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ON THE COVER: Photo supplied
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

Young adults, boomer anxiety
Peter Epp’s article “Why Don’t Young Adults Go to Church?” (May) is helpful, but he danced around the answer. I agree with Epp that we millennials are a fickle generation with great potential for leadership and change—if we ever decide to do anything. And we also recognize that the best way for us to grow in our faith is to be “forced” to be around people who are different from us. But as I have ministered to and between many generations for the past nine years, I think we on the younger end hear more behind the question, Is there anything the rest of us can do to welcome [you] back? and those are the things that make us not want to be part of the church.

First, there is a lot of adult anxiety behind this question. When a boomer asks this question of a millennial, we hear fears that “the church will die with me” or, “I failed as a parent.” These are real, valid and good things to be anxious about, and I do not want to belittle the soul searching and self-doubt that comes with this anxiety. But the boomer must remember that we have grown up now. We are not motivated by your anxiety. However, we do feel loved by your concern.

Second this question reiterates, re-educates and empowers us in the ways of individualism and consumerism. These are the things that the culture has trained us to be and do. But intu-}

Itively, we know the empty addiction that comes with centering the universe around “me” and consuming things in order to find a sense of self. When the church follows suit, there is skepticism about the church. At best we begin to think, You just want me for my offering, but I still live with my parents so that I can pay off my college debt.

Third, and somewhat related to the second one, we hear, “Pleasing you will keep you around.” This is what we have known of the church for 20 years, and we are tired of it. When we were in MYF, it sounded more like, What’s something fun we can do that would make you want to invite your friends? We have grown up, so why is the church still treating us like it did when we were 14? A church preoccupied with pleasing people to get them back and keep them around is not a church, it’s any consumer-driven organization concerned with brand loyalty.

Part of our generation’s sincere, valid, prophetic insight lies in the purpose behind the questions we want to be asked and the things that a church should only be talking about: How can we help each other follow Christ better?

There is no program or worship style that will get us back. Our lives are too filled with other programs and forms of entertainment. The local church needs unapologetically to be and offer the only thing it can: the deep love of Jesus in word, attitude and deed. The church has been and will continue to be a blessing as congregational members use their gifts to do this in ways that pastors never can.

—Daniel Yoder, youth pastor, College Mennonite Church, Goshen, Ind.

Mennonites and Catholics
I read with appreciation John D. Roth’s column in the May issue concerning improving relationships between Mennonites and the Roman Catholic Church. I’m thankful to Roth for bringing attention to recent developments that bode well for increasing dialogue between our two traditions.

One active and ongoing effort to-
ward greater friendship between Mennonites and Catholics that was not mentioned is Bridgefolk, a grassroots movement that brings together Mennonites drawn to the spiritual practices of the Catholic tradition and Catholics attracted to the peace ethic of the Mennonite tradition. Bridgefolk will offer another opportunity for engagement between Mennonites and Catholics at our 12th annual conference, to be held July 25–28 in Waterloo, Ont., with a focus on the theme of reconciliation (see www.bridgefolk.net for details).

The context for Roth’s column was the recent inauguration of Pope Francis, which has been well-received across the global church and was attended by representatives of Mennonite World Conference. Several participants in the Bridgefolk movement have contributed comments from various perspectives on the new leader of the Catholic church. These are available at the Bridgefolk website (www.bridgefolk.net/tag/bridgefolk-on-francis).—Darrin W. Snyder Belousek, Lima, Ohio

Temper justice with mercy

A prison-wide hunger strike at Guantanamo is now entering its third month, and many prisoners are suffering severe weight loss. Eighty-six of the 166 men have been declared innocent and were cleared for release in 2009 by an interagency Guantanamo Review Task Force established by the president. In fact, more than 160 men who have never been charged with any offense—much less convicted of a war crime—remain at Guantanamo with no end in sight. Nevertheless, our government refuses to allow them to leave. They have not seen their families in that time, and many have children they have never seen and fear they may never get to see.

A hundred men are reported to be on a hunger strike in protest of their indefinite detention, and more than 20 are being force-fed, which in itself is a form of torture—tied to a chair or a bed with a plastic tube threaded down their noses. Five hunger strikers have been hospitalized.

Prisoners are starting to die. Adnan Farjan Abdul Latif writes: “This is a prison that does not know [anything] but the language of power, oppression and humiliation for whoever enters it. … Anyone able to die … has no other hope. I will end it.”

America cannot assert any moral authority while Guantanamo remains open. For those not charged with any offense, their long detention is a most serious stain on the U.S. human rights record. Col. Morris Davis says, “There is something fundamentally wrong with a system where not being charged with a war crime keeps you locked away indefinitely, and a war crime conviction is your ticket home.”

Congress must stop its constant politics of fear-mongering and give these men their freedom. Let us finally temper our “justice” with a bit of mercy and close Guantanamo immediately.—Daniel Riehl, Llitz, Pa.

Mennonites in novels

I enjoyed Valerie Weaver-Zercher’s excellent article, “The Amish Makeover of Christian Fiction” (April). It brought to mind the 1971 doctoral dissertation of my late father, Stanley Shenk, “The Image of the Mennonites in American Novels, 1900–1970.” He took 30 U.S. and Canadian novels and examined them closely, finding that 19 of them presented Mennonites in a largely positive light, while seven were mostly negative about Mennonites. One was 50-50; the other three fell outside his methodology. To his surprise, Dad found that, for the most part, the authors were accurate in portraying (Continued on page 54)

We had to learn a new word for this issue: ethnodoxology. Wikipedia says, “Those in this field study local musical traditions and work with local musicians and churches to adapt and develop locally created musical forms for Christian worship.”

James Krabill has edited two new books on ethnodoxology and introduces this field (page 18). We also publish two chapters, written by venerable Mennonite women, from one of the books. Eleanor Kreider writes “Artistic Expression in Early Christianity” (page 20). Mary Oyer writes about “A Sabbatical year in Africa That Changed Everything” for her (page 22).

Phoenix resident Laura Glass-Hess writes the fourth and final Bible study for the convention theme “Citizens of God’s Kingdom: Healed in Hope” (page 24).

For those not attending the Phoenix convention because of “the sustained persecution of immigrants by the state of Arizona,” Iglesia Mennonita Hispana (Hispanic Mennonite Church) sponsored a May 3–4 gathering in Fort Myers, Fla., to focus on immigration issues. Our coverage of that event leads off the news section (page 32).

Also in the news section, associate editor Anna Groff publishes two articles: one about a Detroit Mennonite who runs the world’s largest urban farm (page 34) and another about a Cherokee Mennonite woman who modeled for an Amish romance novel cover (page 35).

The news section also includes the usual June reporting about commencements at Mennonite colleges, seminaries and universities (page 36) and the story of a 26-year-old congregation with 1,800 attenders that decided to build a community park in their town rather than a new, 1,700-seat auditorium (page 39).—Editor
Albuquerque Church deals with intruder
ALBUQUERQUE, N.M.—On May 9, Albuquerque police arrested Michael Kelly in the building of Albuquerque Mennonite Church. The building is also used by other groups.

Kelly said he had been sleeping in the church from 10 p.m. to 6 a.m. for about six months. In December 2012, the church discovered that about $800 in cash from youth fund-raisers had been stolen from the office.

The church rekeyed the office door locks and installed a safe. Over the next several months, other minor items of cash and grocery gift cards went missing, as well as food from a refrigerator, and the church took more security measures, including installing cameras.

The church met on May 12 to discuss whether or not to press charges. In a May 14 email, Pastor Anita Amstutz wrote that church members arranged themselves on a continuum, and those advocating prosecution outnumbered those advocating dropping charges. But all agreed that restorative justice be activated.

Amstutz wrote: “We wish for restorative justice, not retribution, in this situation. We are concerned for the welfare of Michael Kelly ... and hope that he might use this opportunity to put his life on track rather than continuing to be on the run and avoid responsibility for his actions. We seek rehabilitation and community service rather than long-term imprisonment.”

A group of about six agreed to follow the case and meet with Kelly. They also hope to have a say with the district attorney and speak to the criminal justice system.—Gordon Houser

Japanese Mennonites express concern about changes in constitution
FINDLAY, Ohio—Members of Mennonite church conferences in Japan last month sent a statement to Protestant periodicals in Japan. It expresses grave concern over the emerging potential today of a revision to Japan’s post-World War II constitution, which renounced the right to wage war.

The statement reads, in part: “The sole role model for us to follow in our faith and life is the Lord Jesus Christ. Our Lord Jesus is the Lord of Peace, not the Lord of War.”

The statement goes on to express concern that some want to change the constitution, particularly Article 9, which renounces war.

The statement concludes: “We also call on all Christians who hear and follow the words of the Lord Jesus to defend the Constitution of Japan and its Article 9. It is our hope that we transcend our denominational boundaries and unify to bring about peace, and with the leading of the Holy Spirit, combine our efforts so that we may be called children of God.”—Ken Shenk

Playing ball in Kenya
Joseph gets ready to bat. Eastern Mennonite Missions GO! participant Travis Tice coaches Kenyan kids in baseball. He works with the Kenya Redsox, a Nairobi-based organization with a long-term commitment to minister to at-risk kids through recreational sports. Tice connects with kids who live in a nearby slum community and street kids who fend for themselves.—EMM

Derksen named Congo coordinator for MC USA
ELKHART, Ind.—Rick Derksen of Seattle began May 1 in the role of volunteer Congo coordinator for Mennonite Church USA. Derksen and Marilyn, his wife, served with Africa Inter-Mennonite Missions from 1977 to 1998 in Congo.

As Congo coordinator, Derksen’s responsibilities will be twofold. First, he will assist in coordinating the relationship between Mennonite Church USA and Congolese denominational partners. Second, he will assist in connecting congregations in the United States who already have relationships with Congo so that they can work together better.—Mennonite Church USA

Australian mission workers cultivate community
ELKHART, Ind.—For husband-and-wife team Mark and Mary Hurst, ministry is not reserved for the inside of a worship hall or for within an organizational structure.

Ministry can take place in a garden or at the ocean. It can happen while knitting a baby blanket. It can be as simple as offering advice about raising children.

“For us, it is loving God and our neighbors as ourselves,” Mark says.
“So building relationships with people through gardening, ocean swimming, and knitting is as important to us as leading worship, doing Bible study and teaching about peace and justice.”

Since 1990, the Hursts have served as resource people and pastors in Australia with the Anabaptist Association of Australia and New Zealand. They began as mission associates with Mennonite Mission Network in 2000 and have been living in Sydney, Australia, since 2008.

The Hursts build networks, conduct workshops on conflict transformation, and provide services to members and others interested in Anabaptism. They are also part-time pastors at Avalon Baptist Peace Memorial Church in Avalon, a seaside community in Sydney’s Northern Beaches. Their approach to ministry is simply about cultivating community, they say.

“We try to build relationships with people and let our lives and words reflect Jesus and what it means to follow him,” Mark says.—Mennonite Mission Network

**MCC encourages Egyptian youth with disabilities to counter stigma**

BENI SUF, Egypt—Bola Melad Ragheb looks like a typical Egyptian youth, with a shock of dark hair and a warm smile. Only 17, he likes playing soccer on a computer with his friends. He prefers tea to coffee and relies on the greasy goodness of French fries to help him through the long, vegan-foofoo–only, Coptic fasts.

Yet when Bola walks, it becomes apparent he faces an added degree of adversity in life. At the age of 3, he contracted polio, causing him to limp.

Later, his mother heard about a program that helps young people with disabilities. Run by St. Mary Church in the town of El Fashen, its aim is to help students with disabilities integrate into the school system and succeed in their education. The program is sponsored by Mennonite Central Committee’s (MCC) Global Family education program through a partner, Ekhlas Coptic Organization for Development.

“One of the main goals of the program at St. Mary is to build the students’ confidence and encourage them that even though they have disabilities, they also have capabilities and rights,” says Trish Wiebe, MCC Egypt’s program coordinator, from Blumenort, Manitoba. The program also helps bring together people with disabilities who find support through friendships.

—MCC

**MDS project in Walker County, Alabama, closes**

WALKER COUNTY, Ala.—Almost exactly two years after tornadoes devastated parts of the south, Mennonite Disaster Service (MDS) celebrated a final home dedication in Walker County.

On April 27, 2011, Alabama residents experienced one of the worst tornado outbreaks ever. More than 60 tornadoes were reported on that day across the state, and 243 people lost their lives. More than 13,000 homes were destroyed or heavily damaged across Alabama, Cordova, Birmingham and surrounding areas took a direct hit.

Jessie Williams’ home was destroyed by the tornado. Now, thanks to the Walker County Long-Term Recovery Committee, MDS and World Renew, and many faithful volunteers, Williams has a place to call home again.

Bill and Esther McCoy, project coordinators involved with the MDS response for the past two years, report, “This home was the last one to be built by the Walker County Long-Term Recovery program, so it was done cooperatively by MDS and World Renew.”

In the two years that MDS has been responding in Walker County, 1,589 volunteers worked 11,586 days on 292 cleanups, 82 minor repairs, 12 major repairs and four complete new builds.

—MDS

**Pedaling for ice cream and relief**

Les Gustafson-Zook, newly appointed coordinator of the Mennonite Central Committee North American relief sales, rides a bike attached to the five-gallon ice cream maker. Tim Yoder and Russ Buschert, engineers, are in background at the Idaho Mennonite World Relief Festival held April 19-20. The sale garnered more than $51,000 in sales, while attendees pedaled the Cycling Creamery and created 20 gallons of delicious homemade ice cream.—Beth Landis
The good glitches

Do your gadgets have glitches to which you’ve grown accustomed or resigned yourself? Mine do.

Take my computer at work: For a couple of months, I’ve had to get down on my hands and knees to turn it on. First I flip the switch “off” on the back of the tower. Then, after waiting a few seconds, I turn it back “on,” and finally, I press the big “on” button on the front to actually start the machine.

At that point I can stand up again, dust myself off and begin my computer-related tasks. Beginning my workday with several seconds on my knees seemed a ready-made prayer opportunity, so I decided not to ask for a fix.

Such inconveniences are sometimes called “first-world problems.” My unusual computer startup routine fits neatly among other nontragic problems, such as espresso drinks made with the wrong kind of milk, broken iThingies and flight delays.

A month ago I had another first-world problem: The phone company accidentally disconnected my Internet connection before they could install my new connection. This happened after hours on the phone with different customer service representatives half a world away, rarely getting the same answer twice.

Frustration increasing, I heard myself speaking rudely to the representative. When the really bad news came—FOUR WHOLE DAYS without home Internet—I wondered if I would start yelling.

I had a serious case of first-world entitlement-itis and, with a 9-year-old listening to my end of the calls, I worried it could be contagious.

I had recently watched the movie *The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel*, about British retirees moving to India. I felt myself easily superior to the nasty characters who looked down—way down—on all things Indian. I would never complain about curry and traffic, as they did.

Why do you see the speck in your neighbor’s eye, but do not notice the log in your own eye? Or how can you say to your neighbor, “Let me take the speck out of your eye,” while the log is in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your neighbor’s eye.—Matthew 7:3-5

And I didn’t complain … until the day someone in a faraway call center quoted me yet another price, asked me to wait on hold for the fourth time and took away my Internet for four days. Then I began to feel ugly.

I knew my anger was out of place, but it took several minutes for me to stop myself. In my imagination, I heard the voice of a friend telling me simply to stop. So I did.

I thanked the customer service representative on the phone for his help and said I’d be grateful for my restored home Internet connection whenever it happened. Then I got on my bike—still ad-dled by my anger—and pedaled to church for an afternoon at the office.

Thanks be to God, my first-world problem number one came to the rescue.

“God forgive me,” I uttered as I got down on my knees to start my computer. I burst into tears there under my desk, very much in need of the grace of God.

Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love;
according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions.—Psalm 51:1

I saw with utter despair the sin of my rudeness toward the customer service representative and the underlying sin of cultural superiority that allowed my rudeness to flourish as it did. I was also grateful for my friend’s imagined voice—speaking the truth in love—that helped me change my path in that moment.

Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me.—Psalm 51:10

The work of curing first-world entitlement-itis is tied closely for me with the work here at home of undoing racism, sexism, heterosexism and other “isms.” It is difficult work, possible only through God’s healing grace and our commitment to God’s reign “on earth as it is in heaven.”

I looked, and there was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, robed in white, with palm branches in their hands.—Revelation 9:9

I thank God for the glitches that send me to my knees, physically and spiritually. And I thank God for the women and men whose voices remind me of the gap between the here-and-now and John’s vision of a new city in which “nothing accursed will be found”—not first-world problems or hunger or pain or loneliness or oppression.
'The Anabaptist martyrs are not dead'

Early on April 12, 1528, members of the Anabaptist congregation in the German city of Augsburg gathered in the home of Susanna Doucher, located along the Bürgergässchen, for an Easter Sunday sunrise service.

At the time, Augsburg was a vibrant center of the Anabaptist movement in south Germany. Already in 1526, only a year after the first Anabaptist baptism in Zurich, the congregation had grown to include between 700 and 1,000 people, despite the fact that they were forced to meet in secret. By 1527, the group had developed its own organization for poor relief, a regular Bible study for members, a rudimentary job-placement program for immigrants and a plan for training evangelists. That August, the congregation hosted a mission conference that included dozens of Anabaptist leaders from Switzerland, the provinces of Austria and numerous surrounding German territories.

At the same time, however, resistance to the movement from Augsburg and elsewhere was growing. During the fall of 1527, most of the leaders of the Augsburg congregation were arrested, tortured and banished, and the city issued dire warnings against anyone caught baptizing or meeting in secret. Indeed, in the aftermath of the August mission conference, so many of the leaders present there were executed that the gathering became known as the “Martyrs Synod.”

Yet, despite these storm clouds on that April morning of 1528, the beleaguered congregation of Augsburg gathered to celebrate the resurrection of Christ. Early in the service, Hans Leupold, who had received a warning that authorities might break up the meeting, encouraged anyone who was afraid to leave. At around 7 a.m., the police arrived and arrested all 88 members who had remained—“men and women, old and young, servants and maids, citizens and foreigners.” The foreigners, about half the group, were immediately banished; the rest were imprisoned, tortured, interrogated and forced to flee upon their release. Although individual Anabaptists continued to live in the city, by the early 1530s the congregation in Augsburg had ceased to exist.

On April 12, 2013, 485 years later, the mayor of Augsburg gathered with a group of Mennonites, representatives from the Protestant church and Friedrich Aschoff, a 14th-generation direct descendant of Susanna Doucher, outside Susanna’s former home to unveil a plaque commemorating the Augsburg Anabaptists and the events that had taken place there.

The ecumenical gathering was one of many initiatives organized by Wolfgang Krauss, a Mennonite historian, theologian and peace activist. For more than a decade, Krauss has directed a project known as Wieder Täufer in Augsburg und Anderswo—a play on the word Wiedertäufer (Anabaptists) that calls attention to the fact that Mennonites are alive and well in Augsburg today. As a young adult, Krauss encountered Christ in the midst of a personal crisis and soon thereafter became a convinced member of the Mennonite church in Germany. Since then, he has been a tireless promoter of Anabaptist history, ecumenical encounters and the renewal of the Mennonite church and its peace witness.

Krauss recognizes that a focus on Anabaptist persecution can encourage attitudes of self-righteousness among contemporary Mennonites and may seem to be at odds with his commitment to ecumenical dialogue. But he is equally clear that forgiveness does not imply forgetting. “The Anabaptist martyrs are not ‘our’ martyrs,” Krauss insists. “They died as witnesses to Christ, and like all the martyrs of the church, they belong to that cloud of witnesses (Hebrews 12:1). They point us to Christ, … and if we ignore them, we obscure the witness of Christ and weaken the gospel.”

“This is not about an identity of victimhood,” Krauss says. “But the Anabaptist martyrs are not dead. They live on as those who have been resurrected and are part of the contemporary cloud of witnesses in the fellowship of the church today.”

Stories of 16th-century Anabaptists may seem like ancient history to Mennonites in North America. But for many brothers and sisters in the global Anabaptist-Mennonite church, the account of Susanna Doucher and the Augsburg Anabaptist congregation is almost certain to sound familiar, particularly to those groups who face the challenge of persecution and suffering still today. As Wolfgang Krauss reminds us, we remember the Anabaptist story not as a Golden Age we must return to but as a living testimony to Christ’s presence that joins the church today with a great cloud of witnesses who have gone before us. I am grateful for people like Krauss who keep these stories alive as a gift to the whole church.
The wealth gap keeps getting wider

Believe it or not, we’re in an economic recovery. But if you’re not in the upper 7 percent of American households, you may not realize it. If you’re among the rest, 93 percent of American households, you may still be feeling pinched.

According to a report released April 23 by the Pew Research Center, “wealth inequality widened dramatically during the first two years of the economic recovery, as the upper 7 percent of American households saw their average net worth increase 28 percent while the wealth of the other 93 percent declined,” writes Michael A. Fletcher in the Washington Post. The uneven recovery has only accelerated a decades-long trend of growing wealth inequality in the country, despite rising popular and political awareness of the dynamic.

From 2009 to 2011, the Pew report says, the average net worth of the nation’s 8 million most affluent households jumped from an estimated $2.7 million to $3.2 million. And for the 111 million households that form the bottom 93 percent, average net worth fell 4 percent, from $140,000 to an estimated $134,000, the report said.

These changes mean that between 2009 and 2011, “the wealth gap separating the top 7 percent and everyone else increased from 18-to-1 to 24-to-1” and that “the most affluent 7 percent of households owned 63 percent of the nation’s household wealth in 2011, up from 56 percent in 2009.”

Why such a disparity in net worth? Mostly it’s because the wealthiest households have their assets concentrated in stocks and other financial instruments, while others’ wealth is concentrated in their homes. During the recovery, stock values have rebounded and reached new highs, while housing values have stayed mostly flat.

This widening gap applies to all Americans, but “the last half-decade has proved far worse for black and Hispanic families than for white families, starkly widening the already large gulf in wealth between non-Hispanic white Americans and most minority groups, according to a new study from the Urban Institute,” writes Annie Lowrey in an April 28 article in the New York Times.

The Urban Institute study found that while the wealth gap widened, the income gap between white Americans and nonwhite Americans remained stable, writes Lowrey. “As of 2010, white families, on average, earned about $2 for every $1 that black and Hispanic families earned, a ratio that has remained roughly constant for the last 30 years. But when it comes to wealth—as measured by assets, like cash savings, homes and retirement accounts, minus debts, like mortgages and credit card balances—white families have far outpaced black and Hispanic ones. Before the recession, non-Hispanic white families, on average, were about four times as wealthy as nonwhite families, according to the Urban Institute’s analysis of Federal Reserve data. By 2010, whites were about six times as wealthy.”

By the most recent data, the average white family had about $632,000 in wealth, versus $98,000 for black families and $110,000 for Hispanic families, the report said.

Two major factors helped to widen this wealth gap in recent years. The first is that the housing downturn hit black and Hispanic households harder than it hit white households, in aggregate. Second, black families suffered bigger hits to their retirement savings, the Urban Institute found.

Without changes to government policies, it’s only going to get worse. “The Urban Institute suggests reforming government policies that encourage savings but disproportionately benefit the already wealthy and families with high incomes, like the home mortgage interest deduction,” writes Lowrey.

Such a wealth gap is far from the justice Jesus called us to practice.—Gordon Houser

Pontius’ Puddle

Joel Kauffmann
African-American clergy leaders hear daily the cries of the parents, family and friends of those whose precious lives have been snuffed out by guns and other types of violence.—Rev. Carroll
Baltimore, president of the Progressive National Baptist Convention

Choosing ignorance over research
Over the past 20 years, the number of deaths from motor vehicle crashes has dropped by 31 percent, deaths from fire by 38 percent and deaths from drowning by 52 percent. These advances came as a result of interventions based on research. In 1996, pro-gun members of Congress were able to sharply reduce the funding that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention received for research on injury and death from firearms. Two years later, Congress curtailed research on the subject at all agencies of the Department of Health and Human Services, including the National Institutes of Health. Since 1997, at least 470,000 people in the United States have died from gunshot wounds, including more than 165,000 who were victims of homicide.—Christian Century

Changing minds about doctored photos
When Julia Bluhm, 14, from Waterville, Maine, got tired of looking at heavily doctored photos of young models in her fashion magazines, she didn’t just moan about it; she launched a petition on change.org that got more than 50,000 signatures. This got the attention of Seventeen editor Ann Shoket, who last July announced a Body Peace Treaty and pledged to keep it real for future spreads.—Columbia Journalism Review

Illegal immigration lowest in 40 years
Illegal entry is at its lowest level in 40 years. More than 25 percent of immigrants are non-Mexican (it used to be 95 percent). The U.S. government spends more on immigration enforcement than all the other federal law enforcement agencies combined, including the FBI, DEA, ATF and Secret Service. And the Mexican economy is improving; the wage gap between the United States and Mexico, which used to be 7 to 1, is now 4 to 1.—Newsweek

Meet antipoverty goals, say clerics
With fewer than 1,000 days left to meet the United Nations’ Millennium Development Goals, religious leaders from the G-8 countries are pushing heads of government to renew their efforts to meet the antipoverty benchmarks by 2015. The MDGs are eight development targets that were established following the Millennium Summit of the United Nations in 2000 and include targets on reducing extreme poverty, improving child mortality and combating HIV/AIDS.—Religion News Service

A train run by a drunken engineer
Here are excerpts from a presentation to a State Department hearing on Keystone XL draft environmental impact statement at Grand Island, Neb., on April 18 by Duane Ediger, congregational chair of First Church of the Brethren of Chicago, a reservist with Christian Peacemaker Teams and a member of the Illinois Coalition for a Moratorium on Fracking: “Eighty years ago, leaders of what would become Exxon, BP and Royal Dutch Shell got together in secret in Scotland and formed an oil cartel to set prices and carve out oil-producing areas for their mutual financial benefit. In league with the military industrial complex that developed after World War II, this still-secret cartel set up and toppled governments at will. What’s left of fossil fuel supplies, God’s good earth, climate survivability and accountable government are all at stake in this fight. … Greenhouse gases are currently entering our atmosphere at a rate 1.8 times the rate the atmosphere is capable of dispersing them. Per capita, the United States’ contribution is still four times that of China or India. Unless we set as a baseline for purposes of environmental impact the 80 percent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by about 2043 needed in order to avoid irreversible catastrophic harm from climate change, our situation is like being on a train headed for a known bridge out and heedng the drunken engineer’s demand to go full throttle and keep our hands off the brakes.”

4 things you should know about Colombia’s armed conflict
1. First and foremost, the war is about land.
2. Human rights defenders continue to risk their lives by nonviolently struggling for justice and attempting to return to their land.
3. It is the most dangerous place for a union organizer in the world.
4. The United States has given billions of dollars in military aid to Colombia.
—Christian Peacemaker Teams
Lyle Yost improved the lives of farmers and benefited future generations.

Hesston College put the town of Hesston, Kan., on the Mennonite map, but it took the entrepreneur Lyle E. Yost to make the town’s name recognizable around the world on Hesston-branded machinery. Years before the college claimed the tag line, “Start Here, Go Everywhere,” Yost, as a young Mennonite farmer, did just that. As president, CEO and chair of the board of Hesston Manufacturing/Hesston Corporation, he traveled around the world to achieve his goal: “to improve the life of the farmer.” Yost’s philanthropy and the impact that the corporation he founded—now AGCO Corporation’s Hesston facility—has on the economy continue to bless people in many ways, especially those in his hometown.

A legacy of leadership and generosity

by Susan Miller
Yost died April 5, 2012, exactly 11 months before his 100th birthday.

Yost spent a lot of his growing up time with his grandparents, Peter and Suzanna Yost, members of the Church of God in Christ Mennonite, who lived beside the farm home he shared with his sister Zella, and parents, Joseph and Edith Alma (Hensley) Yost, absorbing their faith and farming ingenuity.

He graduated from Hesston Academy just before the Great Depression forced the college part of the academy and Bible school to shut down for a few years. Before returning to Hesston College as a freshman, Yost helped his family survive the Dust Bowl by driving around the Great Plains, acquiring abandoned, dust-covered machinery and bringing the implements back home to refurbish and resell in his father’s farm implement dealership.

Yost continued his education at Goshen (Ind.) College, graduating in 1937 with a degree in economics and completing a second bachelor’s degree in education in 1942. He married Erma Martin on July 31, 1938, after five years of courtship.

Hesston College President Milo Kauffman had visited Erma and her sister Ruby in their Minot, N.D., home and recruited them to come to Hesston College, where Erma and Lyle met. On their first date, Lyle took her to Pennsylvania Mennonite Church (which later moved to a new building in town and changed its name to Whitestone) for a Sunday evening service in which his uncle, Earvy Yost, preached and sang. After Erma’s death, Lyle noted in a letter to his children, “As they were placing [Erma’s] headstone, here I stand 75 yards (a pitching wedge) and 70 years from where I had my first date.”

During their marriage, the couple experienced the sorrow of the stillbirth of their first daughter and the joys of parenting Byron, Winston, Susan and Cameron. They endured the rigors of custom harvesting and the exhilaration of a transatlantic Concorde supersonic jet flight. Erma used her talents to help start the first kindergarten and public library in Hesston while adapting from a rural farm to an international corporate lifestyle with Lyle. In retirement the couple enjoyed more time together, traveling, golfing, reading and enjoying their grandchildren.

After Yost worked at a bank and taught in Elkhart County, Ind., the death of his father and the draft board’s farm deferment obligated him to return to his family’s farm near Hesston in 1943. He spent the next four years farming and custom harvesting.

Knowing that a farmer’s livelihood depends on getting grain harvested and stored while the sun shines, Yost grew impatient with the harvesting time lost in manually unloading stopped combines. To save the day, he invented an unloading auger and took his plans to Adin Holdeman, who made the prototype in his Hesston Machine Shop. Elmer Berner, an implement dealer, found eager buyers for the combine attachment, and the three men joined to found Hesston Manufacturing Company to mass-produce the augers in 1947.

While busy envisioning new products for farmers, Yost took actions to improve his community to make it an inviting place to live and showcase his factory.

In 1955, the growing manufacturing company produced its first self-propelled farm instrument and branded it the Hesston Swather. Swathers (also called windrows) and many of the implements that followed made haymaking a one-person job and established Hesston’s reputation as a leading manufacturer of hay and forage implements. When the new public high school replaced Hesston Academy, students chose the Hesston Swather as their unique mascot, since by the mid-1960s “Hesston Corp.” had become such an important part of the city’s identity and prosperity.

Yost, while busy envisioning new products for farmers, took actions to improve his community to make it an inviting place to live and showcase his factory.

He became president of Hesston’s first Chamber of Commerce and used his influence with the city to “insist that all the streets be curbed and gutted,” his daughter Susan Yost says. He wanted the city to be “tidied up.”

He and two other entrepreneurs, Roy Mullet and LeRoy King, helped start the municipal Hesston Golf Park. Last year, a younger generation of friends and family members of the three “founders” and of the first Hesston golf pro, Dean Adkisson, raised enough money and in-kind donations to fully fund the new Dean Adkisson Learning Center, which was dedicated this spring. The center will help youth learn the game these golfers love, and a scholarship fund will help economically disadvantaged and at-risk youth participate.
When Mennonite farmers were struggling, [Yost] helped not only the Mennonites but the world. He knew how to follow Jesus in the marketplace.
—Peter Wiebe

Floyd Sowers, planner of the fund-raising event, says, “The response was unbelievable—all because of the impact that all four of those individuals had on the community.”

**Ahead of his time in many ways**—Lyle got his pilot license in 1945 and flew his private Cessna to scout the best routes for his custom combining crews—Yost, like the biblical Esther, was a leader “for such a time as this,” Peter Wiebe said at Yost’s memorial service. Wiebe was Yost’s pastor at Hesston Mennonite Church for 13 years in the 1960s and ’70s, and visited him at his winter home in Arizona.

“When Mennonite farmers were struggling, he helped not only the Mennonites but the world,” Wiebe said. “He knew how to follow Jesus in the marketplace.”

Yost was determined to manufacture and market quality products. When the first clutches failed on the augers his factory manufactured, Yost offered replacement clutches at the manufacturer’s cost. “[That] decision gave dealers and buyers confidence in the honesty of management and assured them that the company was here to stay,” Murray Bandy wrote (in *Hesston Centennial, 1886-1986*).

Nearly all the first officers and employees of the corporation were local Mennonites, and quite a few were related to each other. Even today, 70 percent of the 1,500 AGCO employees live within a 20-mile radius of Hesston, says AGCO’s human resources director Tom Nutting.

In the early years, many farmers worked on production lines in the winter months and returned to work their farms in the spring. Yost welcomed the farmers’ ideas for creating and improving new farm products and promoted promising employees, keeping morale high.

Employee Gary Vogt, whose father had worked on Yost’s custom-harvesting crews, began working at the Corp. after he graduated from high school in 1962 and resigned in 1989 to start his own business. His jobs over the years included finish assembly worker, fork lift operator, engineer, experimental mechanic, production control supervisor, materials analyst and more.

“[Working for Lyle] was very exciting because the Corp. started from nothing. If you worked hard you could go places in the Corp,” Vogt says.

**While Yost’s creativity, ambition, persistence and confidence in his ideas for making things better led to much of Hesston Corp.’s success, he was quick to acknowledge the contributions of others. Near the end of his career as president of Hesston Corp., he wrote, “I tell managers that my success with this company has been in bringing in the right people, people who know more about their specialty than I do, and I depend on them” (quoted in Mary Hess’ *Anatomy of a Town, Hesston, Kansas*).

Yost combined his love for flying, invention and problem solving with ways to help others. In the early years, he would land his Cessna in a farmer’s field, troubleshoot mechanical problems, then fly back home and make changes to the implements just before they went into production.

When his flying included overnight hotel stays, Yost took along Gideon Bibles and placed them in hotels. He served as President of the Kansas Gideons Chapter and Trustee of Gideons International.
He took his family, sometimes one child at a time, with him on business trips, giving them the opportunity to spend quality time with him as they traveled around the world.

At the time Hesston Corp. was growing the most, Yost made at least six trips to South America to direct the work of Mennonite Economic Development Associates in Uruguay during its first 25 years. “MEDA was the perfect position for him,” Wiebe says. Yost served on the MEDA board from 1963 to 1985.

“He realized there was emptiness and a need for the church to become involved in helping those who need help,” Susan Yost says.

“In 1961, when Lyle joined MEDA, we had projects only in Paraguay,” says Allan Sauder, MEDA president. “He began raising funds in Kansas to support a group of very poor farmers, living hand to mouth on their small farms in Uruguay. It was Lyle’s keen business sense that recognized an opportunity to sell their milk products into the larger markets of Montevideo. During one of the many trips he made to Uruguay, together with his wife, Erma, Lyle convinced farmers that a creamery would help them earn more income—money they desperately needed to feed their families, to educate their children, to afford better health care and be able to dream about increasing their farms beyond the subsistence level.

“Today, many thousands of small farmers are able to access better markets using the value-chain approach pioneered by people like Lyle.”

Hesston Corp. continued to grow as it acquired manufacturing plants in North America and Europe. In 1974, when he was selected Kansan of the Year, Yost was leading “a worldwide conglomerate with a total of 11 operating divisions … and a work force of some 4,000 employees, more than 2,500 of them in Hesston alone” (Billy M. Jones, Factory on the Plains, Lyle Yost and the Hesston Corporation).

In 1975, when “the company was enjoying the longest and strongest surge in its brief history,” Jones writes, Yost stepped aside, and Howard Brenneman became president. Yost continued to serve as CEO until 1982. During that interim, the farm recession, overproduction and other factors caused Hesston stock to drop dramatically, and the company faced major losses.

Susan Yost says her father had options: “He could have shut the factory down. But Dad felt a real responsibility, especially for the job security of the Hesston work force.”

_The solution that kept the plant operating, although scaled back, was the result of Yost’s negotiation with representatives of the Italian firm Fiat Trattori and the sale of “50.2 percent of Hesston’s outstanding voting stock” on Sept. 13, 1977, writes Jones. Fiat’s friendly takeover led to the formation of a new corporation retaining the Hesston brand name on hay and forage equipment. In 1991, AGCO purchased the corporation._

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He could have shut the factory down. But Dad felt a real responsibility, especially for the job security of the Hesston work force.—Susan Yost

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Lyle Yost checks an advertising layout. Photo provided
international corporation, AGCO leads as Hesston and as Harvey County’s largest employer and continues to expand even after two years of drought have plagued the Great Plains.

During his retirement, Yost continued his work as a philanthropist and adviser. Throughout his lifetime he supported the church, its educational institutions and personnel, both openly and anonymously. He helped the Milo and Clara Kauffman family through many lean years while Milo served the church and college, and he asked the Chester and Eva Osborne family to make payments on the house they purchased from Yosts to Hesston College.

Lyle Yost led by asking probing questions and encouraging others to do their best.

“He was generous to me [as well],” Wiebe says. “When the time came to change styles, Lyle tossed me a suit.” This was just another way the tall business leader with an upright stature shared with the equally tall and upright man in the pulpit.

Current Hesston College President Howard Keim says Yost came to his office yearly advising him to “have something new every year to keep people interested.”

Greg Anderson, chaplain at the Prince of Peace Chapel in Aspen, Colo., describes Yost as a man of “warmth, acceptance, gentleness and kindness” and says that Yost in his vision and support for the interfaith chapel he and his Uncle Earvie started “was a century ahead of his time.”

The Yosts’ lead gift made the construction of Hesston College’s largest building possible. At the dedication of Yost Center, Lyle summarized some of his beliefs: “I believe that we are God’s workmanship and that we are here for a purpose. ... We are created to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

“I believe that ... we should give back to [God] a part of what we receive—whether it be time, talent or money.

“I believe in the principle of multiplying—a seed planted grows and multiplies. ... A dollar given in faith multiplies many times.”

Lyle’s gift in 2011 of gliding swings to Mennonite nursing homes in the south central Kansas area is symbolic of his transition from being young, ambitious and innovative to living life in the jet set to handing over leadership responsibilities to younger people to relaxing, reminiscing and letting go of most of his material possessions. He continued to read his Bible and the newspaper every day and remained mentally alert throughout his last year.

Although he held many more leadership positions than one can imagine being doable, he was not a controlling person. He led by asking probing questions and encouraging others to do their best. He helped his children discern their own vocational callings, all unrelated to Hesston Corporation, and supported them in their decisions. Honored in more than 100 publications and with many of the highest awards in industry, Yost retained his humility and kept advancing his goal to improve the lives of farmers. As farmers benefitted, so have and will thousands of others in his generation and in those to come.

Yost leaves a legacy of economic leadership, creativity, kindness and generosity.

Susan Miller is a free-lance writer and a member of Hesston (Kan.) Mennonite Church.
QUESTIONS TO
women leaders

Shé Hall is the web and social media manager at an advertising agency in Norfolk, Va. She is a member of the praise team and creates many of the digital and print communications media at Calvary Community Church in Hampton, Va. Although often not in a position of leadership by title, she takes seriously the power of consumed media to lead people. It can guide, influence, strengthen and more. She is also a member of the board of directors of The Mennonite, Inc.

Do/did you have a woman leader as mentor? If so, how does/did she help you?
I do not have one woman as a mentor; however, there are many women in my family, church and community who have mentored me by either spending time directly with me or by allowing their lives to be an example. I’ve learned lessons in the hardships of being a woman leader who is balancing a career and family. I’ve learned how to correct those who are following me in love. I’ve learned the importance of taking care of my mind, will, intellect, emotion and imagination. I’ve also learned how being a great leader often means being a humble follower.

Are you mentoring a young woman who may be a potential church leader?
Over the past couple of years I’ve had the chance to have what I call mentorship pow-wows with some young women. I stumble upon chances to encourage, support or lend an ear to younger women and, at times, my female counterparts. Some of these women could be church leaders, but I hope their leadership speaks volumes both inside and outside the church’s walls.

If so, how is her experience the same/different from yours?
Many of the women I consider mentors are much older than I am. Most of the young women I have a relationship with are within 10 years of my age. The times change so quickly now. It could be beneficial to have someone speak into your life that was in your position just a year ago.

What impediments have you faced in becoming a leader?
In my 29 years, most of my impediments in becoming a leader are in my mind. Doubt and worry creep in and know exactly where my focus is hidden. As I take on more leadership roles, I’ve been able to pick up on the signs of doubt and worry earlier and fill my mind with positive thoughts, music, Scripture and conversation that help keep me on track.

When you face challenges as leader, what encourages you?
I’m encouraged by the trials I’ve had. I’m reminded that I made it to the other side and am better for the lesson learned. I’m also encouraged by two Scriptures: Proverbs 19:21 (“Many are the plans in a person’s heart, but it is the Lord’s purpose that prevails.”) reminds me that God is in control. Luke 1:45 (“Blessed is she who has believed that the Lord would fulfill his promises to her.”) reminds me that although I’m facing a challenge, I can keep moving forward by focusing on God’s promises to me. They will still come to pass.

I’ve learned the importance of taking care of my mind, will, intellect, emotion and imagination.
—Shé Hall
Two new books help us consider worship and mission for the global church.

Singing our way into God’s future

by James R. Krabill

This past December, I had the great joy and satisfaction of seeing released a two-volume set of books on global worship. For almost two years I have served as general editor for these publications, bringing together more than 100 writers from 20 countries to reflect on the general theme of Worship and Mission for the Global Church (see book covers page 18, lower left).

The purpose of these books is to help the people of God imagine what it would be like to use all the arts—music, drama, visuals—for God’s purposes in the life of the church. To explore this, we have included theological reflection, global case studies, practical tools and audiovisual resources to increase understanding of and appreciation for culturally appropriate arts in Christian worship and witness.

‘A Foretaste of Glory Worship’

C. Michael Hawn, a professor of global music at Perkins School of Theology, reminds us in chapter 132 (vol. 1) of the vision the Apostle John paints in Revelation 7:9-10. Here we see a multitude from all nations and languages, standing before the throne and singing, “Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.” This passage, says Hawn, “points the church today to the end of time as we know it and offers a vision of what will be—a time when our praise will be universal and our diversity will reveal the splendor of the Creator’s imagination.”

The church in the West, observes Hawn, “tends to sing only songs that focus on our past (often under the label ‘traditional’) or songs that reflect the current culture (often under the label ‘contemporary’). But what songs might we sing to pull the hope of Revelation into the present? What songs might we sing that would give us glimpses of the gathering described in Revelation 7?” It is time for the 21st century church, declares Hawn, to “sing itself into a new understanding of what it means to be the church.”

A helpful tool for expanding our worship horizons

Anne Zaki, a global and multicultural resource specialist based in Cairo, Egypt, presents a helpful tool for us in thinking through and designing worship experiences with Revelation 7 in mind. In chapter 13 of the Handbook, Zaki sets forth four ways in which “Christian worship relates dynamically to culture” (These are more fully articulated in a document called “The Nairobi Statement of Worship and Culture,” developed in 1996 by the Lutheran World Federation Department for Theology and Studies.).

1. First, Christian worship should be transcultural—the same substance for everyone everywhere, beyond culture.
2. Second, it should be contextual—varying according to the local situation (both nature and culture).
3. Third, it should be countercultural—challenging what is contrary to the gospel in a given culture.
4. Fourth, it should be crosscultural—making possible sharing between different cultures.

Zaki calls these various features “an intricate four-step dance, where each dancer has certain steps to perform yet always remains conscious of a partner—now pulling together, now pushing apart, ever moving, avoiding a checkmate crisis.” To illustrate this interactive dynamic, Zaki suggests the diagram (above) featuring the various components to consider in worship planning.

These are but a few reflections offered to readers as they seek to increase their awareness of God’s global family and begin more intentionally to “sing their way into God’s future.”

James R. Krabill is senior executive for global ministries for Mennonite Mission Network.
Artistic expression in early Christianity

How can Christian practices create artifacts that promote truths and challenge the wider culture?

by Eleanor Kreider

In the early centuries, Christians enculturated their faith by using symbols that affected common life and worship. The following examples of historical symbolic forms reach across cultures and enrich the transmission of the gospel. These examples pose questions for contemporary Christians seeking symbolic expressions in worship.

Christians used distinctive and potent symbols to reflect their faith, values and life-practices.

Catacomb art

Around the beginning of the third century, Christian communities began to produce and use visual art forms. Why so late? Injunctions against idolatry, resistance to the culture around them, insistence on an invisible God—these may have been reasons. We cannot know for sure. As we see in the Roman catacombs of the third century, Christians began borrowing and adapting a variety of contemporary symbols. Their theological reflection in written texts correlates with a visual language of sacred images. Visual art may have been illustrative or didactic, but it also could be richly exegetical and liturgical.

In catacomb paintings and as bas-relief sculpture on sarcophagi (tombs), heroes and stories of the Bible appear clad in the iconography of Greco-Roman culture. Jesus, as healer and wonder-worker, sometimes carries a “magic” wand. Depicted as a clean-shaven youth, Jesus could as easily be taken for an adolescent Orpheus, who in Greek mythology charmed all living beings with his music and challenged the power of the underworld. Apostles sculpted as full-bearded men look remarkably like heroic Roman statues. Favorite Bible stories (Jonah, the fiery furnace, Lazarus) and depictions of Christ or saints are frequent subjects. Birds and flowers, trees and rivers evoked more than appreciation for nature—they could also be symbols of paradise, of life after death. It is often difficult to differentiate early Christian symbols from pagan prototypes. In the century after the emperor Constantine, when it became safe and advantageous to be a Christian, Christian symbolism became more explicit.

Signet rings

In Roman times men of substance wore signet rings, which they used to authenticate documents or to label goods for trade. In the late second century, Clement of Alexandria instructed Christian men to wear the signet ring at the base of the little finger. On no account could the ring’s image be a lover, for we are a “chaste people,” or a sword or bow, “for we cultivate peace,” or a drinking cup, “for we practice temperance.” The image on the ring could be of a dove, a fish, a ship in full sail or an anchor, which could discretely evoke the cross. In this way Christians used distinctive and potent symbols to reflect their faith, values and life-practices.

Peace greeting

In the mid-second century, Justin Martyr mentioned the peace greeting as a part of the eucharistic liturgy of the church in Rome. This
gesture continued throughout early Christianity in weekly eucharistic services and also at the conclusion of believers’ morning prayer following catechetical sessions. The kiss of peace is one of the oldest Christian liturgical practices, noted in several New Testament epistles as the holy kiss or the kiss of peace (e.g., 1 Thessalonians 5:26; 1 Peter 5:14). Kissing in public in Greco-Roman culture was reserved for relatives or social equals. The Christian liturgical kiss of peace was counter-cultural, even scandalous. Enemies of the Christians gossiped and slandered them because Christians exchanged the greeting across social and economic lines in their weekly eucharistic services, as they sought to be reconciled with each other following the teachings of Matthew 5:23–24.

At the appropriate time in the eucharistic service, a deacon announced the peace greeting, often asking if any member of the assembly had a grievance against another. This was the time to greet and be reconciled with the estranged person. Later, during the Christian centuries in Europe, this practice faded, becoming infrequent and in many places confined to the clergy. Since the 20th century, when the peace greeting was reintroduced into Christian liturgies, the physical gesture has varied according to culture—a bow, a hands gesture (namaste), an embrace, a kiss, a handshake.

**Eucharist as a form of the Roman banquet**

In 1 Corinthians 11–14, the apostle Paul addresses the Christian community in Corinth about its worship practices. The church had adopted the familiar cultural form of Greco-Roman banquet (meal plus symposium—the after-dinner conversation) for their Lord’s Supper. These chapters address a single worship event in a Corinthian house church. Chapter 11 relates to the meal. Chapter 14 deals with the symposium (conversation). Between these two chapters, chapter 12 presents Paul’s vision for the multigifted church, and chapter 13 is a paean of praise to the virtue of love and a call to “table manners” of courtesy, deference and honor. Paul, as a missionary theologian, accepted the enculturation of the church’s worship within the forms of the banquet.

However, Paul as a pastoral theologian pointed to distortions in the church’s practice of the meal and advised the church on how it should rectify these abuses and align its worship with the distinctive values of the Christian faith. For the meal, Paul admonishes the richer believers to stop “showing contempt” to the poorer believers and share food equitably (“discern the body,” 11:29). For the symposium (the conversation), Paul rebukes the church’s chaotic use of spiritual gifts, which prevented outsiders from participating in worship and kept Christian worship from expressing the character of the “God of peace” (14:33). “Each” and “all” were to contribute according to the gifts of the Spirit (14:26, 31). Multivoiced worship at table was what Paul considered “decent and in order” (14:40). This enculturated form of liturgy included countercultural gestures and practices that created social bonding and radical equalization.

This enculturated form of liturgy included countercultural gestures and practices that created social bonding and radical equalization.

**Architectural space**

New Testament churches were domestic gatherings. The host of the home often served as leader of the church. Worship on this domestic scale continued for several centuries, though in some instances the apartments or houses could be fairly large. In the fourth century, by imperial favor, churches in some cities were able to build large buildings to house growing congregations. But house churches continued into the fifth century, when in many places they were displaced by purpose-built church buildings. This new scale of worship necessitated an “amplification”—rhetorical sermons, glorious processions and dramatic liturgy. Now churches were filled with standing crowds and kept in order by patrolling deacons. Imagine the change in how individuals experienced worship. No longer face to face in someone’s home and courtyard, worshipers now stood in a grand public space, craning to see and strain to hear what was going on.

**Questions then and now**

All these symbols and gestures we have considered in early Christianity—in art, jewelry, meal practices, space—raise questions for today. How can Christians engage practices and create artifacts through which Christian truths become comprehensible yet challenge aspects of wider culture in the name of the gospel?

Eleanor Kreider teaches at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Elkhart, Ind. This article is excerpted from Worship and Mission for the Global Church (William Carey Library Publishers, 2013).
I suddenly realized that East African Mennonites were worshiping with ‘foreign’ materials, even though the English words of the songs had been translated into Swahili.

way down the aisle so rhythmically that it felt like dance—an unacceptable worship expression in this church tradition. All singing was in parts and unaccompanied because the early missionary pioneers from the United States had represented Mennonites of the a cappella-singing variety.

In the midst of this worship experience, however, there emerged a young girl from the smallest choir, bringing to the front a soda bottle with molded rings at its neck. When the congregation heard the percussive rhythmic accompaniment she provided by rubbing a nail over the rings, they erupted with joy and pleasure. Women ululated in a way I had never heard with the singing of missionary hymns.

What an epiphany for me! I suddenly realized that East African Mennonites were worshiping with “foreign” materials, even though the English words of the songs had been translated into Swahili. The original style of the missionary music had simply not reached into their deepest sound pool, the kind of sound that flowed naturally from their cultural musical heritage.

**My Western musical origins**

I had been born into an American Mennonite culture in the 1920s when my group held to a long tradition of a cappella singing in worship. We learned to play instruments, but they belonged to the secular aspect of life.

During the 1950s, I spent a sabbatical leave working on what was then the new doctor of musical arts degree, using cello as my instrument. In addition to serious cello playing, I had the excellent guidance of a cultural history professor in examining what Western Christian artists had experienced across the centuries in pursuing their craft.

Later, during the 1960s, my work on research-
ing and editing a hymnal for Mennonites forced me to face problems of sources and styles of music for worship. I had been exclusively a classical music professor and performer up to that point. Not even folk songs were on my radar. But my colleagues and I agonized over those much-loved hymns we did not personally value. We had to come to grips with the reasons others liked them so well. The Moody-Sankey gospel songs, for example, we needed to learn to know on a different level. And our agreement to work by consensus as a committee forced us to find new ways of evaluating various musical styles and traditions.

This was the period in American hymnody when a few cross-cultural songs were beginning to appear in denominational hymn collections. The Vatican II Council of the Catholic Church in the mid-1960s lifted the ban on the exclusive use of Latin in worship and encouraged vernacular styles of music. In our new Mennonite hymnal we managed to include only six Asian hymns in the short time we had before publication. African hymns seemed either too difficult or too oversimplified for Western use.

**A sabbatical that changed everything**

For this sabbatical leave (1972–73), I determined to study African music and arts, primarily to enrich the related music and visual arts course I taught throughout my career.

Most mission hymns that I had heard seemed so Western that I paid little attention to them. Only gradually did I realize that the changes Africans made to these songs—with additions, omissions and various other alterations—actually revealed a great deal about what they loved in their own oral music traditions.

I set out to record on cassette tape African traditional songs and instruments but soon felt I was simply taking something away from the musicians who helped me. Kwabena Nketia, a fine musician, scholar and professor at the University of Legon in Ghana, suggested that I study a few instruments, and he found teachers to help me do so. I learned immediately that I needed a printed page of music to study an instrument, that music comes to me first through the eyes and then the ears. I was introduced suddenly into the oral world—a reality vastly different from the literate one.

The instruments—especially the one-stringed fiddle and African thumb instrument, both known by many names across the continent—I would have called “primitive” until I saw what my teachers did with them. And my “perfect pitch” was useless in trying to capture the tonalities they produced.

The whole experience was both discouraging and enlightening for me. I have a distinct memory of practicing my one-stringed fiddle as I waited outside the locked door of my instructor’s room. A Ghanaian woman on her way to market with a large gourd of peanuts on her head stopped to watch me. We could not speak, but after many minutes she reached for a handful of peanuts and handed them to me. It was another epiphany. The sounds I made certainly could not have interested her, but she must have been astonished that this person, both woman and white, would care to play a musical instrument from her culture.

Only gradually did I realize that the changes Africans made to mission hymns actually revealed a great deal about what they loved in their own oral music traditions.

**Focusing on differences is the most fruitful**

As I studied African music, I gradually concluded that, rather than focusing on those similar qualities between African and Western musical forms and traditions, the differences were more fruitful for understanding and using music specifically in worship. In African hymns, for example, the frequent repetitions of both words and music contrast sharply with the “wordiness” of Western hymns, inviting improvised changes and encouraging dance. (It is noteworthy, for example, that ngoma—the word for music in the Swahili language—also means “drum” or “dance.”) The persistent downward motion of a melodic line in Africa differs from a more arched shape in Western melody. Rhythmic vitality is far more important in Africa than harmonic richness and subsequent loss of rhythmic energy in the West. Musical form in Africa is often cyclical with no clear beginning, middle and end; Western music, in contrast, tends to be structured around high and low points of intensity with clear parameters.

None of these ideas are absolute, I have learned, but recognizing the tendencies greatly enriches my musical life. We humans, created in God’s image, are “fearfully and wonderfully made.” And God opens ways for us of experiencing the worship music of other cultures and sharing our own, thus leading to justice, joy and praise.

Mary K. Oyer is music professor emerita at Goshen (Ind.) College and a member at College Mennonite Church in Goshen. This article is excerpted from Worship and Mission for the Global Church (William Carey Library Publishers, 2013).
A reflection on Ephesians 2:14-22

An *uneearned* citizenship

by Laura Glass-Hess

I live in Phoenix, where the daily reminders of group divisions are plainly evident. The everyday realities of life in a border region represent the fears of the majority. The day laborers in the Home Depot parking lot—young and not-so-young men dressed in jeans and boots—represent a fear of a flood of uneducated, desperate workers driving down wages. The storefront signs written in Spanish represent a fear that our country will be divided by people who refuse to assimilate. The young mother arrested for driving a vehicle with a hidden compartment full of methamphetamine represents the fear that people fleeing poverty will bring violence and crime with them. Angry voices on both sides of the immigration debate exacerbate perceived differences into emotionally charged and intractable positions.
Paul wrote Ephesians to a church that was often deeply divided between Jews and Gentiles. Jews saw themselves as the chosen people and lived by strict purity laws and a cultural tradition shaped by oppression and separation from the dominant society. Gentiles—called “outsiders” and “heathens” by the Jews (verse 11)—did not follow ritual purity laws and did not share the Jews’ cultural background. Jews feared that Gentiles would corrupt their way of life, taint their religious purity and destroy their culture—just as some Arizonans fear that those from the south will overwhelm their schools, endanger their way of life and harm the economy. The Ephesians passage speaks of a “dividing wall of hostility” between groups—a hostility based on differences. Christ came to break down that barrier—to create something new that both groups could belong to, free of the baggage that makes the “majority” suspicious and resentful of the “other.”

On a trip to Mexico a few years ago, I met a couple who lived in Mexico City. He was from Germany, and she was from Spain. They had decided to live in Mexico because it was something new for both of them. They wanted to start something new in a place where neither of them had a history, where neither was completely comfortable or had a cultural advantage. I was struck by the wisdom and courage of that decision. It required them to leave places where they fit and were comfortable and sure of themselves—with only the faith that together they could create something new.

The new life we are called to in Christ is like that. Christ calls us to leave the cultural norms we are comfortable with and to go to a new place—a place where we will meet others who challenge our ideas of what everyday life and faith should look like. This is the holy temple, occupied by the Spirit of God, filled with the members of God’s household and built on Christ as the cornerstone (verses 19–22).

It may be natural—even comfortable—to separate ourselves from another group by viewing its members through the filter of our own fears. Exhaustive amounts of research have been done on the concept of “confirmation bias,” the idea that we are more likely to pay attention to events and characteristics that align with our current beliefs. This bias can lead us to notice favorable attributes in our own group and negative ones in groups we distrust or dislike. It can lead us to build the “dividing wall of hostility” higher and higher.

But God’s kingdom is different. God’s kingdom is a place where foreigners and strangers are transformed into citizens and members of God’s household. In God’s kingdom, a boy (Joseph) sold by his own brothers into slavery and thrown into prison in a foreign land becomes the one who saves a nation from starvation. In God’s kingdom, an impoverished widow (Ruth) goes to a country that is not her own and becomes an ancestor of the Messiah. In God’s kingdom, a tax collector (Matthew) despised as scum by the religious officials becomes a disciple of Jesus. As members of God’s family, we must be able to see past our fears—to see the “other” as a fellow citizen in the kingdom of God.

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This concept of citizenship is worth exploring. In the United States, there are two ways to become a citizen: by birth or by an application process. The first requires no work on our part, no choice, no effort. I am a U.S. citizen, with all its privileges, rights and complexities, merely by the arbitrary fact that my mother was physically present in this country when I was born. The students to whom I teach English in my community have a different route to citizenship. They must struggle to learn a language not their own—a process that often takes years. They must be here legally for three to five years before they can even apply to be a citizen. They must submit an application and pay a fee of $680. They are fingerprinted, and their background is checked, since they have to be of “good moral character.” They spend months studying and memorizing 100 questions on U.S. history and government—questions many natural-born citizens cannot answer. They must pass tests that measure their ability to read, write and speak English. If they pass the tests, they take an oath of loyalty to the United States. And after this whole process, they now have the same citizenship that cost me nothing.

It seems to me that citizenship in God’s kingdom is of the unearned variety. The Gentiles, who didn’t follow the laws and regulations of the Jews, were still receiving the same spiritual citizenship as the Jews—citizenship in this new place, where we all go to be transformed. The differences that
divided us before we were citizens of this new kingdom are still there, but we are now given the peace to overcome them. That transformation may be painful, and the process difficult, but the right to struggle through that process as children of God, together in God’s family, is freely given.

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And when the task of reconciliation seems hopeless—when our fears and differences and the “dividing wall of hostility” seem insurmountable—we return to the cross. There on the cross, Jesus showed us what is important. He showed us that closeness to God is not achieved by conforming to cultural norms or religious rituals but by inward peace and openness to God’s leading, as together we are built into a temple filled by God’s Spirit.

Laura Glass-Hess grew up all over the place and lives in Phoenix, where she is a member of Trinity Mennonite Church, Glendale, Ariz. She works as a criminal defense attorney representing indigent clients and spends her free time working on her urban farm and exploring Arizona’s wild places.
The church is to make Jesus visible in and to the world.

Let us pray for revival

Wilt thou not revive us again that thy people may rejoice in thee.
—Psalm 85:6 KJV

by Myron S. Augsburger

As we get older, relationships need to be renewed. Just so in our experience of God we need the renewal of our love and joy in God’s grace. I find a danger of becoming routine, even becoming presumptuous in taking God for granted in life experience. The dynamic of radiant fellowship needs to be rekindled by the Spirit, and in writing this call I am affirming that it should begin with me. My friend Bishop Lloyd Weaver and I have covenanted together to pray for revival.
We Mennonites have a lot of great values incorporated in our concept of discipleship, but the danger is that we focus on those values rather than on the centrality of Jesus. Just as nonconformity became central in the past, ethical concerns become central today. With this we need to reaffirm this as a nonconformity that is larger than a few symbols.

Our witness is that one cannot be a disciple of Jesus and ignore his call to walk in holiness, in peace and in reconciliation. We need to be reminded that “he is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us” (Ephesians 2:14). We also need to witness to the larger church that to walk with him is to walk in his peace. It is this common faith commitment to Jesus that makes us one, walking together in a ministry of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:20). As our Anabaptist forebears discovered, Christian experience is relational, “not sacramental or theological but existential” (Robert Friedman), and this relational center is our focus.

**Revival is not simply stirring emotions** or a renewal of pietistic feelings but should be a call to a renewed holistic identification with Jesus as Lord, a renewed sense of personal relationship with him with a deep sense of the mutual openness of love. This is personal, yes, but not private. When we open our lives to Jesus we open them to all that Jesus is doing in our neighbor, our broth-
ers and sisters, and this allows the Spirit to quicken a fellowship of grace as a “community in the Spirit.” This is a quality community created by the Spirit and not a mere social form of ethnicity or religious demands. Such a community will open itself to people who are different from us but who share the same commitment to Jesus.

In our day, the confrontation between various religions is a challenge for the Christian church to be clear about what it means for us to confess Jesus as Lord and Savior. Unfortunately, Christendom is so divided as to fail to give a clear witness of a common commitment to Jesus. We tend to elevate our various interpretations, and in so doing we minimize the quest to understand Jesus better. One has said that in the Christian church we have dogma, doctrines and applications. Dogma is the universal expression of Jesus as Son of God, Savior (1 Corinthians 15:3-5), doctrines are the various interpretations of the dogma, and these interpretations account for denominations, and applications are the attempts of various groups to relate their faith to life practice. The danger is that groups elevate application to the level of dogma and in doing so eclipse the gospel by patterns of religious order and fail to witness to the person of Jesus. We should join Paul when he writes, “May I never boast of anything except the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world” (Galatians 6:14).

The revival we need is a renewal of our faith commitment to Jesus and a celebration of his “finished work” in reconciling us to the Father. This renewal will be a spirit of rejoicing in the assurance of our salvation, that we are given a new birth “into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who are being protected by the power of God” (1 Peter 1:3-5a).

Such joy will be contagious, and such common focus on Jesus will be an enriched community of the Spirit that reaches out to those around us. And such vitality in our commitment to Jesus will call the next generation to a meaningful faith and not merely to a religious tradition. Revival is a first-hand experience of relationship with the Lord.

Revival calls for a repentant spirit, repentance from sin as perversions of the good but above all repentance for failing to engage the fullness of Christ. Revival calls for a new obedience to the Word of God, and this means a renewed focus on biblical preaching and not simply essays on the psychology of religion and life. Revival calls for an authentic openness to the Spirit and to God’s work of disclosing Christ within and through us. And a genuine revival will express a spirit of love for others and be a witness to the assurance of his grace.

As Billy Graham commented, churches have become so institutional and defensive of their own programs that it has now become difficult to have a communitywide mission. I have found this to be the case and pray that we may become more interested in a strategy of communication that engages the larger community.

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While much can be done by the congregation and by one-on-one sharing, I have found that often people not engaged in the church will come to a communitywide meeting either by the common interest or sometimes even because they can maintain a degree of anonymity while hearing the gospel. A genuine revival in a congregation can become contagious and spill over to friends and neighbors through the spirit of the members.

These are a few thoughts on revival, but the reality is more than I can verbalize. I have been blessed often by revival meetings, but at my age I must ask whether these memories mean that such an experience is a piety of the past more than a fresh moving of the Spirit. We don’t work up a revival; we rather pray it down. It is a gift of God, a sovereign moving of God’s Spirit.

I pray for such a revival and that it come in some contemporary form that honors Jesus, and I call on the extended membership of the church to join me. We together are God’s church, the body of Christ, and as such we are made alive in the Spirit.

Remember, just as the body makes one personality visible, so the church as the body of Christ means that we make Jesus visible in and to the world.

Myron S. Augsburger is an evangelist in Harrisonburg, Va.
God at work through the little things

During a regional gathering of the Mennonite Camping Association, Alan Stucky, pastor of Pleasant Valley Mennonite Church in Harper, Kan., shared about how God can work in people’s lives through simple conversations—even those that might seem insignificant—and through caring people following up on such conversations.

I asked Alan to recount the story as a reminder to all of us that it is often in the little events of life that God does the most amazing work.

Many times we don’t get to see the fruit of the seeds we plant in the work of ministry. But sometimes we do. Such was the case when my friend Brett sent me a letter he had received from a young woman.

In the summers of 2005 through 2007, I had the great opportunity to volunteer as the Bible lesson leader for a week of junior high camp at Camp Mennonah near Murdock, Kan. One of the directors I worked with was Brett, another youth pastor whom I’d known for years.

During the week, we had opportunities to minister to all kinds of kids dealing with all kinds of issues. I know for a fact that we had a significant impact on a number of the kids. Others simply had to turn over to the trust and care of God, hoping the Holy Spirit was at work in their lives. Rebecca was one of those girls.

One night after campfire, Rebecca stayed behind to pray and talk with one of the adults. She wound up talking with Brett. At one point, Brett asked her what she thought God was calling her to do. She said she didn’t know and that she didn’t even go to church. Brett said, “You know that God loves you even if you don’t go to church, right?” He then asked if she had a friend she might feel comfortable going to church with. She said, “Yes, there’s Megan.”

After the conversation that evening, Rebecca felt as though God was calling her to start going to church, but she wasn’t totally sure. After going home from camp, she didn’t quite know what to do and began to question whether or not she was supposed to go to church. Then, out of the blue, Megan’s mom called and invited her to go to church with their family. Rebecca couldn’t believe God was actually calling her to do what she’d talked about at camp.

She attended church that year and returned to camp the next summer, excited to tell Brett what had happened. When she told him that Megan’s mom had called and about how she had started going to church, Brett said, “Yeah, I know. I called the pastor of that church after camp last year and told her about you.” Rebecca was almost in shock that someone would care enough about her to do that for her.

It was confirmation that God was working in her life.

Rebecca attended church throughout high school and then attended Bethel College in North Newton, Kan. As she made plans for the summer after her first year, she actively pursued a job as a summer staff person at a Mennonite camp. She was offered such a position at Swan Lake Christian Camp in Viborg, S.D., which she had learned about while visiting a friend in South Dakota that year. Once again, God was at work.

While that summer presented its challenges, Rebecca also had a profoundly moving experience, again during campfire. After returning home, she decided to go through catechism, be baptized and join the church. As part of the catechism class, she was to write a letter to someone who had made a difference in her faith. She chose Brett.

It was in that letter that she shared the story of her faith journey—a journey that had begun that night with a simple conversation after campfire.

Everyone has simple conversations every day. How often do we remember that God uses these conversations to be about building up and encouraging people in their faith? I hope Brett’s example of listening and follow-through inspires us to view every encounter—whether it seems significant or ordinary—as an opportunity to enter into the work God is about all around us.

Let us view every encounter—whether it seems significant or ordinary—as an opportunity to enter into the work God is about all around us.
Deed and word

A n interesting dichotomy has been argued in Christian mission. Should the Christian’s mission in the world focus on verbal witness, or should acts of care and compassion be our priority? Word or deed, evangelism or service, gospel or peace?

I answer the questions with a resounding, “Yes. Both.” Jesus illustrated a seamless concern for people’s hearts, bodies and relationships, and the early church understood Jesus’ intentions to embrace all human need and humanity in its entirety. No longer could any credible argument be made for separating either Jew from Greek or separating word from deed. We are a seamless whole, and God cares for all humanity. That is God’s mission. We participate in many ways.

Why then does the debate continue? I suspect two reasons. First, Christian mission and evangelism have at times been patronizing and condescending. The mission thrust of the church has not always been carried out with sensitivity and has sometimes been linked to cultural pride and violent power.

Sadly this is true, although it is not immediately apparent why this is often cited as an argument against verbal witness but seldom against compassionate service. Well meaning deeds can be as patronizing as ill-spoken words and one’s actions can be as dangerous as one’s speech—maybe more so.

Still the fact of the Crusades looms as a horrible example of “Christian” motives gone awry. We continue to live in their wake. Frank admission of failures is a proper chastening of the mission endeavor.

I think there is a second reason, too. I suspect that Christians not only question the method of Christian mission but sometimes even wonder whether it is necessary at all. The message, not simply the method, is thought to be a condescending carryover from an imperialistic and colonizing past.

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In an increasingly interconnected world, it is more difficult to talk about convictions from one perspective without appearing blind or insensitive to the contributions of others. Hence we feel called to give priority to actions and efforts that receive praise from a variety of faith perspectives. Giving voice to conviction expresses mere personal opinion and polarizes people. Even worse, inviting others to share one’s faith experience appears not as humble generosity but as downright arrogance.

I often hear a presumed quote of Saint Francis of Assisi: “Preach the gospel and when necessary use words.” Apart from the question of whether Saint Francis actually said it, I really do like that statement. And I also like Saint Francis’ example.

On the heels of the Crusades and the debris of human conflict, Francis articulated and practiced simplicity, joy and love as the motives that would form his life and the character that would define his witness, even to the Muslim world. His compassion led him in the year 1219 into the very presence of the Sultan of Egypt, where he attempted to share the gospel, using words. His mission held together deed and word.

Some years ago the words “integrated witness” came into my vocabulary. They replaced the earlier language of “holism,” itself introduced as an antidote to a perceived bias of words over deeds.

In the current climate, the danger of prioritizing words over deeds is now matched with the danger of prioritizing deeds over words. And further, holism, introduced to bring balance to the witness of deeds and words, has sometimes become a euphemism for deeds without words.

I believe in an integrated witness that values deed and word, peace and witness, justice and evangelism. The hues of truly Christian and godly engagement in the world are reflected through the various facets of an integrated witness. 

The views expressed do not necessarily represent the official positions of Mennonite Church USA, The Mennonite or the board for The Mennonite, Inc.
Gathering for those not attending Phoenix 2013

Iglesia Menonita Hispana organizes event in Fort Myers, Fla., with 120 attending.

Three leaders hold quilt squares that were created for display on an empty chair that will be on stage at the Phoenix convention in July. The empty chair will represent undocumented members of Mennonite Church USA and their allies who will not participate in the Arizona convention. From left: Juanita Nuñez, former moderator of Iglesia Menonita Hispana, Samuel Lopez, current IMH moderator, and Madeline Maldonado, incoming chair of the Mennonite Mission Network board of directors.

On May 3-4 and less than one week after the dedication of its new building, Arca de Salvación church in Fort Myers, Fla., hosted an event called “Celebrando la Inmigración” (Celebrating Immigration). The event was organized by the Iglesia Menonita Hispana (Hispanic Mennonite Church).

The main reason for the two days of celebration was to gather the IMH congregations that resolved not to be present at the Mennonite Church USA convention in Phoenix in July due to the sustained persecution of immigrants by the state of Arizona.

The event drew more than 120 people from several states and representatives from churchwide groups, including Mennonite Mission Network, Executive Board, Mennonite Education Agency, Mennonite Historical Society, Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) and Christian Peacemakers Teams. Some of them provided presentations focusing on the life of the immigrants, their participation and contributions to society and the Mennonite Church USA congregations to which they belong.

On May 3, at the beginning of the program and after a welcome from David Maldonado, the local pastor and participants were led in worship by the local musicians. The altar was festooned with flags of the nations represented and crafts characteristic of each country of origin.

Andrew Boddén of MCC presented two true stories of immigrants to the United States in search of better horizons—like those who came from Europe in the past.

Then Gilberto Flores, associate conference minister of Western District Conference, recounted several cases of immigrants who found expressions of Christian love and cordial welcome in many of our Mennonite congregations on this side of the border.

Later, Saulo Padilla, director for MCC immigration education, recounted his story and challenged the audience not to be silent but “tell your story to your children and grandchildren.” This was to avoid situations that most European descendants are in now: They do not know their own stories. Then several participants were able to relate some of their stories, including comical circumstances and anecdotes that occur to many entering a new culture.

Based on the story of Exodus, Juanita Nuñez and Gilberto Flores presented, “From Immigrants to Pilgrims,” an analysis of the dynamics that govern the displacement of people at migration.

Stanley Green, Mennonite Mission Network’s executive director, presented the theme, “Immigration and Food: Building a Potluck of Justice, Diversity and Belonging.” Green talked about the stereotypes of food used to denigrate immigrants. With the passing of time, he said, such food is preferred and even adopted as national food.

May 4 brought the rich ethnic tradition of the Garifunas through worship and praise in three languages: Garifuna, Spanish and English. The audience was led in worship by the Garifuna musical group.

Rolando Santiago, executive director of the Lancaster (Pa.) Mennonite Historical Society, shared about Anabaptist migration to many places in the world, analyzing the many factors that operate in the act of peoples and communities migrating. Finally, Samuel Lopez presented “A Pilgrim’s Prayer,” an enlightening piece written by Carlos Mestes. He also conducted the group in a reflection and response to the document.

—Rafael Barahona, a joint release of The Mennonite, Mennonite Church USA Executive Board and Mennonite Education Agency
Women in Leadership Project gathers momentum

Subgroups focus on mentoring, monologues, undoing sexism.

Mennonite Church USA’s Women in Leadership Project (WLP), whose goal is to address the systemic obstacles that stand in the way of women becoming church leaders, continues to generate interest and gather support from across the country.

“We are blessed to be joined by many who are committed to volunteering their time in order to move this work forward,” says Joanna Shenk, who coordinates the project with Hilary Scarsella. Shenk and Scarsella are Mennonite Church USA Executive Board staff members.

In addition to coordinating four focus groups—one each on mentoring, monologues, empowering resources, and undoing sexism—WLP staff members are leading several other initiatives, from a Women in Leadership blog on Mennonite Church USA’s website to a “Women Doing Theology” conference slated for early 2014. There are plans to create an online tool that will help interested congregations and church agencies locate people in their areas who can provide education and church services to address domestic violence and abuse.

At the churchwide convention to be held July 1–6 in Phoenix, the WLP will host a learning experience, Undoing Sexism through Storytelling, and a seminar, Circles of Solidarity: Creating Mentoring Networks for Women. An exhibit highlighting 100 years of Mennonite women’s history in the United States also will be on display.

The WLP began in August 2009. During the project’s first two years, Shenk conducted an audit of Mennonite organizations related to numbers of women in leadership, worked with a short-term steering committee, presented findings of the audit to the denomination’s Executive Board and Constituency Leaders Council, hosted a gathering of 30 women leaders in Goshen, Ind., and led a workshop with Scarsella at a Mennonite Women USA “Women in Conversation” retreat in Heston, Kan. She also coordinated a seminar and reception in July 2011 at the denominational convention in Pittsburgh.

“The conversation at Pittsburgh 2011 resonated with feedback from other gatherings that had happened across the country,” she says.

In the months that followed, additional gatherings were held in Greeley, Colo., and Newton, Kan. The needs and goals identified at all these gatherings were shaped into the four focus groups described above. A new steering committee was formed in August 2012 to provide vision for and feedback on each part of the project.

“Recognizing that no one form of oppression exists on its own, this steering committee is tasked with holding the Women in Leadership Project accountable to an approach that understands that the need for undoing sexism intersects with needs for undoing racism and all other ‘isms,’” Scarsella says.

The Mentoring focus group is working to create a network of support and development for women leaders across the church, focusing specifically on theological leadership, pastoral leadership, institutional leadership and conference leadership.

The Monologues focus group strives to create a safe space for women to tell their stories of struggle and hope related to being in leadership in the Mennonite church. The group is launching a website where women’s stories will be collected and shared for one year; the group will then select some of the stories to appear in a book.

“There are stories thatelijk Mennonite Monologues will give voice to women’s stories that have never had a public space to be shared,” says Rachel Halder, a member of the group.

The Empowering Resources focus group is developing a worship series intended to help not only women and girls but entire congregations address the need for undoing sexism in both personal and congregational settings. The worship resources will take into account women’s stories and experiences in the Bible and today.

“We believe that worship with this emphasis offers the whole church an opportunity to experience God more fully and deeply,” Scarsella says. “It forms women and girls to believe they are worthy of being called as leaders.”

The Undoing Sexism focus group is tasked with generating conversation about naming and transforming systemic sexism in Mennonite Church USA. With careful attention to the broad range of needs across the denomination regarding this subject, this group is creating a document that seeks to explain the need for attention to be given to systemic sexism in the life of the church. The group is also working toward creating a website to offer resources to support Mennonite secondary education teachers of all subjects in providing antiseexist and antiracist education.

—Mennonite Church USA staff

Emily Kraybill of Goshen (Ind.) College served the Women in Leadership Project as a Ministry Inquiry Program intern in the summer of 2012.
Detroit Mennonite runs largest urban farm

Mike Score faces challenges in balancing competing interests in struggling city.

When Mike Score stood on a street corner by a vacant lot in Detroit, he felt a nudge from God to consider urban farming. That was 10 years ago. Score now works as president of Hantz Woodlands, a large-scale tree farm and subsidiary of Hantz Farms, located near that very same street corner.

Score was born on the east side of Detroit and says he grew up as a “city kid.” He went to Michigan State University in East Lansing to study crop and soil science, and there he met Mary, his wife. Together, they completed a four-year Mennonite Central Committee term in the Democratic Republic of Congo, followed by time serving in Kentucky.

After these eclectic experiences, he hoped to return home to contribute his skills.

“I had a 30-year career in agriculture, but my hometown was Detroit,” he says. “It seemed like an oxymoron.”

However, he moved back to Ann Arbor, Mich., in 1997 and began working for Michigan State University. During this time he also helped write business plans for food and agriculture ventures. In 2003, he received a call from someone who wanted to reopen a farmers’ market in Detroit near where Score’s grandparents lived when they emigrated from Poland to Detroit.

“[That area] was a classic train wreck,” says Score, a member of Ann Arbor (Mich.) Mennonite Church. “Heroin and crack came in the ’70s. It was crime ridden and blighted.”

Score also worked with a church group that helped formerly homeless individuals and former addicts with gardening projects. “I watched people tend their plants, make money and then get back on drugs,” he says. “It was really heartbreaking.”

The efforts were small scale and kept failing. When Score felt most frustrated, he went on a prayer walk. At a street corner he heard God say, “Mike, you need to work with people where they’re at and with what they have.”

In 2008, Score’s boss from Michigan State connected him to John Hantz, a businessman in Detroit who wanted to start an urban farm business venture. That year, Score went to meet with one of Hantz’ employees. During the meeting, the employee showed a map of where the urban farm would begin. It was the exact same street corner Score prayed at years earlier. Score was hired.

Hantz Woodlands is an enterprise of the Hantz Farms Detroit. It launched in 2009 and has plans to purchase more than 200 acres of vacant land from the city of Detroit and plant hardwood tree farms in those areas. Hantz Woodlands will maintain the properties, pay taxes to the city, beautify the area and hopefully create some new jobs down the road. Score has been president for four years.

Despite the divine timing for Score, the work of Hantz Woodlands faces challenges. For example, residents near the vacant lots have strongly questioned why the city of Detroit would sell to Hantz and not to them.

According to Score, the city council wanted to keep the land public, with hopes that a “big economic development venture” would emerge, but that never happened. They wanted to believe that the city was on the “upswing economically” and were blind to other options.

“Frankly, we agreed with the community members on this point,” he says. “The city should have never done what they did.”

The city owns over one-third of the land through foreclosures and does not receive property taxes from that land. At a public hearing in December 2012, 125 residents spoke against Hantz and nine in favor. However, the city council still voted 5-4 in favor of the venture. Score says their attorney asked two of the members who voted for Hantz Farms why they voted that way.

“The council members said the tactics used [against us] were so unpleasant that they couldn’t bring themselves to vote for our opponents,” Score says. “Our project had merit. If the council had voted against us, they would have had to work with our opponents.”

The Mennonite staff contacted the city clerk on May 13 for the minutes but never received them. “People are frustrated that the city denied their requests to buy [the lots], and now they are selling to Woodlands,” says Score.

Score works to educate residents that his contract with the city includes a stipulation that before Hantz can purchase the land, the residents have the opportunity to buy lots adjacent to their properties for a lower price than Hantz would pay. “We can empathize,” Score says, “but on the other hand, it was our effort that moved the city … to sell vacant parcels to community residents.”

Score remains committed to community involvement. If the neighbors of the Woodlands affirm the work, Woodlands will work to purchase 150 more acres. One of the end goals is job creation.

“In the future, hopefully, neighbors will want crops that will create more jobs,” says Score. “We’re willing to let our neighbors take the lead in terms of what we plant and grow.” —Anna Groff
Model lands Amish romance book cover

DeBerg attends Emmanuel Mennonite in Minneapolis, edits Timbre.

How does a Mennonite woman end up an “Amish” model featured on the refreshed cover of an Amish romance novel?

For Claire DeBerg, a model and a member of Emmanuel Mennonite Church in Minneapolis, it just came together.

In 2009, a modeling agent approached her at a wedding and asked, “What’s your ethnicity?” DeBerg, who is Cherokee, says she is asked this question a lot.

The agent was looking for “ethnically vague models” and thought DeBerg fit the bill.

DeBerg could not find a reason not to try modeling, so she agreed to get some headshots taken and have the agency represent her.

Almost immediately, she landed a job for a commercial for Target, which is headquartered in Minneapolis.

Some auditions involve speaking a few lines, others involve only a few photos. For Target, DeBerg had to laugh on cue, which she also did in the commercial shoot.

The commercial aired on the Red Channel, Target’s in-store channel. In fact, her parents went to a Target in Kentucky and saw the commercial airing in the television sales section of the store.

But DeBerg’s modeling did not end with Target.

In August 2012, DeBerg received an email from her agent asking for four photos: one front view with her hair down, one with her hair up and both profiles.

She landed the job and later found out the audition was for Bethany Publishing House, also located in Minneapolis. A reshoot was planned for a new cover of Beverly Lewis’ novel The Prodigal, book four in the Abram’s Daughters Amish romance series originally published in 2004.

DeBerg says Bethany Publishing House likely wanted the new cover to feature a woman instead of just an Amish man, like the first cover, since books with women on the covers tend to sell better.

The photo shoot took two hours and produced more than 800 photos, which surprised her. The photographer specializes in shooting the images for Amish book covers.

“He takes his work very seriously and has actual Amish clothes made by the Amish,” DeBerg says. “He rents the head coverings to movie sets needing authentic Amish clothes and was very distraught when a covering was re-
turned to him quite crushed. Each bonnet is stored alone in its own container.”

The makeup artist was a young, trendy woman who considered herself an expert in Amish makeup and hairstyles. She styled DeBerg’s hair into the traditional rolled sides and bun in the back.

During the shoot, DeBerg talked with the crew, sharing with them that she is Mennonite, and explained the differences between Amish and Mennonites. The crew asked her many questions about her life and faith.

They were shocked when she said there are three Mennonite churches in the Twin Cities. DeBerg joined Emmanuel Mennonite in 2001.

She did not grow up Mennonite but came to know them through her sister, Jennifer Davis Sensenig, who did a year of service in Manitoba with Mennonite Voluntary Service and later went to Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Elkhart, Ind.

DeBerg has modeled for Walgreen’s, a Rapala commercial, H&R Block and various other print ads. She continues to audition; however, her attitude remains light and noncompetitive.

“For me, [modeling is] fun and pays well. When I don’t get a part, I’m OK with it,” she says. “Modeling is not my career path … if it was, I’d be living in L.A. or New York, not Minneapolis.”

DeBerg says jokingly that she is trying to get other Mennonites to model.

Her agent asked her if she knew an Asian woman in her 50s or 60s. DeBerg immediately thought of Kim Vu Friesen from her congregation. Friesen is a former Mennonite Church USA Executive Board member.

Friesen auditioned for the Walgreen’s commercial and landed the job. However, when she arrived for the shoot, the crew thought she looked too young, so they applied makeup to age her.

DeBerg has also gotten her family into the modeling world. Her 10-year-old daughter, Gloria, who has actually gotten more work than DeBerg, was in a Target commercial that aired during the 2012 summer Olympics.

Her husband also got a job modeling for a Medtronic print ad.

In addition to work as a model, DeBerg began as editor of Timbre, the Mennonite Women USA publication, in January. She is a graduate of Bethel University, St. Paul, Minn., and of the University of Northern Iowa in Cedar Falls.—Anna Groff

Claire DeBerg
Colleges, seminary graduate 1,238 students
Speakers include former professor, seminary president, nonprofit exec.

Abigail Graber (center, with red and yellow trim) was part of a ‘legacy’ couple added to Bluffton University’s traditional Maypole dance for May Day festivities on May 4.

Bluffton (Ohio) University
279, May 5
Minutes away from becoming Bluffton University graduates on May 5, 279 students were reminded that they have another test.

“That test is called ‘the rest of your life,’” said J. Denny Weaver, a professor emeritus of religion at Bluffton and the speaker at the university’s 113th annual commencement ceremony.

The test is “how well you invest the education you have acquired,” he said, urging the graduates to do so by helping bend the moral arc that the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. said is long but “bends toward justice.”

“King is telling us that progress toward justice may seem slow, but we should keep working away at it,” said Weaver, a noted Mennonite theologian who retired in 2006 after 31 years at Bluffton. “Use your Bluffton University education to bend that arc toward justice."

“Injustice comes in many forms,” he said, citing income inequality—“fostered by economic and tax policies that keep the poor poor while allowing the rich to get even richer”—as well as discrimination of various types.

“Our world needs people who are willing to confront these injustices and take risks for peace,” added Weaver, also an author and editor who has written extensively about nonviolence and religion.—Bluffton University

Eastern Mennonite Seminary, Harrisonburg, Va.
24 graduates, April 27
In 2005, Nathaniel Daniel had lost everything. He was jobless, homeless, addicted to drugs and involved in criminal activity. His wife had left him, taking their three children with her. This year he will graduate from Eastern Mennonite Seminary with dual degrees: a master of divinity and master of arts in conflict transformation.

“We are never beyond God’s reach,” says Daniel. “We are never beyond God’s love. That’s the message I want to take to people with addictions. My seminary degree is part of my testimony and witness to what God can do.”

Daniel is planning to start a chapter of U-Turn for Christ, the program that turned his life around, in the Harrisonburg, Va., area. U-Turn for Christ is a residential drug and alcohol program for men and women who are seeking restoration from drug and alcohol addiction. It has a biblical foundation.

Daniel entered the U-Turn program in 2005 at the urging of his estranged wife, Eleni Maile. He completed several months of residential treatment and then, in phase two of the program, did six months of service helping survivors of Hurricane Katrina.

Finally, Daniel was reunited with his family, and they moved together from California to Tennessee, where Daniel continued to work for a branch of U-Turn. In 2007, Daniel returned to Harrisonburg for a high school reunion at Eastern Mennonite High School.

“I realized as I was giving my family a tour of Eastern Mennonite High School and Eastern Mennonite University that I wanted my family to be a part of this community and that I wanted to study in seminary,” he says. His older son, Yonaton, is now a rising sophomore at EMU. His younger children, Yosef and Asene, are students at Eastern Mennonite High School.

“The seminary has been incredibly challenging, intentional and formative for me. The people here have been able to speak into my life. They affirm who I am and also continue to stretch and pull me, preparing me for what God has called me to do.”

Daniel says he added the conflict transformation degree to address the ways that addicts hurt
not only themselves but those around them: “Helping people restore relationships with others is part of the healing process.”

In 2010, Daniel was ordained in Mennonite Church USA. He and his family attend Lindale (Va.) Mennonite Church.

Daniel is one of 18 graduates who received degrees on April 27. Daniel and 12 others received master of divinity degrees, four received master of arts in religion degrees, and one received a master of arts in church leadership. Six received graduate certificates.

Daniel’s story embodies what Lee Snyder, president emeritus of Bluffton (Ohio) University, told seminary graduates in her commencement address, titled “Reclaiming the Story.”

“The biblical narrative ‘is not a safe or simple story,’ but then neither are our stories safe or totally comprehensible. We join a cast of unlikely heroes, scruffy characters and needy travelers on a journey of faith. Beloved of God, we are invited into a company of individuals who have experienced the Redeemer’s transforming love.

“The church has a story that must be shared. It is ‘Scripture’s grand narrative’ that allows us to abound in hope rather than wallow in despair.”—Laura Lehman Amstutz of EMS

**Eastern Mennonite University, Harrisonburg, Va. 497 graduates, April 28**

Commencement speaker Mark Shriver said he had to battle his own ego to address the 2013 graduating class of Eastern Mennonite University (EMU) about what really counts: “To perform acts of hope and love … is what matters.”

“I initially accepted the invitation to speak here because it is such an honor and it felt good for my ego,” he said on April 28. “I was being recognized for all of my great achievements: Should I talk about my work as a member of the Maryland legislature or what lessons I

![From left: James Souder and Phillip Martin, EMU class of 2013, celebrate following commencement.](image)

gleaned from my successful private sector experience? Maybe I should speak about writing a bestselling book and the experience of a national book tour? Surely this was my chance to speak about my thoughts, to share my pearls of wisdom.

“But when I started to write this speech, I struggled,” he said. “Those very thoughts conflicted with what [EMU] stands for and has taught each of you. Indeed, by extending the invitation, [EMU] was teaching me that what I am trying to do in my life—to serve poor kids and their families, to perform acts of hope and love—is what matters.”

Mark Shriver is the author of *A Good Man: Rediscovering My Father, Sargent Shriver* (Henry Holt and Co., 2012), which describes how his father lived out his faith, hope and love in his marriage of 54 years, parenting of five children, and wide-ranging service work.

Shriver is senior vice president for strategic initiatives and senior advisor to the chief executive officer of Save the Children U.S. Programs. “By asking me to stand in front of all of you—a guy who is not a political potentate or a high-ranking legal scholar, who is not a famous bestselling author—by inviting me to speak—someone who is striving to be a pencil in God’s hand—[EMU] has taught me—and I hope all of you—that what is truly important in life is to accept Jesus’ invitation to love and serve each other, to commit to daily acts of hope and love.”

—Mike Zucconi and Bonnie Price Lofton of EMU

Nathaniel Daniel, Eastern Mennonite Seminary graduate, celebrated his accomplishments on April 28 with his family (left to right): sons Yosef, 17, Yonatan, 19, his wife, Eleni Maile, and daughter Asene, 15.

![Nathaniel Daniel](image)
Mennonite schools (continued)

Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Bethel College yet to come

Goshen (Ind.) College
277 graduates, April 28
Members of Goshen College’s Class of 2013 received undergraduate and graduate degrees on April 28 after being encouraged to seek God’s love that surpasses knowledge, as well as true and authentic relationships.

The class of 2013 consisted of 277 graduates. At a morning baccalaureate worship service in the college’s church-chapel, president James E. Brenneman delivered a sermon titled “Love in the Clouds of Unknowing,” based on Ephesians 3:16-19, in which the Apostle Paul speaks of God providing “love that surpasses knowledge.” At 3 p.m. Sunday, under slate-gray clouds, 138 current and retired faculty members led the graduates in a procession into the gymnasium of the Roman Gingerich Recreation-Fitness Center for the 115th Goshen College commencement.

Brenneman acknowledged the tragic loss of Millicent M. Morros, 48, who was killed on March 14 in downtown Goshen. She received a bachelor’s degree in organizational leadership at Sunday’s ceremony, and a moment of silence was observed on her behalf. Her classmates in the adult program wore pink roses in her honor.

The commencement speaker was Dan Charles, a food and agriculture correspondent for National Public Radio. Before working at NPR, Charles was an independent radio producer and writer, and he has contributed articles for publications including National Geographic, Science and the Washington Post. In his address, “Searching for What’s Real in a Digital World,” Charles talked about growing up in a rural Mennonite community near Lancaster, Pa., and how his life was enriched by Goshen College graduates, who have become some of his closest friends.—Goshen College

Goshen College graduate Emily Trapp, a music major from Canby, Ore., celebrates receiving her degree.

Hesston (Kan.) College
161 graduates, May 5
Commencement speaker J. Nelson Kraybill, president-elect of Mennonite World Conference, filled the graduates with hope for a world filled with shalom as they departed Hesston College at the May 5 ceremony.

Kraybill referenced the apostle Paul’s words to the church in Ephesians 1:16-23 to encourage the graduates that there is hope in the world, and God is not silent. “I do not cease giving thanks to God for you as I remember you today in my prayers,” Kraybill said. “And I pray with Paul that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened so you understand the hope to which God has called you, and the power of the gospel to transform lives and change the world.”

Kraybill, who serves as pastor of Prairie Street Mennonite Church in Elkhart, Ind., and is president emeritus of Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Elkhart, shared stories of forgiveness and love to show that, despite the pain and suffering in the world every day, there is hope in faith and within faith communities. He challenged the graduates to live for that shalom community and serve others boldly.—Hesston College

Destavia Davis, Nacogdoches, Texas, receives her Hesston College diploma from president Howard Keim.
Florida church to build a community park  

Cape Christian Fellowship is 26 years old; 1,800 attend five worship services.

Rather than building a new, 1,700-seat auditorium, Cape Christian Fellowship in Cape Coral, Fla., will build Fellowship Park (artist’s rendering above), build a health clinic nearby, build new churches in Haiti and launch a new campus in North Cape Coral.

Recognizing that cities are changed at home, Cape Christian Fellowship has announced plans to forego building a proposed 1,700-seat auditorium and build Fellowship Park, a community park for the city of Cape Coral, Fla. The park will be open for public use and will be funded, maintained, owned and operated by the church.

The church has doubled its membership over the past five years, and rather than pursue a traditional church building campaign, Cape Christian Fellowship initiated a Christmas offering to fund the park, the expansion of its interactive family worship experience, a health clinic nearby, new churches in Haiti and launch of a new campus in North Cape Coral. A family offered a $1 million matching gift, and others gave generously to reach a total of $1.28 million. The 100,000-square-foot park will include the city’s largest splash pad, multiple playgrounds, sports and multipurpose fields, common areas, a jogging trail, covered pavilions and covered seating with a full service café.

Fellowship Park is part of a larger expansion campaign in progress. The second phase of this campaign includes the church’s involvement in local schools. The final phase of the campaign involves launching a medical clinic and the Center for Family Life to provide resources to the community. The 26-year-old church is home to over 1,800 members and guests who attend their five contemporary worship services each weekend.—Cape Christian Fellowship
Welcoming stance affects church transfer request

Atlantic Coast approves Pa. congregation’s move from Lancaster Conference.

A Pennsylvania congregation hoping to transfer from one Mennonite Church USA area conference to another after expressing openness to gay members has received an invitation to associate membership.

Atlantic Coast Conference (ACC) delegates on April 20 invited Frazer Mennonite Church, currently affiliated with Lancaster Mennonite Conference, to become an associate member.

The decision drew interest mainly because of a statement introducing the congregation that Frazer’s pastor, Brenda Martin Hurst, read at the ACC fall assembly last October.

“Frazer wants to continue to be the welcoming, connecting and healing place that it has been for decades, without singling out a certain group of people—in this case gays—for special exclusion when they desire to be a member,” she read in part.

Neither the Frazer congregation nor its leadership have come to a consensus about homosexuality, she said. But the congregation has expressed “preliminary affirmation” for a general membership statement that “welcomes into membership all persons who profess faith in Christ and all who desire to walk with Christ in order to grow and trust in God, in following the light of Scripture and in living Jesus’ way,” without naming or singling out gays for exclusion.

Frazer requested membership in ACC after it became clear that Lancaster Mennonite Conference would not support such a statement, Martin Hurst said.

She said the congregation was drawn to ACC because it embraces unity in Jesus Christ in the midst of diversity in belief and practice. Frazer values ACC’s congregation-centered leadership structure and its commitment to Mennonite Church USA, she said.

Meeting at Conestoga Mennonite Church, ACC delegates accepted Frazer’s associate membership in a narrow two-thirds majority vote—64-29, or 69 percent in favor.

“Over the next 18 months, we will continue to engage in dialogue and discernment, trusting that God’s Spirit will lead and guide us. We request that delegates at the fall assembly in 2014 review Frazer’s membership status,” the invitation concluded.

Martin Hurst said Frazer “would have preferred to receive a clear ‘yes’ or ‘no’ to our request for full membership ... rather than a partial affirmation, leaving our conference membership status uncertain for an extended period of time.” But she said Frazer understood that ACC might need more time to discern.

The ACC executive committee proposed associate membership in April because of diverse responses to Frazer’s request and a desire to stay together as a conference and to be faithful to Jesus and Scripture.

“Is there a way forward that respects the deeply held convictions of everyone involved in this process?” conference moderator Harry Jarrett asked. “We believe that extending to Frazer an invitation of associate membership for a period of 18 months may be that way forward.”—Lowell Brown for Mennonite World Review, reprinted with permission
Eight women, six of whom were current members of the Mennonite Early Childhood Network Council, gathered March 15-17 in the home of Linda and Vernon Martin of Harleysville, Pa., for the first summit of MECN. Since 2006, members of the MECN Council have been meeting through monthly conference calls to provide information and support for parents and early educators of children, birth through kindergarten, primarily through emails to members and on its website, www.mennoniteeducation.org/mecn.

Kathryn Aschliman, MECN coordinator, and Elaine Moyer, Mennonite Education Agency senior director, planned the agenda and facilitated the event for early childhood professionals from Indiana, Kansas, Ohio, Pennsylvania and Virginia. The three-day summit included time to reflect on the mission statement, explore current trends in care and education of young children, and brainstorm about ways that MECN can continue to provide support for others in the early childhood field. The need for additional funding for MECN initiatives and resources was also discussed.

For a glimpse of local programs, Linda Martin provided an opportunity for attendees to visit Salford Mennonite Child Care Centers in two locations: Salford Mennonite Church and the intergenerational child-care program located in the Dock Woods Retirement Community. Linda was the director of SMCCC for nearly 20 years and is currently serving on the board.

As an initial outcome of the summit, MECN will invite responses from churches, child-care and education programs, and parents through a needs-assessment survey to learn how MECN can best serve young children through the adults who teach and care for them. Responses to the survey will clarify the needs and help determine direction for future MECN initiatives.

Louise Matthews, director of The Lion and Lamb Peace Arts Center of Bluffton University, led the Sunday morning worship. Reflecting on the message highlighted in the picture book Different Just Like Me by Lori Mitchell, she said, “We are gifted differently and have unique opportunities to be advocates for young children in direct and indirect ways through our various roles as educators and directors.”

—Louise Matthews
Illegal gun trafficking the focus of MCC tours

1,700 people at 32 events hear traumatic stories due to illegal handguns.

Monts before the mass shooting of teachers and children in Newtown, Conn., brought the issue of gun violence to national political attention yet again, Mennonite Central Committee U.S. was raising awareness about the problem of gun violence in the United States. Through MCC East Coast’s work with those touched by gun violence, they knew that any gun violence caused tremendous loss and trauma, forever changing the lives of the families, friends, neighbors and communities who knew both the victim and the offender.

They also knew that many of those murders were committed with illegally trafficked handguns.

So MCC East Coast organized the Gun Violence Prevention Storytelling Tour to schools, universities, churches and small groups in the fall of 2012, and MCC Great Lakes did a similar tour this spring.

The tours “aimed to encourage a conversation among Jesus’ followers about ways the church can bear witness to the ‘Spirit of life in Christ Jesus’ in the face of the ‘law of sin and death’ so evident in gun violence,” says Curtis Book, MCC East Coast peace and justice coordinator, citing Romans 8:2.

More than 1,700 people at 32 events heard local storytellers share personal experiences of loss and trauma because of illegal handguns. Along with other tour participants, they talked of ways faith communities and families can respond in order to cope with these losses and prevent further violence.

On the East Coast tour, which visited Philadelphia, Harrisburg (Pa.) and Harrisonburg (Va.), Book and J. Fred Kauffman, MCC Philadelphia program coordinator, spoke about illegally trafficked handguns, which they said are flooding urban neighborhoods already struggling with many other problems.

“Legally owned guns are used in very few crimes,” says Kaufman, “so our concern is not law-abiding gun owners; it is precisely about illegally trafficked handguns.”

Typically a gun trafficker gives money to friends who can pass background checks and asks them to buy multiple handguns at a legal gun shop. The straw purchasers then give the guns to the trafficker for a commission, and the trafficker sells the guns on the street to people who cannot buy a gun legally—youth or people with a criminal record.

If a gun used in crime is traced back to straw purchasers, they claim it was “lost” or “stolen” and face no liability.

In Great Lakes, after presentations in the Chicago area, Kaufman also led an Indiana workshop for Goshen and Elkhart pastors that culminated in visits to three local gun shops. Most of the pastors had never been in a gun shop.

Talking illegal guns with the sheriff: J. Fred Kauffman (left), Mennonite Central Committee Philadelphia program coordinator, leads an Indiana workshop for Goshen and Elkhart pastors that included a discussion with Elkhart County Sheriff Brad Rogers. The workshop culminated in visits to three local gun shops.

The goal was to learn how gun shops operate and engage in discussions about how the owners can be allies in the fight to keep illegal guns off the streets.—Mimi Copp Johnson and Jennifer Steiner of Mennonite Central Committee

What can I do?

1. Connect with a church that has been affected by gun violence. Listen to their members’ stories of how this violence has touched their lives.

2. Pray for victims and offenders of gun violence, for churches and communities that walk alongside them.

3. Sign MCC Gospel of Jesus & Gun Violence postcard on gun violence prevention to send to elected officials.

4. Make use of the MCC Preventing Gun Violence packet with your church or group for study, discussion and prayer.

5. Do research on illegal gun markets. Learn about the flow of illegally trafficked handguns from legal gun shops to criminal markets through straw purchasers.—Mimi Copp Johnson and Jennifer Steiner
Good News Seminary turns nightmares into dreams

On his way to commit suicide, Ofosu met man who introduced him to Christ.

In the past, Philip Ofosu attempted to take his own life. Now he is leading a congregation in Ghana. Philip Yaw Ofosu’s life has been shaped by dreams, adversity and miracles. Good News Theological and Seminary has helped him make sense of it all.

Ofosu was born on the day some soldiers of the Ghanaian army overthrew the government of Kwame Nkrumah, the first president of the Republic of Ghana, Feb. 24, 1966. His parents sacrificed much to permit their son to attend primary school. However, his father’s death forced Ofosu to drop out to help his mother on the family farm.

Sometimes, Ofosu wept over the misfortune that prevented him from continuing his studies. One day, a policeman saw Ofosu’s tears as he went to work in the fields. When the policeman learned Ofosu was crying because he longed to go to school, the policeman provided a large portion of the required fees. Ofosu sold firewood to pay for the remainder.

Making good use of the policeman’s seed money, Ofosu furthered his education at Tamale Polytechnic, where he majored in construction, and at University College of Education in Kumasi. Ofosu worked as a technical instructor in secondary schools to help pay for his studies.

Although a student and a teacher following his dreams by day, Ofosu was a victim of nightmares when he tried to sleep. In 1989, he said he began to feel trapped and had no one to help him with these spiritual attacks.

“A snake bit me in a dream. When I woke up, I sensed burning at the place the snake bit. In another dream someone shot me. On waking up from the sleep, I felt a sharp pain at the place in my leg where the bullet hit,” Ofosu says.

To counteract this increasingly unbearable oppression, Ofosu spent all his salary and borrowed large sums to consult occult specialists. He visited 12 fetish shrines in all.

“But the experiences became worse,” Ofosu says. In 1996, Ofosu fell so deeply into debt trying to buy freedom from fearsome night terrors that he decided to take his own life. His first attempt was with a knife. When that failed, he put some poison in his pocket and armed himself with a rope. He took public transportation to a deserted place.

“On my way to the spot where I intended to commit suicide, I met a man who introduced me to Christ,” Ofosu says.

A physical person or an angel? It is not clear. When Ofosu returned home, he and Margaret, his wife of seven years, held hands and prayed. Margaret had also been having premonitions of her husband’s death. In dreams, she saw Ofosu with bound hands surrounded by people threatening him with a spear. But then heavenly light broke into this scene of torture, and she witnessed her husband being saved by angels.

“That night the chains fell away, and now I am free,” Ofosu says, describing what happened as he and Margaret prayed.

Ofosu and his wife both became Christians. In 2000, Ofosu resigned from his teaching positions and plunged into serious Bible studies. With the help of his wife and a friend, Ofosu began a prayer ministry with five people under a big cashew tree. Today, this has grown into a 70-member congregation, Christ Celebration Church.

In 2005, Ofosu enrolled at Good News Theological and Seminary and graduated three years later with a bachelor of theology degree.

Good News Theological College and Seminary grew out of a collaborative ministry that began in 1969, when Mennonite Board of Missions, a Mennonite Mission Network predecessor agency, was invited by Church of the Lord (Adalura), an African-Initiated Church, to begin a biblical seminary in a suburb of Accra.—Lynda Hollinger-Janzen of Mennonite Mission Network
Is the church afraid to talk about sex?

Loewen: Mennonite youth may think homosexual sex is the only kind there is.

Youth growing up in many Mennonite churches could be forgiven for thinking that homosexual sex is the only kind of intercourse people have, because that’s the only kind many congregations discuss.

Keith Graber Miller, professor of Bible, religion and philosophy at Goshen (Ind.) College, says that congregations have been so focused on gay and lesbian relationships that they have missed an opportunity to discuss intimacy with heterosexual youth and young adults.

“If I’m heterosexual, I get no guidelines for how to think about my body, sex, sexuality and relating to the other sex,” he says. “That’s a really bizarre thing.”

While some churches, families or youth groups do a good job, many ignore the uncomfortable subject to the possible detriment of future relationships.

“I don’t know how we can imagine, as a church, that our people are going to grow up to be healthy sexual beings in congregations if the church does not talk about sexuality at all during their adolescent years,” he says.

While the topic may make some parents or pastors squirm, many youth have questions the church won’t answer.

What to talk about?

The conversation in many churches may focus on homosexual relationships, but youth and young adults often have different priorities.

Twenty years ago, Graber Miller promised himself he wouldn’t give presentations on sexuality if he could not speak about masturbation. While he says that the majority of men and women self-pleasure, including those in relationships, many wonder if it’s OK or feel tremendous guilt about it—something he aims to alleviate.

He usually links that discussion to one about pornography because for many people the two are closely linked. While Graber Miller affirms masturbation, he is against pornography, arguing that it exploits women and can create unrealistic expectations for relationships. He advocates separating masturbation from pornography in order to foster healthier relationships.

In the past, students have come to him, saying, “I’m in a relationship now really for the first time with somebody I really care about, and I’m finding that my past addictions to pornography are affecting the way I’m relating to the person I’m dating, and I don’t want to be that kind of person,” Graber Miller says.

When serving as youth minister for Mennonite Church Saskatchewan, Anna Rehan also gained an understanding of what youth and young adults want to know, and masturbation is one of many items on the list. She says that many questions are practical in nature, such as:

• At what point in a relationship should you or shouldn’t you have sex?
• Is it OK to live with a partner before marriage?

“That are realities they’re asking [about] because that’s what’s out there,” says Rehan, who is now retired but serving on an interim basis until July.

Wendy (Harder) Eisler also encountered youth with a lot of practical questions throughout her 17 years in youth ministry.

“When they start dating, that becomes their world, and so they have tons of questions,” she says. “I guess to me there wasn’t ever a topic that was taboo.”

Eisler says that sometimes kids just need a safe space to raise questions they are embarrassed to ask their friends or parents. Having open communication allows teens to understand what their friends are talking about, and then form their own opinions.

Both Eisler and Graber Miller stress to youth that there are stages of intimacy in relationships and encourage them to consider the significance of each one. Eisler provided youth with a pamphlet that described different stages of intimacy and placed the talk in a series of Bible studies on relationships.

Graber Miller often distributes a list of approximately 40 intimate behaviors, from simple things like holding hands all the way to intercourse. He wants to remind youth that there are many acts of intimacy before sex that can have a significant impact on their lives and relationships.

“What I want us to get away from is, to think that sex, having sex, is genital-genital sexual intercourse only. To me, there are broader forms of sexual behaviors that involve genitalia that are morally significant and that should not be entered into lightly,” he says.

When it comes to guidelines about sex, there are variations in what leaders will suggest. While Graber Miller says he is realistic that not all young people will save sex for
committed, publicly affirmed relationships, he still presents that as the ideal.

Rehan says that she wants to affirm sex in a committed relationship, warning youth against recreational sex, which she says is harmful over time.

“I think that would be our concern,” she says, “to let kids know that you’ve got these impulses, and it feels good for the moment. But what are some of the long-term effects that can have and how healthy is it in the long run?”

Eisler always made clear to the youth where she stood but remained open to talking with those who didn’t do the same.

“What I learned early on in dealing with teenagers,” she says, “is if you do draw the lines in the sand and you create things really black and white, they stop talking to you.”

Kathy Giesbrecht, associate director of leadership ministries for Mennonite Church Manitoba and a longtime youth pastor, takes a similar approach to encouraging a dialogue with youth. When teaching Sunday school, she tries to give them some guidelines but doesn’t set out strict rules, even though that’s what some parents may prefer.

“We want to help our kids think and understand,” she says, “and so giving them guidelines for a variety of scenarios isn’t probably our most helpful strategy.”

**How to have the conversation:** Once a congregation decides to talk with youth about sex, it faces another significant hurdle: how to bring it up.

Both Eisler and Graber Miller suggest bringing in a facilitator from the congregation or community who is familiar with the topic, such as counselors, social workers or doctors.

Graber Miller has also asked youth to write down questions on the topic ahead of time to diffuse some of the tension. Youth groups can also watch popular movies, then discuss “what kind of messages are being communicated and how is that similar to or different from what you hear from the church and from your school and from your peers,” he says.

Giesbrecht suggests bringing in couples or individuals in different stages of life to share about their experiences in adolescence and adulthood, and the stages of their relationships.

“That has been helpful because it often will normalize experience, and kids will just see people in the congregation differently,” she says. She has also found that holding both co-ed sessions and separate ones for women and men helps some youth feel safer to voice their questions or concerns.

Youth assemblies or provincial retreats are also good opportunities to have a guest speaker start the conversation. Then youth leaders can pick up the discussion in smaller groups.

Janna Wiebe, youth pastor at Springfield Heights Mennonite Church, Winnipeg, Manitoba, and a session planner for this year’s Mennonite Church Canada youth assembly, says there will be talks with youth about sexuality, although the details aren’t confirmed at this time.

“At the 2007 assembly, the seminar on sexuality was the most popular and well-attended seminar of the entire week, which just goes to show that youth crave a safe outlet to talk about and learn more about sexuality,” she says.

While talking with youth is important, both Giesbrecht and Graber Miller suggest that sexuality should also be part of congregational discussions. Hearing about sex, or even relationships, pregnancy, adoption and infertility, would foster healthier congregations and help youth feel more comfortable asking questions. Observing honest discussion from the pulpit “would help youth in the church say, ‘Oh look, the church does talk about sexuality and bodies, and maybe it’s OK for me to talk to people here about them, too,’” Graber Miller says.

If congregations choose not to talk about sexuality from a faith perspective, it’s as good as telling youth that anything they hear from friends or the media is good enough.—Anna Rehan

**Why it’s important:** If congregations choose not to talk about sexuality from a faith perspective, it’s as good as telling youth that anything they hear from friends or the media is good enough, Rehan says. Instead, she says, congregations could say, Here’s another way of thinking about it as Christians. As a child of God, how do we look at this whole picture?

Some parents, teachers or youth leaders may fear they will encourage more sexual behavior by talking about it, but Graber Miller says that is unlikely. “We’re not going to make them want to rush out and engage in something,” he says. “They are exposed to this all the time in other kinds of ways. They just haven’t had a chance to think about them from a faith perspective or from an ethical perspective.”

Furthermore, he says, if the church wants to remain relevant, it cannot ignore the issue.

“The church will become increasingly irrelevant to youth if they’re not talking about sex and sexuality,” he says.

While Giesbrecht agrees that discussions with youth are important, she firmly believes congregations need to foster conversations about relationships in all age groups.

“It’s actually about us as adults, as a whole community, being healthier, and then our children will feel our health,” Giesbrecht says. “They will experience it. That’s the greater gift.”—Emily Loewen, a co-editor of the Young Voices column in Canadian Mennonite. This article first appeared in the Feb. 4 issue and is used with permission.
Grandpals program connects generations

Landis Homes residents and fourth and fifth grade students bond.

When Kylah Morales, a sixth grader at Hinkletown Mennonite School (HMS) in Ephrata, Pa., was asked to select a mentor during her baptism preparation class at New Holland (Pa.) Mennonite Church, she immediately knew whom she wanted to ask: her “GrandPal” from the past two years, Marian Jane Stoltzfus.

Marian Jane Stoltzfus and Morales had connected through GrandPals, a cooperative program between HMS and Landis Homes Retirement Community, Lititz, Pa., while Kylah was in fourth and fifth grade at HMS. Morales and Stoltzfus have built a relationship that has enriched their lives, their communities, their church and their faith. Morales knew Stoltzfus was the person she could rely on as they worked through a list of discussion questions leading up to Kylah’s baptism and talk with about her thoughts and problems.

The GrandPals program connects fourth and fifth grade HMS students with Landis Homes residential residents for seven activities during the school year.

The award-winning GrandPals program began in 1999 with HMS teacher Harriet Doubt’s vision for an intergenerational relationship for her students that would benefit all participants. Initially the relationship was to be through email and letter correspondence but has adapted to regular visits for joint activities. These activities include a GrandPal interview in September that students then use to write a report shared with GrandPals in May.

Other activities include a Bible Bee, Christmas program, sharing day, and a GrandPal visit to HMS to view the middle school theater production with the students. Students become acquainted with their GrandPal in fourth grade, and the relationship extends into fifth grade when possible. By the end of fifth grade, many have formed valuable friendships that benefit both generations.—Joint release of Hinkletown Mennonite School and Landis Homes

Landis Homes resident Barbara Longenecker sits with Dominic Answer, a fifth grade student at Hinkletown Mennonite School in Ephrata, Pa.

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Goshen will leave a ‘green carbon footprint’

No coal, gas or oil is now used to provide electricity for the campus.

Green footprint: Goshen (Ind.) College president Jim Brenneman (left), Northern Indiana Public Service Company’s manager of public affairs Angela Nelson and Goshen College sustainability coordinator and utilities manager Glenn Gilbert hold up a representative “green carbon footprint” on May 13.

Goshen (Ind.) College president Jim Brenneman announced May 13 that the college has taken a major step by voluntarily purchasing all its electricity from renewable energy sources, such as wind and solar power. This single action will reduce the college’s carbon footprint by about 45 percent.

The college is the first major customer of Northern Indiana Public Service Company (NIPSCO), the regional electricity provider, to take the action and participate in its new Green Power Program.

“What this means for Goshen College is that going forward from today, no more coal, gas or oil will be burned, no more carbon dioxide will be introduced into the atmosphere to provide electricity for our campus,” Brenneman said during an all-campus convocation. Before this step, the equivalent of 24 train car loads of coal were needed (or about 12 tons per student) to provide electricity to the campus each year. Coal is Indiana’s primary energy source.

In 2007, Brenneman became a charter signatory to the American College & University Presidents’ Climate Commitment. In doing so, he joined with leaders of 175 other higher education institutions in agreement to neutralize greenhouse gas emissions. Goshen College was one of two higher education institutions in Indiana and the first Mennonite college or university to sign the landmark climate commitment. There now are 664 signatories.

“We did that because we are very concerned about life on this planet, it was one more way we can care for the world, and it was part of our broader ecological stewardship commitment,” Brenneman said. “Goshen College, like the Mennonite church we are a part of, has always been committed to being global citizens.”

By signing up for this program—which recently became available to all customers—NIPSCO buys renewable energy certificates on the college’s behalf. RECs are the environmental attributes associated with electricity that is generated from renewable sources. NIPSCO Green Power Program RECs are certified through Green-e® Energy, the nation’s leading renewable energy certification and verification program. Green-e® Energy provides independent, third-party certification to ensure that certified renewable energy meets strict environmental and consumer-protection standards.

Participants in the program pay a monthly premium in addition to the standard electric rate, which goes entirely to pay for the RECs.

In response to the college’s energy efficiency efforts and commitment to sustainability, NIPSCO’s manager of public affairs Angela Nelson presented a $5,000 check to the college’s Ecological Stewardship Committee to help with further initiatives on campus in the future.

Since 2007, the college has been very successful at energy conservation.

“In that time, both natural gas and electrical consumption have been reduced by over 25 percent,” said Glenn Gilbert, the campus’ sustainability coordinator and utilities manager. “Conservation will continue to be a major component of our strategy.”

Going forward from today, no more coal, gas or oil will be burned, no more carbon dioxide will be introduced into the atmosphere to provide electricity for our campus.—Jim Brenneman

The college is using about the same amount of electricity on campus today as it did in 1992, despite adding 290,000 more square feet of building space.

Gilbert added: “We seek to be leaders in environmental sustainability and model a safe and effective way for our society to move away from dependency on fossil fuel-based energy sources that have proven to be so destructive to our environment.”—Jodi H. Beyeler for Goshen College
**CALENDAR**

“Moral Dilemmas in Healthcare” is the theme for the second Annual Gathering of Mennonite Healthcare Fellowship (MHF), June 21-23, on the campus of Goshen College, Goshen, Ind. Among the plenary session speakers will be Timothy Stoltzfus Jost, a national expert on healthcare law and health-care reform, and Ervin R. Stutzman, executive director of Mennonite Church USA. The annual gathering also continues the tradition of MMA and MNA to make the weekend enjoyable and inspiring for the whole family. Worship times at the beginning of each plenary session will be led by Goshen folk singers Gwen and Les Gustafson-Zook. The couple will also present a late-evening concert on Saturday. Throughout the weekend, childcare and children and youth programs are offered for all families who register by May 31. Highlighting the activities planned for school-age children will be a visit to the Merry Lea Environmental Center, operated by Goshen College. More information and registration instructions are available online at www.mennonhealth.org, by email at info@mennonhealth.org or by calling the MHF Office at 888-406-3643.

**WORKERS**

**Angustia, Moises**, was ordained as pastor at Iglesia Unida de Aviviamento, Brooklyn, N.Y., on March 17.

**Garcia, Ivania**, was licensed as associate pastor at Iglesia Manantial de Vida, Camden, N.J., on March 24.

**Gunderson, April Dawn**, was ordained as associate pastor of care and counsel at Harrisonburg Mennonite Church, Harrisonburg, Va., on April 7.

**Kabamba, Louis**, was ordained as an evangelist at French Church for Revival, Mount Joy, Pa., on March 24.

**Nzey, Jean Bruno**, was ordained as pastor at French Church for Revival, Mount Joy, Pa., on March 24.

**Yoder, Don A.**, was ordained at Springdale Mennonite Church, Waynesboro, Va., on April 14, while serving as interim pastor there.

**OBITUARIES**


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**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.


Wyse, Donald Gene, 81, Columbus, Ohio, died April 4. Spouse: Joyce M. Miller Wyse. Parents: Vernon and Ivah Rupp Wyse. Children: Tim, Doug, Jill; five grandchildren. Funeral: April 8 at Columbus Mennonite Church.
RESOURCES

Fifty Shades of Grace: Stories of Inspiration and Promise (Herald Press, 2013, $12.99) is a collection of stories about experiencing God’s grace in the midst of everyday life. The book explores what grace looks like in action—even in a world jaded by violence and unforgiveness—and how it can triumph over great tragedy with mercy and hope.


John (Believers Church Bible Commentary) by Willard Swartley (Herald Press, 2013, $34.99) studies how the Gospel of John draws us into union with God and into unity with one another. It communicates who Jesus is, in both intimate and profound dimensions. The commentary provides sections on the text in biblical context and the text in the life of the church.

For a Church to Come: Experiments in Postmodern Theory and Anabaptist Thought by Peter Blum (Herald Press, 2013, $21.99) explores some of our commonly held ways of talking about knowledge, meaning, commitment and action. Blum suggests that some postmodern theoretical work, often dismissed or assumed to be anti-Christian, is well worth bringing into contemporary Anabaptist-Mennonite conversations about discipleship and corporate life.

Thrill of the Chaste: The Allure of Amish Romance by Valerie Weaver-Zercher (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013, $24.95) analyzes the growing trend of Amish romance fiction and places it in the context of contemporary literature, religion and popular culture.

Making Peace: The Role Played by the Community of Sant’Egidio in the International Arena, edited by Roberto Morozzo della Rocca, translated by John Milfsud (New City Press, 2013, $17.95), describes how this movement of lay people founded within the Catholic Church has worked to help resolve civil wars and international conflicts.

The Story of Original Sin by John E. Toews (Pickwick Publications, 2013, $18) traces the history of the interpretation of Adam and Eve in Genesis 3 and explains the emergence of the doctrine of original sin on the basis of a mistranslation of the Greek text of Romans 5:12.

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Jubilee Celebration: First Mennonite Church of Campaign-Urbana, Ill., is planning a 50th anniversary reunion weekend on July 26-28, 2013. All former attendees are warmly invited to return for a weekend of fellowship, worship, service and music. Check out information on www.fmc-ct.org or call the church at 217-367-5353.

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Pittsburgh (Pa.) Mennonite Church, a vibrant and talented urban congregation, seeks full-time pastor starting as early as July 2013. Predominantly young adults and young families, PMC is actively involved in local, denominational, and global missions. Send inquiries to pmcpastorsearch@gmail.com.

Wanted: Brethren Press and MennoMedia are seeking a project editor, up to full-time, for a new Sunday school curriculum, Shine: Living in God’s Light. The editor works closely with free-lance writers and editors and various committees and reports to the project director. Applications will be reviewed as they are received. Find the job description and contact information at www.shinecurriculum.com.

North Danvers Mennonite Church of rural Danvers, Ill., is seeking a full-time pastor. A member of the Central District Conference, we have a Sunday morning all-ages attendance of about 80 and value discipleship, worship, service and fellowship. Would prefer a candidate with experience, seminary training, Anabaptist values, and strong preaching and communication skills but will consider all applicants. Church website: Northdanverschurch.com. Search committee contact: marvel-craig@yahoo.com.

Mennonite Church USA seeks a denominational minister of youth and young adults. Visit www.mennoniteusa.org/about/jobs/ for more information.

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A call for stories from those on the margins

When we pick up a Mennonite publication or see a Mennonite in print, the voices we often hear from are among the following: Mennonite pastors, seminarians, service project workers, Mennonite parachurch employees, denominational leaders and Mennonite church members. These voices are strong and prominent and the ones relied upon to direct the denomination as it finds its way in our society.

I can no longer find myself among this list, and as I continue to share my experiences with the Mennonite community, I’ve wondered to what extent my role will continue among you. With much introspection, I believe my story even until now has a purpose greater than just a life lesson for me. I knew I was called to serve you all, and I didn’t know how. Since leaving the Mennonite church, I’ve experienced a depth of love and understanding from a handful of people within the church as well as sustained invitations to continue to serve. This alone has surprised and humbled me. Yet I continue finding myself retreating into a default position of margins and shadows. The grief would not leave my side, and as I prepared to write to you all, God opened my heart to the realization that I may not be the only one.

I’m confident some of you reading this right now may find yourselves in the margins with me. Maybe you’ve left the Mennonite world years or decades ago but still receive this magazine because somehow its focus, its work, its stories are still relevant to you, even if this is the only way you engage Mennonites.

Maybe you call yourself an Anabaptist but for some reason can no longer sit in the pews of a Mennonite church. Maybe a scholarship gave you a Mennonite education, but your last encounter with Mennonites was graduation day. Maybe the short-term warm embrace and sturdy hands of Mennonite service built your life, but you no longer share their “compañerismo.” Maybe you live and work arm in arm with Mennonites in cities like North Newton, Goshen and Harrisonburg, believing in the work you’re all doing, but outside the 40-hour work week you’re estranged from the community. Maybe you grew up within a Mennonite family but with age have slowly slipped away from the label. And finally, maybe you’ve embodied the love of the Anabaptist story and/or theological focus but cannot relate to the social, cultural and/or political interpretation expressed within the church.

I’m a firm believer that these voices found in the margins may have a profound gift of greater Mennonite awareness and precise vision for the future. Is this the time that they be heard? Would Mennonites of privilege and power as a group make a concrete, unified effort to listen deeply to these voices? What if we all stopped to hear their stories? What would they say? Are we afraid as a collective group to hear them speak, afraid they may see clearly that we’ve chosen to hide away? Would they be as gracious to us as we’d need for them to be? Could they paint a picture that is similar to what we’ve tried painting for ourselves? Could they show us a new way of being church?

My brothers and sisters that lie in the margins, you matter, and your journey is of value to me and many others. There are many of us that hold a deep sorrow and/or longing. I invite you to step out of the shadows and join the hundreds like you. It’s time for our voices to be heard and be present to what we share. Into what form our voices will shape, I do not know yet, but I’m calling you to reach out.

Unified, we can breathe renewed life within ourselves, among our local communities that see within us the Mennonite fingerprint and upon the church and beyond as the waves of our sharing impact all. It is time, time to bring these stories to the light and for your words to be known. I look forward to receiving email messages from you and seeing where God, our Unifying Source, takes us. Thank you.

Janet Trevino-Elizarraraz lives in San Antonio, Texas. She can be reached at alpasofirme@gmail.com.
Books on emergence, saints, Yoder

Good books are being published every day. May you find time to read some of the following.


She delves into the history of emergent churches, focusing primarily on the United States while recognizing that Emergence Christianity “is international in scope.”

She notes the change in emphasis from believe/behave/belong to belong/behave/believe. She writes that a central characteristic or principle is “its aggressive belief in inclusivity and the importance of diversity in worship and in community.”

A photographic section of emergent churches and an annotated bibliography are bonuses to the book.

Saints: Two recent books provide vignettes about an array of saints through history. Finding God: A Treasury of Conversion Stories, edited by John M. Mulder (Eerdmans, 2012, $22), includes stories of 61 Christians, from Paul the Apostle to Bono the rock star. Many are well-known; many more are not. I’d never heard of Pat Day, for example (he’s a jockey). The stories are interesting and inspiring.

Also inspiring are the stories in Mothers, Sisters, Daughters: Standing on Their Shoulders by Edwina Gateley and Sandra Mattucci (Orbis Books, 2012, $20), which introduces 22 women from different parts of the world, including politicians, mystics, religious women, poets, women from Scripture and environmentalists.

Again, some are well-known; many are not. Each story is accompanied by a poem and a drawing from the authors.

Yoder: Although John Howard Yoder died in 1997, books by him and those reflecting on his work continue to be published. Radical Christian Discipleship (Herald Press, 2012, $15.99) is the first of three volumes of a series called John Howard Yoder’s Challenge to the Church. While many of Yoder’s works address scholars, this series collects pieces Yoder wrote that address ordinary Christians.

This volume focuses on how Christians are to follow Jesus in every aspect of our lives. It includes lectures, magazine articles and sermons he gave or wrote over a period from 1954 to 1978. He addresses various aspects of non-conformity, calling for conformity to Christ. While these essays are historically situated, they are remarkably relevant to Christians today.

Things Hold Together: John Howard Yoder’s Trinitarian Theology of Culture by Branson L. Parler (Herald Press, 2012, $24.99) is addressed to scholars but deals with important issues for the church.

Parler, who is a member of the Reformed Church, writes that “Yoder speaks not just to Mennonite questions or issues but to matters that all Christian traditions care about.” Here he is addressing how Christians relate to culture. He notes that Yoder has been unfairly criticized and shows that Yoder advocates a trinitarian theology of culture that affirms God’s work in creation and in redemption. He writes that “cultural practices and institutions that go against the way of Jesus also go against the grain of the universe.”

Finally, Loving the Poor, Saving the Rich: Wealth, Poverty and Early Christian Formation by Helen Rhee (Baker-Academic, 2012, $29.99) shows how wealth and poverty, often ignored today, were central issues in the early church. There’s much here for us to ponder.

Gordon Houser is associate editor of The Mennonite.
(Continued from page 5)

Mennonites and didn’t resort to caricature as much as he had expected.

It’s interesting that Weaver-Zercher ends her article by saying that the next subgenre—to rival Amish romance tales—may be Mennonite fiction. Clearly, there has been long-standing fascination in North America with both the Amish and Mennonites (and not just on the romance front).

When my dad went to New York University to defend his dissertation, one of the three interviewers started out by saying, “So tell us, Rev. Shenk, about the Mennonites.”

Slightly taken aback, my dad nonetheless held forth (with other questions interspersed) regarding Anabaptist history and the Mennonites. At the end of the two-hour session, with nary a question having been raised about his thesis, Dad’s adviser stood, extended his hand and said, “Congratulations, Dr. Shenk.” The bound dissertation can be found in the Mennonite Historical Library at Goshen College.

As a copy editor and wordsmith, I love Weaver-Zercher’s book title, *Thrill of the Chase*. I might add that some of us in the Shenk family recently decided to publish (this year or next) Dad’s two previously unpublished book manuscripts. Their titles are *The Book of Hezekiah* (what some people think is in the Bible but isn’t) and *Common Sense on the Second Coming*, a review of end-times predictions, along with biblical analysis and interpretation.

—Dan Shenk, Goshen, Ind.

Jesus and gun violence

After reading the April issue, I wanted to share a few thoughts about the article, “Jesus and Gun Violence.”

I have enjoyed having and shooting guns most of my life. I am 78 years old now. I do believe in nonviolence. I fulfilled my military obligation during the Korean War by testing milk from dairy cows in Michigan’s upper peninsula for two years. As I read the article, I wondered: If spears, knives, ropes, hammers and nails were outlawed, would Jesus not have suffered death?

Also, in Genesis 4 there is a story about the murder of the second man on the earth—killed by his brother, the firstborn. I doubt if it was done with a gun. I believe murderers are people, not guns.—Paul Gingerich, Pigeon, Mich.

God gave us oil and coal

Why did God put all this oil and coal on the earth if he doesn’t want us to use it? God can pollute the earth more with one mountain blowing its top than we can do in years.—Joseph Graber, White Pigeon, Mich.
God sightings at a graveside

Brothers and sisters, we do not want you to be uninformed about those who sleep in death, so that you do not grieve like the rest, who have no hope. —1 Thessalonians 4:13 TNIV

Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have.—1 Peter 3:15b TNIV

I’d known Dennis Gillespie casually for several years. A retired Lutheran minister, he was intrigued by both Mennonites and Orthodox faith. In recent years, he attended our worship services at Park View Mennonite Church and occasionally participated in our Sunday school class. His recent death from cancer underscored his deep Christian faith in a most unusual way.

At the graveside service, pastor Phil Kniss commented that in all his years of conducting funerals, he had never met a man who was more prepared for death than Dennis Gillespie. Phil spoke on good evidence, which I shall explain partly as a God sighting, an evidence of God at work in Dennis’ life.

Although I’ve known many people who purchased a casket in preparation for their burial, I’ve never met anyone else who kept the coffin in the living room for a couple of years prior to death. Lest you think of Dennis as morbid, let me explain.

Because of his appreciation for the Orthodox Christian tradition, Dennis purchased a wooden casket crafted by an Orthodox priest. The pine box doubled as an attractive cabinet, standing on end with several shelves that housed books and curios. Engraved on the side in artful eye-catching script were the words—Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal, have mercy on us. The lid (not used as furniture) was accented by an attractive Orthodox cross made of walnut wood, which contrasted nicely with the light-colored box. Dennis opted for a “green” burial, with no embalming or concrete burial crypt.

At the grave site, his three children and friends joined in a ritual infused with prayer, Scripture and careful theological reflection, all written by Dennis in anticipation of that moment. Halfway through the ritual of words, the casket was lowered into the ground, and participants were invited to throw dirt on top of the wooden box.

But another important part of Dennis’ preparation for his death was evident in the way he faced his final weeks of life. It was only a few short weeks before his death that he first learned that he had terminal cancer. Although his final illness came as a surprise, he took the diagnosis in stride and made the final preparations for his homegoing.

As I reflected on Dennis’ unusual preparation for death, I saw the work of God in his life in a new way. Now I am convinced it was God who gave Dennis the courage and grace to look death in the face without flinching.

In fact, I have observed a number of women and men who reflected an unusually calm demeanor as they faced their final days. In every case, their faith in God was a crucial part of their assurance. Within the last month, I have met two people who recently came to faith in Christ because they observed the peace and assurance with which particular people faced death.

I have observed a number of women and men who reflected an unusually calm demeanor as they faced their final days.

My interaction with Dennis Gillespie and others points me in a fresh way to look for the evidence of God’s work in their lives. It prompts me to think that the close of one’s life is perhaps one of the best times to look for the indications of God at work. It won’t be possible, of course, to trace out all the ways that God’s Spirit has been at work in an individual, but some clues are simply too obvious to miss.

May God help us all recognize at least those signs and give thanks to God. 

Ervin Stutzman
is executive director of Mennonite Church USA.
Should we censor history?

... be sure your sins will find you out.—Numbers 32:23b

Should we expunge from our website articles and names from articles we’ve published when someone requests we do this for them? That is a conundrum we face from time to time, and we usually turn to Colleen McFarland, director of archives and records management for Mennonite Church USA. Her response: “To request their removal from the Internet is, in effect, a request for censorship.”

In the past year we’ve had several requests from people requesting we remove articles from our website that were either written by them or quoted them. They feared the articles would hurt their chances at employment should future employers do an Internet search with their names.

Even though the articles will remain in print in perpetuity (in our storage area if nowhere else), finding it in print is far more difficult than with a search engine on the Internet.


When writing something that will be published—in print or on the Internet—calculate the risk.

“Editors tell me they are increasingly beset by readers who once cooperated with a reporter on a sensitive subject—nudism, anorexia, bullying—and years later find that old story a recurring source of distress. (It’s called “source remorse.”),” Keller writes.

More and more states are passing erasure laws that require some things to be removed from the record. But here’s the dilemma: Can something that was true at one time become untrue? Keller describes the argument of lawyers in a class action lawsuit against some news outlets.

“They dispute whether something that was true when it happened can become not just private but actually untrue—so untrue you can swear an oath that it never happened and, in the eyes of the law, you’ll be telling the truth,” Keller writes.

In Christian terms, we describe this as forgiveness. We sing hymns about the blood of Jesus blotting out our sins. But when our sins are forgiven, is it as if they never happened? The blood of Christ washed them away?

Our work as reporters and editors results in a limited but permanent record of what some Mennonite Church USA members, congregations and organizations believe, say and do during this era. This record will be a resource to those who follow us—if for no other reason than so they don’t make the same mistakes we do. But if we begin erasing history, where do we stop?

The Bible—especially the Old Testament—has some history in it that some may want to expunge. For example, if we erased God’s promise to his chosen people about a promised land, would we have a Palestine-Israeli conflict that is so intractable? Or would we want to expunge the story about Jesus using whips in the temple to drive out the animals belonging to the money changers and upsetting their tables?

Because there is no resolution yet to the matter of erasing or censoring history, there is only one action to suggest: When writing something that will be published—in print or on the Internet—calculate the risk. Is this something that might one day be a problem where someone can quote you against yourself?

The Internet is indelible. Today’s clever witticism may be tomorrow’s embarrassment. To be sure, “Your sins will find you out.”—ejt