Lois Gunden
a righteous Gentile

September 2013

www.TheMennonite.org

INSIDE:
• Dialogue’s demands and discoveries
• An elder’s side job
• Like a man?
• An African-American male as a human
• Stealing wages
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ON THE COVER: Photo courtesy of Mennonite Church USA Archives, Goshen, Ind.


**LETTERS**

This publication welcomes your letters, either about our content or about issues facing the Mennonite Church USA. Please keep your letter brief—one or two paragraphs—and about one subject only. We reserve the right to edit for length and clarity. Publication is also subject to space limitations. Email to letters@themennonite.org or mail to Letters, The Mennonite, 3145 Benham Ave., Suite 4, Elkhart, IN 46517. Please include your name and address. We will not print letters sent anonymously, though we may withhold names at our discretion.—*Editors*

**Results should be public**

Regarding John Howard Yoder and the statement posted on the Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS) website (see also page 45): The statement falls short of an apology. In fact it comes off more as an appreciation of Yoder’s scholarly work than as a profound statement of contrition. It reads, “We regret the hurt. …” This is a statement of regret rather than a clearcut statement of apology.

My father, Ross T. Bender, served as AMBS dean for many years and found Yoder a difficult personality, to say the least. Dad left the seminary in 1984 for an extended leave to pastor at Glennon Heights Mennonite Church in Lakeland, Colo. When he returned, the faculty had finally made the decision to bar Yoder from campus. My father never received an apology from the man.

After my father died in the spring of 2011, I wrote to president Sara Wenger Shenk and other faculty members detailing my concern about the abuse my father suffered from working with this man—not sexual abuse but manipulative behaviors. Also, before the final faculty witnesses to Yoder’s sexually abusive behavior (in AMBS classrooms) pass away, it needs to be spelled out in explicit detail how this man operated.

The AMBS statement says: “References to Yoder’s submission to and completion of the disciplinary process with Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference will be made as appropriate with students, future faculty and scholars.” This is waffling. These results should be published openly.

I should say that before my father died he forgave John (albeit posthumously). He viewed him as a sort of Jean Calvin, however that may be taken.—Ross Lynn Bender, Philadelphia

**Phoenix convention coverage**

I found the coverage of the convention very helpful, since I wasn’t there. I’m grateful for the work to describe what went on in Phoenix. Now I feel like I have a sense for the meetings.

I did notice a strange addition of a “(sic)” in the middle of a quote of someone who was talking about “the kindom of God.” I take it the editor thought the person meant to say “kingdom of God” but forgot the “g.” Actually, “kindom of God” is language developed in Latina theology (particularly in what’s called “mujerista theology”) as a way to get around the patriarchal and hierarchical image of kingship. If interested in “the kindom of God,” read the work of the late Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz.—Isaac Villegas, Chapel Hill, N.C.

**Editor’s note:** We appreciate this information. We added the “(sic)” after finding no definition for “kindom” at dictionary.com.

As a person who was not able to attend the convention in Phoenix, I just want you to know that now I feel like I was there (almost). The August issue was truly one of your best, if I may say so. My husband and I read it cover to cover. Thank you so much for the excellent coverage of a very broad range of topics.—Linda O. Krueger, human resources coordinator, Mennonite Mission Network

**Censorship and ‘graphic’ images**

Gordon Houser once again makes us stop and think, this time with his “Graphic Images in Media” (Mediacul-
tured, August). He quotes Conor Friedersdorf saying, “the American media sanitize almost all death. … During the Iraq War, an American could watch hours of TV coverage without ever seeing the dead body of a U.S. soldier.”

Friedersdorf is soft on the near-complete military censorship of coverage of violence in war zones. At the outbreak of the first Gulf War, the U.S. military leadership vowed not to let photographers into the live battle areas because “the media lost the war in Vietnam for us, and that’s not going to happen again.” So they created a system of one “pool” reporter to go in but only exactly where the military wanted. Thus, censorship.

Then, a reflection on one of the most misused words in the English language, “graphic.” As an art teacher, I know that “graphic” means a reproducible image, such as a wood block print, an etching, a photograph or video image.

To use “graphic” in the sense of violent or gory, that is something that has incorrectly crept into our language. If you want violent, gory or disturbing, look no further than the second edition (1685) of the Martyrs Mirror.—Brian D. Stucky, Goessel, Kan.

**Fructose does not cause obesity**

In response to Gordon Houser’s article on obesity and fructose (Miscellany, August): I believe it is inappropriate for The Mennonite and publications like it to get on a “band wagon” or suggest directly or indirectly that others do. It is nonsensical to think that any complex problems can be reduced to one simple item.

Obesity is not the result of fructose or any other single item in our diet. It is not due to any single food item in our diet or even a food group. And removing single items from our diet will not have any significant effect. People are obese because they eat too much, not because they eat the “wrong” things. Obesity is related to when we eat, where we eat and why we eat. Obesity will not be affected by campaigns against specific items or foods but by a change in our “culture of food.”

The readership of The Mennonite would be well served by having articles such as this one reviewed by a medical/scientific review committee.

—Dwight A. Kauffman, Pandora, Ohio

**Concerned about freemasonry**

Should the Mennonite church examine Freemasonry? Though many other denominations have done so, the only Mennonite statement I’ve found so far is from a single author, Daniel Kauffman, in 1898. It is time for an update, and I suggest the following resources as a starting place:

In 1952, Walton Hannah published the first version of his book Darkness Visible: A Christian Appraisal of Freemasonry, which delivered verbatim transcriptions of Freemason rituals. The 2008, Baronius Press edition states that the accuracy of these transcriptions was confirmed by Commander Higham, Grand Secretary of the United Grand Lodge of England.

In his pioneering book Masonry, Conspiracy Against Christianity (Pilgrim Press, 1997), historian A. Ralph Epperson examines passages from Masonic publications and provides a wealth of citations for further study.

There are other resources to help Christians who are caught in Freemasonry. William Schnoebelen left Masonry, and in his book Masonry Beyond the Light, he shows why he believes membership in the group is incompatible with faith in Jesus Christ. He also shows how Masons can properly repent and leave their lodge. Further resources are available online, such as www.ephesians5-11.org.—Jon Ebersole, Affoltern am Albis, Switzerland

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**In this Issue**

Lois Gunden Clemens is only the fourth U.S. citizen and perhaps only Mennonite to be named by Yad Vashem, Israel’s official memorial to the Jewish victims of the Holocaust, as Righteous Among the Nations. Lois will receive the formal award posthumously for her courageous work in France saving Jewish children during World War II. We commissioned her niece Mary Jean Gunden to write the piece as this month’s cover story (page 12).

In this issue we also publish an article that has been in the planning stages for three years (page 26). It was written by an anonymous Mennonite man who describes his struggles to remain faithful to church teachings while dealing with same-sex attraction. He originally communicated with a pseudonym through his counselor. In order to check the veracity of Anonymous’ story, we asked for and received a letter confirming it from the counselor’s agency.

In his June Mediaculture column, associate editor Gordon Houser described a new Herald Press book on John Howard Yoder’s writings as “remarkably relevant to Christians today.” The comment sparked a critical response from one of our readers, who then continued to speak on social media about the hurt remaining among Yoder’s victims, and the blogosphere continues to see posts from others. So in News Analysis, we publish three pieces related to the discussion: a blog post by Sara Wenger Shenk, president of Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Elkhart, Ind., an AMBS faculty statement about teaching Yoder, and excerpts from a July 28, 1992, news story in the former The Mennonite (page 44).

Associate editor Anna Groff pulls together a survey of “edgy Mennonite blogs and websites” on page 40. —Editor
NEWS BRIEFS
News from the Mennonite world

AMC sets Reconciliation Discernment Committee
ELKHART, Ind.—Eight years after disciplining the Hyattsville (Md.) Mennonite Church for a membership policy that grants full membership to LGBTQ individuals, the Allegheny Mennonite Conference has launched a “reconciliation discernment” process by commissioning a 10-member committee to discern if reconciliation of some type between the conference and the congregation is possible. The commissioning came at AMC’s annual celebration gathering Aug. 1-3 at the Laurelville Mennonite Church Center in Mount Pleasant, Pa. AMC had seen a purpose statement for the committee brought by conference leaders at a previous delegate session.

“The purpose of the Reconciliation Discernment Committee is to explore how we live in unity as diverse congregations within Allegheny Mennonite Conference,” says the statement. “The committee will examine how we discern God’s will and work together when we disagree on the issue of same sex relationships.”

J. Lorne Peachey, AMC moderator, said on Aug. 5 that the committee will include four members from AMC and four members from Hyattsville. Donna Mast, who is the AMC conference minister, will serve as staff for the group but not be a voting member of the committee. The conference has asked Don Sharp, pastor of the Stumptown Mennonite Church in Bird-in-Hand, Pa., to serve as facilitator.

AMC also heard of Hyattsville’s July 28 vote to call Michelle Burkholder, who recently married another woman, to serve as an associate pastor. The vote was 98 percent in favor.

According to Peachey, there was no discussion during conference sessions of Hyattsville’s latest decision.

—Everett J. Thomas

Mennonites, Lutherans continue reconciliation
GOSHEN, Ind.—A six-member task force appointed by Mennonite World Conference (MWC) Faith and Life Commission met at Goshen College July 20-23 with counterparts from the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) to review progress on the commitments the two global communions made to each other during a service of reconciliation in Stuttgart, Germany, in July 2010.

At that service, which culminated nearly five years of dialogue, representatives of the LWF asked forgiveness for the actions of their forebearers against the Anabaptists in the 16th century. MWC leaders committed themselves to promote a more balanced interpretation of the Lutheran-Anabaptist story, continue conversation on unresolved issues and encourage their member churches to seek greater cooperation with Lutherans in service.

In their joint meetings at Goshen, the two task forces affirmed the trilateral conversations on baptism moving forward among the MWC, LWF and Catholic churches.

The MWC task force affirmed a website, www.anabaptistwiki.org, sponsored by the Institute for the Study of Global Anabaptism at Goshen College, that provides easy access to resources related to Lutheran-Mennonite dialogue. The MWC task force called on the Faith and Life Commission to take a stronger role in encouraging Mennonite colleges, universities, seminars, historical societies, information centers and tour groups to incorporate the story of MWC-LWF reconciliation.

—Goshen College

Singing in Chin at Western District Conference
Members of Chin Emmanuel Church in Houston sing at Western District Conference’s annual assembly, held Aug. 2-3 in North Newton, Kan. Delegates voted to accept Chin Emmanuel as a member of WDC. —Gordon Houser

Claiming Faith released
HARRISONBURG, Va., and WATERLOO, Ont.—Believing it important to pass faith from one generation to another, MennoMedia has published Claiming Faith: Youth Discover the Confession of Faith. This new tool will familiarize youth with the Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective. The MWC task force affirmed the trilateral conversations on baptism moving forward among the MWC, LWF and Catholic churches.

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Former Hesston College teachers release book on multiracial ancestry

HESSTON, Kan.—Former Hesston College instructors Sharon Cranford, Wichita, Kan., and Dwight Roth, Hesston, have released their book *Kinship Concealed: Amish Mennonites/African-American Family Connections* (Legacy Book Publishing, 2013)—the story of Cranford’s, an African American Baptist, and Roth’s, a white Mennonite-Episcopalian, unexpected shared heritage.

Part semiautobiography and part historical fiction, the book documents the historical multiracial lineage of Amish brothers Jacob and John Mast, who immigrated from Switzerland to Philadelphia. Jacob, Roth’s ancestor, stayed in Pennsylvania and became the first Amish bishop ordained in the United States, while John, Cranford’s ancestor, left the Amish church and moved south during the peak of slavery in America. John’s grandson, Rueben, became a slave owner in North Carolina and fathered a child with a slave girl; the child became Cranford’s great-great-grandfather Charley Mast.

The duo celebrated the book and family connections with a gathering for descendants of Jacob and John Mast on July 29 at Conestoga Mennonite Church, Morgantown, Pa., near where Jacob Mast lived and ministered more than 250 years ago.—*Hesston College*

MDS at work in Alberta

CALGARY, Alberta—Nancy Thiessen is one of about 250 people who volunteered with Mennonite Disaster Services (MDS) to help clean up in High River, Alberta. The city of about 13,000 was the hardest hit during the floods in southern Alberta in late June.

“We’ve never dealt with anything like this in Canada before,” says Janet Plenert, MDS director for Canadian operations. After the flood, Plenert and Jim Dyck (MDS Alberta) began constant communication with the Alberta unit, a group of about 12 volunteers across the province.

MDS is now working on transitioning from emergency response to long-term recovery. They will be looking for individuals and groups to volunteer for a week at a time as they start rebuilding. The hope is that this work will start in October.—*MDS*

Public witness calls for protecting Las Pavas, Colombia, farmers

CHICAGO—On July 26, Christian Peacemaker Teams workers and supporters took to the streets of Chicago to call for an end to violence against the community of Las Pavas, Colombia.

Donning cardboard palm trees and straw hats, participants dramatized the company’s attacks and encroachment upon Las Pavas territory.

Five members of the group took a letter to the office of U.S. Senator Dick Durbin, drawing the connection between U.S. aid for training Colombian police and the lack of law enforcement to protect the people of Las Pavas. The office door was locked.—*CPT*

Bridgefolk conference meets in Canada

Collegeville, Minn.—Meeting for the first time in Canada, the 12th annual Bridgefolk conference was held July 25-28 at Conrad Grebel University College in Waterloo, Ontario, under the theme “Reconciliation: A Way to Peace.”

Bridgefolk is a movement of sacramentally minded Mennonites and peace-minded Roman Catholics who meet to celebrate each other’s traditions, explore each other’s practices and honor each other’s contribution to the mission of Christ’s church.

Previous conferences alternated between Catholic and Mennonite locations in the United States. Of the 60 participants at this year’s conference, 35 were Mennonite and 25 Catholic.

Keynote speakers were Christian McConnell, who teaches liturgical studies at the University of St. Michael’s College in Toronto, and John Rempel, director of the Toronto Mennonite Theological Centre, both of whom spoke on practices of reconciliation within their respective churches’ traditions.—*Bridgefolk*
Is God in the details?

For learning about wisdom and instruction, for understanding words of insight, for gaining instruction in wise dealing, righteousness, justice and equity—Proverbs 1:2-3

Proverbs provides us with basic instructions for righteous living. They are simple and straight to the point. They help us check ourselves and those around us when we need to make sure our actions are in line with God’s plan for our lives.

There is an old saying, “The devil is in the details.” Basically it refers to the hidden or mysterious processes taking place in a given situation. You will find that there are so many undermining, unspoken and, dare I say, evil intentions that seem to drive our daily planning. My invitation to everyone is to pray, “God is in the detail.” In order for this to happen we have to be honest about our motives with ourselves and those we are working with. Far too often we are not aware that our hidden, private thoughts are driving our public lives. We go through the motion (most times well intended) only to find out we have some hidden bias that causes us not to see.

In the past months, America has been engulfed in the George Zimmerman trial. Many of us were totally confused about what and how things were playing out right in front of our eyes. It was obvious, right? The person standing his ground was Trayvon Martin. Only to be hoodwinked yet again by our justice system.

For people of color, we knew there would be some new legal maneuvering that would take place; we just weren’t sure what that would be. We were aware that the “devil was in the detail.”

I remember the O.J. Simpson trial and a jury of his peers that found him not guilty. America was shocked and angry: How could the jury let him off? The legal arena realized how unpredictable juries could be. The days of all-white male juries were long gone. Jury selection had become unpredictable. So new tactics were put in motion. Today those ways play themselves out in twisting and tangling up the laws so that it is hard for the jury to come back with a verdict any different from what the attorney wanted in the first place. It’s no longer about innocence or guilt or who sits on the jury but which judge and attorneys are working on the case. Without an honest judge and a really good attorney, your chances of winning in the courtroom are slim to none. In the courtroom now, the judge and attorneys go behind closed doors and together come up with the instructions for the jury. The smartest, cleverest, wealthiest (based on connections) person in the room will get what he or she wants.

For most people of color and/or any person in poverty, a wealthy lawyer with endless options will never be the person defending them because that person is more than likely too expensive. That attorney can charge an enormous hourly fee because they are the smartest, cleverest and/or wealthiest person in the room.

So how do we get the devil out of the details?

We can no longer simply look at the big picture and assume that everyone sees the same thing. We have to break things down, question our own motives and be honest with everyone about our hopes and dreams for the desired outcome.

If the devil is in the details, and I believe he is, then in every thing we do we must pray God into the details. In order for God to be there we have to seek the purest of thoughts and actions on our part. The goal is to talk openly, checking in often with others and understanding that our personal agenda is not the driving force to create the end results.

The next time you sit in a meeting and the group is deciding what is best for everyone, ask everyone to pause and state what they expect to get out of the meeting. We need serious, deeply considered, honest thoughts in order to create something true. This is one way we can begin to get “God in the details.” I hope that by simply reminding ourselves to consider if “God is in the details,” we will be more aware of when God isn’t and the devil is.

Cyneatha Millsaps is lead pastor of Community Mennonite Church in Markham, Ill.
Free choice may still be communal

Several years ago the Iglesia Nacional Evangélica Menonita of Guatemala participated in a survey of their members’ religious beliefs and practices. As with many surveys, participants were instructed to respond to the questions individually and privately. Each person was to respond with his or her personal convictions regarding the questions—not with answers they imagined the pastor or those conducting the survey wanted to hear.

For most Westerners, such a methodology seems obvious. Our beliefs, after all, are personal; our identity is shaped by the choices we make, and healthy individuals do not simply conform to group pressure. But when members of the indigenous, communally oriented Kekchi congregations were asked to fill out the survey under these conditions, they simply refused. Their dilemma was real: How, they asked, would any of us know what we believe as individuals apart from those beliefs and practices that we hold in common?

The Kekchi refusal to respond individually to the survey captures beautifully a tension that runs deep within the Anabaptist-Mennonite tradition—a tension that is likely to become more and more visible as European and North American Mennonites come into closer contact with members of our global family. On the one hand, the principle of “voluntary,” or believer’s baptism goes to the very heart of Anabaptist theology. No one, we have taught, is born a Christian. We do not become a follower of Jesus simply because we went to church throughout our childhood. Neither are we Christians by virtue of living in a “Christian nation.” Behind this is a deep conviction that the Christian faith cannot be coerced. Instead, the decision to follow Jesus must be made freely by each person in response to God’s gift of grace and the movement of the Holy Spirit.

At the same time, we have also recognized that while our faith may be personal, it is never private. The commitment to follow Jesus is always made in the context of a larger community in which baptism marks the entrance of the new believer into the fellowship of other committed Christians. Moreover, this community is the setting for the Christian formation that follows baptism. Being a Christian, we have taught, is not primarily a matter of absorbing a set of intellectual ideas or a list of doctrinal beliefs. Rather, we come to know what it means to follow Jesus by participating in the formative practices of the church—by sharing in habits of worship, singing, praying, confession, Bible study, footwashing and Communion, and by working, eating and serving together with other members of the body of Christ. In this sense, we come to know what we believe only as we begin to live out these beliefs in relationships with other believers.

Though it may initially seem odd, the Kekchi impulse to respond communally to questions of faith and practice helpfully challenges our temptation to confuse voluntary baptism with the Western tendency to make individual choice a religion unto itself. Sometimes the North American Mennonite emphasis on a purely “voluntary” commitment feeds into the pervasive individualism and autonomy of our culture, making the decision to follow Christ simply one more consumer-oriented choice that promises to enhance your life.

Deeper encounters with brothers and sisters in the global church are likely to raise unsettling questions about the relationship between the individual and the community. The recently published Global Mennonite History series, for example, notes several instances in Asia and parts of Africa where the conversion of a local leader prompted an entire village or clan to seek baptism and to join the larger Anabaptist-Mennonite fellowship. Such stories are reminiscent of the account in Acts 10:24-48, where we read of Cornelius and his “relatives and close friends” hearing the gospel and being baptized, or the baptism of the members of Lydia’s family (Acts 16:15), or the baptism of the Philippian jailer and “all his family” (Acts 16:33).

I do not mean to suggest we return to the practice of infant baptism. After all, faith cannot be coerced. But we should also recognize that the individual decision to follow Jesus is ultimately a decision to yield our will and desires to Christ and to the body of Christ. The Kekchi Mennonite sisters and brothers in Guatemala remind us that a living faith is always embedded in the relationships of a larger community whose shared practices shape not only our hearts but our beliefs and our practices.
Are family issues only women’s issues?

One of the conversations going on in our society is a debate about work-life balance: how to balance one’s work life with the responsibilities of parenting. However, the conversation is happening almost exclusively among women. Men remain largely excluded from the debate.

In the July/August issue of *The Atlantic*, Stephen Marche’s essay “The Masculine Mystique” comments on this exclusion of fathers from debates about balancing work and parenting. He notes that “decisions in heterosexual relationships are made by women and men together,” and “when men aren’t part of the discussion about balancing work and life, outdated assumptions about fatherhood are allowed to go unchallenged.”

Marche challenges a myth perpetuated by Sheryl Sandberg’s popular book *Lean In*: that talent and hard work can take you to the top. He calls this “pure balderdash, for women and men.” The central conflict right now, Marche writes, is “family versus money.” The Pew Research Center released a study in March called “Modern Parenthood” that found about half of all working parents say it is difficult to balance career and family responsibilities, with “no significant gap in attitudes between mothers and fathers.”

Marche discusses women’s rise to economic dominance within the middle class. While “it is an outrage that the male-female wage gap persists,” he writes, “over the past 10 years, in almost every country in the developed world, it has shrunk.” And “of the 15 fastest-growing job categories in the United States, 13 are dominated by women.”

However, the “top leadership positions remain overwhelmingly filled by men.” According to the World Economic Forum’s “Global Gender Gap” report, he writes, “women around the world hold a mere 20 percent of powerful political positions. In the United States, the female board-membership rate is 12 percent—a disgrace.”

But Marche calls this a “hollow patriarchy: the edifice is patriarchal, while the majority of its occupants approach egalitarianism.” Nevertheless, men wield power. He notes a paradox: “Masculinity grows less and less powerful while remaining iconic of power. And therefore men are silent. After all, there is nothing less manly than talking about waning manliness.”

A 2008 Pew study asked cohabiting male-female couples, “Who makes the decisions at home?” In 26 percent of households, the man did; in 43 percent, the woman did.

This hollow patriarchy “keeps women from power and confounds male identity,” Marche writes. He notes parenthetically that “the average working-class guy has the strange experience of belonging to a gender that is railed against for having a lock on power, even as he has none of it.”

While enlisting men in the domestic sphere may be a good idea, Marche writes, “the solution is establishing social supports that allow families to function.” Sharing the load of parenting equally doesn’t matter if the load is unbearable. And it will only become bearable when things like paid parental leave and affordable, quality child care become commonplace. In every state, the average annual cost of day care for two children exceeds the average annual rent, he says.

Marche blames men for failing to make themselves heard in this debate. “Where is the chorus of men asking for paternity leave?”

Meanwhile, the society sees parenting as a women’s issue. Sandberg writes: “When mothers care for their children, it’s ‘parenting,’ but when fathers care for their children, the government deems it a ‘child-care arrangement.’”

Marche concludes, “As long as family issues are miscast as women’s issues, they will be dismissed as the pleadings of one interest group among many.” —Gordon Houser
Delaware 15th state to oppose *Citizens United*

On June 10, Delaware became the 15th state to call on the U.S. House of Representatives to overturn the *Citizens United* Supreme Court decision, which allows unlimited spending on elections by corporations, unions and other groups. The case also represents an expansion of prior rulings that have reasoned that corporations are people and that corporate election spending qualifies as protected speech under the First Amendment.

These 15 states constitute nearly 80 million people. An increasing number of legislators, activists and others are building a movement at state and local levels to pressure Congress to take action on the issue.

In Delaware’s case, 11 state senators and 24 state representatives signed a letter about the ruling, which was sent to both of Delaware’s senators as well as to U.S. Rep. John Carney (D–Del.).

“The United States of America’s elections should not be permitted to go to the highest bidder,” the letter reads, “and yet this is the risk that rises from the ashes of the *Citizens United* decision.”—*Yes! Magazine*

**Numbers to ponder**

- Average cost per mile to drive an SUV: 75.7 cents
- Average cost per mile to drive a sedan: 59.6 cents
- Average cost per mile to ride a bicycle: 10 cents
- Savings in a year if Americans took one four-mile round-trip bike trip per week instead of driving: $6.6 billion (2 billion fewer gallons of gas per year, based on gas prices of $3.64 per gallon)

—*Bicycling*

Catholic hospitals differ from bishops

The Catholic Health Association, representing Catholic hospitals across the country, says it no longer objects to the Obama administration’s mandate that all employees receive free birth control coverage. The decision puts the hospitals at odds with the Catholic hierarchy, which in early July rejected the White House’s final regulations.

—*Religion News Service*

Stop subsidizing fossil fuels

The $1.9 trillion spent each year subsidizing fossil fuels adds to the problem of global warming and to the debt of developing countries, according to a new report from the International Monetary Fund. The report, *Energy Subsidy Reform: Lessons and Implications*, says the most direct way of acting to prevent climate change is for governments to stop subsidizing the fossil fuel industry.

The money governments pay to make the price of fossil fuels lower for consumers in developing countries would be better invested in public programs like health and education, according to the report. And greenhouse emissions could be cut by 13 percent per year if wealthier, developed nations adopted carbon tax policies.—*Yes! Magazine*

Gay Americans are much less religious than the general U.S. population, and about three in 10 of them say they have felt unwelcome in a house of worship, a new study shows. The Pew Research Center’s study, released June 13, details how gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender Americans view many of the country’s prominent faiths: in a word, unfriendly.—*Religion News Service*

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- Average cost per mile to drive a sedan: 59.6 cents
- Average cost per mile to ride a bicycle: 10 cents
- Savings in a year if Americans took one four-mile round-trip bike trip per week instead of driving: $6.6 billion (2 billion fewer gallons of gas per year, based on gas prices of $3.64 per gallon)

—*Bicycling*
When Lois Gunden went to Vichy France at the request of the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) 72 years ago, she hoped to be able to improve the lives of child refugees. She could not have imagined that she would be in a position to save them from deportation and death at Auschwitz.

In 1941, MCC asked her to manage a children’s convalescent home, the Villa St. Christophe in Canet-Plage (now Canet-en-Roussillon), France, just 30 miles north of the Spanish border. She was also to oversee a food distribution program in several outlying villages.

Lois’ proficiency in French was likely her single most important qualification; she had already attained a master’s degree in French and had been a language instructor at Goshen (Ind.) College for two years. Previous experience by MCC workers had shown that language was a significant barrier to effectiveness in assignments outside metropolitan areas of France, as few people spoke any English. She was also well-known to Mennonite decision-makers of
World War II, Lois Gunden helped save many Jewish children.

Lois Gunden embarked on the “S. S. Excambion” at dock in New York harbor on Oct. 4, 1941. Her companions were Helen S. Penner (b. 1909, Nebraska) and Joseph N. Byler (b. 1895, Pennsylvania), both also traveling to southern France as MCC relief workers. Although there were 99 passengers on the ship when it departed New York City, after a stop in Bermuda two days out, only about a dozen passengers continued on to Lisbon. They had an enjoyable trip, the first such voyage for Lois and Helen. As they approached Lisbon, Lois wrote in a letter to her family on Oct. 14, “Oh yes, a German bomber came toward us this morning as we were on deck drinking bouillon. It circled over us a couple times and then flew on. That was our first sign of warring Europe.”

Their small party traveled through Portugal and Spain to France; Lois Gunden and Helen Penner began work at Villa St. Christophe on Oct. 22. Joseph Byler went on to Lyon, about 300 miles north, where he relieved Jesse Hoover as the director of the small MCC operation in France. Also working from the Lyon office was Henry Buller, who had already been serving for eight months.

The Villa St. Christophe was a 20-room summer home located on the Mediterranean beach. It was reasonably comfortable, although cold and drafty in the winter, and its sewage system was prone to backing-up. They cooked on a coal-fired stove and did laundry by hand. The home held 60 children, and at the time Lois arrived, the majority of them were Spanish refugees; almost all were brought to the home from the Rivesaltes refugee camp about 12 miles away.

Most of the children at the Villa had been treated in the camp infirmary or at the hospital for...
Lois recognized that most of these children were traumatized by their experiences.

refugees in nearby Perpignan. Some were severely malnourished when they arrived, and all of them needed a good bath and delousing. Lois described her first visit to Rivesaltes on Nov. 18, 1941: “Outstanding and unforgettable memories of day—braveness of boys when they discovered they were leaving without parents; sight of bunks with people sitting hunchbacked on them; dirty and bare kitchen—provisions only for one day; eagerness with which children drank milk; possibility for terrible cold when wind blows.” The camp at Rivesaltes truly was a horrific place housing 8,000 people without adequate food, water, shelter or sanitation; death by starvation or disease was a daily occurrence in the camp.

MCC wanted to expand its operation in France, and Lois was assigned to find other possible locations. When she was successful, Lois would organize and direct the new operation. While there were properties available to rent, unfortunately, furnishings were impossible to find. Mattresses, sheets and other textiles, kitchen supplies and utensils, tableware—all were in short supply. Lois continued to search for other locations throughout her stay but was never successful.

Helen Penner suffered a nervous breakdown in January 1942, only about two months after her arrival. Lois spent nights with Helen in the hospital, and the physician’s recommendation was a lengthy rest cure, after which Helen should return to the United States. Lois found a suitable place for Helen in the spa-town of Vernet-les-Bains, where she stayed until arrangements could be made for her return to the United States in mid-May. In working through that crisis together, Lois learned that she could count on her staff, who themselves were refugees.

Mary Elmes, a Quaker aid worker in nearby Perpignan, was Lois’ direct link to AFSC operations. Mary, from Ireland, had been a relief worker in Spain during the war and had moved into France with AFSC. Lois had great respect for Mary, and her friendship and mentoring offered a camaraderie that Lois very much appreciated.

MCC’s need for a French speaker was not only to be able to communicate while undertaking normal business but also to be able to work with French officials and bureaucrats. They required virtually all legitimate activities to be documented by various papers; identity cards, permission-to-travel cards, ration cards, permission for and documentation of the transfer of children, all required official signatures, stamps or periodic renewals.

While Lois was kept busy with a wide range of tasks, she found some time every day to spend with the children. They ranged from toddlers to age 16. They walked on the beach nearly every sunny day, and presented an interesting sight as they walked in pairs in line. The older children helped the staff with various chores, such as carrying water, bringing supplies from the tram to the Villa and helping prepare vegetables for cooking. It was from seeing them regain their health and return to some of the simple pleasures of childhood that Lois gained the most satisfaction. For her, they were the closest replacement to the family she so missed.

About every two weeks, a group of three to seven children returned to the camp, and a similar number arrived at the Villa. By February 1942, many of the Spanish refugees were being freed from the camp, and children were leaving the Villa to join them. A few were able to leave France, but many of them were being released to join work details. The newcomers to the Villa from the camp included an increasing number of German, Polish and other Western European Jews. Many of these families had fled from persecution and took refuge in France for several years before becoming entangled in the anti-Jewish laws of Vichy France, which in many respects were even more repressive than those of Germany.

Lois recognized that most of these children were traumatized by their experiences. She

Vichy France was France from July 1940-August 1942. Leaders collaborated with the German occupying forces in exchange for an agreement not to divide France between the Axis powers. Despite the government’s pro-Nazi policies, much of the French public initially supported the new government, seeing it as necessary to maintain a degree of French autonomy and territorial integrity.—Wikipedia

Children at the Villa play in the sand. Photo courtesy of MC USA Archives, Goshen, Ind.
appreciated every opportunity to “add just another ray of love to the lives of these youngsters who have already experienced so much of the miseries of life.” With 60 children of various ages, the Villa needed to operate on a consistent schedule, and the children had to be held to certain standards of behavior, or total chaos may have ensued. Lois’ approach in resolving conflict between the children was to talk with them and encourage them so they would find their stay at the Villa much more enjoyable if they changed their behavior. She prayed, “May I show the kindness and gentleness to the children they do not get from others.”

By early July 1942, the Vichy government agreed to deliver for deportation up to 50,000 Jews. Those already in camps in unoccupied Vichy France, such as Rivesaltes, were deported to Drancy, a transit camp in Occupied France. From Drancy, they were deported to Auschwitz.

Mary Elmes visited Lois at the Villa on Aug. 9, 1942. Lois wrote, “Mary informed me about return of Polish and German Jews to Poland, where death by starvation awaits them.” In the deportations of August, September and early October 1942, if children under the age of 16 were not in the camps with a parent, they often weren’t searched out, particularly if French officials knew they could already meet their quota for the scheduled transports. Lois now understood the importance of moving as many Jewish children out of the camps and into the Villa as possible.

Relief agencies working with AFSC had been allowed to continue working in France as long as they remained neutral and followed French law. Individual workers like Lois and Mary Elmes had to make difficult decisions. To obviously flaunt the law would render them unable to help anyone. But to release these children in the absence of duress was something they both found unconscionable.

The OSE (Œuvre de Sécourse aux Enfants), a French Jewish child-welfare organization, was by this time operating clandestinely. They were able to move children out of the relief agencies’ homes and camps to OSE group homes, private homes and Catholic convents, monasteries and schools that would give them shelter. What evolved was an informal operation similar to the U.S. Underground Railroad, which helped runaway slaves reach freedom.

Workers like Mary Elmes and Lois Gunden were also effective advocates with local officials for individual children and more humane treatment generally. It was the responsibility of local French officials and police to carry out the roundups and deportations; many of these officials were the same people with whom Mary and Lois had already developed working relationships. In their Department (Pyrenées-Orientales), where enthusiasm for these responsibilities was sometimes lacking, the children sheltered by their groups were often overlooked.

Throughout the year Lois spent in France, she and other relief workers operated despite many uncertainties. From the time that the United States was attacked at Pearl Harbor, there were many occasions when they were advised to consider leaving France. Diplomatic relations between the United States and Vichy France were increasingly strained. Space available on passenger ships was limited, and Clipper service was not possible.

Lois now understood the importance of moving as many Jewish children out of the camps and into the Villa as possible.

The girl in the back row is Ginette Drucker Kalish, whose story is told in the Yad Vashem press release (see page 16). Georges Koltein, center of second row, gave testimony to Yad Vashem. His older brother Jacques is on Ginette’s left (far right, back row). Photo courtesy of Mennonite Church USA Archives, Goshen, Ind.
Lois became inured to the issue, noting that “if God wants me to return, he will provide a way.”

The amount of food they could acquire, and thus their ability to operate at all, was never certain. All of Vichy France faced food shortages during the winter of 1941-42. While the summer offered fresh fruit and vegetables, the ongoing Allied blockade interrupted normal trade with North Africa; the onset of winter in 1942 was a fearful prospect. Officials that had helped refugee relief organizations obtain food staples became far less cooperative. Some of the locals expressed dismay that their children had less access to food than did refugee children.

The Nov. 8, 1942, British-American attack on French North Africa ended U.S. diplomatic relations with Vichy France. On Nov. 11, Germany took control of southern France, and Americans became unwelcome. Lois had gone to Lyon to witness the wedding of Henry Buller and Beata Rosenthal, an assistant in the MCC Lyon office. Unable to return to the Villa, Lois worked with Henry to provide an operating plan so that existing staff could continue to care for the children. The staff moved the children several months later, when German occupiers requisitioned the Villa.

Lois and the Bullers were escorted by police to Mont-Dore on Jan. 27, 1943, and held in a hotel for several weeks before their transfer to Baden-Baden, Germany, as part of the official North American Diplomatic Group. After complex negotiations for a prisoner exchange, they arrived in New York City on the Gripsholm on March 15, 1944. Lois resumed teaching French at Goshen College in the fall of 1944.

Mary Jean Gunden lives in Moraga, Calif., and is a member of College Mennonite Church in Goshen, Ind. She is a niece of Lois Gunden.

Yad Vashem names Lois Gunden Righteous Among the Nations

One morning while the children were out for a walk, a policeman arrived at the center in order to arrest three of the Jewish children, Louis, Armand and Monique Landesmann. Lois Gunden told the police that the children were out and would not return until noon. At noon the policeman appeared again and ordered her to pack the children’s belongings and prepare them for travel. This time Gunden told him that their clothing was still being laundered and would not be dry until the late afternoon. Gunden testified that throughout that day and evening she prayed for wisdom, guidance and the safety of the three children. The officer never returned, and the children were saved. During this time, Lois Gunden kept a diary, describing in it her experiences and daily activities.

In 1958, she married a widower, Ernest Clemens. While she did not have any children of her own, Gunden gained a stepdaughter through her marriage. In addition to teaching French at Goshen College and at Temple University, she also ministered in the Mennonite Church. Lois Gunden died in 2005. On Feb. 27, Yad Vashem recognized Lois Gunden as Righteous Among the Nations. According to Yad Vashem’s website (www.yadvashem.org): “Attitudes toward the Jews during the Holocaust mostly ranged from indifference to hostility. The mainstream watched as their former neighbors were rounded up and killed; some collaborated with the perpetrators; many benefited from the expropriation of the Jews’ property. "In a world of total moral collapse there was a small minority who mustered extraordinary courage to uphold human values. These were the Righteous Among the Nations. They stand in stark contrast to the mainstream of indifference and hostility that prevailed during the Holocaust. Contrary to the general trend, these rescuers regarded the Jews as fellow human beings who came within the bounds of their universe of obligation."

The main forms of help extended by these Righteous Gentiles were hiding Jews in the rescuers’ home or on their property, providing false papers and false identities, smuggling and helping Jews escape, and the rescue of children.—from a Yad Vashem press release
What leadership positions have you held/currently hold?
Currently I serve as pastor of Zion Mennonite Church, Donnellson, Iowa, a small, rural congregation that is, I believe, the oldest active Mennonite church west of the Mississippi River. The congregation’s history predates the beginnings of the General Conference Mennonite Church (GC) and was one of its founding congregations. I served as co-pastor of West Zion Mennonite Church, Moundridge, Kan., along with my spouse, John Yoder-Schrock. We served as family life ministers at Bethesda Mennonite Church, Henderson, Neb. My first pastorate was at Hively Avenue Mennonite Church, Elkhart, Ind. I served on the ministerial committee of the Central District, the former Northern District and the Western District conferences and the GC Committee on the Ministry.

Do/did you have a woman leader as a mentor? If so, how does/did she help you?
No, I did not have a woman in pastoral ministry as a mentor; there were, however, three of us first-time women pastors who met regularly with a woman leader, a “trailblazer” supporting and encouraging women in pastoral ministry. It was helpful to discuss everything from appropriate dress for preaching to finding one’s voice and claiming one’s role on boards and committees.

Are you mentoring a young woman who may be a potential church leader?
I am grateful for the opportunity to mentor two women who were/are beginning in pastoral ministry. Encouraging them in discovering, testing and shaping their identity as a pastor and in claiming their role as leader in a congregation has been a rich experience. Indirect mentoring has happened as young women have experienced my ministry.

If so, how is her experience the same/different from yours?
Beginning and growing in one’s role and identity as a pastor is similar then and now. One difference is that being a “pioneer” woman in pastoral ministry was a new experience for many people, whereas today many members have known or experienced a woman as pastor.

What impediments have you faced in becoming a leader?
There have been and continue to be some congregations where women are not even considered as pastoral candidates. Even in congregations where I have served, some members have struggled to receive my ministry. Others who had questions or were resistive at the beginning eventually came to trust and affirm women in ministry.

When you face challenges as a leader, what encourages you?
To be a leader is to face challenges, times when one may be discouraged or shaken. I am anchored, however, as I remember my call and ordination to pastoral ministry. God who called me is and has been faithful in all circumstances. Family, friends and pastoral colleagues are invaluable encouragement and support.

God who called me is and has been faithful in all circumstances.
—Martha Yoder-Schrock
Dialogue’s

by LeRoy Bechler

Dialogue, the two-way conversation we value highly as Anabaptists, is never easy. When one opens conversation with someone who is not just other but truly other, the dialogue makes some peculiar and surprising demands on us. More than 50 years ago, I learned some valuable lessons about hearing clearly and attempting to be truly heard. And far better than many of my other annuities, it has had a regular and rewarding set of dividends.
demands and discoveries

A reflection on the experience of being in dialogue with segregationist preachers 50 years ago.

The year was 1957. The place, the deep south, Atlanta and Montgomery, Ala. A sabbatical from church planting in Saginaw, Mich., allowed Irene and me to spend a school year at Atlanta University (now Clark Atlanta University, a “black” institution of learning, we would have said then) and learn firsthand about the racial crisis and the emerging civil rights movement.

As Christmas approached, the Atlanta Journal and Constitution, in response to public charges that “the pulpits have been paralyzed” on the segregation-integration question, invited ministers of many faiths to give their views and printed one article every Sunday. I was appalled by the logic, alarmed by the hermeneutic, astounded by the eftorner of the articles and could not return to class with my fellow students without having opened conversation with these pastors.

Martin Luther King Jr., an emerging leader in the civil rights movement, came from Montgomery to visit our class and talk about the boycott and his ensuing imprisonment. Later I received an invitation to visit Montgomery, have dinner with the Kings at the Ralph Abernathy home around their long dinner table and visit the Kings’ parsonage. All this helped me find my voice, and I wrote my first attempt at dialogue with the author of the article “Bible Orders Separation and Love, Harwell Says.”

The first reply to the newspaper’s challenge came from the Rev. J. W. Harwell, pastor of Bethany Baptist Church in Madison, Ga.: “Let’s face it. Integration is integration, whether compelled by law and military force or brought about by deception from church pulpits.” Harwell claimed to examine segregation and integration fairly in the light of the Bible, where “eternal principles are clearly set forth, namely, “the principle of love and the principle of separation” (his emphasis). “The Bible does not teach the universal brotherhood of man and Fatherhood of God,” he argued; it teaches universal sinfulness of man, and “God does not desire for mankind in a sinful state to dwell together as one great people. He has therefore established laws of separation.” He supported this with Genesis 6, on mixed relations causing the flood, and Genesis 11, on “Babel causing separation and scattering of people.” He wrote: “Integration breeds lawlessness. God knew this tendency of man’s depraved nature when he made his laws of separation.”

As I reread the yellowed clipping, I recalled praying through my many feelings before writing, “If you care to engage in a friendly discussion by letter, I am sure both of us can profit.”

So our conversation began. Three letters from me and three responses from him explored our differing theologies. His last letter despaired of our ever gaining anything from the other since his way of reading the Bible to find “a principle,” like God-ordained separation marked by “God-created skin color,” did not convince me to extend the Babel story of God the great Separator into a social design for clearly divided societies with different privileges and opportunities. My insistence on beginning with the teaching and life of Jesus seemed to have no relevance to his thinking—Jesus was about spiritual things, not social realities, and the gospel is about new birth, not a new community of disciples.

Dialogue means finding common ground, and I sought to affirm his concern for separation of the believer from those practicing evil, but it didn’t work. It only conceded that there is a principle of separation, and thus we must obey it. I learned from our dialogue that no one changes because of biblical quotations and definition of the text’s meaning.
sought to find a common concern for the welfare of every person. He agreed but saw that each would fare well in separate situations. Dialogue sometimes grows as we share our own story, and so we talked of family issues, but moving it beyond into the family of God ran head on into the walls of segregation.

I learned from our dialogue that no one changes because of biblical quotations and definition of the text’s meaning. Text gets answered with text, biblical quote with biblical quote, and when assumptions are made, they are called simple logical deductions. When boundaries are drawn, they are justified as self-evident, God-given natural divides. I had long known that no one changes except in relationship, and I tried to create a way to relate as brothers, but that failed as well. We were brothers in name only, in a theological sense of parallel ministers with a common language of piety, but we remained strangers and would, I feared, go on as strangers.

This time I tried my best to build relationship first—appealing to our common faith in Christ, our shared roots in the Bible, our love for the church and its mission. I introduced myself, expressed my commitment to be teachable, then followed with a series of carefully worded questions about equating separation from evil with segregation, how this could possibly be related, if it could be, to race? I ended warmly, and sent it off with hope of dialogue.

The long letter he returned took every sentence I had written with sincerity and sensitivity. His position wove a continuous fabric from his reading of the Scripture to the current practices of Southern life. Satan was the author of integration; God has willed the absolute separation (biblically, he said, this is the same as segregation). But he, too, ended with the same brotherly warmth I had offered him. Now here was my hoped-for chance to dialogue. So I responded by quoting the words of Jesus from the Gospel of John and Paul’s word to the Ephesians, then laid out my heart for the mission of reconciliation.

I was finding it hard to talk his “separation by divine command at Babel” language. Would he find it equally hard to talk my “reconciliation as taught by Jesus and Paul” vocabulary? He did his best—nine pages of reinterpreting the texts I had offered through the lens of separation as a governing principle of Scripture interpretation. It was a heroic effort, and he ended by quoting me, “Brother Bechler, in our understanding we are ‘separated by the pen and the words we use.’ We are trying to arrive at an understanding of each other’s position with a different meaning as to the word itself and the issues involved. I believe, could we be in harmony as to the definition of segregation, we would be closer together in our thoughts and interpretations than we realize.”

He was right. If I ordered my life by his principle, his world would make complete and consistent sense; if I yielded my life to a gospel of reconciliation, it did not. So we did it again in the next interchange and came back to the same impasse. We paused for a month, then each tried once more. We had touched each other deeply, and I sincerely expressed my longing to sit and talk face to face. I spoke of how important it was to me to converse with someone who was seeking to know and obey the will of God, even when we heard the call of Jesus leading us in such different ways. Looking back, my words were a lament that we could both long for common fellowship, but we had differing visions of how to be fellows and how
to climb aboard the same great ship. A sense of loss hung between us. We were reaching across a wide space, and our arms were much too short. He expressed it in a final paragraph of blessing, of benediction, with a surprising affection and brother-to-brother “koinonia” (fellowship).

Sometimes dialogue results in increasing mutuality; sometimes it only confirms our differences and individuality. Sometimes we must admit that the process—or the participants—fails; sometimes, to our surprise, it works. Looking back, I now recognize that those that fail may actually connect us deeply, and only God knows what the outcome of the conversation ultimately may have been.

Dialogue doesn’t mean we come to agreement. It doesn’t mean the common ground becomes our totally shared ground. It allows us to have separate grounds—and a no-man’s land in between—but with a safe path that crosses over with no pitfalls, no landmines—to continue a troubling metaphor—a way to reach each other. Dialogue is how we work at this process of co-discerning, and even when we do not reach either unity or unanimity, Jesus is present. We want to see walls crash, separation end, gates open, bridges reach across, and on those occasions when we do experience all of the above, we celebrate. When we do not, we grieve and let go, knowing the Spirit of God is still present on both sides of this conversation about faithfulness.

LeRoy Bechler, was a church planter of a reconciled congregation in Saginaw, Mich., a long-time pastor in Los Angeles and the conference minister for evangelism for Southeast Mennonite Conference. This article was written with a bit of encouragement and expansion by David Augsburger. The documents from the Atlanta Journal and Constitution and the letters in this 1957 dialogue are going to the Mennonite Archives for future readers or researchers.

Even when we do not reach either unity or unanimity, Jesus is present.

Mennonite urban intruders

I met LeRoy and Irene Bechler at the end of the 1950s. They had invited me to preach at the church they were serving in Saginaw, Mich. Saginaw is a strange place in itself, but put in the black community a white couple calling themselves Mennonites—ah, what an exotic presence. Baptists we know, and Methodists we know, but Mennonites? I was none of the above but was African American and could be had for the price of gasoline and a cup of coffee.

They had settled in Saginaw, and before the smoke had cleared at headquarters, they, along with a growing band, had pioneered urban ministry in key American cities. I was to preach in their company from Youngstown, Ohio, to St. Louis, from Hough in Cleveland to Watts in Los Angeles, and from Chicago’s west side to sleepy but tricky St. Ann, Ill.

These disciples were not noisemakers. They did not intend to be anybody’s heroes. In the late ‘50s, heroes were not needed in America as they are today. But they were Spirit-led intruders. They taught the gospel by listening, and they learned discipleship by listening. You can learn a lot about Jesus while braiding the hair of a youngster whose nap is different from your own.

As the crow flies it is a long way from Saginaw to Atlanta. But as the Spirit moves, not really that far.—Bill Pannell of Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, Calif.
An elder’s side job

Family news took Phil and Loretta Helmuth into the future and the past at the same time. Three more grandchildren were due to arrive in March, which led Phil and Loretta to talk about striking a new balance between work and family—and its financial implications.

by Gloria Diener
Tough economic times lead to money mentoring by a congregation’s elder.

Thinking about money and its role in life is nothing new for Phil, who was asked to serve in a newly created position of elder of financial care at his church in Harrisonburg, Va., because of his experience in financial matters and his willingness to share what he’s learned.

The Helmuths’ daughter, Laura, called in September 2012 to say that she and her husband, Asa, parents of a 2-year-old girl, were expecting twins. Less than a week later, daughter Annette and her husband, Trey, parents of three children younger than 7, dropped in to say they were expecting a baby.

News of the upcoming births reminded Phil and Loretta of the first major challenge they faced together, newly married and still in college. Loretta found out she was pregnant, two years earlier than they’d planned. They worked things out, with Phil waiting to finish college until mid-career, taking one class at a time.

Nearly 40 years later, Phil and Loretta enjoy life as nearly 60-year-old grandparents. An empty nest has offered time to bicycle, provide support for their parents and enjoy their four grandchildren when they’re not at Eastern Mennonite University, where Phil is executive director of development and director of church relations, and Loretta works as secretary/receptionist at the physical plant.

“What if Laura needs to be on bed rest again during this pregnancy?” they wonder. “What if Annette’s family needs additional help in March? What can we offer them?”

The process Phil is using to figure out what their decisions will mean financially is one he’s become familiar with in recent years. The economic recession that started in late 2007 led Park View Mennonite Church to create the elder role in which Phil agreed to serve.

“The number of families and individuals among us facing financial crises is increasing,” he remembers a member of the pastoral staff telling him. “We’d like to appoint an elder well-versed in financial matters to assist in discernment and ongoing support in these situations.” Phil says he knew the question before it was asked. “Would you consider this ministry?”

The answer was yes. Phil is passionate about the ways in which spirituality and finances intermingle.

Phil is passionate about the ways spirituality and finances intermingle.

As the economy got worse, Phil became more aware of the need for financial mentoring as he listened to donors’ financial concerns in his role as a fund-raiser. Many wondered whether they ever would be able to retire after their savings were depleted.

“I decided I needed to answer some financial questions for our own situation,” Phil says. “I wanted to know what adjustments Loretta and I needed to make in our family budget to provide flexibility for unexpected life events.”

He decided to develop a spreadsheet. “I wanted to see the numbers,” he says. He looked at his income and projected to see what the numbers would look like when he and Loretta are 65. “I then did the same with savings.”

Phil then came up with a retirement budget to satisfy the question of whether he and Loretta could live off the amounts on the spreadsheet. Phil’s spreadsheet experience was an eye-opener, a new way of looking at life.

“In working with the spreadsheet,” Phil says, “I learned exactly what our current financial situation is, and I could estimate how much we’d need if we wanted to retire.”

As elder of financial care, Phil invites people who seek his help to share their financial situations. For many people, the invitation demands something extremely difficult—laying bare the financial burdens they carry.

Chris and Beth (not their real names), a couple
in their early 30s who are active members of PVMC, had been married for 10 years when they realized they were headed for a financial crisis they couldn’t handle.

“The worst thing was the secrecy,” Beth says now. “Money had such power over us, and our lives were filled with so much shame and disappointment.”

Several unexpected events in their lives were compounded by a few decisions that turned sour. Beth and Chris fell into a pattern of trying to hide their financial problems from everyone, even from each other.

“We’d quit talking about finances,” Chris says. “It just wasn’t worth the fights, the blame and shame those conversations inevitably elicited.”

By the time they agreed to meet with Phil, they realized they needed someone to help them talk through finances in the same way some couples need a marriage counselor.

Phil is clear about his role—he explores with people their individual situations and identifies resources so they can make healthy decisions. He relies on using the spreadsheet, simple and clear. Another tool he’s used is counseling provided by LSS Financial Counseling Services through Everence.

For Beth and Chris, the confidential, anonymous LSS counseling via telephone—along with Phil’s help—changed their lives.

“I’d kept hoping for something miraculous, a couple thousand dollars,” Chris says with a smile. “But I realize now [that] winning the lottery wouldn’t have made a difference in our lives. We needed something deeper than a miracle.”

Phil offered them suggestions for planning ahead and for budgeting, then ways to convert these concepts into day-to-day practices.

“He made himself available to us in a nonjudgmental and caring way, which made it possible for us to communicate with each other,” Beth says. “He offered hope and affirmation where there was none.”

“Working with both LSS and Phil has been a bit like having cheerleaders,” Chris says. “They’ve been supportive, sending us notes, offering prayers on our behalf and checking in to see how we’re doing.”

Beth smiles as she sets aside the past to focus on the present.

“Living with accountability hasn’t been easy,” she says, “but we’ve made so much progress.”

As Phil reflects on the couple’s progress, he says, “The thing I love most about my role is the opportunity to provide a voice of hope in the midst of despair.”—Phil Helmuth

Your financial questions
Have concerns about your financial situation? You can receive free telephone consultation through LSS Financial Counseling, a benefit from Everence. If you have questions about your more significant financial issues, like retirement savings, contact an Everence representative or visit Everence.com where you will find retirement and savings calculators as well as worksheets.

**Basic questions**

LSS can help with budgeting, debt issues and your basic financial questions from loans to creditworthiness. To use this service, call toll-free 877-809-0039, or for Spanish-speaking phone counselors, call 855-292-0131. You can also learn more about LSS at Everence.com.

**Larger questions**

Everence advisers can help you with larger financial questions, such as long-term financial goals, retirement savings and other questions about your financial security in the future. Contact your Everence representative at your local Everence office or find a representative at Everence.com or by calling 800-348-7468.

**Your congregation’s elder role**

Phil’s role, as an elder for financial matters, may be useful in your congregation to help people on a whole range of financial issues.—Everence

Gloria Diener of Harrisonburg, Va., attends Park View Mennonite Church, where she serves on the elder team with Phil.
In my talks with pastors and lay leaders, I note there is not one life transition or challenge that comes without a financial component:

- starting a business costs money
- getting married costs money
- having a child costs money
- going to college costs money
- receiving medical care costs money
- even dying costs money, and the list goes on.

“An Elder’s Side Job” (page 22) is a wonderful example of how one congregation recognizes that the financial needs and resources of its people are part of the spiritual ministry of the body.

The early church recognized this connection between our faith and our finances. In Romans 15:25b-29, the Apostle Paul says as much: “I am going to Jerusalem in a ministry to the saints; for Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to share their resources with the poor among the saints at Jerusalem. They were pleased to do this and indeed they owe it to them; for if the Gentiles have come to share in their spiritual blessings, they ought also to be of service to them in material things. So when I have completed this, and have delivered to them what has been collected, I will set out by way of you to Spain.”

Such mutual care and aid modeled by the church in the first century was not lost to the early Anabaptists as they read Scripture and made applications for their lives. Menno Simons wrote: “True evangelical faith cannot lie dormant. It clothes the naked, it comforts the sorrowful, it shelters the destitute, it serves those that harm it, it binds up that which is wounded.”

Arthur 21 of Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective says, “As stewards of money and possessions, we are to live simply, practice mutual aid within the church, uphold economic justice and give generously and cheerfully.” As the stewardship arm of Mennonite Church USA, Everence promotes this emphasis, which has been in place since its founding as MMA in 1945.

The Everence Strategic Plan 2012-2013 states that we are committed to help people

- make financial decisions that include mutual aid and compassionate sharing,
- leverage resources to meet identified needs,
- become equipped to face economic challenges that arise and to respond with generosity when those challenges affect others.

Paul wasn’t the first follower of the Way to pick up on this idea of caring for the physical needs of others as part of our spiritual responsibility. In Acts 2, the early group of believers come together to form Christ’s body on earth. The Holy Spirit shows up accompanied by a sound like the rush of a mighty wind, divided tongues as of fire and many who began speaking other languages. Too often we stop here. But in Acts 2:44 is a fourth manifestation of the Holy Spirit: “All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need.”

It’s easy for us to get excited about the Holy Spirit doing something around us that creates a spectacle of sorts, but when the Spirit does something within us that transforms our hearts and our way of relating, that’s truly amazing. It has been suggested that stewardship is everything you do after you say you believe. Whether we are talking about stewardship of our time or skills or money, how we use these God-given resources says a lot about our faith in God, our worldview and our ultimate sense of ownership.

Jan. 19, 2014, is Stewardship Sunday, and we encourage people to begin planning now to give special attention to this theme that day. Maybe the Scripture texts identified here will help inform planning. It may be a time to examine the way we respond to the needs of those within our congregation and our community.

Is it time to consider identifying an elder of finance who provides financial counseling as well as benevolence assistance?

Beryl Jantzi is the Everence Stewardship Education Director and a former pastor of several Mennonite congregations.
When I failed to do something to his specifications, my father shot at me the instructive, critical words, “Do it like a man.” This registered in my tender heart as, “I’m not pleasing to him. I’m not good enough. There’s something wrong with me. Do I have what it takes to be a man?”
My parents struggled to know what to do when at an early age I asked for a doll and a petticoat for Christmas. Though embarrassed, they conceded to my request because they were advised that if they didn’t make a big deal about it, these odd and unnatural things would go away more quickly.

When and how did I become aware of my same-sex attraction, this thing that seemed to rise up from somewhere deep within? I don’t remember a time it didn’t exist. Young boys come to an understanding of their sexuality at different times and in various ways, and as I became aware of mine, I knew I was “different.” I preferred playing house to playing baseball. When the other boys joked about girls and their bodies, there was no allure or fascination for me. I felt safe when I was with the girls, and I identified with their interests. I felt like I belonged when I was with them.

One day, when I was in my early teens, I asked my father what the word “homosexual” meant. I had some idea, but his awkward response was something like, “Uh, those people are sick. It’s awful. I didn’t know about that stuff until I was 23. It’s when men, well,” and he stumbled through a brief explanation.

Little did he know that I was already sexually active with a male friend from church and was struggling to make sense of it all. I needed guidance in understanding and processing my shaky sexual identity; I needed to find a safe place to talk; I needed to find refuge for my troubled heart. My father was simply not able to go there with me, and I took on a lot of shame that day.

Sometime later, I said spontaneously to my friend, “You’re a homosexual.” He retorted, “You are, too.” That accusation pierced me and became a weapon the enemy has used to attack my personal and sexual identity for years. It became a fundamental part of how I thought of myself. Is this my identity? Am I hardwired this way? Is this who I really am?

I know my father loved me. He was a devout Christian man who provided well for our family and did the best he could to train and discipline his children. But he was emotionally absent from me and unable to connect with me in the ways I needed him. My brothers were more athletic than I, and somehow I didn’t fit into my father’s idea of normal, acceptable and masculine. He was critical of my sensitivity and could not identify with this son who would rather read a book than go fishing and rather take art lessons than learn to pass a football. I was always more closely connected with my mom than with my dad. She seemed to understand me better, which created a natural bond between us. We did many activities together, and I felt she cared much more about me. Even though nothing overtly inappropriate ever happened between us, we were likely more emotionally tied to each other than what was healthy for either of us. In spite of her insecurities, she was more of a leader in our home than my dad; at times her influence bordered on dominance and manipulation.

Now I’m a grown man. I’m a graduate of one of our Mennonite colleges and am happily married to a godly Christian woman. We have children and grandchildren whom I dearly love. My wife and I are active members in our congregation, yet my struggle with this unwanted same-sex attraction persists.

Though I have prayed fervently again and again for the Lord to take these strong urges and relentless desires away from me, I have not found complete release from them.

I gave full disclosure of this struggle to my wife before we were married. Being a private person, it has been difficult for me to discuss this openly, since it makes me feel exposed and vulnerable. My wonderful wife has never been anything other than loving and supportive of me, even though she can’t begin to identify with or understand what this is all about. I try to be open to discuss her questions and fears because I know this is on her mind a lot and is painful for her. Even though we don’t dwell on this on a regular basis, we carry the weight of it together.

I’ve been in counseling for many years. My insightful and compassionate counselor has been tremendously helpful in helping me understand, sort out, make some sense of and deal with what is happening inside me. In addition to counseling, I’ve done a lot of reading and attended several seminars on homosexuality. The Lord has granted me great release from the guilt and shame I have carried over the years, but though I have prayed fervently again and again for the Lord to take these strong urges and relentless desires away from me, I have not found complete release from them.

Whether homosexuality has genetic, psychological, experiential, emotional and/or spiritual roots, I don’t believe it is God’s intent or design. Neither
is blindness, schizophrenia, depression, alcoholism, demonic oppression, or feelings of inferiority. While these are not part of God’s perfect plan, they are realities with which many of us need to live.

I have come to understand that my sexual orientation is not the defining characteristic of my identity. My core identity is rooted in Jesus Christ, and I am a child of God. I am not first of all a homosexual who happens to be a Christian; I am a Christian who struggles with same-sex attraction.

At some point, we each need to decide who or what is going to be the source of authority in our life. Will it be Scripture, the traditions of the church, science or personal experience? While my journey and lack of a miraculous delivery do not match up with what I have longed and prayed for, I choose Scripture as the bedrock of faith, action and reality. I believe it is God’s plan for one man and one woman to live together in the mystical union we call marriage. I believe that this is what the Bible teaches, and I have chosen to act upon it, difficult though it is for me at times. I need to choose daily to remain faithful to my wife and to the conviction that God’s intent and desire for me does not include living my life as a practicing homosexual.

In addition to my wife and counselor, I have several dear friends, straight men, who know about my struggle and who provide understanding, warm acceptance and continuous prayer backing. The love and support from these people and the great mercy of God have helped me not to compromise the life and moral standards I believe God is asking me to pursue. They have helped build my resolve to stay the course. Some days I feel vulnerable and find myself closer to the edge than I wish I were, so when I hear of a Christian who has “fallen,” I bow my head and ask for strength. That could so easily have been me.

As I look back over my life, I realize I have grown and changed in many ways. I know that I have more hope for the future than I did 10 years ago. I’m learning to be more confident as a person, more willing to share my struggles with others, more open to challenge and growth and more dependent on God for healing and hope. I have not yet mastered the art of letting God meet all my needs and fill all my longings; neither have I figured out how to calm the storm that rages in my soul or ease the pain and loneliness I sometimes feel. But I choose to submit to God, to be obedient to my understanding of his Word, to hunger and thirst after righteousness and to turn from despair and hopelessness. I choose to strive toward holiness.

This struggle, to my surprise, has become a pathway to intimacy with God and has become a compelling force that has driven me closer to him. The emotional absence of my biological father has propelled me on a relentless course of pursuing...
my heavenly Father. Through this valley of darkness I have become more sensitive to the pain and loneliness of others. I believe God can use our struggles and brokenness to help us be more pliable in his hands, more understanding and forgiving of the sins and addictions of others, more humble and more dependent on him.

Many books and articles have been written on the subject of same-sex attraction. Some of these promote the perspective that since the Bible declares homosexuality a “sin” and an “abomination,” those who struggle with same-sex attraction need to repent, turn from their sin and be forgiven and healed. Period. I find this simple solution leaves me feeling empty, unacceptable, cold and misunderstood. I have repented; I have struggled.

There are also many in the church who have promoted the perspective that God has created some people with same-sex attraction, that this is normal and good and should therefore be embraced and celebrated. We are being asked not only to accept actively gay people into full membership in the body of Christ but to embrace them as leaders in our churches.

I submit that we as a body of believers follow a loving, gentle, middle path as an alternative to the two sharply contrasting perspectives described above. We need grace and truth; we need compassion and principles. How does one discount the biblical teachings on human sexuality and sexual purity? I have come to believe that same-sex attraction in itself is not a sin, but the acting out of that temptation is a sin.

Since the tendency to live outside biblical boundaries is common to us all, let’s surround one another with love and mutual accountability. And let’s be a church community that responds with grace and mercy rather than judgment and condemnation to those who find themselves struggling with unwanted same-sex attraction.

Do I struggle? Yes. Have I made some progress? Yes. Is there any hope for people like me? Absolutely. Do I believe God can still receive honor and glory through my life and my experiences? As I yield to Him, yes.

Dear Father, I pray, help me understand what it means to live “like a man,” to be the person you have called me to be, using the gifts and strengths you have given me, to love my wife and family, to serve the church and community, to continue to grow through struggle and to live up to the commitments I have made with faithfulness, integrity and purity. Help me to finish well. Amen.

Some minor details of this story have been altered to protect the anonymity of the author. He and his wife are active members of a Mennonite Church USA congregation.

Let’s be a church community that responds with grace and mercy rather than judgment and condemnation to those who find themselves struggling with unwanted same-sex attraction.
Jesus challenges the stones in our hearts

John 8:1-11 poses a question about stoning, but there aren’t any real stones in the story. It is easy to imagine that the scribes and Pharisees are clenching stones in their hands when they bring this unnamed woman to Jesus, but the text doesn’t tell us that. Neither does it tell us that, after Jesus’ response, they dropped their stones as they walked away.

Jesus’ adversaries aren’t interested in an actual stoning; they are not even really concerned for this unnamed woman, whom they drag before Jesus and into the public eye. They only want to use her as a prop in their debate about the Torah (John 8:6).

This is really a conflict story that poses a Torah-test for Jesus: a question of how to interpret and apply Scripture. Like other “Torah-tests” in the Gospels (cf. Mark 12, Matthew 21-22), Jesus’ critics pose a question that invites one of two polarizing answers, either of which would leave Jesus in a difficult position.

Here, Jesus’ interlocutors are asking him to interpret the Torah command concerning stoning (Deuteronomy 22:21-27). They aren’t really interested in the details of the case: They don’t bring both parties in the adulterous act or witnesses, as the Torah requires (Deuteronomy 17:2-7). They push Jesus to rush to judgment in hopes of charging him—not the woman.

The dilemma for Jesus is clear: If he upholds the Torah rule, he not only endorses the death penalty but offends the Roman governor, who claimed the right to judge in capital cases himself. If he criticizes the Torah sentence, he has set himself against Moses and invited criticism from his community.

Jesus does something he is described as doing nowhere else in the Gospels: he bends down and writes on the ground—leaving his breathless opponents and the trapped woman standing above him. The story doesn’t tell us what he writes, but that hasn’t stopped interpreters from speculating.

Jesus refuses to let his challengers control the situation; he has shifted the focus from the woman to himself—giving her space to breathe and perhaps reclaim her humanity in the face of those manipulating her.

He stands and speaks a short proverb, “Let the one without sin throw the first stone.” Again, he bends down and continues writing on the ground.

Jesus has refused to answer the question the way his challengers posed it. He has deflected the call to pronounce a death sentence by inviting the questioners to examine their own hearts. The question-positors walk away, one by one.

When Jesus looks up again, he addresses the accused woman for the first time, not as a foil but as a human being. Jesus does not condemn the woman but points her toward a new beginning. He says, “Go and do not sin again.”

Jesus has addressed both the woman and her accusers in ways that challenge and extend mercy. His invitations to them sharpen the issue for us.

Our tendency in hearing this story may be to judge the scribes and Pharisees for manipulating the woman into the conflict and bringing this question to Jesus in the first place. But this is a judgment story where Jesus challenges our human claims to pass judgment, so we have to be careful. We may want to condemn these critics of Jesus. But in doing so, we discover that the proverb applies to us as well.

Jesus doesn’t speak a harsh or condemning word in this story. He doesn’t condemn the woman or his inquisitors. Jesus’ response is a patient but studied silence and a provocative proverb that subverts their own smugness—but also invites them to engage a broader perspective.

This image of Jesus kneeling on the ground seems very much the servant pose, reminiscent of the later scene in John 13, where Jesus washes the disciples’ feet. Here is Jesus—in the middle of a conflict—bending to write on the ground, a servant to his adversaries and to their victim, even as he speaks the truth in love.

What are the stones we need to scatter and drop from our hands and hearts? Where are the stony places in our hearts and in our congregational life that need to be melted and restored as healthy arteries, as channels of healing and hope? Indeed John 8 is a call not to gather stones, but to scatter them in the ocean-depth of God’s mercy and divine compassion.

This story reminds us that we participate in God’s grace when we deal graciously with each other—even in the midst of conflict. We follow the pattern of grace embodied in Jesus. As Colossians puts it, “If anyone has a complaint against another, forgiving one another; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive” (3:13). 

**Jesus challenges the stones in our hearts**

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**Here is Jesus—in the middle of a conflict—bending to write on the ground, a servant to his adversaries and to their victim, even as he speaks the truth in love.**

**Patricia Shelly** is moderator-elect of Mennonite Church USA and professor of Bible and religion at Bethel College in North Newton, Kan.
Sustainable simplification shuns ‘shoulds’

Over the years, many people have expressed to me an intention to simplify their lives. In nearly every case, those intentions appeared to be grounded in either a litany of “shoulds” or a reluctant resignation to making a sacrifice. In my experience, neither is sustainable.

Guilt has always struck me as a useless emotion. It does nothing to help the person or situation we’re feeling guilty about, and it makes us feel miserable. Acting proactively to preclude guilt benefits others and avoids misery for the one who acts. When I hear someone say “should,” I flinch, sensing that the words that follow evince a reluctance in that person’s spirit for the action being considered. In most cases, either dithering postpones the action or a withering spirit saps the verve of the well-intentioned soul. In both instances, a long-term sustainability is lacking.

When I speak to groups about downward mobility, someone usually commends me for my willingness to sacrifice. Once again, I flinch. It’s no sacrifice to eschew something you never wanted in the first place. Unless one’s heart embraces a simpler lifestyle, it will not be sustainable. And unless we’re religious flagellants, our hearts won’t desire simplicity as long as we consider it a sacrifice. On occasion, I sense a willingness by some to engage in temporary sacrifice to buy time, e.g., to ride a bicycle until a “smart,” clean car is invented. I put no faith in technological fixes, since each new technology ratchets up global wealth disparities and is nearly always less environmentally sustainable than the one it replaced. “Smart” devices usually result in increased use of the item by its owners, who now feel less guilt over using it, thus canceling out any anticipated environmental improvement.

The environment, after all, is God’s creation, and I observe two distinct worldviews regarding it. One says, God’s creation is awesome, and with a little ingenuity, our technologies can make it even better. The other worldview says, God’s creation is awesome, and our attempts to alter it to our liking are not likely to result in improvements, so we’d best use our ingenuity to learn how to adapt to nature rather than attempting to adapt nature to our desires. I ascribe to the latter mindset and try to take my cues about how to live from Jesus’s lifestyle.

My faith tells me that Jesus had the capacity to choose any lot in life he wished. He could have chosen to be wealthy and magnanimously bestow his riches on others. He didn’t. Fully conscious of his endless options, Jesus chose to be homeless, poor and unencumbered by the power trappings of the culture he so roundly rejected. And he beckons us to join him, not as bystanders but as members of a band of outcasts. It’s as if Jesus implores us to viscerally experience with him the benefits of voluntary poverty. His words of invitation and opportunity to those he encountered were, “Follow me,” not, “Worship me” or, “Put me on a pedestal”—a polite way to dismiss his behavior as hopelessly inimitable. None of us is capable of being completely like Jesus, but his exhortation to “follow me” encourages us to do our best and come as close as we can, asking for God’s grace and guidance to augment our efforts.

Jesus wants the best for his followers, not the inferior, soul-eroding best that our culture panders. He wants us to have a lean and robust faith, not the flabby faith and vacuous values of a superficial life. The path that Jesus modeled for us is not a hair shirt of misery. He embraced voluntary poverty because he knew it to be the best sustenance for a healthy soul. When something is best, it’s no sacrifice to embrace it, and no “shoulds” are needed to prompt us to the task.

So, in pursuit of communion with Jesus in his life of voluntary poverty, I’ve come up with a high-maintenance disciple’s confessional prayer to try to keep me on the Christian path. I share it here in hopes it might be of use to any others who seek a similar journey.

Dear Lord, Great Spirit of Goodness and Love, I admit to being a drain on your patience. Please gift me with discernment to clearly know your will, desire to partner with you to implement your will and discipline not to be diverted or distracted. Please transform my self-absorbed existence and remake me into a vibrant conduit of your goodness and love, free from spiritual plaque, selfish concerns and material encumbrances. Finally, Lord, when my days on this earth are over, please inspire me to have lived a meaningful life centered on things that really matter rather than the baubles of our self-indulgent, secular culture, so I may exit this life with a minimum of regrets. Amen. 

Chuck Hosking attends Albuquerque (N.M.) Mennonite Church.

Guilt does nothing to help the person or situation we’re feeling guilty about, and it makes us feel miserable.

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

**Will begin with Greencroft Communities Foundation in February 2014**

Everett J. Thomas submitted his resignation Aug. 1 as editor of *The Mennonite* and CEO of The Mennonite, Inc. He began serving as editor on Nov. 1, 2000. Thomas will begin working in February 2014, as president of the Greencroft Communities Foundation, headquartered in Goshen, Ind.

The foundation serves six facilities in the Greencroft Communities system in Ohio and Indiana. The position also includes some chaplaincy and church relations work at Greencroft Goshen and Greencroft Middlebury (Ind.).

Thomas currently serves as the chair of the Greencroft Communities Foundation board and co-chaired the foundation’s recent capital campaign that raised $3 million for a new health-care facility at Greencroft Goshen, to be finished in 2014.

Mark King, president and CEO of Greencroft Communities, in an Aug. 8 interview noted Thomas’ “strong passion for serving some of the poorest residents on [Greencroft’s] campus.” King said that 40 percent of the residents and one-third of those in independent housing live below the federal poverty line. Thomas, he said, is also “personable, caring, friendly and relates well with aging residents as they work at that transition in their lives.”

During Thomas’ tenure as editor, says Barth Hague, board chair for The Mennonite, Inc., “*The Mennonite* has grown from a print magazine to a content distribution system for Mennonite Church USA. Through web-based technologies, our readership has continued to grow over the past decade.”

**Since 2000, The Mennonite has moved** from being printed by Mennonite Publishing House in Scottsdale, Pa., to its base first in Goshen, Ind., and now in Elkhart, Ind. Besides publishing *The Mennonite*, The Mennonite, Inc., publishes two e-zines, *TM* and *Merno Acontecer*, and maintains a website and Facebook page. Readership for the various media has grown to more than 37,000.

Hague says that Thomas “leaves the organization in good fiscal and operational health, for which the board of directors is deeply grateful.”

Susan Sommer, who served 10 years as a board member and the last seven years as board chair, notes the many changes in the church during Thomas’ tenure.

“[The magazine’s staff] watched and reported while the goal of one denomination for two nations became two national denominations. [They] watched and reported through structural changes, through leadership changes, through identity changes.”

She uses nautical images, something dear to Thomas, who enjoys sailing, to describe how she’s enjoyed working with him “while we navigated the changes: some foreseen, many not; some smooth sailing, much not—but all in all, an exciting ride.”

Bylaws for The Mennonite, Inc., stipulate that when resigning, the editor must give the board six months’ notice.

“This opportunity from Greencroft came as something of a surprise to me,” says Thomas. “Until I learned of this possibility, I was planning to work here until retirement in 2016. I consider the role of editor to be a sacred trust and did not make the decision lightly. But leading the Foundation will let me work at something about which I am also passionate.”

Greencroft Communities is a member of Mennonite Health Services Alliance, now an agency of Mennonite Church USA. King said Thomas will be helpful to Greencroft Communities as they seek to “relate well to the broader church and be good stewards as they grow and develop.”

Greencroft, he said, “develops a vibrant life for seniors,” who come there “not to retire but to live and continue serving others as active participants in the community.”

Last year, he said, residents gave 40,000 hours in volunteer work.

The transition to a new editor will be coordinated by the board of The Mennonite, Inc., and the Executive Board of Mennonite Church USA, which must approve the selection of Thomas’ successor. Marty Lehman, associate executive director of churchwide operations for Mennonite Church USA, is the liaison between the Executive Board and the board for The Mennonite, Inc.

Thomas came to *The Mennonite* after serving for 11 years as president of the Mennonite Board of Congregational Ministries, an agency of the former Mennonite Church that is no longer in existence. From 1972 to 1989, he served first as an English teacher and then administrator at Bethany Christian High School in Goshen.

Since 1992, Thomas has served on the Goshen City Council, representing the district in which Greencroft Goshen is located.

Thomas and Barbara, his wife, have two adult children and one grandchild. They are members of College Mennonite Church in Goshen.—*Gordon Houser*
Western District hosts Year of the Bible Launch

220 hear Loren Johns, Patricia Shelly, Lois Barrett, attend 12 learning centers

Marilyn Bogard, director of the Western District Conference (WDC) Resource Library and Year of the Bible (YOB) coordinator, opened the Year of the Bible Launch, held Aug. 1-2 on the Bethel College campus in North Newton, Kan., by noting that planners expected 100 participants. About 220 came.

The two-day event included worship, talks followed by discussion in table groups and 12 learning centers, with time for participants to attend four of them.

Loren Johns, professor of New Testament at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS) in Elkhart, Ind., spoke on “Engaging the Word Through Christian Formation.” He noted the Anabaptist distinctives of biblical interpretation, including “perspicuity,” or clarity or understandability. He said that Christian formation is a matter of knowing, being and doing.

Patricia Shelly, professor of Bible and religion at Bethel College, spoke on “Engaging the Word Through Experiential Worship.” Her talk, mixed with music and action by participants, included “Binding God’s Word,” “Embodying God’s Word” and “Dwelling in God’s Word.” Discussing dwelling, she quoted New Testament scholar Raymond Brown, who said, “In the Scriptures we are in our Father’s house, where the children are permitted to play.”

Lois Barrett, a church consultant and a professor at AMBS who lives in Wichita, Kan., spoke on “Engaging the Word Through Life and Service.” She discussed the ways people learn, then led a discussion of Luke 11:14-23. She said the church should be pointing out where the finger of God is at work and should be a sign, an instrument and foretaste of the reign of God.

The 12 learning centers included these: 40 Ways to Study the Bible, Navigating the YOB Website; Exploring the 12 Scriptures Project, Houston Style; Dig In: Bible Resources from MennoMedia; Reading the Bible in 90 Days; Written on our Hearts: Scripture Memory Methods for All Ages; The Lectionary Lens: For Pastors, Worship Planners; Become Like a Child: Speaking Kid’s Language in Children’s Time; Walk This Way: Bible Walkin’ on the Plaza; Mining the Web: Bible Resources for Youth and Young Adults; Acting Out in Church: Bible and Drama; and Seminary in your Back Yard: Studying the Bible at AMBS—Great Plains.—Gordon Houser

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Eastern Mennonite University
Harrisonburg, Va.
Executive Board staff says seven have switched, two in process.

In the last couple of years, staff members in the Executive Board’s leadership development office have been keeping a record of Mennonite Church USA congregations that leave one area conference and join a different one.

According to Beth Hunsberger, leadership development office manager, seven congregations have dropped membership in their original conferences and joined another Mennonite Church USA conference during this period. They include several that made the switch before the Executive Board’s formal record keeping began:

2007: Swiss Mennonite Church, in Alsen, N.D., transferred its membership from Central Plains Mennonite Conference to the North Central Conference.

2009: First Mennonite of Berne, Ind., withdrew from Central District Conference and joined Ohio Conference.

2012: St. Paul (Minn.) Mennonite Church withdrew from Central Plains Conference and joined Central District Conference.

2013: Bethel Mennonite Church, Inman, Kan., withdrew from Western District conference and joined South Central Conference.

2013: Herold Mennonite Church, Cordell, Okla., withdrew from Western District conference and joined South Central Conference.

2013: Metro Mennonite Church, Mustang, Okla., withdrew from Western District Conference and joined South Central Conference.

2013: Frazer (Pa.) Mennonite Church, Lancaster (Pa.) Conference, transferred to Atlantic Coast Conference.

Denominational minister Nancy Kauffmann listed other congregations currently in possible transitions from one conference to another. She provided the following updates on July 23:

• Covenant Mennonite Fellowship in Sarasota, Fla., was introduced to Central District Conference in June. According to CDC’s policy of membership, transferring is a two-year process, so Covenant will be up for vote in 2014.

• Salem Mennonite Church in Kidron, Ohio, has decided to leave Central District Conference and possibly join Ohio Conference. According to Mennonite Church USA policy, the former conference will hold records for up to one year while a former congregation moves to another conference. We will know by March 2014 if Salem will join Ohio Conference.

“We have a policy not to change records until we get official word from conferences that the transitions are complete,” Kauffmann said.

The database will continue to include congregations that have left Mennonite Church USA completely, but those congregations will not show up in the Directory.

According to Lois Johns Kaufmann, conference minister for Central District Conference, two other congregations not listed by the database also joined CDC: Atlanta Mennonite Fellowship in 2004 and Shalom Mennonite Congregation in Harrisonburg, Va., in 2005.

“The losses make me wonder how the rural and urban parts of the church can get to know and trust each other,” Kaufmann said on Aug. 15. “Even as I reflect on the losses, I recognize that new beginnings can be helpful.”

Central District Conference moderator Ron Guengerich expressed his sadness at the loss of the congregations but appreciation for the new congregations that have joined CDC.

“We have conversation concerning the issues on which we sense there is disagreement,” Guengerich said on Aug. 15, “but we also do not equate unity in Christ with uniformity on all issues. We trust that the Holy Spirit is moving and guiding in the different contexts. In CDC, we do not function as a body in which the conference is a parent that is enforcing uniformity and imposing one viewpoint on our member congregations.”—Everett J. Thomas

We like the stewardship foundation that Everence has. There was never any question we would rely on Everence for health insurance when we turned 65."
– Ted and Sue Nofzinger, Creekside Church of the Brethren

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Local history and international cultures converge

Eastern Mennonite Missions’ Global Fair draws 2,000 to Hans Herr House.

The past and the present as well as international and local cultures all came together at Eastern Mennonite Missions’ Global Fair on July 20. Around 2,000 people enjoyed a sunny Saturday on the grounds of the 1719 Hans Herr House near Willow Street, Pa., visiting exhibits featuring countries all over the globe and exploring the oldest homestead in Lancaster County.

Twenty-five EMM workers provided exhibits representing 21 countries.

Fairgoers got to sample and purchase food from many countries, including the always popular injera and wat from Ethiopia, chicken kebabs and walking tacos from Mexico, iced coffees from Vietnam, osh from Central Asia, and japrak (rice wrapped in grape leaves) from Albania.

Upohar Ethnic Cuisines made its first Global Fair appearance, offering Iraqi and Nepali food made by resettled refugees and new immigrants now living in Lancaster city. Owner Srirupa Dasgupta founded the company to give refugee/immigrant women a chance to rebuild their lives, earn fair wages and become part of the local community.

Dasgupta said, “Many people tried our food. The sanbusa (triangular pastries stuffed with mixed vegetables) sold out quickly, so we’ll have to bring more next year.”

Also new this year was a small-scale “Lennon Wall” (named after John Lennon) at the Czech Republic exhibit. People from all over the world paint symbols and messages of love and peace on the real, ever-changing Lennon Wall when they visit Prague, the capital city.

The “Lennon Wall” at Global Fair went from being a blank white wooden wall at 11 a.m. to a completely paint-covered, fascinating mural by the end of the fair.

Exhibitors Jan Heindel and Stacy Nofziger, EMM workers in the Czech Republic, said the chance to add something to the wall seemed to appeal to all age groups.

Children particularly enjoyed a number of activity stations scattered around the grounds. At the What’s your house made of? station, children got to read about and touch various building materials used for houses around the world, including straw bales, pressed earth, adobe and bamboo.

Many fairgoers toured the Hans Herr house for the first time. The hand pump that draws water from the house’s well was in almost constant motion throughout the afternoon.

Some of the boys in attendance said the Native American longhouse on the grounds was the best part of the fair. “I liked the bows and arrows and all the animal skins,” said Adrian Sedano.—Linda Moffett of Eastern Mennonite Missions
Ten rising middle schoolers from the Goshen, Ind., area blended a love of sports with a love of journalism by participating in Goshen College’s Write on Sports camp July 8-19.

Write on Sports originated in New Jersey in 2005 from Byron Yake, a former national sports editor with the Associated Press and a 1961 Goshen College graduate.

The 2013 Goshen camp is the first to take place outside New Jersey.

“Write on Sports blends sports and writing in such a way that you learn almost unawares because you get caught up in the excitement of sports and the interactions between journalists and athletes,” says Duane Stoltzfus, Goshen College professor of communication and director of the Write on Sports Goshen camp.

The campers can then take the interviewing and writing skills they develop during the camp, Stoltzfus says, and apply them to other subjects when they return to school in the fall.

Throughout the camp, participants worked on spot stories—brief news feature articles that are written in a short period of time—which are then published as posts on the camp blog.

In addition to writing three to four blog posts apiece, students each worked on a longer feature story, which will be combined into a small book. Each student also had the chance to create a video on a sports-related topic of his or her choosing that was shown to parents on the final day.

A highlight of the camp for many participants was a July 10 field trip to the University of Notre Dame (Ind.), where they had the chance to tour the digital media suite and the press box and interview two Notre Dame football players, a Notre Dame women’s basketball player and Jack Nolan, a longtime basketball announcer.

Campers also got to interview three South Bend (Ind.) Silver Hawks players and a pitching coach and attend a Silver Hawks game.

“One of my favorite parts [of camp] was probably going to Notre Dame,” said Diego Torres, who will enter seventh grade at Goshen Middle School in August. “It was really cool to get to go into the locker room and on the field,” he said.

During the two-week camp, participants had the chance to interview a variety of people involved in athletics or journalism, including Anthony Anderson, assistant sports editor at The Elkhart (Ind.) Truth; Justin Gillette, a Goshen College graduate who is ranked fifth in the world in marathon wins; Natalie Newell, softball pitcher for Bethel College in Mishawaka, Ind., who led her team to the national tournament in 2013; Greg Keim, Goshen News sports reporter; and Jason Samuel, general manager of 91.1 FM The Globe, Goshen College’s radio station.

LiAnna Overman, who began as a seventh grader at Goshen Middle School in August, said she “liked getting to interview people because you get to explore your own mind. You can think of questions that you probably never thought of before.”—Lauren Stoltzfus for Goshen College
Grant to digitize John Howard Yoder’s work

Mennonite Historical Library receives over $12,000 to provide online access.

The Mennonite Historical Library has received a $12,023 grant to digitize and provide online access to unpublished and informally published works of John Howard Yoder, one of the more prominent theologians of the 20th century.

The project is a collaborative effort between Goshen College’s Mennonite Historical Library and Mennonite Church USA.

Rooted in the Mennonite tradition, Yoder introduced Anabaptist thought, including pacifism, into mainstream Christian theology.

Yoder served nearly 30 years as a teacher and scholar on the faculty at Goshen Biblical Seminary, Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS) and Notre Dame (Ind.) University.

The digital library will provide improved access to Yoder’s unpublished works, including lectures, essays and correspondence.

Digital files of these works will become freely accessible through the Private Academic Library Network of Indiana and Indiana Memory websites.

A prototype of the project is already available at http://replica.palni.edu/cdm/landingpage/collection/p15705coll18.

John D. Roth, director of the Mennonite Historical Library, says: “We are delighted to partner with the Archives of Mennonite Church USA and AMBS in this collaborative venture. This project is an important step in making the unique resources of our collections more accessible to researchers regionally around the world.”

This project is supported by the Institute of Museum and Library Services under the provisions of the Library Services and Technology Act, administered by the Indiana State Library.

Bluffton students relish Flyer experience

Phoenix Flyer for convention run by Bluffton University group

Chay Reigle may speak for three fellow Bluffton (Ohio) University students when he sums up how he spent part of his summer vacation, in Phoenix.

“In just a week,” says Reigle, a public relations major, “I beefed up my resume, got real-world experience in journalism, worked alongside professors, attended a convention filled with passionate, socially responsible people and even got to experience the infamous dry heat.”

That checklist also applies to Bluffton students Donald Isaac, Kate Ellis and Kerry Bush. With Reigle, they helped produce the Phoenix Flyer, the daily news sheet at the Mennonite Church USA national convention July 1-6.

Working with them were Zachary Walton, an assistant professor of communication at Bluffton, who served as editor, and his wife, Karen Bontrager, a 2004 Bluffton graduate who was largely responsible for page layout and helped with editing.

Bluffton had accepted the assignment in Phoenix after Hannah Heinzekehr, an alumna and a planning coordinator for the convention, requested the university’s help with the news sheet.

Bush, a Mennonite student and the primary photographer in the Bluffton group, says she learned “more about what goes on behind the scenes at a convention I attended multiple times as a youth.”

A graphic design major from Bluffton, Bush was the “unofficial” social media manager as well, Walton says.

“She raised the visibility of what we were doing” with the printed convention publication, he says.

Sharing office space in the convention center with representatives from Mennonite World Review and The Mennonite also exposed the students to models of church journalism, he notes.

The students’ coverage included stories about matters of concern to the church, such as youth attendance, and about immigration and other controversial issues that were not part of official convention events, Walton says.

One day, Ellis, a former Lima News photo intern who also assisted with photography and photo editing in Phoenix, joined a group that traveled nearly 180 miles to tour the Mexican border at Nogales.

The work introduced the young journalists to diverse and intriguing people as well. Isaac interviewed two pastors from South Korea and Bishop Victor Umoahasi, president of Mennonite Church Nigeria.

“I learned,” says Reigle, a junior originally from Bluffton, “that no amount of coursework can substitute for real-world experience.”—Bluffton University
Undocumented woman threatened by husband

MCC West Coast staff used special federal program to get her green card.

The green card that Francisca held in her hand for the first time on May 30 represented not only freedom to live in the United States legally but also freedom from fear that she would be separated by deportation from her two American-born daughters. Francisca’s green card, an identification card attesting to her permanent resident status in the United States, also meant that her former husband could no longer threaten to turn her into immigration authorities if she reported his abuse.

Instead, she has a pathway to U.S. citizenship. (The names of Francisca and her children have been changed to protect their privacy.)

Francisca migrated to the United States in March 1997, when she was just 21. She worked at whatever jobs she could get—restaurant dishwasher or housecleaner.

She had a daughter, Sara, a year later, raising her as a single parent until she married a U.S. citizen in 2006. When she became pregnant in 2008, her husband began to abuse her verbally and physically. Once she gave birth to Ana, Francisca’s husband threatened to have her deported if she tried to leave with her daughters.

During a visit in 2010, Francisca’s father became worried about his daughter’s safety and called the police. When they arrived, Francisca’s husband had already fled, but he was arrested a few days later. While serving a two-year sentence, Francisca’s husband continued to threaten her from jail, claiming he would obtain custody of Ana because he was a U.S. citizen.

When they learned about Francisca’s history of being abused and her fear of being separated from her daughters, Francisca’s pastors referred her to Gloria James, the immigration program coordinator for West Coast Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) in Upland, Calif.

When James heard her story, she knew Francisca was a prime candidate for legal residence through the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA). This act allows undocumented victims of domestic violence, rape or sexual assault by a U.S. citizen to obtain lawful status. VAWA exists, in part, so that abusers cannot use the victim’s immigration status to prevent the victim from calling the police or seeking safety, according to a White House fact sheet.

Francisca was able to apply for legal residency through the help of West Coast MCC immigration staff. James and her colleague, immigration staff associate Crystal Fernandez, who works in Reedley, Calif., guide immigrants through the maze of U.S. immigration policies.

West Coast MCC established the immigration program in the late 1980s at the request of Anabaptist churches in California who worked with undocumented people in and beyond their congregations. The pastors and MCC saw the need to keep families together, to advocate for just laws and to provide immigration education plus practical advice on specific cases.

Francisca’s case was one of about 32 that West Coast MCC worked with in 2012, using VAWA or the petition for a U visa, which allows victims of violent crimes to become legal residents. Each case requires many hours of work and can take years to process, James said. Francisca’s case was active for two years.

Victims must provide exhaustive documentation, including police and medical reports, James says, and the process often retraumatizes the women. Applicants are required to tell their painful story multiple times.

James often listens to difficult stories that reinforce the need for MCC’s presence in the field. Many lack the money or time to seek professional counseling. Through referrals to outside agencies, victims of crime can receive counseling and services to assist them in healing from past trauma.

“This group of victims, our brothers and sisters in Christ, don’t often have the monetary resources or information they need to speak out. MCC is acting with compassion to empower women, especially when they are the most vulnerable,” James says. “Everyone needs an advocate.”—Emily Will of Mennonite Central Committee
17 Japanese churches create confession of faith

Hokkaido group has been working on the statement for 10 years.

Members of Mennonite churches in Japan shown here are among those who are reemphasizing peace as the nation discusses restoring its military’s ability to go to war outside Japan’s borders. Back row, from left to right: Fumiko Kawaguchi holding baby Oki Kawaguchi, Yasuko Momono, Mary Beyler, Nobuyasu Kirai, Tsuyoshi Serita, Hiroshi Kaneko, Junko Nakanishi, Yoko Mizuki, Mariko Ando, Koichi Uryu. Seated in the front from left to right: Maki Kawaguchi, Kizuki Kawaguchi, Shozo Sato, Mitsuko Yaguchi, Mitsuru Ishido, Yukari Kaga.

Japan Mennonite Christian Church Conference (Hokkaido) has produced a Christ-centered confession of faith that outlines five core beliefs emphasizing community, care for the environment, and peacemaking.

A conference of Japanese Mennonites in May adopted a formal document defining what they believe collectively despite their autonomy and differences.

Japan Mennonite Christian Church Conference (Hokkaido) adopted a confession of faith during its 61st gathering on May 18.

The conference is comprised of 17 churches. The document reads: “Each congregation is autonomous, independent and self-supporting, but as disciples of Jesus Christ we hereby establish the Japan Mennonite Christian Church Conference Confession of Faith to reaffirm our shared faith today with the hope of further deepening our mutual fellowship and cooperation.”

The core principles, as translated by Ken Shenk, who spent many years among Mennonites in Japan with Mennonite Board of Missions, a Mennonite Mission Network predecessor agency, are these:

1. Jesus Christ is the Word of God the Father and is revealed by the Holy Spirit.
2. The church is a community of believers that learns from the Bible under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.
3. Believers listen to the Lord Jesus Christ, serve each other and love their neighbors.
4. Believers care for creation, build peace and justice, which come from Christ, and participate in the work of the kingdom of God.
5. Following Jesus’ nonviolent way of life, we as believers do not participate in war.

“Above all, these five articles make it clear that we live by the same faith as our church’s ancestors in faith, the Anabaptists/Mennonites, who put the Lord Jesus at the center of their faith and sought to listen to and follow Christ in their lives,” wrote Akira Mimoto, pastor of Tottori Mennonite Church, Kushiro, in a document translated to English. “I think that it is highly significant that our conference’s 17 congregations, despite their distinctive autonomous and independent organizational styles, passed as a group of Mennonites this resolution to value and share in these articles of faith that were valued by our forebears in faith.”

The effort to write and adopt the confession of faith began about 10 years ago, says Mary Beyler, a Mennonite Mission Network worker who serves with Mennonite congregations in Hokkaido.

The churches have been referencing historical confessions of faith and the confessions of Mennonite Church USA and Mennonite World Conference but eventually determined that a confession reflecting their unique Japanese and Anabaptist perspective was also needed. Beyler was part of the committee that was appointed to write the confession of faith.

“The confession is short enough to use often in worship, to recite and to confess together. It can help us think about and to rethink the foundations of our faith. I hope it is recited regularly, studied and preached.”

The confession is also significant as the Japanese discuss possible changes to the nation’s 1947 Constitution to restore its military’s ability to take offensive action outside Japan’s borders.

However, the confession is not a reaction to this. The Hokkaido conference churches have long established that their antwar stance is because of their faith in Jesus.

“Some churches wanted to be able to introduce what is unique and special about Mennonites when other Christians or not-yet Christians come to our churches,” Beyler says. “The confession is short enough to use often in worship, to recite and to confess together. It can help us think about and to rethink the foundations of our faith. I hope it is recited regularly, studied and preached.”

Wil LaVeist of Mennonite Mission Network
An overview of edgy Mennonite blogs, websites

Blogs include Femonite, Femmonite, MennoNerds, Abnormal Anabaptist.

The past decade has seen a rise in blogs and websites published by Mennonites. Some of these blogs feature Mennonite voices on the margins. Others hope to attract those new to the Mennonite faith. Others serve as an outlet for an individual to share reflections on theology, society and cultural trends. This article provides an overview to a selection of these blogs and websites.—Anna Groff

Abnormal Anabaptist
abnormalanabaptist.wordpress.com
Launch year: 2007
Who started it: Robert Martin
Purpose: Blogger Martin writes about various themes and topics from an Anabaptist perspective. “I recognize that I have been informed and shaped by other thoughts, so I may not necessarily be ‘normal’ when it comes to what some may consider traditional Anabaptism,” Martin says. “And yet, at the same time, even Anabaptist thought, practice and theology aims for being ‘abnormal’ in relation to the culture around us. So, thus gives birth to the idea of being an ‘Abnormal Anabaptist.’”
Audience: Most readers are Anabaptists/Mennonites engaging conversation or folks from outside the ethnic-historical tradition seeking to learn more about what it means to be an Anabaptist.
Traffic: The blog has 56 followers and 500 followers on Twitter.—Robert Martin

Femonite
www.femonite.com
Launch year: 2012
Who started it: Meghan Florian
Purpose: The blog is a “mashup of feminism and theology with a splash of Anabaptism,” says Florian.
Audience: The audience is readers who are interested in thinking about theology and feminism together in the context of the church and in conversation with the wider world.
Traffic: New posts generate, on average, 350 unique views.—Meghan Florian

Femmonite: Musings from a Mennonite Feminist
femonite.com
Launch year: 2012
Who started it: Hannah Heinzekehr is the creator.
The blog grew out of an assignment for one of the graduate school courses that required her to blog on a daily basis.
Purpose: The purpose is to explore intersections between feminism, Mennonite/Anabaptist identity and theology. “I also wanted to create a conversational space for women within Mennonite Church USA because I felt there was a hunger within the church for discussions about gender, leadership and faith among women,” Heinzekehr says.
Audience: The audience is people affiliated with Mennonite or Anabaptist churches and primarily women in their 20s to 40s. “It also pulls in a lot of people who are just curious about who or what Mennonites are,” she says. “Every time a new Amish reality show airs, my blog hits go up.”
Traffic: The blog has 230 subscribers and receives around 10,000 page views per month.—Hannah Heinzekehr

Jesus Radicals
jesusradicals.com
Launch year: 2000
Who started it: The website as a way to communicate a group of evangelical college students’ experiences being arrested at the School of the Americas. Nekeisha and Andy Alexis-Baker were the primary people behind the site at the time. In 2010, Mark Van Steenwyk proposed that the work he and a few others were doing at www.jesus-manifesto.com could be united into the Jesus Radicals website. Currently, Jesus Radicals is coordinated primarily by Nekeisha Alexis-Baker, Joanna Shenk, Mark Van Steenwyk and Brett Taylor.
Purpose: The focus is to explore the theologically practical politics of a Jesus-centered life and how that way of life may benefit from a critical engagement with anarchist political stances (defined broadly as a commitment to critique of all forms of domination). It includes a theology section that includes the most comprehensive collection of articles by Jacques Ellul anywhere in the world, as well as other radical theologians with anarchic tendencies. All this is augmented by articles, a biweekly podcast, a community forum and an annual gathering.—Mark Van Steenwyk
Audience: The audience is radically minded Christians, many in their 20s and 30s.
Traffic: It has 500 regular e-newsletter subscribers and receives between 80,000 and 100,000 visits each month.

Marginal Mennonite Society
facebook.com/marginalmennonitesociety
Who started it: Charlie Kraybill
Launch year: 2011
Purpose: “We are Marginal Mennonites, and we’re not ashamed. We’re marginal because no self-respecting Mennonite organization would have us.” Read the entire MMS declaration on its Facebook page.
Audience: The audience includes self-identified Marginal Mennonites.
Traffic: They have 1,260 “likes” on Facebook.

—Marginal Mennonite Society

Pink Menno
pinkmenno.org
Launch year: 2008
Who started it: The campaign and blog were started by a group of friends, including lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer folks and their allies.
Purpose: Pink Menno supports the inclusion of LGBTQ individuals in marriage, in ordination and in the loving community of Christian fellowship within the Mennonite church. Pink Menno envisions the day when it becomes irrelevant because the church is fully living out Christ’s radical love toward all people, especially toward those in the margins. Pink Menno will remain a visible, vocal presence supporting, sustaining and furthering genuine dialogue.
Audience: The audience includes Mennonite Church USA. It especially focuses on giving voice to the silenced and marginalized.
Traffic: Over 1,000 members have registered on the Pink Menno networking site, and web traffic around the time of Phoenix 2013 was 100-500 unique visitors daily.—Darian Harnish

Our Stories Untold
ourstoriesuntold.com
Launch year: 2012
Who started it: Rachel Halder
Purpose: The mission of Our Stories Untold is three-fold: to bring awareness and education on sexualized violence and abuse within religious communities—specifically the Mennonite church—through the online blog and speaking events; to foster and support survivors within these communities so they feel safe to share stories; and to create holistic healing and empowerment through storytelling, sexuality and spirituality retreats for women. The blog component is available for women to tell their stories and for the community to be educated on rape issues within the church.
Audience: Though the blog is based in the Mennonite church, many people outside the church follow as well. “It’s rare that sexualized violence is discussed in religious circles, so I think people are interested even if they don’t know anything about Mennonites,” says Halder.
Traffic: The blog receives 100-1,000 unique visits a day, depending on the content posted.—Rachel Halder

Roots of Justice
rootsofjusticetraining.org
Launch year: Roots of Justice began operating as an independent organization in 2012. Roots of Justice’s initial programs, however, were spun off the Mennonite Central Committee U.S. Damascus Road Antiracism Process, which began in 1995.

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(Continued from page 41)

Who started it: Friends of the MCC U.S. Damascus Road Antiracism Process worked with MCC U.S. to enable a successful birth of a new organization.

Purpose: The Facebook page connects with a wide range of constituents interested in antioppression. The email listserv provides a forum where Roots of Justice participants and others can share information.

Audience: The audience is anyone interested in antioppression work and past participants of Roots of Justice programs, including Damascus Road.

Traffic: The Facebook page has 180 “likes” and the listserv includes 100 email addresses.—Phil Morice Brubaker

The Social Mennonite
http://paper.li/HarryJarrettJr/1304098626
Launch year: 2011
Who started it: Harry Jarrett
Purpose: Jarrett publishes The Social Mennonite on a daily basis, drawing from social media, blogs, news sources and more. He compiles these into an online paper that focuses on Anabaptist and Mennonite related items.

Audience:Jarrett began this in 2011 as he was preparing to livestream the delegate sessions at the Mennonite Church USA convention in Pittsburgh. It was one of the ways he was working at building awareness and online community among Anabaptists.

Traffic: To date there are 50 subscribers, 4,883 views, and 947 shares.—Harry Jarrett

Young Anabaptist Radicals
young.anabaptistradicals.org
Launch year: 2006
Who started it: Tim Nafziger, Sarah Thompson, Katie Hochstedler, Eric Meyer, Carl Meyer, Michael J. Sharp, Lora Steiner, Brian Hamilton, Tim Showalter Ehst, Paco Michel-son and Jonny Gerig Meyer
Purpose: The goal is to provide a space for conversation among and for self-identified young Anabaptist radicals. They imagine together what it might mean to root our lived faith today (and tomorrow) in the spirit and soil of early Anabaptism.

Audience: The audience is those drawn to Anabaptist values from outside the Mennonite church (“Anabaptist camp followers,” as Levi Miller has called them) and those within the church drawn to a more radical expression of our heritage. The blog boasts 96 writers who have posted at least once in the last seven years.

Traffic: The site receives about 1,500 unique visitors a month and 3,000 page views. We have over 350 “likes” on Facebook.—Tim Nafziger

—Compiled by Anna Groff

Leaders learn giving is mutual

Nine Service Adventure leaders meet for orientation in Kansas.

True hospitality cuts both ways. That’s what nine new Service Adventure leaders learned about gift-giving as they met for orientation July 22-27 in Hutchinson, Kan. Historically, the Latin meaning of “hospitality” signified both the guest and the host would bring a gift.

Michele Hershberger, a Bible and ministry professor at Hesston (Kan.) College, said sometimes that gift will be a listening ear, or sometimes it will be showing humility or faith. People bring whatever they have acquired on their journeys—wherever they are along the way. So, in the case of Service Adventure, it’s a reciprocal relationship between both the leaders and the community, and the leaders and the participants.

In addition to listening to Hershberger, Service Adventure leaders also spent the week discussing worship nights, learning components, simple and sustainable living, budgets and scheduling.

Several Mennonite Mission Network employees and previous Service Adventure leaders, including Tonya Ramer Wenger, who is a previous Mission Network board member gave input during the week.

At the end of the week, the leaders were anointed and sent to their new communities, where they will spend the next two years.

Service Adventure leaders will mentor participants ranging in age from 17 to 20 and focus on faith formation and leadership development.

Giving and receiving counsel, they will welcome two groups, each serving for one year, into their homes in Albany, Ore.; Albuquerque, N.M.; Anchorage, Alaska; Colorado Springs, Colo.; Johnstown, Pa.; or Raleigh, N.C. Philippi, W.Va., is also a service location but is taking a sabbatical this year.

Susan Nisly, Service Adventure director, reflected on the new group of leaders: “This incredible group of leaders is such a confirmation of God’s faithfulness … my prayer for them is that they can use this time to continue to develop their leadership gifts as they pour themselves into the lives of the young adults they will be living with.”—Kelsey Hochstetter of Mennonite Mission Network
On the weekend of Aug. 10, Pittsburgh’s famous Andy Warhol Bridge began wearing a massive, knitted sweater of sorts, designed, created and installed (save for high-altitude stuff left to professionals) by more than 1,400 volunteer knitters in and around Pittsburgh.

Knit the Bridge, led by Amanda Gross graduate of Eastern Mennonite University, Harrisonburg, Va., represents the largest-ever U.S. “yarn bomb,” which Gross describes as a sort of “joyful graffiti” that covers public spaces and objects in knitted artwork.

The installation, which will stay up for a month, will include thousands of colorful 34- x 72-inch panels covering the bridge’s superstructure, plus miles of yarn knitted into narrower railing covers.

Gross focused on art as a peacebuilding tool while studying at EMU’s Center for Justice and Peacebuilding and came up with the idea of the yarn bomb as a way to inspire wide community participation in a public art project.

For the past year, she has been working full-time on the project, which is funded through an Indiegogo campaign and support from numerous organizations.

“I was looking for different ways to connect people and connect different communities,” says Gross, who organized a much smaller yarn bomb in downtown Pittsburgh a few years ago with other members of the city’s Fiberarts Guild. “The process is just as important as the final product.”

While covering a major and massive physical feature in Pittsburgh with yarn is a significant artistic achievement in itself, both the act of knitting and bridges are symbolic of the connectedness Gross hopes to achieve through Knit the Bridge.

As of early July, some 1,500 people had contributed knitted panels, representing more than 80 percent of municipalities and townships within Allegheny County (home to Pittsburgh), as well as numerous other communities in southwest Pennsylvania.

“It’s really a community project. It’s a wonderful thing, and it’s a privilege to be working on it,” says Penny Mateer, an artist and lifelong Pittsburgh resident who is co-directing Knit the Bridge.

Ranging in age from very young to very old, knitters who have contributed panels represent the city’s different racial, ethnic and class communities. Elementary schools have participated; kids in juvenile detention have knitted panels; retirement homes have pitched in.

The National Public Radio affiliate in Pittsburgh ran a story in late June about a group of boys in a local program for at-risk teens who are finger-knitting a piece for the bridge.

Gross and her colleagues drummed up support for the effort through social media, word of mouth and with the help of about 90 people who volunteered to lead outreach and organize knitting parties in their own communities.

Other than rules against letters, numbers or other representational imagery, contributors were given free rein to design their individual panels.

The Knit the Bridge installation will remain up through Sept. 8. After coming down, the panels will be washed and donated to charity.

In mid-June, the county council unanimously approved an ordinance to allow Knit the Bridge to proceed. Also as of late June, the community-made panels totaled 116,688 square feet of hand-knitted or crocheted panels.

One reason for the project’s wide appeal, Gross says, is that knitting and crocheting are generally seen as accessible “crafts” rather than fine art. “That part has made it really easy for people to get excited about it and feel like they can be a part of it,” Gross says. “A lot of people are missing that. … They just want an opportunity to participate.”—Andrew Jenner for Eastern Mennonite University
Unfinished business with John Howard Yoder
Seminary president blogs about renewed interest in discipline case.

Time has its way. As does the Spirit. The accelerating interest in and widespread appreciation for John Howard Yoder’s theological work has also provoked renewed calls for the Mennonite church, including Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS), Elkhart, Ind., to revisit unfinished business with his legacy.

In February and March of 2012, AMBS faculty did significant work to review AMBS’ history with John Howard Yoder and to come to a shared agreement that guides how we teach, critique, interpret and use Yoder’s work with integrity, recognizing the significance of his theological work and the harmfulness of his actions.

In addition to the hard work our AMBS faculty has done to interpret the complicated ironies of John Howard Yoder’s legacy over many years, I wanted to add a personal word.

As the current president of AMBS, I’m committed to a new transparency in the truth-telling that must happen. We must strive to get the facts straight, acknowledge healing work that has been done and shoulder the urgent healing work that must still be done.

Some who are only tuning in now will say, “I had no idea about John Howard Yoder’s widespread sexual harassment and abuse.” Others will say, “Why keep bringing this up; it was settled long ago; he submitted to a church disciplinary process and was cleared for ongoing ministry.”

Others will say, “Finally. This has taken far too long.”

The renewed outcry for truth-telling about what really happened and what didn’t happen in the 1970s, ’80s and early ’90s has deepened my resolve and the resolve of Mennonite Church USA leaders, including Ervin Stutzman, to continue the healing journey.

I was not close to the John Howard Yoder saga when it was unfolding and only heard him speak once during his visit in 1997 to Harrisonburg, Va. Now, as I review the written materials about him and talk to people, I am dumbfounded (appalled) at how long it took for anyone in authority to publicly denounce his harmful behavior.

I am also keenly aware that I was not there. I do not presume that I would have done things differently at that time. I thank God for all the faithful and arduous labor that was exerted under extreme stress to stop John Howard Yoder’s sexual abuse and to listen to the victims—as ineffective as it proved to be for many years.

As AMBS professor Ted Koontz said elsewhere, “The women who experienced sexual and power abuse by John personally have far too long been sidelined (along with others who were directly abused by other church leaders) and are rightfully at the center of our concern. I nevertheless am aware the hurt caused by John’s behavior was and is far-reaching. That circle of hurt includes some who carried major responsibility to work at stopping his abusive behavior, who were unsuccessful and who were burdened by the weight of that failure.”

True, there was confusion about who John Howard should be accountable to, with various influential church leaders and institutions continuing to send him all over the world, even as AMBS leaders of the time discouraged his use as a resource. It took far too long to realize how he was outmanipulating people who sought to confront him, along with providing his own theological rationalization for his sexual activities. But it’s time to say frankly that we have fallen short. Even those of us now in leadership who weren’t remotely involved at the time must commit to the deep listening needed to get the facts straight.

What did actually happen? What was done to address it and what was left undone regrettably, or done poorly, in retrospect? Who suffered because of that failure? Who was disbeliefed for too long even as an abuser was allowed to continue his globetrotting ministry without public censure? In what ways would we respond differently today given the benefit of hindsight and so much learning in the meantime?

Yes, John Howard’s ministry was and is an exposition of the gospel that is reaping an enormous blessing. Thanks be to God. This flawed man was gifted in ways that allowed him to grasp radically good news in the gospel that needed retelling, reimagining.

Ironically, it is because of that gospel that we can fearlessly call sin what it is. The far-reaching hurt of the evil that was perpetrated and allowed to fester too long must be more fully and publicly acknowledged. It is then that we can move into deeper healing and reconciliation. May it be so.

—published originally on Sara Wenger Shenk’s post, Practicing Reconciliation on the AMBS website. Reprinted with permission.
AMBS adopts statement on teaching Yoder

Three faculty conversations in 2012 dealt with his ‘complicated legacy.’

In 2012, Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary president Sara Wenger Shenk, dean Rebecca Slough and teaching faculty member Ted Roonts organized three faculty conversations about John Howard Yoder’s complicated legacy. This statement reports on shared agreements that will guide how AMBS faculty teach, critique, interpret and use Yoder’s work with integrity, recognizing the significance of his theological work and the wrongfulness of his actions. As a learning community, we expect to exercise greater freedom in speaking about the nature of his legacy and will post this statement in an internally accessible place for AMBS faculty, staff and students.

John Howard Yoder’s scholarly and personal legacies have presented opportunities and complications for AMBS over many years. His contributions to the Christian church through his scholarship and teaching have been innumerable. His behavior, however, wounded many women, some of whom were his students at AMBS. His creative, insightful, perhaps even revolutionary thinking on ethics, peace and ecclesiology seem contradictory when set beside his inappropriate actions.

When AMBS colleagues and administrators became aware of Yoder’s abusive behavior toward women, he was confronted. They worked diligently to hold him accountable over multiple years, and when it became evident that their attempts were ineffective, he was asked to leave in 1984. Finally, in 1992, he submitted to a disciplinary process with Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference in response to charges of misconduct brought by a number of women. The Church Life Commission of Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference took on leadership of the disciplinary process. The CLC formed an accountability and support group that met with John more than 30 times between the fall of 1992 and the spring of 1996. It also suspended his ministerial credentials and mandated that John undergo psychological evaluation and counseling. The accountability and support group’s final report stated that Yoder made sufficient changes in attitudes, beliefs and behaviors to bring closure to the process. The CLC concluded its report by recommending continuing use of an accountability plan and encouraging “Yoder and the church to use his gifts of writing and teaching.” In the latter part of 1997, shortly before Yoder’s death, he was invited again to teach at AMBS as a substitute teacher for a professor who was ill, and he was also reconciled with his home congregation.

During their review in 2012 of AMBS’s history with John Howard Yoder, the faculty at AMBS noted these shared agreements for their use of Yoder’s writings and theology in their teaching:

- We recognize that John’s legacy is deeply connected with AMBS and that his thought should be freely evaluated, appropriated or criticized by faculty and students.
- As faculty we agree that his work will be read appreciatively yet critically in light of its contributions to the fields of ecclesiology, ethics, peace and justice;
- his work has been and will continue to be read and evaluated within a broader context of scholars and practitioners, especially those who are addressing similar issues related to ethics, peace and justice;
- the tension created by his work on ethics, peace and justice and his behavior that was hurtful to many women will be open for examination;
- references to Yoder’s submission to and completion of the disciplinary process with Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference will be made as appropriate with students, future faculty and scholars;
- Yoder will be presented as the complex person that he was—intellectually brilliant, deeply caring, generous, creative, shy, dismissive of people who confronted him about his misuse of power and manipulative while crossing boundaries with women.
- Faculty will address forthrightly questions or issues raised as students consider the possible connections between his thought and some of his actions and will examine what these writings communicate to vulnerable women, men and children.
- AMBS will use particular care when utilizing his writing on singleness, marriage and sexuality and how to interpret it.
- As a result of AMBS’s experience with Yoder, we will continue to learn together and teach about the nature of power and authority and the issues that arise when they are used inappropriately and/or unwittingly;
- the necessity of recognizing and maintaining appropriate physical and psychological boundaries, especially with those of lesser power and authority or greater vulnerability.

We commit ourselves as faculty of AMBS to ongoing healing, forgiveness, and reconciliation in God’s beloved community, while acknowledging that not everyone fully trusts Yoder’s repentance.
NEWS ANALYSIS

(especially among students, colleagues and people inside and outside of the church);

• accountability for personal behavior at all times;
• the obligation to treat accusations or incidents of misconduct, especially sexual misconduct, seriously and with appropriate urgency and ensuring that there is an effective grievance policy in place;
• the necessity of and strategies for protecting vulnerable women, men, children and anyone living on the margins of our communities and congregations.

In conclusion, we acknowledge that John Howard Yoder’s theological legacy is proving to be widely influential and transformative for many people. We are grateful that many people testify to a rediscovery of Jesus through Yoder’s insightful writings. We also give thanks that the church’s disciplinary process appears to have brought Yoder to repentance and restoration with at least some former colleagues and church family members before his sudden death.

We regret the hurt that was inflicted by this flawed man and an accountability process that while good-intentioned and effective in part, didn’t go far enough to heal all wounds. We commit ourselves as faculty of AMBS to ongoing healing, forgiveness and reconciliation in God’s beloved community while acknowledging that not everyone fully trusts Yoder’s repentance. We will teach from Yoder and others who provide helpful theological perspectives with enhanced alertness to our own failures and a keen attentiveness to what in us contributes to life abundant and what stands in need of God’s ongoing redemption.—Reprinted with permission

Excerpts from the former The Mennonite


Editor’s note: These excerpts from the July 28, 1992, issue of the (former) The Mennonite are on pages 325 and 326. We re-publish the excerpts to show some of what the church press reported on the situation and how church leaders were working with John Howard Yoder in the early 1990s. A Gospel Herald report is in the July 14, 1992, issue on pages 11 and 12.

The Church Life Commission of the Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference on June 27, 1992, suspended the ministerial credentials of John Howard Yoder over allegations of sexual misconduct. … The action calls for restitution and a program of therapy, after which restoration of credentials will be considered. …

Although the (report from the conference task force) did not elaborate about the nature of the allegations, three of the eight women told The Elkhart Truth that most of the incidents took place in the 1970s through the mid-1980s, when Yoder was president and professor of theology at Goshen Biblical Seminary in Elkhart, Ind.

The women, who were in positions of church leadership, said the allegations included improper hugging, use of sexual innuendo or overt sexual language, sexual harassment, kissing or attempts to kiss women, and forcible sexual behavior. Sexual intercourse was not among the allegations.

“It can range from suggesting, ‘Sit on my lap’ to actually pulling people down on his lap, inappropriate kissing and hugging,” one of the women said. “It certainly violated the professor-student relationship. It certainly violates the marriage covenant and our understanding of that within the church.” …

Rationalization: After five meetings with the task force, Yoder agreed to meet with an accountability group and to undergo therapy “to work thoroughly with … a high degree of rationalization and a denial of the problems associated with his sexual misconduct,” according to the task force’s statement. …

This marks the third investigation into the allegations of Yoder’s misconduct since rumors first came to the attention of a Mennonite Church official in the 1970s, leading some to call for Yoder’s resignation from the seminary. According to a source close to the investigation, Goshen Biblical Seminary examined similar allegations but dropped the matter in 1984, when Yoder ended his seminary employment. …

A second investigation, initiated by Prairie Street Mennonite Church elders in 1985-86, never got off the ground because no women would come forward for a face-to-face confrontation with Yoder, sources said.—Tom Price in The Elkhart Truth

Other reporting about Yoder by Tom Price in The Elkhart Truth

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MWC launches study of its global members

30 people gather from 18 countries for Mennonite World Conference project.

Nearly 30 people from 18 countries gathered at Goshen (Ind.) College July 29-Aug. 2 to launch the Mennonite World Conference (MWC) “Global Anabaptist Profile.”

The MWC project, which is organized and funded by the Institute for the Study of Global Anabaptism at Goshen College, will be the first systematic study of how the MWC “shared convictions” are finding expression among the 25 groups participating in the study.

It will also shed new light on the demographics of the rapidly growing global Anabaptist family and create a digital library of testimonies from pastors and lay members of Mennonite and Brethren in Christ congregations around the world.

“The size of the Anabaptist-Mennonite global fellowship has nearly tripled in the past three decades, with most of the growth coming outside of Europe and North America,” said John D. Roth, director of the Institute and secretary of the MWC Faith and Life Commission. “Yet we really don’t know very much about the lived experiences—the beliefs, practices and challenges—of our global body.”

According to Roth, the project has been in development for nearly three years. In 2011, Roth helped establish the Institute for the Study of Global Anabaptism at Goshen College and initiated a series of conversations with MWC, Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) and the mission agencies of various Mennonite conferences regarding the global survey. Following the approval of the project by MWC’s Executive Committee and General Council, Roth forged a partnership with Kanagy, who has extensive experience with similar church member profiles. Kanagy will serve as a co-director of the project.

The 25 MWC member conferences who are participating in the Global Anabaptist Profile were selected randomly, with proportional representation within each of MWC’s five regions. This spring, church leaders from each group identified a research associate to carry out the project within their country. At the consultation in Goshen, the research associates met for four days to revise the survey, refine additional questions specific to their conference and receive basic training in social research methods. They also spent time in daily worship, sharing, singing and prayer.

Participants in the consultation expressed resounding enthusiasm for the project. “The task ahead is enormous, but I’m very hopeful that the project will help my church better understand where we are, where we are heading and how we fit into the global church—the bigger Body of Christ,” said Tigist Tesfaye Gelagle, who represented the Meserete Kristos Church in Ethiopia.

“The research will be owned by our church,” said M.Z. Ichsanudin of the GITJ church in Indonesia, “so that our conference will have data that can help our decisions. This is a bridge for building brotherhood among the Mennonite churches all around the world.”—Goshen College

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FOR THE RECORD

OBITUARIES


WORKERS

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

Brubacher, Randall, was ordained as deacon of Churchtown Mennonite Church, Narvon, Pa., on April 7.

Gomez, Lou, began a term on the pastoral team of Mennonite Friendship Community, S. Hutchinson, Kan., on May 13.

Horst, Carmen, was ordained as associate pastor of James Street Mennonite Church, Lancaster, Pa., on June 23.

Kanagy, Audrey, was ordained as associate pastor of Living Light Mennonite Church, Washington Boro, Pa., on June 2.

Krebs, Matthew, was licensed as lead pastor of Hershey Mennonite Church, Kinzers, Pa., on June 16.

Landis, Troy, was licensed as discipleship coach of Eastern Mennonite Missions, Salunga, Pa., on Aug. 4.

Lehman, Philip Ray, was ordained as Minister of Music and Outreach at Waynesboro Mennonite Church, Waynesboro, Va., on May 5.

Raid, Elizabeth, began a term on the pastoral team of Mennonite Friendship Communities, South Hutchinson, Kan., on May 13.

Weaver, Darrel, was licensed for church development in Germany at Weaverland Mennonite Church, East Earl, Pa., on June 16.


Geiser, Lois Arlene Balmer, 73, Bluffton, Ohio, died July 4. Spouse: Ronald Geiser. Parents: Sidney and Thelma Wingate Balmer. Children: Jon, Deron, Kamala Renick; seven grandchildren. Funeral: July 8 at First Mennonite Church, Bluffton.


Meck, Howard, 93, Wauseon, Ohio, died June 25. Spouse: Helen Roth Meck. Parents: Clarence and Mable Resh Meck. Children: Don, Mary Lou Heck, Marvin Rohrer-Meck, Mabel McFarland, Linda Yoder, Dorothy Sue Meck; 16 grandchildren; one great-grandchild. Funeral: June 29 at Central Mennonite Church, Archbold, Ohio.

For the Record is available to members of Mennonite Church USA. Births and marriages appear online at www.themennonite.org. Obituaries are also published in The Mennonite. Contact Rebecca Helmuth at 800-790-2498 for expanded memorial and photo insertion options. To submit information, log on to www.themennonite.org and use the “For the Record” button for online forms. You may also submit information by email, fax or mail: Editor@TheMennonite.org; fax 316-283-0454; 3145 Benham Ave., Suite 4, Elkhart, IN 46517.


Nisly, Frances, 79, Hartville, Ohio, died June 18. Parents: John and Lizzie Miller Nisly. Funeral: June 22 at Maple Grove Mennonite Church, Hartville.


Short, R. Dean, 81, Archbold, Ohio, died July 7. Spouse: Esther Yoder Short. Parents: Clarence and Mary Schmucker Short. Child: Sam D.; five grandchildren; one great-grandchild. Funeral: July 11 at Lockport Mennonite Church, Stryker, Ohio.


Swartzendruber, Alda Burkey, 97, Newton, Kan., died June 27. Spouse: Lloyd Swartzendruber. Parents: Arthur and Amanda Stutzman Burkey. Children: Rosie Roberson, Arthur; five grandchildren; seven great-grandchildren; one great-great-grandchild. Funeral service: July 2 at West Union Mennonite Church, Parnell, Iowa.

RESOURCES

Created and Led by the Spirit: Planting Missional Congregations, edited by Mary Sue Dehmlow Dreier (Eerdmans, 2013, $26), includes essays by nine contributors—many of them experienced church-planting pastors—who offer diverse yet cohesive perspectives on the Spirit’s missional church planting in our time. This is the fifth volume in the Missional Church Series.

Touching Godliness by K.P. Yohannan (GFA Books, 2013, $14.99) challenges readers to touch godliness by following Jesus down the path of total surrender and submission. It includes a study guide.


God’s Story, Our Story: Exploring Christian Faith and Life by Michele Hershberger (Herald Press, 2013, $13.99) explores the elements of Christian faith and life for those considering baptism or church membership. This revised edition addresses the essential issues of faith through an engaging survey of the biblical story and how God continues to work among us.

No Strings Attached: Boundary Lines in Pleasant Places by Rachel Nafziger Hartzler with contributions by Sara Yoder VonGuntten and Leona Doell Yoder (Wipf and Stock, 2013, $38) is a history of Warren Street/Pleasant Oaks Mennonite Church in Middlebury, Ind., which existed for 86 years. The congregation began during the social and religious turmoil of the 1920s, when some Mennonites held to rigid doctrines and ethics implemented by central authority, while others operated with a congregational polity and became more assimilated into secular culture.

Reading the Passion Stories with Heart and Mind by Wes Bergen (Lighthouse Christian Publishing, 2013, $7.95) looks at the stories of Jesus’ death spiritually and intellectually. It asks difficult intellectual questions and how these texts relate to one’s life.

You Are Not Going to Heaven (and Why It Doesn’t Matter) by Wes Bergen (Wipf and Stock, 2013, $20) contends that salvation is something that either happens here and now, on this earth, or not at all. Salvation is something that happens to bodies. More importantly, salvation is something that either will happen on this earth or we risk making the world uninhabitable by human beings. The Bible is not a manual for getting to heaven.
All candidates must have an updated Ministerial Leadership Information Form (MLI) on file with MC USA. To place an ad in The Mennonite, call 800-790-2498 and ask for Rebecca Helmuth, or email advertising@themennonite.org.


Johann, the first novel published by Everett J. Thomas, is available for $8.95 at Amazon.com. Copies may also be ordered from the Better World Books store, Goshen, Ind., at 574-534-1984 or from the Lancaster (Pa.) Mennonite Historical Society at lmhs.org.

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**ECO-ADVENTURE TOURS**
- **CHINA & YANGTZE RIVER CRUISE** (Nov 1-15/2013)
- **THE AMAZON RAINFOREST & GALAPAGOS ISLANDS** (Jan 16-26/2014)
- **SPECTACULAR SCANDINAVIA & ITS FJORDS** (June 15-25/2014)
- **POLAR BEAR EXPRESS** (Oct 16-25/2014)
- **ANTARCTICA** (Jan 5-15/2015)

**EDUCATIONAL TOURS**
- **BRITISH ISLES (LUGGARD, SCOTLAND & WALES)** (Sept 13-25/2013)
- **EUROPEAN CHRISTMAS MARKETS** (Dec 9-15/2013)
- **JAMAICA: ITS PEOPLE, NATURAL BEAUTY & FRUITS** (Jan 19-27/2014)
- **JAPAN & COREA** (Sept 15-25/2014)
- **CHRCHES & SAFARIS in ETHIOPIA & TANZANIA** (Oct 10-23/2014)
- **VIETNAM & SINGAPORE** (Nov 10-24/2014)
- **AUSTRALIA & NEW ZEALAND** (Jan 30-Feb 17/2015)
- **CUBA** (Jan 9-18/2015)
- **AUSTRALIA & NEW ZEALAND** (Jan 30-Feb 17/2015)

**CUSTOM TOURS**
- **HOLY LAND TOUR** (Jan 19-28/2014)
- **ISRAEL, PALESTINE with Pastor David Boshart** (April 25-May 3/2014)
- **ISRAEL, PALESTINE with Pastor Jim Brown** (Sept 15-21/2014)
- **EXPLORE THE WORLD OF PAUL** with Tom Yoder Neuhold (May 6-23/2015)

**HERITAGE TOURS**
- **INDIA: HISTORY, CHURCH AND THE CHURCH** (Oct 6-21/2013)
- **EUROPEAN HERITAGE with Pastor Jim Brown** (April 24-May 3/2014)
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Questions for the church

Four months ago, I wrote an article (The Mennonite, May) on young Mennonites that gave me the small thrill of what it might feel like to go viral—at least in the Mennonite world. It showed up on Facebook walls other than my partner Shanda’s. It showed up on friends’ parents’ Facebook walls. It even showed up on a childhood crush’s Facebook wall. And just when I asked, May I call this ‘Mennonite viral’? (Shanda, for the record, answers no), it was linked by a respected blogger, a discussion group of some of my most intelligent former students and some self-proclaimed Mennonite heretics. I even got an email from a Lutheran minister and a great uncle I’ve always aspired to write like. He wanted to make sure we could chat at the next family gathering about what I’d written.

The message many seemed to take from the article was, Young adults are failing their hard-working church—which is definitely part of what I think. But the strange thing about writing a column is that few of the readers are your uncle. You won’t have a chance to sit down with them over dinner to listen and add your other—sometimes even contradictory—thoughts on the matter.

Many of my further thoughts are questions for the church, some of them rhetorical and some of them not. I ask them because I don’t think we ask them often enough. Or if we do, we don’t seem to have found a way to address them with concerted individual, congregational and conference efforts and strategies. Here are four of them:

1. How many of our resources are we investing in efforts that directly address our loss of young adults? Over the past decades, we’ve developed an approach that invests a lot of capital in our youth and in our institutional programs. For some reason, though, we’re seeing fewer and fewer youth make the leap from their youth groups to our institutions. Are we adapting to address that? Do we have conference staff with a significant part of their mandate dedicated to bridging that gap, or are young adults simply something we add to the side of our already busy youth staffs’ positions? Furthermore, when young adult groups spring up to work on this themselves, are we prepared to give them the resources they need to make a difference?

2. How radical are we willing to be? It’s been well-documented that our society is going through a major shift in its attitudes toward many things, especially religion, and that Millennials (those born after 1980) have some major differences from Baby Boomers. When we picture our future, is it one where we protect the Baby Boomers’ vision or where we embrace the opportunities (and address the new challenges) facing Millennials? Are we making ourselves more agile in order to be ready for change, or are we digging in our heels?

3. Are we building a church that truly reflects the challenges and opportunities of the changing society around us? Our neighborhoods, schools and workplaces are increasingly diverse. For young adults, building community with people from different backgrounds and realities is no longer just optional; it’s essential. When we come to church, are we finding a community that includes and explores that landscape with us or one that just tries to minimize its jagged edges?

4. Are we investing in the expertise of our Mennonite elementary, middle and high schools? I recognize that this may seem to contradict #1, but Mennonite schools have always been on the front lines of our efforts to give our young people a foundation they’ll never want to leave. They’ve been honing these abilities for decades, and they’re constantly adjusting to the shifting needs and attitudes of new generations. When we choose where our children go to school or where our donation dollars go, are we valuing these institutions as much as we should?

As a high school Mennonite studies teacher, I try to focus my students on the question, Do you want to be the generation that loses this faith community or enhances it? When I leave the classroom, however, I’m sometimes disheartened by the task I’ve thrown at them. Are the rest of us even prepared for them to say yes? Are we asking the hard questions, studying models that could answer them and making a plan to move forward? Or are we quick to “like” an article about their need to take responsibility but still a bit slow to take our own?
FILM REVIEW

Frances Ha (R) is an art film, shot in black and white, that centers on Frances (Greta Gerwig), a kind of lost soul in New York without an apartment, an apprentice for a dance company who wants to be a dancer. She has dreams but seems unable to follow through on what she needs to do. This funny film is also touching in its depiction of her search for a solid, unconditional love.—Gordon Houser

BOOK REVIEWS

Taking Jesus at His Word: What Jesus Really Said in the Sermon on the Mount by Addison Hodges Hart (Eerdmans, 2012, $18) is addressed to Christians and non-Christians. Hart says it is not a book of doctrinal argument but of “sitting before Jesus, asking him about living life, listening to him and taking notes.” Hart’s approach is honest and full of insights. For example, he writes, “keeping ourselves salty means being authentic, doing what we do invisibly as unto God.”—gh

Liturgies of the Arts in Christian Worship by Bruce Ellis Benson (BakerAcademic, 2013, $17.99) argues that “God has called all of us to be ‘artists’ [and] that being an artist is not something just for the few, some select group of ‘artistically inclined,’ rarefied folk.” Benson contends that life is improvisational, that “our very lives should be seen as art and that we should live liturgically in service to God and neighbor.” This is helpful, but in generalizing “art,” he weakens the distinctive skills and calling of artists.—gh

Mothering Mennonite, edited by Rachel Epp Buller and Kerry Fast (Demeter Press, 2013, $34.99) is the first scholarly attempt to incorporate religious groundings in interpretations of motherhood. The 17 essays address the roles of mothering in Mennonite contexts and how Mennonite mothering intersects with the larger world. The book includes poetry, memoir and reflection from a variety of viewpoints.—gh

An African-American male as a human

In the early hours of Jan. 1, 2009, Oscar Grant, a 22-year-old African-American man, was shot in the back while being held by police at Fruitvale Station in Oakland, Calif. He later died. In the days and weeks following, Grant was alternately labeled a saint or a villain, a loving father or a drug dealer. Ryan Coogler’s extraordinary debut film shows that he was actually a complicated human being.

What makes the film Fruitvale Station important is that it avoids the polarizing, simplistic notion that a person is only either a saint or a villain. Coogler shows Grant’s humanity: He is a loving father and a convicted felon; he loves his girlfriend but cheated on her; he loves his mother but lies to her.

The film opens with a cellphone video taken by a bystander of the actual Oscar Grant being shot.

Then we switch to Dec. 31, 2008, the last day of his life, and watch Michael B. Jordan’s remarkable portrayal of Grant.

On the verge of a new year and only three months out of prison, Oscar is looking to change his life, to begin anew. He tells his girlfriend, Sophina (Melonie Diaz), that he is committed to her and their daughter, Tatiana (Ariana Neal).

After dropping off Tatiana at preschool and Sophina at work, he goes to a grocery to try to get his job back. He’s been fired for showing up late, though he hasn’t told Sophina or his mother (Octavia Spencer) this. He says to his former boss, “You want me to sell drugs?”

Oscar has an easygoing nature, and Coogler uses the device of showing his cellphone texts to portray his quick navigation of relationships as he moves from one difficulty to another. We witness his struggle to be a better person in the face of systemic forces that try to hold him back. Finding legal work to support him and his family poses a huge problem.

All the while, as he seeks to change, as he expresses his delight in Tatiana and his affection for Sophina, our gut wrenches because we know what’s coming.

Oscar and his friends are on the train after celebrating the New Year, when a white thug he encountered while in prison baits him into a fight. Later, the police are called and hold Oscar and several of his friends on the platform, and a white officer, struggling to handcuff Oscar, shoots him. (He later claimed he thought he was grabbing his Taser instead of his gun, and he served 11 months in prison.)

Coogler has created not only an important film but an excellent film. He shows the complicated humanity behind the stereotype of the young African-American male. The film’s pace, editing, acting and writing are superb, and we come away sad and angry about one more wasted life because we’ve come to know this man—his aspirations, his struggles, his potential.

That the film was released around the time of the Trayvon Martin trial was unintentional yet raises many parallels. A young African-American male, killed by someone overreacting with a gun. Still, Coogler steers clear of racial polarizing. Oscar has several positive interactions with whites.

Fruitvale Station succeeds in portraying a specific human in his realistic complexity, and that story resonates with us viewers who see Oscar’s tragic death as something that affects us all.

Gordon Houser is associate editor of The Mennonite.
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God sightings at a family gathering

I am reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and, I am persuaded, now lives in you also.—2 Timothy 1:5 NIV

In his second letter to Timothy, Paul gives credit to a parent and grandparent of his young mentee. Paul implies that habits of faithfulness can be passed from one generation to the next. Perhaps it’s more than a coincidence that I’m noticing this since Bonnie and I now have two grandchildren of our own.

My noticing also has to do with my recent participation in the sixth quinquennial national gathering of the Jacob Hochstetler Family Association. Jacob Hochstetler was a 1738 Amish immigrant to Pennsylvania. The weekend was a family gathering on steroids, featuring plenary speakers, exhibits, genealogical releases, books and mementos, workshops and an official business meeting. I also followed through on the offer to see the last home and burial place of Jacob’s son, Joseph, who died more than two centuries ago in Juniata County, Pa.

As we registered for the Hochstetler gathering, we were invited to place a little star on our name tag under the heading of one or more of Jacob’s four children—John, Barbara, Joseph, Christian—to indicate our line(s) of descent. That meant I got to paste three stars on my registration tag: I’m a direct descendant of three of Jacob’s children.

In a plenary session at the Hochstetler gathering, one of the speakers commented that we wouldn’t likely be gathering as a group had it not been for a specific act of faith or conscience on the part of our ancestor. Because of Jacob’s belief in nonresistance, he refused to shoot at the warriors outside his home during the French and Indian War. He has become an icon of faith among his Anabaptist descendants.

I am so fascinated with the life of my ancestor and his family that I am writing a series of three historical novels about them. The first one, Jacob’s Choice, is scheduled for publication by Herald Press in the spring of 2014.

Studying about this ancestor and the events his church community faced during the French and Indian War has been a profound spiritual journey for me. More than ever, I am convinced that we are called to acknowledge not only our ancestors’ faithfulness to God but God’s faithfulness to them. If we open our eyes to the work of God in history, we can see God’s actions shine forth in our genealogies.

Yes, I said genealogies. Have you ever taken the time to ponder the many genealogical lists in Scripture? Most times they are accompanied by fascinating narratives, i.e. the book of Numbers. Some of the lists offer praise or blame regarding the life of an ancestor. But what strikes me most deeply is that the ancestors are included regardless of their praiseworthiness. Some fell far short of God’s ideals.

Consider the genealogy of Jesus in Matthew 1:1-17. Note that four women are mentioned in this list among the preponderance of men. All four were either outsiders to Jewish faith (Rahab, Ruth and Uriah’s wife [Bathsheba]) or they conceived a child out of wedlock by an ancestor of Jesus (Tamar and Bathsheba). Perhaps this list was one of Matthew’s ways of showing that Jesus would raise up a family of faith that included people with less-than-ideal birth circumstances.

If we open our eyes, we may make plenty of God sightings in the pages of our own genealogy books.

If you read carefully through the Old Testament, this may indeed be the rule rather than the exception. God is the ultimate hero of all the biblical stories of God’s people. In the same way, if we open our eyes, we may make plenty of God sightings in the pages of our own genealogy books, especially if we are willing to read between the lines. That’s in essence what Paul was inviting Timothy to do.
Stealing wages

You shall not steal.—Exodus 20:15

Labor Day does not seem to be much about labor—unless it’s cleaning out the garage or working in the yard. But this year on Labor Day, consider the victims of wage theft. This is something I knew little about until Kim Bobo, founder of Interfaith Worker Justice, spoke at the 2012 Associated Church Press convention. She also was interviewed in the June issue of *U.S. Catholic*.

“Wage theft is when employers illegally don’t pay workers for all their hours or don’t pay them for all their work,” Bobo said.

Here is what I learned from Bobo: The most common form of wage theft is not paying the minimum wage; the federal level is currently $7.25 an hour. According to a large study Bobo cited, one quarter of workers earning less than $10/hour get paid less than the minimum wage.

However, the biggest form of wage theft is in not paying overtime. The same study of low-wage workers showed that of those working more than 40 hours a week, three out of four do not get paid overtime.

But there are other forms of wage theft. In order to avoid paying taxes, FICA and Social Security, some employers call their workers “independent contractors.” This means the worker has to pay both the employer’s and the employee’s payroll taxes and has no worker’s compensation or unemployment insurance. Bobo said she’s seen dishwashers in the backs of restaurants called independent contractors.

“If you get up in the morning,” Bobo said, “…and say to yourself, ‘I’m going to work for myself,’ then you’re an independent contractor. If you get up in the morning and say, ‘I’m going to work for Mr. Smith,’ you’re an employee.”

Then there is the problem with tips: One out of 10 waiters do not get all their tips.

“If you put your tip on a credit card,” Bobo said, “you cannot be sure the worker will actually get it. We always tell people to pay their tips in cash if they don’t know for sure.”

Of course, the downside to tipping in cash is that the worker may not report the income in order to avoid paying taxes on it.

What else can we do to prevent wage theft?

If we pay attention to the way large corporations, especially, treat their employees, we can support those who treat their employees well.

For example, Costco has a history of providing excellent pay and benefits for its employees and having a good work environment. On the other hand, Wal-Mart has a history of cheating its workers, paying low wages and offering few benefits, Bobo said.

Further complicating the ethics of participating in the economy is the terrible working conditions in places like China and Bangladesh. While it may seem good stewardship to spend less for clothing, for example, we can read the label to see where an item was made. Doing so may help us imagine the child labor, unconscionably low wages and terrible working conditions demanded by the manufacturer that enable prices so low.

Labor Day may be the symbolic end of summer. But it can also be a day to reflect on the human energy expended each day to provide us the essentials of life. It can also be a day to evaluate to what extent our participation in the economy means we are complicit in violating the eighth of the Ten Commandments.—ejt

Evaluate to what extent our participation in the economy means we are contributing to wage theft.