).
17. A priest of Baal (2 K i. 11:18)
18. King Ahab’s daughter who killed her grandsons to gain the throne (2 K i. 11:2).
25. “Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord, thy God ___…” (KJV).
26. Goliath’s brother (1 Chr. 20:5)
27. She asked for the head of John the Baptist.

DOWN
1. He plotted against Mordecai and all the Jews (Es. 3).
2. He worked against Nehemiah’s rebuilding of Jerusalem’s walls.
3. Son and successor of King Saul, also called Ishbosheth (1 Chr. 8:23)
5. Third king of the northern kingdom who murdered Nadab’s family to become king
6. Israel was a part of this empire during the life of Jesus.
7. _____-Baladan, a king of Babylon (Is.39:1)
8. Israel’s sixth king, who was a commander under King Elah and took control from Zimri, then Tibni (1 K i. 16:22)
13. A supporter of Diana (Artemis); he incited a riot against Paul at Ephesus (Acts 19:24).
14. Jesus was first taken to this father-in-law of Caiaphas before his trial (John 18:13).
15. The father of Menahem, a cruel king of Israel (2 K i. 15:14)
16. Son and successor of Solomon
19. Hosea named his second son this to show God’s rejection of Israel (Hos. 1:9)
20. Colonists from this area worshiped an idol called Ashima (2 K i. 17:30).
22. “Whenever Hannah went up to the house of the Lord, her ___ provoked her till she wept…” (1 Sam. 1:7).
23. A gatekeeper and one of many men who married pagan wives during the captivity, then divorced them (Ez. 10:24)

Bible bad guys
By Jeanette Baer Showalter

RECOGNITION
To be recognized in our August 2011 issue, send the completed puzzle and form below to: The Mennonite, 1700 South Main Street, Goshen, IN 46526.

DEADLINE:
July 1, 2011

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EMAIL ADDRESS

Answers to the puzzle can be found on page 57.
Concerning the February editorial: Some letter-writers rebutted possible defense of the use of alcohol. I questioned the late professor Howard Charles about Jesus’ first miracle at Cana (John 1:3-11). He said that natural fermented grapes in Jesus’ time had a lesser alcohol content than modern-made wines.

When 42-year-old Martin Luther married Katherine von Bora on June 27, 1525, he ordered one barrel of the best Corgall beer. Wedding priests included a barrel of Einbeck beer, wine. In those days traffic accidents from drunk drivers and broken homes were not a social problem like today.

John and Charles Wesley constantly carried fortified wine with them, since water supplies were frequently polluted. Past letters criticizing the moderate, controlled use of alcohol are still valid.—Art Martin, Goshen, Ind.

Editorial team responds

The February editorial was in response to letter-writers asking why we published an article about a winery in Virginia owned by a Mennonite couple without any editorial explanation or rationale. One of the responsibilities we carry as journalists is to report changes in the church, and the editorial did so. The editorial also opined that the legal and moderate use of alcohol is not something about which we need to divide. Many letters in response to the editorial addressed the illegal or immoderate use of alcohol; we agree that these are grave concerns.

Some readers criticized us for publishing the winery story because it gave free publicity to a private, for-profit company. While we do occasionally publish stories about private enterprise, we are careful to consider the news value against what some see as endorsement and free advertising. But the outpouring of responses—in the past decade no other article in The Mennonite generated as many letters—confirmed the news value of the winery story. We do not, however, expect to publish such a story again in the near future.—Anna Groff, Gordon Houser, Everett Thomas

Editorial is disheartening

Some days I wonder if there is a more frustrating magazine than The Mennonite—or perhaps it just so nicely captures my frustration with the Mennonite church—fitting for the “official” voice of Mennonite Church USA, I suppose.

I opened the May issue and read a lovely piece by Jenn Ebenshade (“A Letter to my Daughter”). Jenn encouraged her daughter to embrace a radical nonconformity, to resist those who want to turn her and her Christianity into something safe and non-threatening.

Then I read a disheartening editorial by Everett Thomas as a mouthpiece for Ervin Stutzman (“Unconventional Conventions”). It suggests the only reward for poor Jenn’s daughter—should she take this advice—is when she grows up, she will be accused of damaging youth conventions beyond repair with her social advocacy and her “haunting.”

Rather than blaming the young men and women who are taking to heart the Anabaptist tradition of protesting the injustices they see, perhaps the leaders of Mennonite Church USA should be actively engaging in and encouraging dialogue and teaching ourselves how to agree and disagree in love rather than using divisive language that just adds to the space between us.

As for Jenn’s daughter, I hope it is the voice of her mother rather than of church leaders—even if that voice takes her to places the church and we in the church aren’t quite ready to follow her to.—LeAnne Zook, Washington, D.C.

I was dismayed at the tone of Thomas’ May editorial. I am galvanized to respond to the quote from Ervin Stutzman, included by Thomas, that unfairly misrepresents the Pink Mennos with a negative description that techniques they used have “come to haunt our church’s most visible gathering.”

I participated at our Columbus 2009 convention as a delegate and felt respect for the young adults who organized the Pink Mennonite witness there. I saw circles of Pink Mennos and other friends singing hymns of faith together and creating intentional gathering places for respectful dialogue.

For youth groups for whom homosexuality may be a new and uncomfortable issue, the presence of Pink Mennos created an opportunity for youth and sponsors to talk together about their questions and convictions as followers of Jesus. I did not experience or hear reports of Pink Mennos pressuring people to take up sides. Rather, I understood their presence at the Columbus convention as a way of expressing their love for the Mennonite church and of asking for their voices to be included and taken seriously.—Tina Stoltzfus Schlabach, Goshen, Ind.

My experience as a delegate to the 2009 convention in Columbus was contrary to the statement by Ervin Stutzman, as quoted by Everett Thomas in the May editorial. It was not the Pink Mennos who pressured me to take sides but a pastor who was then serving in Southeast Conference but since has relocated to the Midwest. At that time, I was serving on the Leadership Team of Southeast Conference, and he sought me out to object to my standing near the Pink Mennos, who were singing hymns outside the delegate meeting room. If I was “haunted” by anyone, it was by that conservative brother, not the advocates of social change.—Eve MacMaster, Gainesville, Fla.
Investing in Hope An answer for the hope inside us

*But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have."

—1 Peter 3:15 (TNIV)

The Apostle Peter wrote to people who were enduring hard times. He encouraged them to take their suffering in stride, looking to Jesus for hope. Peter knew that people who lived with hope in the face of trouble would inevitably be queried about the reason for their positive outlook. He encouraged them to be ready to give an answer to those who asked.

Much of the modern church in America is weak and flabby when it comes to suffering for the sake of Christian faith. Followers of Jesus scramble alongside unbelieving neighbors to attain creature comforts and enjoy the supposedly good life to the full. Not exactly the kind of lifestyle that leads unbelievers to inquire about the reason for the hope that springs from within.

Yet in my travels, I often witness counter-signs indicating that people are seeking to follow a different path. I encounter congregations and conferences that are robustly missional in their Christian witness, openly declaring their hope in Christ. In this vein, I was strongly encouraged by my recent visit to Illinois Mennonite Conference (IMC).

IMC is one of the 21 area conferences in Mennonite Church USA. As the “pastor” of this group of churches, Chuck Neufeld wraps his arms of love around the diverse peoples that make up the conference. The theme of this year’s conference, “Embrace—for the Glory of God (Abraza—para la Gloria de Dios)” (Romans 15:5-7), reflected his warm spirit of care.

The meeting was held in Cicero, Ill., an urban community of Chicago close to the Midway airport. A large Spanish-speaking congregation, Sonido de Alabanza (Sounds of Praise), hosted the meeting. They demonstrated the hospitality and efficiency that helps them touch nearly 1,000 people in ministry every week. In his message to the conference, pastor Esdras Ferreras spoke fluently in both Spanish and English, with an interpreter who easily adapted when he switched from one language to the other.

The assembly planners gave priority to worship, preaching and interaction, with a relatively small block of time given to business. They launched an experiment by which each congregation will visit and be visited by a sister congregation. I sensed an air of excitement about the plan.

What I will remember most is my participation in two of the three Sunday worship services at Sonido de Alabanza. The energetic worship was led by more than 20 musicians, singers and banner wavers, accompanied by dancers of all ages between the front row and the stage. Later, when Pastor Ferreras made his weekly statistical report, the congregation responded with applause. Among other numbers, he reported these:

- New converts: 11;
- Teams of three: 67 (teams of three believers, each praying for three unbelievers);
- Potential cell group leaders in training: 86;
- Street evangelism: 23 gave their lives to Christ;
- Unbelievers for whom they are praying: 648;
- Bible chapters read: 3,039;
- People fasting: 169;
- Daily devotional with their families: 235;
- Personal ministry (supplying needs and praying for others): 294.

Founding Pastor Juan Ferreras attended all the services, greeting people and casting a father’s eye over the time of ministry. Dubbed an apostle, he has helped start 50 daughter churches, most of them outside the United States.

This congregation, along with a nearby IMC church of the same size, Vida Abundante (Abundant Life), has much to teach us regarding the missional church.

Perhaps God can use the rising interracial tensions in our nation to prompt diverse peoples within Mennonite Church USA to embrace one another to the glory of God. It could even prompt unbelievers to ask about the hope that lies inside us. May it be so. 

Ervin Stutzman is executive director of Mennonite Church USA.
The end of publishing in Scottdale

Actions taken by delegates at our biennial conventions have a direct effect on individual workers, their families and their communities. For example, former General Conference Mennonite Church members experienced this firsthand over the last decade as staff and programs in the Newton, Kan., office have diminished since the merger of their conference with the former Mennonite Church.

Another example: In the former Mennonite Church, a 1971 action to create a General Board and Mennonite Board of Congregational Ministries had a long-term but direct effect on Mennonite Publishing House (MPH) in Scottdale, Pa. (see cover photo). Forty years later, nearly to the month, that venerable publishing ministry will close its shop in Scottdale. A remnant of the staff will move to a new organization in Harrisonburg, Va., and the building is up for sale.

To mark the end of the publishing ministry in Scottdale, we asked historian John Sharp, former pastor at Scottdale Mennonite Church, to write a short history of that community’s contribution to congregational and denominational life (see page 12). This piece touches briefly on some of the behind-the-scenes decision-making in the early 1970s that contributed to the demise of Mennonite Publishing House.

Rachel Fisher, now retired and living in Goshen, Ind., was present as a minute-taker for most of the meetings preceding the delegate action in 1971. According to Fisher, an “umbrella” organization was needed to provide accountability for the two big agencies at that time (Mennonite Board of Missions in Elkhart, Ind., and Mennonite Publishing House) as well as the smaller Mennonite Board of Education, the fledgling Mennonite Mutual Aid organization and the newly formed Mennonite Board of Congregational Ministries (MBCM). The “program boards” needed this accountability because they were too autonomous, she says.

“It was a real blow [to Scottdale],” says Paul Lederach, who worked for years with Sunday curriculum at MPH, “when they took the General Board to Chicago and MBCM to Goshen.”

Prior to this time, Scottdale was seen as the “capital” of the Mennonite Church. Top staff members for the denomination were there, the Gospel Herald was there, Sunday school curriculum was there, and the national Mennonite Youth Fellowship (MYF) office was there. Within six months after the delegate action in 1971, several of these leadership offices were taken away.

Publishing in Scottdale continued for 40 years but slowly, on a downward trend. There were additional reasons for its trajectory: Print publishing declined as fewer congregations used curriculum created by our denomination. Financial misadventures cost the publishing house both money and credibility. During merger discussions in the 1990s, MPH’s initial resistance to merging with the Commission on Education’s Faith & Life Press left the church wondering about things like dueling youth curricula from the two publishing entities.

Others have pointed out that the seeds for an organization’s demise are planted when things are going well. Similarly, seeds for success are planted when an organization is in trouble. Some of the most important seeds are the actions taken by delegates to change our denominational structure. If delegates to Pittsburgh 2011 take an action that alters the current structure, we know such an action will have a direct effect on individuals, families and communities. The effect, however, may take 40 years to become obvious.—ejt