Building campaign FAQs

1. What progress has been made in the campaign?

The total goal for the campaign is $12.5 million. To date, $10.4 million has been given/committed. Of that total, $4.6 million is progress toward our goal for the building. That is our current focus. We would like to raise $2.1 million to complete the building and avoid borrowing.

For the past three years, $5.8 million of the $10.4 million in cash and commitments received have been used for current and future programs, not facilities.

- $150,000 grant to Global Mission Fellowship for equipping Mennonite World Conference-related churches for mission.
- $300,000 for Mennonite Church USA Executive Leadership ministries.
- $5.35 million for Mennonite Mission Network ministries.

2. Is new construction necessary? Isn’t renovation cheaper?

Initially, it could be 10–30 percent less expensive to renovate an existing structure. Over 15 years, the cash outlay is similar and the asset value is less.

Any renovation is a compromise version of the desired facility characteristics for location, space utilization, and maintenance costs. We will also build in an environmentally sustainable way, seeking to obtain a LEED Gold standard.

Continuing to lease and maintain our current temporary space costs $265,000/year ($85,000 more than our previous location) and gives us no long-term guarantee of occupancy.

An existing building would not benefit from being next to Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary.

3. Why are we building in Elkhart rather than an urban center?

The location of churchwide offices was the subject of a denominational task group as part of the creation of Mennonite Church USA. The task group recommended that one regional office be located in Elkhart, eventually at AMBS. This proposal was affirmed by the Executive Board in April 2001 and reported to the delegates at Nashville 2001. It was reaffirmed by Executive Board in 2003 and has been revisited and affirmed a number of times by a variety of groups over the last six years. The task group determined the regional locations based on 20 values, including accessibility to conferences and congregations, continuity of staffing, economic feasibility, and more.

There are many Mennonite Church USA congregations within easy driving distance of Elkhart. Interns are available from Goshen College and AMBS and denominational staff members are often invited as guest speakers and lecturers. Elkhart also has a low cost of living.

Mennonite Church USA agencies that will occupy the building have programs, staff members and volunteers in a number of urban areas around the United States including Chicago, Denver, Los Angeles and San Antonio. As congregations in urban areas continue to grow, we will continue making intentional decisions to add additional dispersed staff to those areas and we will depend on logistical bases like the one in Elkhart to support their ministries.

Joining together. Investing in hope.
www.MennoniteUSA.org/JoiningTogether
12 Love, sex and marriage
—Sandra Fribley

17 The peace church as worship of God
—J. Denny Weaver

23 The ‘bare essentials’ of Anabaptism

26 Being Mennonite
—Karl Landis

29 So you wanna be a Mennonite
—Joanna Harader

31 Early Christians for peace
—David W.T. Brattston

37 Construction to begin for new MC USA offices—Anna Groff

38 Disaster leaders ‘see the oil’—Anna Groff

40 Reverse polarity, bomb or profiling?
—Everett J. Thomas

42 AMBS graduates 40 seminarians
—Mary E. Klassen

43 89 students in Bethel College commencement—Melanie Zuercher

46 Schools not in The Corinthian Plan
—Andrew Clouse and Rachel Nussbaum Eby

47 Mennonite Women in conversation
—Patricia Burdette and Brian Paff

48 ‘I never thought I’d be a landowner’
—Dick Benner

50 MCC sends letter about Gaza blockade

ON THE COVER: “The Lovers” by Pablo Picasso, 1923
LETTERS

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

—Editors

Arizona law is racist harassment

Everyone should be concerned about the new immigration law in Arizona, no matter what one’s stance on the issue of immigration is. Allowing the police to stop people who appear to be immigrants is simply going to encourage racial profiling, a form of racist harassment. You cannot tell by looking at a person whether that person is an immigrant (either documented or undocumented) or a citizen.

I lived in Elkhart, Ind., in the late 1990s and saw firsthand how this happened. After a raid on a factory, an American citizen had been detained until he could prove his citizenship, although he was born in the United States. I, on the other hand, with my F1 student visa, never bothered to carry my passport. I knew I would not be asked to prove my right to be in the country because I am Caucasian, and English is my first language.

With this new law, the police will be targeting anyone who is or who looks Hispanic. That makes Arizona unsafe for many people who have every legal right to feel safe there.

The issue of immigration is complex; it probably requires some new laws and new ways of doing things to address the challenges of the times. The new law in Arizona doesn’t fix anything, but it risks creating a new set of problems. It may end up costing the state a great deal if it leads to lawsuits, as it might well do. I encourage everyone to take issue with the law and encourage change.—Nancy Frey, Brookline, Mass.

Prayer vigil at wrong church

I just looked through the June issue of The Mennonite, and it is impressive: I was struck by the good quality photos and at the multicultural nature of it. Articles about Hispanics, Anglos, Vietnamese. I thought of what a tremendous change it is from what the Mennonite church in the United States looked like 20-30 years ago. There really is a place for all people in this community. Keep up the good work.

I noticed one mistake. With the photo of Kendel, Bek, Gilberto and myself praying, the caption says that it took place at North Goshen Mennonite Church (“Praying for Immigrants,” News Briefs). It took place at Iglesia Menonite del Buen Pastor in Goshen. There might be some who are sensitive to that, so I wanted to draw your attention to it. But I stick with my words, “Keep up the good work.”—Dean A. Linsenmeyer, Goshen, Ind.

Connections to Nicholas Stoltzfus

Regarding “Cookies for Nicholas” (May): I was struck by the name of this baby that died so early. There is a major historic connection, as Nicholas Stoltzfus was the person to which all Stoltzfus Mennonites can trace their ancestry. He was a Lutheran farmer who “converted” to Anabaptism in Europe.

This is not to take away from the story that Kate tells, yet since this article (a beautiful piece) was written in honor of a Nicholas Stoltzfus, it seemed fitting somehow to recognize the trans-generational connection. The Stoltzfus family (and many families that connect to them through marriage and acquaintance) have been influential, prophetic and steady in the Mennonite church throughout generations.

Perhaps in some way we can all eat cookies, enjoy religious freedom and live life more deeply in memory of both
the historic and more contemporary Nicholas Stoltzfus.—Sarah Thompson, Elkhart, Ind.

**Not buildings and bureaucracy**

Our house church congregation was blessed by Isaac Villegas’s article “I Believe in the Holy Spirit” in the May issue. It makes clear that the church born at Pentecost was not focused on buildings and bureaucracy but on the basics of prayer, fellowship, teaching and hospitality to strangers.—Harvey Yoder, Harrisonburg, Va.

**Reverse anthem decision**

In the May issue, Joe Leichty defends Goshen (Ind.) College’s decision to play the national anthem by saying, “The anthem does not have a fixed meaning.” But even Joe must admit that the national anthem is a symbol of America and American civil religion, not of the kingdom of God or of Christian faith. And it can hardly be denied that America devotes tremendous resources to war, invasion and military preparations. American civil religion justifies these national policies as ordained and approved by God.

But Goshen College was created and is supported by the Mennonite church, which has opposed violence and proclaimed peace through Christ for centuries. The church is an outpost of the kingdom of God, in which we strive to resolve disputes peacefully and regard our enemies with care and concern.

The absence of the national anthem in Mennonite churches and institutions is a 100-year-old theological tradition closely related to the priority of the kingdom of God in Anabaptist faith and practice. To simply abandon this tradition is not a “reasonable request.”

By both playing the national anthem and saying the Prayer of St Francis, Goshen College proclaims a message that is unclear, uncertain and indecisive. In contrast, the church yearns for leaders and institutions that are clearly committed to Anabaptist faith and proclaim it in a simple, direct and joyful way. Our call from God is to practice the values of the kingdom of God, not a confusing mixture of patriotism and piety.

I urge the administrative council as well as the board of directors of Goshen College to reverse the decision to play the anthem and to review and strengthen the Anabaptist theological convictions for which the college was founded and to which the college has long been committed.—Roger Farmer, Washington, Iowa

**Fifty years of appreciation**

I grew up in Kennett Square, Pa. My family was one of the first black families to go to the Mennonite church there. My father was baptized there. Wilber Engles was the preacher. I remember brothers Zook, brother King, brother Calhoun. That was over 50 years ago. I never forgot the love I felt in that little church. How does an old lady find and relive a childhood memory again?—Margaret Thomas, Denver

**Connecting families**

My spouse and I attended the 21st annual retreat of Connecting Families April 9-11 in Maryland. We found the program inspiring and rich in hope. Stories of joy coming out of personal pain warmed our hearts. Several retreat participants reported having sought help from Christian-oriented “reparative therapies” that left them unhealed and unfulfilled.

Connecting Families first met in 1990, after several Mennonite couples recognized a need for mutual support in dealing with issues relating to same-gender attraction. We first attended several years later, at a low point in our lives after a family member informed us that she was lesbian. That weekend (Continued on page 62)

---

**In this issue**

If there was enough space, the title of the cover story could say, “Love and sex, yes. Marriage, not so much.” The article, written by Sandra Fribley, addresses a trend in the church we have been reluctant to discuss (page 12). “The notion of celibacy before marriage has largely been abandoned, even by church-going adults,” Fribley says.

As our country celebrates the Fourth of July, we publish several articles that reinforce our peace church tradition. These include a 3,300-word treatise by J. Denny Weaver entitled “The Peace Church as Worship of God” (page 17).

The essence of “being Mennonite” is the focus of Karl Landis’ article by that name (page 26). “Because most of those who have carried the Mennonite torch for so long in the eastern United States have been Swiss-Germans,” Landis writes, “our particular incarnation of Mennonite values came to be confused with what it means to be Mennonite.” On a lighter note, Joanna Harader (page 29) offers some suggestions about how to be hospitable to new Mennonites. Her first suggestion: “Double-check the spelling of my last name and ask me how to pronounce it (Hair-u-der).”

Original news reporting includes assistant editor Anna Groff’s June 7 visit to the Gulf coast to interview people affected by the nation’s worst oil spill (pages 38-39). Groff also reports on the Executive Board’s June 10-12 meeting in Kalona, Iowa.

Stanley Green, executive director of Mennonite Mission Network, was detained at the Newark International Airport on April 27. Even though the entire terminal was cleared because of his laptop computer, Green never received a plausible explanation for the detention. Perhaps it was an example of the way some immigrants are treated when they are victims of racial profiling (page 40).—Editor
Addicted to radio preaching

I am embarrassed to admit this. But I am addicted to radio preaching: James McDonald, Chuck Swindoll, Tony Evans, David Jeremiah. My friends worry about me. I know they mean well. I know my addiction feeds my cynicism about the fundamentalist wing of the church. Still, I listen.

Part of my attraction is that these men are talented preachers. They have a clarity of vision that communicates well. They are good storytellers. They bring great energy and power into the pulpit. And, from a purely human perspective, they are all far more successful than I am.

The mass appeal of these preachers is their readiness to speak in the voice of God. I don’t mean preaching on a biblical text in which God speaks. I mean speaking as if they actually have an inside line on what God is thinking and doing. They often speak with the authority of God, as if God were being channeled through their voices and their agendas.

Tony Evans regularly describes God as the author of the biblical text. Paul did not write Romans, God did. And here is what God says. This interpretive move makes it impossible to engage the text in any other way than unquestioning obedience. God says it, I believe it, that settles it.

James McDonald routinely calls his congregation to repeat his words as if they were God’s own. He knows exactly what the Scripture says and exactly what God means by it, and anyone who disagrees is falling short of the mark. God said it to me, don’t argue, get in line.

Now my blood pressure goes up as I listen to these men wrap themselves in God’s own clothes and speak with a confidence bordering on the blasphemous. That’s harsh, I know. But I am reminded of Jesus’ words about those to whom much has been given. They have a lot to live up to, because their failure to do right can lead others astray.

When we proclaim that God wrote the Bible, making the human writers mere recorders, we lose access to the text. We can wrestle with Paul or try to make sense of Ezekiel, with the same degree of give-and-take we’d have in conversation with a friend. But who can argue or debate with God? By eliminating the human authors from the equation, these preachers short-circuit our engagement with the Bible.

Worse, by speaking as if they have a direct line to God, these men claim an authority over our lives that is, frankly, scary. They have the truth. All we need do is parrot back their words and otherwise keep silent.

Thousands listen and believe what they hear from these preachers. They may do so because in uncertain times people like to know that God is still speaking. And these preachers make that claim every time they speak. There is comfort in that.

But there is also great risk. If power does corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely, we sheep must be wary of following after any voice that claims to be divinely authoritative.

I believe we are called, in Paul’s words, to work out our salvation in fear and trembling. This means that following Jesus requires a lot of struggle and sweat and tears. It means listening for the voice of God and then testing what we’ve heard with our sisters and brothers in Christ. If we simply allow some charismatic preacher to do our thinking for us, we forego any deep engagement with the Scriptures and the Spirit who inspired them.

So I listen to these brothers perform their oratorical magic and I worry. Not because what they say is necessarily wrong or unfaithful. Sometimes I agree with what I hear. But I worry because the way they preach precludes our need to read and study and listen for ourselves.

Call me an Anabaptist, but I believe Christian discipleship includes doing my own reading, studying and listening in the company of sisters and brothers. There is more to following Jesus than sitting by the radio and trusting that the preacher has it right.

But don’t take my word for it. You can look it up.

Ron Adams is a pastor at East Chestnut Street Mennonite Church in Lancaster, Pa.
Psalm from the wreckage

by Kathy Coffey

The Hebrew psalm, with its unique combination of rage and praise, "wow" and "ow," seems uniquely suited to the economy today.

Now it’s ours, the furious fist: snares and floods, entangled cords of hell, despair of loss thunder of slammed doors teeth of firing, ashen regret.

Where do you hide, O God? In thick clouds of grim news, the silence of the shuttered business, the foreclosed home, untreated cancer, uninsured?

Where is the sleep promised the beloved, in the dimness of 3 a.m., nervous subtraction of dwindling accounts? How long the futile job search?

Why do you stand aloof? The wicked bailed out, the stupid and greedy rewarded. From your lofty throne, do you look the other way?

Rise up, O God. With brassy bolts of justice, rain down coals on corporate snakes. Break the back of luxury.

Our throats ache; even our outrage tires. Helpless, we turn to trust. Show kindness to your dearest: orphaned, crazed, abandoned, abused.

Our need a hollow pit, a bowl carved from ruins. As you warned, our wealth now smoke. Desperation our only wedge to you.

Praise snagged on the ice floes of the heart ekes out, tiny as toe, muted as cricket, one stubborn note on rusty lyre.

Kathy Coffey lives in Denver
No dearth of pastors now

GOSHEN, Ind.—In November 2008, there were 99 openings for pastors in Mennonite Church USA congregations, 51 full-time. But 18 months later there were only 70 positions available with 29 positions being full time. As the number of openings declined, the number of candidates increased on Mennonite Church USA’s national register. In November 2008, 30 candidates were registered. As of May, that number more than doubled to 64, says Lee Lever, director of denominational ministry for Mennonite Church USA.

The trend is similar to what is happening in other Christian denominations.

“After a decade-long clergy shortage in America’s pulpits, Christian denominations are now experiencing a clergy glut—with some denominations reporting two ministers for every vacant pulpit,” said Greg Warner in a May 17 Religion News Service report. Warner said the sudden turnaround was caused by the bad economy.—Everett J. Thomas

Tucson church wears ribbons to protest law

PITTSBURGH, Pa.—Members of Shalom Mennonite Fellowship in Tucson, Ariz., are asking Mennonites across the country to join them in wearing red ribbon pins.

This request was in a letter from members and friends of Shalom that was included in the Pacific Southwest Mennonite Conference e-update.

The letter says this ribbon symbolizes their care for all immigrants as well as their resistance to the “errors in [Arizona Senate Bill 1070],” Arizona’s new immigration law. The members also made a call to prayer.

The letter says: “Immigration is not just an issue here in Tucson or across Arizona. It has ramifications in every state and almost all cities. We urge you to approach immigration as a national issue and to find ways to work in your own congregation to advocate for immigration reform.”—Anna Groff

Byler named MCC U.S. transitional director

AKRON, Pa.—The board of directors of Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) U.S. has named J. Ron Byler the organization’s transitional executive director. He succeeds Rolando Santiago, who has resigned as of August, when his six-year term ends.

For the next three years, Byler, of Goshen, Ind., will lead MCC U.S. while a long-term executive director is sought. He will help guide MCC U.S. through New Wineskins, an MCC-wide restructuring process.

In addition, Byler will oversee all MCC programs in the United States. He will coordinate four regional offices, as well as the Washington Office and the Akron-based national peace and justice staff. He will continue the priority of working closely with the supporting church denominations of MCC U.S. During the past 13 years, Byler worked in leadership roles in Mennonite Church USA and one of its predecessors. Most recently he was interim executive director for Mennonite Church USA.—MCC U.S.

YAMEN! participant dies

STRASBOURG, France—Sithabile Ndlouv, a 2008-09 YAMEN! participant from Zimbabwe, died suddenly on May 9 in Johannesburg, South Africa, after a brief illness. She had been admitted to the hospital the previous night. Ndlouv completed her year-long YAMEN! term in Bolivia last August. The Pumula Brethren in Christ Church in Bulawayo, a Mennonite World Conference-member church she attended for 15 years, was her sending church.

YAMEN! (Young Anabaptist Mennonite Exchange Network) is a joint MWC and Mennonite Central Committee South-to-South exchange for single young people aged 18 to 30. In Bolivia, Ndlouv worked with Centro Menno programs in Santa Cruz, which provide services to Low German-speaking Mennonites who live in surrounding rural areas.—MWC

Good dump

Fifteen Lancaster (Pa.) Mennonite High School students began a composting program at the school that is demonstrating the value and “how to” of composting as it decreases the trash stream and adds nutrient-rich humus to the school’s top soil. LMH senior Christine Baer started the project; plans are for the project to continue next year. Pictured are junior Curtis Ranck, left, and Baer adding food scraps and biodegradable napkins to a compost bin at the school. The student-led composting project started this spring.—LMH

BP hears from MMA

GOSHEN, Ind.—Three weeks after the explosion that sank BP’s contracted drilling rig, MMA Praxis Mutual Fund’s full investment team met by phone with the Head of Social Policy and Sustainability in BP’s London office to receive an update on the company’s efforts in the Gulf and to express MMA Praxis’ concerns about what led to and will follow this disaster.

“Connecting directly to senior management in times like this is a critical part of our stewardship investing commitment,” said Chad Horning, MMA chief investment officer. “It’s important...
to engage management when we see things that trouble us, using our role as investors to encourage changes that are good for people, the planet and the company’s long-term viability.”

MMA Praxis has been a long-time investor in BP, staying with the company through a number of troubling incidents, including an oil-pipeline spill on Alaska’s North Slope and an explosion at the company’s Texas City refinery that claimed 15 lives.—MMA

**Young adult bikes for MDS and Hesston College**

PITTSBURGH, Pa.—Neal Friesen began a six-month bicycle trip, “Cycle MDS,” on May 31. Friesen planned the trip to benefit Mennonite Disaster Service and the Hesston (Kan.) College Disaster Management Scholarship fund.

The trip began in New Iberia, La.—near the Mennonite Disaster Service site and will cover 48 states and some of Canada. Friesen left his position as resident director at Hesston on May 21. To follow Neal, go to www.cycleMDS.org.—Anna Groff

**Farewell to Mennonite Men coordinator**

NEWTON, Kan.—Workers at Mennonite Church USA offices in Newton said farewell May 25 to Jim Gingerich, who served more than 12 years as coordinator of Mennonite Men, an organization of Mennonite Church USA and Mennonite Church Canada. Also on hand was Don Schmidt of Newton, who served eight years as president of the Mennonite Men board. He commended Gingerich’s strong faith, upbeat attitude, good organization and ability to delegate. He also pointed out that during Gingerich’s tenure, JoinHands, the church-building program of Mennonite Men, increased its giving base and raised more than $1 million to help young churches with building programs.

Current board chair Arlen Godshall of Phoenix and Canadian Mennonite Men coordinator Marv Baergen sent greetings, as did former board member Lowell Detweiler, who wrote that Gingerich’s “background in ministry and knowledge of the Mennonite church was just what was needed to move [Mennonite Men] from youth to middle age.” Don Yoder begins June 1 as the new coordinator for Mennonite Men.—Gordon Houser

**Iowa Mennonite School students cheer cooks**

Students at Iowa Mennonite School, Kalona, raised money to show appreciation for the good job and great food Sherry Schrock and Pam Miller provide every day. On April 22, the entire school created a tunnel, told the cooks to take the day off and presented them with money for lunch and a pedicure.—IMS

**Adults personalize Bibles for children**

PITTSBURGH, Pa.—Members at Hyde Park Mennonite Fellowship, Boise, Idaho, wanted to give Bibles to their first graders as gifts, so they selected *The Bible for Children* from Good Books. However, they hoped to personalize the Bibles further, says member Beth Landis, chair of the leadership team at Hyde Park. So for one month the Bibles were kept in the back of the church and members signed their name beside their favorite Bible story and added a comment or thought if they wished.

On May 2, during the church service, the children received their Bibles. Since this was the first time, they gave Bibles to kindergarten through fourth-graders. Next, Hyde Park will give Bibles to their high school students. This time members will sign their name by their favorite Bible verses instead of stories.

The idea came from Belmont Mennonite Church in Elkhart, Ind., where Beth Landis’ sister, Lois Oyer, attends.—Anna Groff

**Metzger next general secretary of MC Canada**

WINNIPEG, Manitoba—The General Board of Mennonite Church Canada has announced the appointment of Willard Metzger to the post of general secretary. He will succeed outgoing general secretary Robert (Jack) Suderman, who served in the post since 2005 and will retire this summer. Metzger is the outgoing chair of Mennonite Church Canada’s Witness Council, the mission and outreach ministry of the national church. Metzger has also been a pastor in Mennonite congregations for 18 years, and most recently was director of church relations for World Vision Canada.—Mennonite Church Canada
Our addiction to cheap energy helps us ignore the lessons from oil spills

Will the Deepwater Horizon disaster have a major effect on our search for oil, or will our addiction to cheap energy cloud our memory of this environmental mess? In “How Quickly We Forget” (Newsweek, May 17), Sharon Begley says, Don’t count on it having much effect.

She looks back at previous disasters, including the Exxon Valdez accident on March 24, 1989, which spilled 10.9 million gallons of crude, making it the worst oil spill in U.S. waters, though that may change with this latest one.

“The legacy of environmental catastrophes,” she writes, is “a hybrid of amnesia and habituation.” In other words, “the public forgets more quickly now than in the past, and understands that no source of energy is risk-free.”

One could call it the cry-wolf effect, except the wolf actually came, and still we forget. Begley says this may reflect “a radical shift in what environmental risks we are willing to tolerate.” The millions of dead seabirds and the devastated gulf shrimp, tuna, crab and other fisheries no longer seem to matter that much to those living outside the area immediately affected by the spill.

“The rise of alcoholism, suicide and domestic violence in the Alaskan towns hardest hit by the Valdez spill had no effect—none—on the enthusiasm for drilling, even in Alaska,” Begley writes. “The deaths of an estimated 250,000 seabirds, 2,800 sea otters, 300 harbor seals, 250 bald eagles and a dozen killer whales was little more than a speed bump for oil development.”

And the oil industry finds ways around attempts to rein in its drilling goals. After the Valdez accident, Congress passed the Oil Pollution Act, which mandated double hulls for large oil tankers, but the industry got the phase-in delayed until 2015.

Begley quotes Jeffrey Short, who was part of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration team that worked on the Valdez spill and is now Pacific science director for the environmental group Oceana: “For people for whom all there is to life is commuting in their SUV to their job and then sitting in front of an electronic screen and watching a figment of reality, I suspect the impact [of the Gulf oil spill] would not be very great for quite some time.”

For millions of us, whether we oppose or support offshore drilling, we still want to go on driving our cars and living as we have. And while the photos of dead wildlife may disturb us, most of us will go on with our lives and may soon forget about this disaster.

This begs the question, What will make us address our addiction to oil?—Gordon Houser

Misplaced fears

- Children abducted by strangers (1999): 115
- Children who drown in pools (2006): 288
- Americans killed by terrorist attacks around the world (2008): 33
- Americans who die from seasonal flu: 36,171
- Women who die from breast cancer (2009): 40,170
- Women who die from cardiovascular disease (2006): 432,709
- Fatal airline accidents (2005): 321
- Fatal car crashes (2008): 34,017

—Newsweek
A man who had come to evangelize the Holy Mountain … asked [a wise and kind monk] if Jesus Christ was ‘his personal savior.’ ‘No,’ the smiling monk said without hesitation, ‘I like to share him.’—Scott Cairns in The Christian Century

Denomination refuses to let church leave
The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America has refused to let a Florida congregation leave the synod over theological differences. Members of St. Peter Lutheran Church voted twice unanimously to leave the denomination. The last official step in the process was for the regional synod to approve the move, but the Florida-Bahamas Synod refused the request, saying the church is in a key spot for missions. St. Peter moved on without approval and joined Lutheran Congregations in Mission for Christ.—Christianity Today

The digital age marches on
Wendy McFadden writes, citing Jeffrey Cole, Digital Center director at the University of Southern California’s Annenberg School for Communications: “Here are some … descriptions of the lives of your people ages 12 to 24: They will never read a newspaper. They will never own a landline (and maybe not a watch). They will not watch TV on someone else’s schedule. They trust unknown peers more than experts. They have little interest in the source of the information, and most information is aggregated. They will soon access everything on mobile devices. … They think email is for their parents. They want to be heard (as evidenced by all that user-generated content).”—Messenger

Small talk doesn’t lead to happiness
As reported in Psychological Science, the happiest participants in a study of conversations spent 25 percent less time alone and 70 percent more time talking than the unhappiest participants. The happiest participants had twice as many substantive conversations and one-third as much small talk as the unhappiest participants. These findings suggest that the happy life is social and conversationally deep rather than solitary and superficial.—Spirituality & Health

12 things really educated people do
1. Establish an individual set of values but recognize those of the surrounding community and the various cultures of the world.
2. Explore their own ancestry, culture and place.
3. Are comfortable being alone yet understand dynamics between people and form healthy relationships.
4. Accept mortality, knowing that every choice affects the generations to come.
5. Create new things and find new experiences.
6. Think for themselves; observe, analyze and discover truth without relying on the opinions of others.
7. Favor love, curiosity, reverence and empathy rather than material wealth.
8. Choose a vocation that contributes to the common good.
9. Enjoy a variety of new places and experiences but identify and cherish a place to call home.
10. Express their own voice with confidence.
11. Add value to every encounter and every group of which they are a part.
12. Always ask: Who am I? Where are my limits? What are my possibilities?—Yes! Magazine

Facebook usage
• Total minutes spent on Facebook in the United States in April 2008: 1.7 billion
• In April 2009: 13.9 billion
—Yes! Magazine

Catholic annulments in U.S.
• Percent of global Catholic membership in the United States: 6
• Percent of Catholic annulments granted to U.S. members in 2006: 60
—Religion News Service

Double standard on terrorism label
When 19 Muslim men crashed two planes into the World Trade Center on Sept. 11, 2001, it was widely labeled “Islamic terrorism,” even as many Muslims cringed at the term. So when nine members of a Michigan-based Christian militia, fueled by visions of the apocalypse, laid plans to gun down police officers, many Muslims wonder why it isn’t labeled “Christian terrorism.”—Religion News Service

Number of people in India with access to toilets: 366 million
Number of people in India with access to cell phones: 563.7 million
—New York Times

Small talk doesn’t lead to happiness
As reported in Psychological Science, the happiest participants in a study of conversations spent 25 percent less time alone and 70 percent more time talking than the unhappiest participants. The happiest participants had twice as many substantive conversations and one-third as much small talk as the unhappiest participants. These findings suggest that the happy life is social and conversationally deep rather than solitary and superficial.—Spirituality & Health

12 things really educated people do
1. Establish an individual set of values but recognize those of the surrounding community and the various cultures of the world.
2. Explore their own ancestry, culture and place.
3. Are comfortable being alone yet understand dynamics between people and form healthy relationships.
4. Accept mortality, knowing that every choice affects the generations to come.
5. Create new things and find new experiences.
6. Think for themselves; observe, analyze and discover truth without relying on the opinions of others.
7. Favor love, curiosity, reverence and empathy rather than material wealth.
8. Choose a vocation that contributes to the common good.
9. Enjoy a variety of new places and experiences but identify and cherish a place to call home.
10. Express their own voice with confidence.
11. Add value to every encounter and every group of which they are a part.
12. Always ask: Who am I? Where are my limits? What are my possibilities?—Yes! Magazine

Facebook usage
• Total minutes spent on Facebook in the United States in April 2008: 1.7 billion
• In April 2009: 13.9 billion
—Yes! Magazine

Catholic annulments in U.S.
• Percent of global Catholic membership in the United States: 6
• Percent of Catholic annulments granted to U.S. members in 2006: 60
—Religion News Service

Double standard on terrorism label
When 19 Muslim men crashed two planes into the World Trade Center on Sept. 11, 2001, it was widely labeled “Islamic terrorism,” even as many Muslims cringed at the term. So when nine members of a Michigan-based Christian militia, fueled by visions of the apocalypse, laid plans to gun down police officers, many Muslims wonder why it isn’t labeled “Christian terrorism.”—Religion News Service

Number of people in India with access to toilets: 366 million
Number of people in India with access to cell phones: 563.7 million
—New York Times
A conversation with 20-somethings

Love, sex and marriage

by Sandra Fribley
I am a 57-year-old woman in a comfortable 26-year marriage, and I think a lot about sex. The reason? I have a 21-year-old son, who is in college.

My concerns have been heightened not only by conversations with my son but also by a seminar I attended last summer at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, Ind., entitled “Unmarried Couples Living Together.” More than 70 pastors and church leaders showed up for this day-long event, nearly twice as many as usually attend these regularly scheduled workshops.

Between the statistics offered by our speaker, Irma Fast Dueck of Canadian Mennonite University, Winnipeg, Manitoba, and the questions and comments of the participants, I realized that this matter of changing sexual attitudes is the elephant in the room that everyone—and no one—wants to discuss.

I learned that the notion of celibacy before marriage has largely been abandoned, even by church-going young adults. More than half of couples marrying for the first time have first lived together, we were told, and nearly 75 percent of single people have been sexually active by age 20.

The speaker encouraged us to think about current brain research and hormones. The part of the brain responsible for rational decision-making isn’t fully developed until age 25, but the average age for the onset of puberty is 11 for girls and 13 for boys. Now consider that the average age for first-time marriage is 27 for men and 25 for women. How surprising is it that young adults are not waiting until marriage to have sex?

How do parents and church leaders (some of whom, if they’re honest, also didn’t wait until marriage to have sex) respond to these changing sexual attitudes in the church?

Clearly we need to foster boundary-conscious, respectful dialogue with teenagers and 20-somethings both inside and outside our churches. If we want adult-to-adult relationships with the emerging adults of our churches and homes, we need to create safe places both to listen and to be heard.

The questions that follow are ones I have found helpful in conversations with my son and other young adults and have emerged out of my own study of current research on changing sexual attitudes and social trends.

Do you see yourself happily married someday?

In his 2007 essay “The Future of Marriage in America,” sociologist David Popenoe, summarizing the results of a survey of 6,000 high school seniors, wrote, “The great majority of American high school seniors still want to get married, with 82 percent of girls and 70 percent of boys saying that ‘having a good marriage and family life’ is ‘extremely important’ to them.”

More than half of couples marrying for the first time have first lived together, and nearly 75 percent of single people have been sexually active by age 20.

Assuming this desire for a good marriage is true for most young adults, the question becomes one of how they best realize that desire. Contradictory attitudes seem to reveal that while young people want to be happily married someday, they don’t have a great deal of hope that their dreams can come true.

Only 39 percent of high school girls and 32 percent of boys in this survey believed that marriage will lead to more happiness in life than remaining single or cohabiting. Seen as an affirmation of sin-
Building a good marriage is fraught with setbacks, failure and sacrifice, all of which are better weathered in a community of friends who share these struggles and find value in them.

It is in this apparent gap between what young people say they want and their lack of hope in being able to have what they want that marriage advocates can stand. We need to be able to adequately articulate why marriage is still a meaningful arrangement. We also need to be able to offer some hope that long-term marriages are still possible, in spite of that recurring statistic that says half of all marriages end in divorce.

What do you think makes for a good marriage?
In her book *Extraordinary Relationships: A New Way of Thinking About Human Interactions*, psychiatrist Roberta M. Gilbert describes an “extraordinary” relationship as one that is “separate, equal and open,” which is, in essence, her definition of what love looks like in any satisfying relationship. She highlights the importance of both friendship (“upon which all solid relationships must be based”) and personal autonomy (the ability “to think independently in the presence of the other”).

A thoughtful reading of Gilbert’s analysis of family systems theory leads to the understanding that only adults who take responsibility for their own emotional maturity can value the needs and life goals of others in the same way they value their own. The ability to follow this version of the Golden Rule within a marriage has become more important for marital success in our day than a commitment to stay married no matter what.

Our sons and daughters, many of whom now separate sexual relations from long-term commitment, seem to compartmentalize their sex drive from their longings for deep friendship and emotional intimacy. In one way, they seem to recognize their own need to mature emotionally so that they can be ready for the kind of relationship Gilbert describes. In the meantime, though, they want to enjoy their sexuality without assuming the responsibilities and expectations of marriage. Many express a desire to achieve career goals and income requirements and satisfy their wanderlust before settling down.

How have we as parents and in the church encouraged our children in this way of thinking, without considering the reality of the human sex drive? Beyond promoting abstinence before marriage, early marriage or “safe sex,” what practical, reality-based counsel can the church offer single adults when even the topic of self-pleasure is still taboo in many Christian circles? I confess my own discomfort—and the sudden realization of just which side of the generation gap I’m on—upon reading an article in one student-produced magazine about a new kind of in-home sales party popular among college-age women. Mary Kay? A new line of jewelry? No—sex toys, complete with demonstrations on how to use them.

Perhaps in our desire to provide well for our children and in our attempts to build their self-esteem by applauding their achievements, we have unwittingly sent the message that being comfortable, successful and self-satisfied are the ultimate life goals and that the struggle, pain, failure and self-denial that come with love and friendship have no value.

Building a good marriage is fraught with setbacks, failure and sacrifice, all of which are better weathered in a community of friends who share these struggles and find value in them. Our children have been watching us as we relate in our own marriages. They have noticed what the church says—and does not say—about sex and marriage. Some have experienced the pain of divorce. Many apparently have concluded that mar-

---

**Ways to reduce the chances of divorce**
The chances for divorce are not the same for everyone who marries. For couples whose combined annual income is over $50,000, the chance for divorce drops by 30 percent. Waiting to have a baby until after marriage reduces the risk of divorce by 24 percent. Marrying after age 25 reduces the risk by 24 percent. If one’s parents are still married, if one is religious and if one has at least some college experience, the risk of divorce is further reduced.—The National Marriage Project (http://rutgers.edu), a non-partisan, nonsectarian and interdisciplinary initiative of Rutgers University
riage is best avoided or put off until they have time to find the “perfect” partner. This, in part, explains why over 50 percent of young adults cohabit before marriage, their attempt to “be sure” before saying, “I do.”

**How would you describe your current relationships?**

Storytelling is a good, usually nonthreatening way to share information. I have listened carefully to my son’s descriptions of his relationship experiences and to his own take on the hook-up culture. I have had to learn to tread carefully and not overreact to attitudes and descriptions outside my comfort zone.

I have earned the kind of trust and respect in these conversations that helps him listen to my stories—stories of my early romantic encounters and of my marriage relationship. I have tried to be honest about my regrets and about the ways love within marriage has been both a struggle and a gift. Our dialogue has helped me find and articulate new meaning in the losses and benefits of my own marriage.

**What kind of family life do you think is best for children?**

Perhaps the attitudes and behaviors most disturbing to me are the ones that deny that sexual intercourse can result in a pregnancy (not to mention sexually transmitted diseases). According to a National Public Radio report on April 20, 2009, over 50 percent of pregnancies in the United States are unplanned, and seven out of 10 of those pregnancies occur in women between the ages of 20 and 29. “Magical thinking,” even by college-educated young people, was the reason given for this trend.

Out of 6,000 high school seniors surveyed by The National Marriage Project, 56 percent said that “having a child without being married is experimenting with a worthwhile lifestyle” or “is not affecting anyone else.” Anyone who, like me, works in a public school knows the often-sad outcome of that attitude. Children of young single parents are often living in poverty and/or living with grandparents.

Barbara Dafoe Whitehead, co-director of The National Marriage Project, in testimony before a Senate subcommittee, said, “According to Census Bureau projections, by 2010, households with children will account for little more than one-quarter of all households—the lowest share in the nation’s history.”

Clearly, not having children—or waiting to have children until one’s 30s or later—is a trend that is gaining momentum. No longer is it a given that most people will become parents sometime in life.

**Do you envision yourself a parent someday?**


Parents may need to come to terms with the possibility that they will never be grandparents.

Issues surrounding birth control, abortion, unplanned pregnancies and divorce continue to raise points of disagreement and division in the church at large. What we can agree on, though, and discuss with the young adults in our homes and churches are the ethical issues surrounding procreation. Emerging adults, particularly those whose own parents have divorced, can identify with the notion that children need parents who want them, who are committed to loving each other and who are prepared to put their children’s needs and happiness before their own.

In her book *Between Two Worlds: The Inner Lives of Children of Divorce*, Elizabeth Marquardt, a researcher and herself a child of divorced parents, interviewed 71 adults under 30, half of whom were from divorced families. All were college graduates. Her interviews, along with a telephone survey of 1,500 young adults, half of whom were from divorced families, revealed that “even successful young people are profoundly shaped by childhood divorce.” In her conclusion, Marquardt writes, “Those of us who are children of divorce are not all falling apart, but neither are we willing to be held up as proof—convenient proof—that kids don’t really need both parents.”

Parents may need to come to terms with the possibility that they will never be grandparents.
For our Christian sons and daughters who clearly want marriage and children but who are considering cohabitation before marriage, we can ask, “When your children someday ask you—and they will—‘Did you live with each other before you were married?’ how will you feel about telling them the truth?” They may also be interested to learn that the divorce rate for couples who cohabited before marriage is even higher than the national average.

What kind of love are you looking for?
In an attempt to share my own understanding of love and marital commitment with my son, I described in writing how I view the marriage journey as a spiritual pilgrimage. I was a little surprised to find that he agreed with my vision of marriage despite our differing views on current sexual attitudes and practices.

In the church, I wrote, we believe we need God’s grace to love another person exclusively for life. This kind of love serves as a mirror in which we see ourselves as we are in relation to the other and then—to use increasingly old-fashioned terms—repent, confess and receive forgiveness so that we can become even better lovers than before. Our character flaws and our personality quirks become known to us in the light of our partner’s willingness to stay with us, accept and forgive, and continue loving us even when he or she has been hurt by who we are.

I explained that this is the kind of love the church believes comes from God and to which humans must aspire if they and this planet are to survive. Love is first a choice and then a daily commitment to the beautifully flawed people we live among. This commitment-driven love between sexual partners produces trust, and trust leads to an intimacy that allows us to be ourselves, weaknesses and all, without fear of rejection. In this intentional, loving context, sex truly becomes lovemaking.

More importantly, this covenant relationship we call marriage provides the best environment for raising not only healthy, happy children but also for creating a partnership that can grow, endure and carry lovers together into old age. Love this strong, this lasting, is not casually given or received but is forged by keeping one’s promise to love—day by day—for a lifetime.

Is this the vision of marriage and family life the majority of young adults say is extremely important to them? If so, how do we in the church become marriage advocates in a way that captures the hearts and minds of our children?

It is never too late to engage in respectful dialogue, listen, tell our own stories and reframe old realities and face new ones in the light of God’s enduring love.

Sandra Fribley is a member of Assembly Mennonite Church in Goshen, Ind.

This covenant relationship we call marriage provides the best environment for raising not only healthy, happy children but also for creating a partnership that can grow, endure and carry lovers together into old age.
The peace church
as worship of God

If we confess the God of Jesus Christ, a peace church is the only church we can be.

by J. Denny Weaver

We are a peace church.
That much is clear.
The real questions are how long that will be true and how long we care.
Signs of drifting: Signs of drift in our commitment are appearing. Here is a short list. Because George W. Bush claimed Jesus as his personal Savior and favorite political philosopher, many Mennonites supported the past president in spite of his aggressive war policies and express little anger at the current president when he continues the same war policies. And the idea is gaining traction in the academic realm that since we are now culturally assimilated, we Mennonites should be willing to “get our hands dirty” to help with “security.” In this argument, helping with security means to support the use of guns in both local and international arenas as long as that use is limited and is called “just policing.”

The world needs to see and hear that retaliation only continues a cycle of violence and breeds more violence.

These discussions mirror comments from Road Signs for the Journey: A Profile of Mennonite Church USA, in which Conrad Kanagy writes, “We have become less likely to resist military service and more likely to say that we would engage in war or carry a weapon.” Also there is the frequently voiced fear that too much emphasis on peace might detract from efforts at mission outreach rather than seeing the gospel of peace as an intrinsic and inseparable part of the good news about Jesus Christ.

Why be a peace church: The list of reasons to continue to be a peace church is longer. The most profound reason of all is new to our thinking about the peace church. It may even surprise. This list builds to that most profound of reasons.

1. Being a peace church is our tradition and our history. Not all Anabaptists in the 16th-century Reformation were pacifists. However, in contrast to the other Reformation groups, rejection of the sword was a central issue of discussion among Anabaptists. The enduring voices were the pacifist ones, and Anabaptists became identified as a pacifist movement. Maintaining Mennonite Church USA today as a peace church is being true to this heritage and tradition.

2. People outside Mennonites expect us to be a peace church. For example, more than half the members of my congregation in Madison belonged to another denomination before they became Mennonites. They sought out Madison Mennonite Church because of the Mennonite tradition of being a peace church. We need not to disappoint such seekers.

3. For many Muslims, Christianity is the religion that attacked Islam in the Crusades and the religion of the people behind the guns aimed at Muslims today. The world of Islam needs to see a peaceful Christian tradition and a denomination that respects the religion of Islam.

4. All the armed countries of the world need us to be a peace church. The world needs us to hold up an image of the peaceable reign of God in the face of seeming unending military conflicts in Iraq, Afghanistan and elsewhere. The world needs to see and hear that retaliation only continues a cycle of violence and breeds more violence. There are more people angry at the United States now than there were before the invasions and occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan, which had the purported goal of stopping terrorism.

5. Observing the disastrous effects of retaliation confirms the truth of Jesus’ words in Matthew 5:38-48 and shows that being a peace church makes sense. Many commentators believe that Jesus’ saying “Do not resist an evildoer” means “Do not mirror evil” or “Do not respond to violence with more violence.” Then the commands about turning the other cheek, giving inner along with outer garment and going the second mile are examples of responses that change the situation without mirroring evil. “Love your enemies” follows with another version of “Do not mirror evil.” It means, rather than responding with more evil or violence, do something to change the situation. Paul repeats that wisdom in Romans 12:17-21 and 1 Thessalonians 5:15, and it is repeated again in 1 Peter 3:9. When one sees the increase in the number of terrorist events after the U.S. invasions and occupations of Afghanistan and Iraq, the truth of Jesus’ words becomes apparent. Violence does not solve problems. Instead, it spreads problems around and breeds more violence.

6. Mennonite Church USA needs to be a peace church for its own health. For at least three decades we have been struggling with the seemingly intractable problem of the place of gays and lesbians in our congregations. There are concerned, committed people on all sides of this issue. If we could solve the question to everyone’s satisfaction on the basis of what we know now, we would have done so long ago. Showing how the peace church maintains itself in love in the face of seemingly intractable problems is part of our witness to the world, but it is also part of
what we do for ourselves.

7. We are disciples of Jesus. Jesus rejected the sword. To be his disciples means to do likewise. Drifting away from the idea of being a peace church is to drift away from following Jesus Christ.

**A nonviolent God**

8. Finally, and most profoundly, being a peace church is the way to worship God. More specifically, it is the way to worship the God who is revealed in Jesus Christ. Since this is a new discussion, it takes some explaining.

We believe God is fully revealed in the story of Jesus Christ, in his life, teaching, death and resurrection. Jesus rejected violence. If God is fully revealed in Jesus, then God also refuses to use or sanction violence. If God is fully revealed in Jesus, then God is nonviolent. We should cultivate nonviolent images of God. This may require rethinking some commonly held beliefs.

**Images of a violent God:** There is a long tradition of seeing God as violent or as a God who sanctions or exercises violence. When a man’s wife dies from cancer, well-meaning friends tell the grieving husband, “God had a plan for your wife.” Although strangely silent after the earthquake in Chile, a well-known religious broadcaster blamed the earthquake that devastated Haiti on a curse because “they made a pact with the devil.” A few months ago, ABC News reported that for several years the manufacturer Trijicon had been putting Bible verses, including New Testament verses, into the serial numbers of rifle scopes it sold to the military. In 1 Samuel 15 God commanded King Saul to “utterly destroy” the Amalekites, “kill both man and woman, child and infant, ox and sheep, camel and donkey.” But Samuel spared Agag the king, as well as the best of the cattle and the valuable treasure. Because Saul had disobeyed and God was displeased, God removed the kingship from Saul.

These stories have a common thread. All assume that God either sanctions killing—whether through Saul’s massacre of Amalekites with the sword or through Americans shooting at Iraqis and Afghans with Bible-blessed scopes—or that God kills directly—whether one woman with cancer or some 200,000 Haitians with an earthquake. We need to abandon this view of a God who kills.

**The omnipotence of God:** The assumption that God uses and sanctions violence often goes hand in hand with the idea of God’s omnipotence. The idea that God is omnipotent—all powerful—is assumed to mean that nothing happens without God’s authorization and that in fact God controls all that happens. The implication is that God exercises evil and violence and sanctions violence as well as being a God of love and mercy. God can do anything and has no limits, the argument goes, so of course God must direct evil and violence as well as convey blessings and act mercifully. Thus cancer and earthquakes must be God’s doing, and Bible verses on weapons both bear witness to the God of Christians and bless the killing the weapons accomplish. Some version of these assumptions about omnipotence and divine violence have been the dominant and traditional view in Christian theology for much of Christian history.

Historical responses to the idea of a violent God have varied. One response abandons the idea of God’s omnipotence. This response assumes that God is loving and merciful, and on the basis of that assumption reaches the conclusion that a loving God is not all powerful. Wouldn’t a God both lov-
The Old Testament has a conversation about the character of God.

A conversation about God and violence:
There is no doubt that the Old Testament has images of a God who kills and sanctions killing. We saw one example in 1 Samuel 15. Others come to mind—the stories of a great flood (Genesis 6-8) or the killing of the Egyptian army in the exodus or the massacre of the inhabitants of Jericho and Ai in the conquest of Canaan. Understanding that God is all powerful, the argument goes, has prevented the great misery caused by things like cancer and earthquakes?

A second response goes a step farther, to atheism. Those who take this step of belief refuse to accept the existence of a God who would cause the misery of an earthquake in Haiti and kill a man’s wife with cancer. Thus the idea of divinely sanctioned violence can actually promote atheism.

But if these three answers—God kills, God is weak and God does not exist—were a multiple choice test, the correct answer would be “none of the above.” There is a fourth, less well-known answer. This fourth answer requires rethinking sections of the traditional theological outline.

The problem of an omnipotent God who kills has two dimensions. One dimension concerns the image of God as a violent God and a God who sanctions violence. The other dimension concerns the understanding of omnipotence or what it means to say that God is all powerful. The following discussion addresses both dimensions.

Consider some familiar stories. Genesis 1 and 2 has two different images of creation. In Genesis 1, God is said to create by speaking. Genesis 2 projects a different image—God creates by kneeling on the ground and forming people and animals out of clay. Each of these images teaches that God is the origin of whatever is.

But something else becomes visible when these two stories are compared with another creation story, the Enuma Elish. This text is a Babylonian creation myth, contemporaneous with the time of Abraham. In the Enuma Elish, the earth, sky and human beings are all the product of violence. Marduk killed the female god Timat in a battle. Marduk then sliced the distended body of Timat in two and elevated the upper half to make the dome of the sky. After a search to determine who had inspired Timat’s rebellion, the guilty god was killed. His blood was then used to make human beings, who would act as servants to the gods. Against such violent stories, it should jump out that in the accounts of Genesis 1 and 2 we have images of a God who creates without violence. The Bible begins with nonviolent images of God.

Consider the account of God’s command to massacre the Amalekites against the story in 2 Kings 6 of Elisha’s solution to a threat to the Israelites posed by the king of Aram. Several times the king set an ambush for the king of Israel, but Elisha the prophet somehow learned of these encampments and warned Israel’s king to stay away. When he learned of Elisha’s actions, the angry king of Aram sent a large armed force to capture Elisha. In the morning, when Elisha’s servant saw this force, he was fearful. However, Elisha prayed that his eyes be opened, and he saw an army of fiery chariots that was protecting them. Elisha then prayed that the king’s army be blinded—unable to detect where they were. Elisha told the army they were in the wrong city and that he would lead them to the place where they would find the man they sought. And he led them to Samaria and into the presence of the king of Israel. Here their eyes were opened and they realized where they were. And the king of Israel asked, “Shall I kill them?” (v. 21). And Elisha said, No, give them something to eat and drink and send them back to their master. So the king of Israel set out “a great feast.” And after they had feasted, he sent them back to the king of Aram. The story concludes, “And the Arameans no longer came raiding into the land of Israel!” (v. 23).

We need to put this story of nonviolent conflict resolution over against the story of the command for a massacre given to Saul. The Old Testament has a conversation about the character of God that
we can only briefly observe in this space. The nonviolent God of the creation stories is pictured against the God who is said to use a great flood to massacre all of humanity except for Noah’s family. Further, in contrast to stories of military victories and assassinations is the account of Gideon, who routed an army of Midianites with 300 men armed only with trumpets, pitchers and torches (Judges 7:1-23). The book of Joshua pictures a violent and thorough conquest of the promised land, but along with the book of Judges, Joshua also displays an incomplete conquest and occupation of the land. The conversation includes the contrast between Nahum and Jonah. In Nahum, God is said to celebrate vengeance on Ninevah, whereas the later book of Jonah portrays God as merciful to the city. On the side of nonviolent resistance are the stories of Esther and of Daniel and his three friends.

What has been missing from much of our understanding has been the fact that the Old Testament contains a series of writings and stories that constitute a tradition of nonviolent resistance and a God who does not practice violence. In fact, these stories represent one side of a conversation about the character of God that goes on throughout the Old Testament. We have been familiar with the texts that portray a violent God but have been less aware of the nonviolent side of the conversation. The question for us becomes, Which of these stories and which side of the conversation best reflects the will and the character of God? The violent side or the nonviolent side?

The answer does not come by simply putting a finger on one or the other of the stories and reciting it in a loud voice. To decide which side of the conversation best reflects the character of God, we need a criterion outside these stories.

Perhaps the creation stories in Genesis 1 and 2 are the beginning of a clue. The fact that the Bible begins with a nonviolent image of God carries some weight.

That clue is followed by a stronger one. As Christians, our identity comes from the story of Jesus. It is obvious which of these paths through the Old Testament reflects the God revealed in Jesus and finds its fulfillment in Jesus. We know that Jesus rejected violence. And his story is a continuation of the history of God’s people that began with Abraham. Their God was the nonviolent creator God. Obviously the Israelites did not all understand God in the same way, and often they lost track of the nonviolent character of God. Nonetheless, that the God of Israel is fully revealed in the story of Jesus is a bedrock tenet of Christian faith. Thus if we truly accept the confession that God is fully revealed in Jesus, it should be obvious that God is not a God who sanctions violence or who kills. It is a misunderstanding of God to think that God commanded a massacre or deliberately kills a man’s wife with cancer or slays 200,000 Haitians with an earthquake.

The omnipotence of God again: The issue of the omnipotence of God remains. Is a nonviolent God truly omnipotent? The violent God, the God who uses and sanctions violence, is a God made in our own image. This God has to punish evil and violence, and that punishment supposedly happens with greater violence exercised by God. It is like the child bullied

The God revealed in the resurrection of Jesus is the God who responds to the taking of life by restoring of life.
If we confess the God of Jesus Christ, a peace church is the only church we can be.

on the school ground who threatens to get his big brother to beat up the bully. Violence is met with greater violence. And God then exercises the greatest violence of all, now and in the end. This is a God who mirrors human violence.

The God who reflects our image is obviously stronger than we are. As weak human beings, we can lift only small weights. God who is so much stronger can lift the ultimate weight. But again, this is just a God created in our image—a God who mirrors what we do, only more so.

But the God revealed in Jesus is not the God made in our image, not the God who responds to violence with more violence and lifts the ultimate weight. The God revealed in Jesus is the God who acts to change the situation.

How does God act to change the situation? The answer is the resurrection of Jesus. God responds to the violence of taking life by restoring life. When people used violence against Jesus, God’s Anointed One, God did not mirror their violence. Instead God changed the situation. God responded with resurrection.

The resurrection speaks to our understanding of the omnipotence of God. Resurrection shows us that the omnipotence of God is the opposite of the image of the God who uses the most violence and lifts the heaviest weight. The God revealed in the resurrection of Jesus is the God who responds to the taking of life by restoring of life. The God revealed in Jesus is not a God who responds to human violence by using more, sometimes infinitely more violence. Here then is how I would define the omnipotence of God: the ability to restore life where there is currently no life, and the ability to carry out the divine will in spite of human violence and disobedience. Rather than a definition of God’s omnipotence that is made in the image of humankind, that definition of omnipotence is the opposite of humankind.

The ultimate fulfillment of the divine will in spite of human violence and disobedience will occur at the final consummation with the return of Jesus. In the meantime, although evil has been defeated by the resurrection, it is still thrashing around and able to inflict suffering. It is as though we are playing in the middle of the fourth quarter of a football game in which the outcome of the game was settled at the end of the first half, when the winning team—our team—capitalized on the opponent’s errors and scored four touchdowns to put the game out of reach. That scoring spree is like the resurrection. The game continues, and we can be injured, but the outcome is determined. The reign of God is victorious, even as suffering and evil are still present.

The nonviolent and omnipotent God is the one fully revealed in the life of Jesus. This God restores life rather than taking life. This God gives us comfort and strength to endure and resist the ongoing evil that Jesus’ resurrection has already defeated.

The most profound reason of all to be a peace church is because the God revealed in the life, teaching, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ is a nonviolent God. This is the God that we should worship at the center of our life as a peace church. If we confess the God of Jesus Christ, a peace church is the only church we can be.

J. Denny Weaver is professor emeritus of religion at Bluffton (Ohio) University. He attends Madison (Wis.) Mennonite Church.
The ‘bare essentials’ of Anabaptism

Anabaptism has been around for almost 500 years. For much of that time, it has been clothed in Mennonite and Amish traditions and culture. But what does it look like without Mennonite and Amish clothing? That’s what Stuart Murray wondered; the result is The Naked Anabaptist: The Bare Essentials of a Radical Faith (Herald Press). For Murray, who helps direct the Anabaptist Network in Great Britain and Ireland, Anabaptism is a way of following Jesus that challenges, disturbs and inspires, summoning Christians to lives of discipleship and worship. In March he took time to answer some questions about his new book.

Author Stuart Murray talks about the making of The Naked Anabaptist
Why did you write this book?

More and more people in Great Britain are seeing Anabaptism as an exciting way to live out their faith. They want to know: Where did Anabaptism come from? What are its core convictions? And, Do I have to give up my own church tradition to become one? The Naked Anabaptist is my effort to provide some answers. It’s a way to simply answer the questions people are asking about Anabaptism by people who know nothing about it or who are confused about what it really was all about.

What kinds of questions were being asked?

The questions that came up most often were: What is an Anabaptist? Where did they come from? What do they believe? Can I become an Anabaptist? What is the difference between Anabaptists and Mennonites? And, Can I be an Anabaptist without living in a common purse community like the Hutterites, driving a buggy like the Amish or belonging to a Mennonite church and singing in four-part harmony?

How did you come up with the term “naked Anabaptist”? 

It was actually my friend Noel Moules who coined it. While traveling with some Mennonite church leaders in 2008 in Pennsylvania, he was quizzed about the growing interest in Anabaptism in Britain and Ireland. They wanted to know why growing numbers of British and Irish Christians were interested in Anabaptism and what Anabaptism looked like without the Mennonite or Amish culture in which it is usually clothed in North America. To which Noel replied, “You mean, what does a naked Anabaptist look like?” When I heard Noel’s story, I knew I had a title for this book.

Why do you think there is growing interest in Anabaptism in Great Britain and other countries in Europe?

Europe has become very secular. The old links between the church and the state—what used to be called Christendom—are disappearing. Today we are living in a post-Christendom era, when the church is no longer at the center of societal life. Since the early Anabaptists also lived at the margins of society, their experiences and perspectives are attractive to many people who are looking for ways to live faithfully as followers of Jesus today.

What are the bare essentials of Anabaptism for you?

For me there are seven essentials or core convictions. First and foremost is belief in Jesus; he is our example, teacher, friend, redeemer and Lord. The second is seeing Jesus as the focal point of God’s revelation. The third is being free from the state and all that Christendom implied.

Fourth, Anabaptists are committed to finding ways to be good news to the poor, powerless and persecuted. Fifth, Anabaptist churches are called to be communities of discipleship and mission, friendship, mutual accountability and multivoiced worship. Sixth, spirituality and economics are connected for Anabaptists, which is important in our individualist and consumerist culture.

Finally, for Anabaptists peace is central to the gospel. It is not the center of the gospel—Jesus is the center of it all. It is as followers of Jesus that we are committed to finding nonviolent alternatives to violence in our world—not peace for its own sake.
You wrote this book for people in Great Britain. Do you think this book will be useful in North America, too?

I hope so. During my visits to the United States and Canada I have encountered the same kinds of questions—people are genuinely interested in Anabaptism but either don’t know anything about it or can’t see past the Amish and Mennonite clothing that covers it. That includes Mennonites themselves, by the way; my hope is that many Mennonites in the United States and Canada will read it and become interested in recovering their own radical heritage.

What do you mean by “recover their own radical heritage”?

During my visits to the United States and Canada I have been amazed by the lack of interest in Anabaptism that I find among many North American Mennonites. I don’t know why that is, exactly; I know there has been a lot of discussion about Anabaptism at seminaries and colleges, but I wonder if it hasn’t been able to filter down to congregations. Or maybe it has gotten so lost beneath all the Mennonite traditions and trappings over time so that it doesn’t seem special anymore.

I don’t want to be misunderstood; I am appreciative of Mennonites and how they have kept Anabaptism alive all these years. They have demonstrated how Anabaptist insights are worked out in the lives of families and congregations and how this tradition can be passed on to the next generation. I would not be an Anabaptist if not for the work of Alan and Eleanor Krieder and the London Mennonite Centre. We owe them a great debt.

But I still find it ironic that it seems to be those of us who didn’t grow up as Mennonites who are far more excited about Anabaptist tradition than traditional Mennonites today. Maybe this book can help change that a bit.

What is your ultimate goal for this book?

My goal is not to promote Anabaptism for its own sake. My interest is in promoting a way of living that helps people become more faithful followers of Jesus. Through it, I want to pay tribute to generations of Anabaptist Christians who witnessed faithfully, refused to conform to social norms, pioneered new ways of being church, challenged dominant assumptions about violence and sometimes suffered appallingly. But in the end I am interested in the Anabaptist tradition only as a means to an end, and that end is to point us to Jesus as the one we are to follow and worship.


The Naked Anabaptist: The Bare Essentials of a Radical Faith ($13.99), is available from Mennonite Publishing Network at www.mpn.net/nakedanabaptist or by calling 800-245-7892.
It does not mean being Swiss-German.

How many times have you heard someone say, “That is so Mennonite” or, “I hate to be overly Mennonite about this, but. . . .” How about, “That’s not a Mennonite name.” What do you think people mean when they say these things? After reading this article, I hope you’ll never use any of these phrases again.
I cringe whenever I hear someone say one of these things because they remind me that many of us, at least those of us from the mostly Swiss-German part of the denomination, still largely confuse being Mennonite with being Swiss-German. I suppose it is not too surprising that any body of ideas represented for several centuries predominantly by one ethnic group will end up being interwoven with and confused with that ethnic group’s culture. But it is high time we do away with that confusion.

Because Swiss-Germans tend to be emotionally restrained rather than expressive, tend to avoid conflict rather than deal with it directly, tend to pinch pennies rather than spend money freely, tend to defer to other people rather than step forward themselves, these traits have been mistakenly associated with being Mennonite where most Mennonites have been Swiss-German.

Because Swiss-Germans tend to be passive-aggressive in dealing with conflict, some confuse this with a Mennonite approach to conflict even though there is nothing in our confession of faith or our core values that calls for us to deal with conflict in this way. It’s just a bad cultural habit that Swiss-Germans pass on. We desperately need people from other ethnic backgrounds to help us develop healthier, more effective ways to deal with conflict. Our “Agreeing and Disagreeing in Love” document calls for us to deal with conflict in more direct and assertive ways, but to be honest, that continues to be a stretch for most of us who are Swiss-German.

Swiss Germans tend to mistake confidence for pride—and have for centuries. One Mennonite congregation I know is recovering from a recent struggle over this very issue. When the new pastor arrived, he could not figure out why it was so hard to identify and recruit leaders in the congregation. No one seemed to believe in themselves enough to take any responsibility. After further investigation, he discovered that the people with leadership gifts, the people willing to take initiative and responsibility, had all left after being consistently undermined and relentlessly criticized for being proud.

Why do we refer to this as “Mennonite” behavior rather than “the dark side of Swiss-German culture”? Is there anything in our theology that calls for us to be passive-aggressive or to confuse confidence and pride? We call these behaviors Mennonite simply because many of us have behaved in these ways. In fact, they are based on a caricature of biblical humility that has shaped the habits of Swiss-German families.

This is even clearer if we associate positive things such as quilting, eating scrapple or sauerkraut, canning or hunting with being Mennonite. These are simply cultural practices of rural Swiss-Germans and have nothing to do with our confession of faith or our core values.

Another question worth pondering along these lines is, How many plain Mennonite groups in the United States are predominately made up of or led by people from ethnic groups other than Swiss-German? The dearth of such groups is a clear indication that there are ethnic and cultural boundaries in place around this approach to the Christian faith.

Because Swiss-Germans tend to be passive-aggressive in dealing with conflict some confuse this with a Mennonite approach to conflict.

One of the tremendous potential benefits from our intercultural and international partnerships, including those in Mennonite World Conference, is the opportunity to rethink what it means to be Mennonite in ways that are not so confused with specific cultural expressions. These partnerships give each national or ethnic group the opportunity to examine the ways in which our culture is intertwined with our theology.

Many of the distinctive faiths of Lancaster Conference Mennonites described in John Ruth’s book The Earth Is the Lord’s are theological in origin but cultural in expression. Living under the cross, nonconformity, nonresistance, simplicity, humility, community discernment—all are theological insights or convictions that need to be lived out in specific ways to have meaning in the real world. But they can all be lived out in a variety of ways. The ways various Mennonite groups have lived them out over the centuries have been specific to the times in which they lived and the cultural habits they inherited.

For example, the fact that Lancaster Conference Mennonites chose to live out these convictions in strict, closed communities that were distinctive in dress and culturally separate was clearly a result of a tightly knit, Swiss-German

©2009 Mennonite World Conference

©2009 Mennonite World Conference

©2009 Mennonite World Conference
farming community responding to the challenges of its time. While these communities extended mutual aid, they were also tightly bound by shame and guilt. We tend to overlook the likelihood that Mennonites from a Dutch merchant community, an African American farming community, a Vietnamese immigrant community or a Hispanic laborer community responding to these same challenges would have responded in different ways, even though they would have been grounded in the same theological convictions.

Yet because most of those who have carried the Mennonite torch for so long in the eastern United States have been Swiss-Germans, our particular incarnation of Mennonite values came to be confused with what it means to be Mennonite. John Howard Yoder concluded in 1970 that the primary focus of the Mennonite denomination had become the preservation of ethnic Mennonitism rather than the proclamation of the true gospel in word and deed.

I long for the day when being Mennonite means we have released each other to develop a wide variety of ways to do the following:

• call people to a meaningful personal relationship with Jesus;
• take the Lordship of Christ seriously in how we read Scripture and in our theological work;
• follow Christ faithfully and together in daily living;
• be true contrast communities in our local settings;
• love each other and extend mutual aid in extraordinary ways;
• live out reconciliation in our congregations and in our communities;
• interact with public culture in noticeably God-honoring ways;
• work together toward peace rather than resorting to violence;
• practice grace-filled discipline in following Christ together.

So the next time you hear someone associate being Mennonite with Swiss-German cultural habits, don’t fall for it. Be sure to confront them directly rather than complaining about them behind their back. Remind yourself that just because some—maybe even many—Mennonites behave a certain way doesn’t make it a defining characteristic of what it means to be Mennonite.

Let’s change the connotation of that phrase from “someone who acts Swiss-German” to “one who excels in living out our highest theological values in a compelling and winsome way.” Would not that be a much better way to think about what it means to be Mennonite? It might even be something we could aspire to.

Karl R. Landis is director of leadership development for Lancaster (Pa.) Mennonite Conference.
As a young adult, I studied with Ron Sider, got most of my recipes from the *More with Less Cookbook* and considered *Living More with Less* second only to the Bible in its authority for my life. Still, I did not technically become a Mennonite until my mid-20s, when I joined Peace Mennonite Church in Lawrence, Kan.

I fell in love with the Mennonites, and I fell hard. Before I knew it, I was going back to seminary and accepting a pastoral call at my church.
For the most part, I have felt welcomed into this denomination. My congregation quickly forgave my Baptist past. Other Mennonite pastors are warm and inclusive. People at convention are friendly.

Still, every once in awhile I trip across some Mennonite cultural trappings. Little things that are said—or not said—that remind me I am a newcomer to the Mennonite world.

Nobody means to exclude those who are new to the Mennonite tradition. Mennonites are trying to be more inclusive on many levels. So I thought I might further the cause by offering this list of do’s and don’ts—to those of you who grew up Mennonite from one who did not:

- Do double-check the spelling of my last name and ask me how to pronounce it (Hair-u-der).
- Don’t assume I just misspelled “Harder.” And definitely don’t ask if I “used to be a Harder.”
- Do feel free to play the Mennonite Name Game when you meet another Yoder or Swartzentruber or Wiens. (Really, it’s pretty entertaining.)
- Don’t abruptly end your conversation with me once you realize I can’t play the game. (“No, I did not used to be a Harder.”)
- Do offer to show me how to make zwieback.
- Don’t expect me to bring it to a potluck. Or to know how to spell it.
- Do sing the alto part of “Praise God from Whom” loud enough that I can catch on.
- Don’t start singing the hymn without even announcing the page number. And don’t announce the number as 606 (unless we’re using the old brown hymnals).
- Do explain to me that Mennonite Church USA is the result of a relatively recent merging of the Mennonite Church and the General Conference Mennonite Church.

+ Don’t say, “Well, of course they did that crazy thing. They were MC.” Or, “What else would you expect from those old GCs?” with a knowing nod. I don’t know. Masters of Cheese-making? Granite Climbers? And for Pete’s sake, don’t start talking about “OMs.” What in the world is OM? Is it contagious?*

- Do tell me about opportunities for my children to attend Mennonite camps.
- Don’t simply announce that the Mennosch or Friedenswald brochures are in. Is a Friedenswald sort of like a zwieback?
- Do patiently explain, for the 4,000th time, how Mennonites are different from Amish.
- Don’t tell me I’m the 4,000th person who has asked that annoying question.
- Do share stories from Anabaptist history. What’s not to love about Dirk Willems?
- Don’t belabor the point that my non-Anabaptist forebears were responsible for the brutal slaying of your principled and peaceful ancestors. (I’m really, really sorry about that.)
- Do tell me about your plans for the weekend.
- Don’t expect me to squeal with excitement when those plans involve something called Schmeckfest.
- Do realize that we newer Mennonites among you may have our own faith stories, favorite foods, musical styles and celebrations that involve far too many consonants. Ask us about them.
- And don’t forget that “no one can lay any foundation other than the one that has been laid, that foundation is Jesus Christ” (1 Corinthians 3:11). It is Christ who binds us together in love. It is our desire to follow Christ’s way of peace and justice that keeps us moving forward. Wherever we may have come from, we are now headed down the same path—together.

*Note: “MC” is Mennonite Church. “GC” is General Conference Mennonite Church. These two binationals merged in 2001 to form Mennonite Church USA and Mennonite Church Canada. “OM” was sometimes used to represent the former Mennonite Church and means “old Mennonite” church.

Joanna Harader is pastor of Peace Mennonite Church in Lawrence, Kan.
Early Christians for peace

by David W.T. Brattston

The early church was clearly opposed to participation in war.

All Christians before the mass apostasy of A.D. 249-251 who considered Christian participation in war opposed it on ethical grounds. The army contained some lukewarm Christians, but their exceptions prove the rule.
The earliest sources are mid-second century: Justin Martyr, Christian insertions into the Sibylline Oracles and the Acts of John. Among the improvements in character and behavior noticed upon conversion to Christianity, Justin detailed that people who used to murder each other now refrain from making war on their enemies. Justin spoke of the Roman army as consisting wholly of pagans without any Christians being soldiers. In its Christian edition, the Sibyl puts people who make wars into the same category as those who dishonor their mothers, plot against their brothers, and betray their friends. The Acts of John 36 consigns warmongers to hell, along with tyrants, murderers and robbers.

Soldiers desiring to become Christians must be taught not to kill and even to disobey if ordered to kill. Christians already in the church who try to join the army were to be expelled as despisers of God.

Shortly afterward, the pagan philosopher Celsus criticized Christians for not participating in the armed forces. He feared their pacifism would lead to barbarian conquest if too many Roman men became Christians and would destroy the Christian religion itself. Thus, even pagans of the period recognized noninvolvement in wars as official Christian policy.

Sometime before A.D. 236, Bishop Hippolytus in central Italy ranked war as a sin with murder, revenge, idolatry, selling a free brother into slavery and separating oneself from God. Dating from A.D. 217, his *Apostolic Tradition* sets out the livelihoods disqualifying applicants for church membership. It excludes idol-makers, prostitutes, pimps, gladiators and pagan priests along with military commanders. Soldiers desiring to become Christians must be taught not to kill and even to disobey if ordered to kill. Christians already in the church who try to join the army were to be expelled, as despisers of God. Even enlisting and taking the military oath were forbidden, in addition to killing in war.

Dating from Syria in the first third of the third century, another church manual likewise condemned government officials who were “defiled with wars” in the same passage as idol-makers, murderers, oppressors of the poor, false accusers, idolaters and extortionists.

Tertullian’s *De Corona* 11 considers “whether warfare is proper at all for Christians.” A Carthaginian, Tertullian was a clergyman and the founder of Latin Christian literature. His writings mentioned in this article date between A.D. 197 and 220. He asked rhetorically, implying negative answers: “Shall it be held lawful to make an occupation of the sword, when the Lord proclaims that he who uses the sword shall perish by the sword? And shall the son of peace take part in the battle when it does not become him even to sue at law? And shall he apply the chain and the prison and the torture and the punishment who is not the avenger even of his own wrongs? … How will a Christian man war, nay, how will he serve even in peace, without a sword, which the Lord has taken away?” Tertullian declared outright that Christ “in disarming Peter unbelted every soldier.”

But what of a man who is converted when already a soldier? In reply to Christians who cited Scripture to justify participation in war, Tertullian stated: “Of course, if faith comes later and finds any preoccupied with military service, their case is different, as in the instance of those whom John used to receive for baptism, and of those most faithful centurions, I mean the centurion whom Christ approves, and the centurion whom Peter instructs; yet, at the same time, when a man has become a believer, and faith has been sealed, there must be either an immediate abandonment of it, which has been the course with many; or all sorts of quibbling will have to be resorted to in order to avoid offending God, and that is not allowed even outside of military service.”

Moreover, we must remember that the New Testament does not state that the centurions were permitted to continue in the army in good faith. The Bible is silent on the point, such elaboration being irrelevant to the thrust of the pericopes.

In his reply to Celsus’ attacks, Origen in the late 240s conceded that Christians did not serve in the armed forces, which Origen sought to justify and explain. The greatest Bible scholar and teacher of his time, Origen was professor at the foremost Christian educational institution of the day (at Alexandria, Egypt) and later founded his own in Palestine. He was best placed to repre-
sent the consensus of Christian teaching in his time because he traveled throughout the eastern Mediterranean as a theological consultant at the invitation of local pastor-bishops.

Origen asserted that Christians have been taught such that “they would not, although able, have made war even if they had received authority to do so.” Further, he writes: “We no longer take up ‘sword against nation,’ nor do we ‘learn war any more,’ having become children of peace, for the sake of Jesus, who is our leader, instead of those whom our fathers followed.”

The proper defense against barbarian hordes, Origen wrote, is prayer. If all Roman men became Christians, as Celsus had feared and Origen hoped, there would be no military or civil calamity, because Christian prayer would prevent invasion by foreign conquerors or, if not, they would themselves become Christians and therefore pacifists. To quote Origen succinctly: “None fights better for the king than we do. We do not indeed fight under him, although he require it; but we fight on his behalf, forming a special army—an army of piety—by offering our prayers to God. … If all the Romans, according to the supposition of Celsus, embrace the Christian faith, they will, when they pray, overcome their enemies; or rather, they will not war at all, being guarded by that divine power which promised to save five entire cities for the sake of 50 people.”

As for the divinely-sanctioned warfare in the Old Testament, Origen drew a distinction between the Jewish constitution received from Moses and the Christian constitution received from Christ. Their political sovereignty gone in the Christian era and without a land or government of their own, Jews have no right to war on their enemies. Christianity was instituted to end war and bloodshed by God’s people, and Christians therefore abstain from them. For Christians to fight in any war, wrote Origen, would fundamentally overturn their very constitution itself.

In two biblical commentaries Origen wrote that Christians do not or ought not to do anything “factious and warlike.” He also preached: “If, therefore, you wish to be made worthy to pursue the inheritance from Jesus and if you wish to claim a portion from him, you must first end all wars and abide in peace.”

There was a discrepancy between official church teaching and the actual practice of some individuals, just as there is today. Except for the New Testament examples cited above, all but one instance from our period come from Tertullian.

One such was “The Thundering Legion.” Details of the incident remain under debate, but what matters for our purposes is that Christians for a few generations afterward believed it to be true. Sometime in the A.D. 170s the Imperial XIIth Legion was in distress due to a drought and a surrounding enemy. The Christian Legionnaires prayed for rain, with the result that a downpour relieved the Romans’ dehydration and frightened off its enemy. Christians of the era touted this as proof that God answers Christians’ prayers. Besides Tertullian, the only near-contemporary mention is the report attributed to the Legion’s commander, the Roman Emperor himself.

Tertullian dismissed Christians that participated in the military as quibblers, inferior exegetes, servants of two masters, rejecters of the prophecies and “turn their backs on the Scriptures.” Christ, he wrote, gave a new law in which all people are to beat their swords into ploughshares and their lances into sickles and nation not to take up the sword against nation and “no more learn to fight” or avenge oneself by a sword.

Christ gave a new law in which all people are to beat their swords into ploughshares.

The pseudonymous report of the Emperor actually fortifies the proposition that Christians in our era of study were in conscience pacifists and non-combatants. It states that the Christian Legionnaires “began the battle, not by preparing weapons or arms or bugles, for such preparation is hateful to them, on account of the God they bear about in their conscience.”

Church fathers, a New Testament apocryphon and at least one pagan during the first quarter-millennium A.D. and in such diverse localities as Italy, Carthage, Palestine, Syria, Egypt and elsewhere in the Roman Empire were unanimous that no Christian could participate in war while none wrote to the contrary.

Competencies for Mennonite pastors

Pastors play a significant role in leadership of Mennonite Church USA. They are in a key position to shape hearts and minds across the church. They interpret the signs of the times through preaching, teaching, modeling, shaping ministries, visioning and being in positions of influence locally and with the wider church. Mennonite Church USA recognizes the importance of the ministerial role and function and has developed guidelines for assessing the qualifications of candidates for ministry.

A person seeking to serve in a ministerial role or seeking a ministerial credential with Mennonite Church USA is required to complete the online Ministerial Leadership Information form and provide four references. The MLI is a 13-page document with six sections:

1. **Background information** (contact info, church connections, baptism date, conference connection, credential status, transition from previous position, education, employment, language proficiency);

2. **Personal character**: relationship to God, to self, to others (theology, confession of faith, Anabaptist/Mennonite distinctive and spiritual development);

3. **Qualifications relating to position and role** (understanding of ministerial role, vision for youth and young adults, missional church understanding, sense of call);

4. **Qualifications relating to task or function** (ranking 20 congregational/pastoral expectations and priorities, pastoral skills and gifts);

5. **Personal needs and preferences** (type of congregation, position preference, housing needs, financial needs, bivocational openness, part-time openness, geographical preferences);

6. **References and legalities** (four references and response to background check questions).

The Denominational Ministry office of Mennonite Church USA gathers and organizes this information for the 21 area conferences and upon request shares MLIs and references with area conference ministers as they help congregations search for pastors and guide conference committees in credentialing ministers.

In the first few years of Mennonite Church USA, conference ministers discussed the lack of standards for education and training of ministers across the 21 area conferences. In 2004, a task force of conference and denominational leaders formed to help bring more clarity to those standards and incorporate missional church learning.

The Ministerial Credentialing and Education Task Force came up with six ministerial competencies to help assess those being considered for ordination in Mennonite Church USA. Ministers are expected to do the following:

1. **Know the biblical story** in content and formation and how the Anabaptist/Mennonite way of using Scripture in community is unique and be able to preach and teach the biblical story in order to help a congregation be formed by the biblical story and be able to share it with others.

2. **Know the Anabaptist/Mennonite story**, its history and theology in light of the wider church so that the congregation is formed by Anabaptist/Mennonite values and praxis.

3. **Practice a Christian spirituality and discipleship** that nurtures a relationship with God and that helps the congregation be formed by God’s love and purposes and increases the capacity to love God and others and invites others.

4. **Have self-understanding, self-awareness and emotional intelligence**. A well-differentiated pastor increases the capacity of a congregation to accept healthy diversity, recognize gifts, express differences, mature in character and welcome new people.

5. **Have contextual awareness** and understand intercultural, interfaith, ecological and global dynamics. A pastor competent to read, learn from and engage ministry context helps the congregation engage its context in healing and hopeful ways and leads the church toward being more welcoming, ecumenical, antiracist and being a sign of God’s presence and reign.

6. **Have the capacity to influence others and lead change**. A pastor competent in leadership equips others for ministry, mentors emerging leaders, cultivates a climate of trust and collaboration and helps the congregation discover its purpose and vision and lead it into that vision.

The full description of these competencies is available at www.mennoniteusa.org.

The congregations and many other ministries of Mennonite Church USA are blessed to have many excellent ministers who faithfully guide the church of Jesus Christ during these times of challenge and opportunity.

---

**Lee Lever** is director of Denominational Ministry of Mennonite Church USA.

A well-differentiated pastor increases the capacity of a congregation to accept healthy diversity, recognize gifts, express differences, mature in character and welcome new people.
Pivotal times

Summertime has come. School’s out for many of us impacted by the annual rhythms of the classroom. Whether we’re tracking with our children or a school-related endeavor is the focus of our own work, or even if our work has nothing to do with school, the onset of summer usually means we make space for vacation.

“Summertime … and the livin’ is easy. Fish are jumpin’, and the cotton is high. Oh—your daddy’s right now. And your mama good lookin’. So hush little baby. Dooooon’t you cry.”

How well I remember Rob Eby of Rebirth fame crooning that hauntingly beautiful Gershwin lullaby on the Eastern Mennonite University, Harrisonburg, Va., stage when I was in college. It always struck me as melancholy and slightly ironic. It seemed both soothing and sad, speaking more of the yearnings of a father to comfort his baby than any arrogance the words themselves might suggest. The minor key and the swaying melody evoked wishful longing even as the words seemed meant to reassure.

The song now evokes memories of becoming a new father and the overwhelming longing I felt to reassure the tiny, vulnerable infant in my arms that I would be there for him, no matter what—and that I would do all in my power, by the grace of God, to create the conditions that would make life “easy” for him, for my beloved wife and for any other children the Lord might give us.

The livin’ certainly hasn’t been easy. Making life work is a delicate, complex process—requiring far more of me than I could begin to imagine as a young father. I’ve made plenty of mistakes and have often regretted that my children didn’t have a more exemplary father (and my wife a more reliable husband). But there are also plenty of things I’ve done well. I’ve never failed to love my children and be ready at a moment’s notice to respond to their need for reassuring support. And nearly every day I tell my wife how much I love her, and I have always been faithful to her in that love. Among the ways I’ve loved them all is by making space, finding resources and investing imagination in expansive time together as a family—on vacation.

I didn’t grow up in a family that regularly took vacations. We camped while on our way to church-related meetings or during family camp at Camp Hebron in Pennsylvania. My wife’s family, on the other hand, regularly took vacations. Since she and her siblings were often away at boarding school, her parents made a big deal of family vacations. It’s as if they were making up for lost time. She tells of vacation trips to various Rift Valley lakes in Ethiopia and of at least annual week-long trips to the Atlantic Ocean—learning to love and respect the mystery of sun, surf and sea.

I determined that vacations would be a regular event for my family. While we lived in Europe, we spent countless magical hours on the Adriatic seacoast and nearby islands, in the Swiss mountains and in travel through eastern and western Europe. After we moved to the Shenandoah Valley, we hiked trails in the Blue Ridge, camped on every Great Lake to and from Mennonite World Conference in Winnipeg, Manitoba, camped on a trek to the West Coast for a Mennonite Assembly in Eugene, Ore., and enjoyed multiple lake adventures in West Virginia, Kentucky and Virginia, sometimes on a houseboat. More recently, it’s been a challenge to get our now dispersed family of six together, but thankfully, my wife’s parents long ago established an extended family tradition of renting a house for a week at Sandbridge, Va.—right where my father-in-law used to go swimming after long days working in the vineyard and peach orchards on his family’s farm in southern Virginia. Everyone from the extended Chester and Sara Jane Wenger family are invited to come and savor time together. There is no way of calculating the enormous gift their generosity of time and space has meant for the forging of family friendship, faith and fun.

During a time of transition in our immediate family geography and rhythms, I am impressed with new intensity about the importance of planning for vacations and holiday celebrations together—deliberately protecting space and time away from the hurly-burly. As a father and soon-to-be grandfather, I am recommitting myself to carve out times when the livin’ can be easy. Time to come away, as Jesus said. Time to laugh and tell stories. Time to revel in God’s good creation by splashing and hiking in wild places. Time to enjoy good eating and rowdy family games. Time to sing to high heaven and anoint each other with sunscreen. Time to read and pray—to grieve what we’ve lost and give thanks for the gifts that are given. Pivotal times when we are there for each other no matter what.
Against the anthem but for hospitality

From the beginning, I opposed Goshen (Ind.) College’s decision to play the national anthem before select sporting events. Playing the anthem compromises Goshen’s institutional values of compassionate peacemaking and global citizenship. But I’m beginning to see how the national anthem discernment process has benefited me, the college and the wider community.

Before discussions about the national anthem began, I didn’t think too much about why I don’t sing the anthem or put my hand over my heart—movements that skirt too close to devotion (though I do remove my hat and stand).

Although I said the pledge of allegiance every morning while in public elementary school, somewhere along the way, I stopped; I also stopped singing the national anthem.

Thanks to Goshen College, I’ve now discerned why I don’t pledge allegiance to the flag or sing the national anthem. I’ve engaged in more meaningful conversations—especially with people who think differently—on one’s allegiances than I ever did before. And I can more meaningfully articulate the reasons behind why it’s so important for me to pledge allegiance to God over country.

Ultimately, the national anthem discernment process has taught me three lessons: how to engage in civil dialogue, celebrate our differences and demonstrate biblical hospitality.

Even though I’m still fervently opposed to showing allegiance to an earthly nation over the reign of God (and I believe the national anthem exemplifies this), I acknowledge that not everyone interprets the national anthem as I do. In fact, such interpretive differences allow the body of Christ to come alive.

Who am I, because of my beliefs, to deny someone else the same freedom I experience—to articulate their interpretation of what it means to be patriotic Christians?

Goshen president James E. Brenneman suggests that three questions have emerged as we’ve engaged in civil dialogue:

1. How should faithful Christians order their allegiances?

2. How do we celebrate the freedoms and opportunities of this country and still challenge injustices that also exist in our midst?

3. And how does a church college retain its historic peace heritage while welcoming an increasingly diverse student body from other traditions?

To the third question, Goshen College is made up of 55 percent Mennonites (and actively seeks people who aren’t Mennonite). At the most basic level, playing the national anthem is an act of hospitality for Goshen.

I trust Brenneman when he says he is “committed to retaining the best of what it means to be a Mennonite college while opening the doors wider to all who share our core values.” And I will hold him and the entire community to that assertion.

So while I believe the anthem represents being more than patriotic to this country, I’ve learned through civil dialogue why it is an essential part of patriotism for many people (of faith or not).

As I’ve learned these differences, I’m excited to celebrate them. I wasn’t in Goshen on March 23 as the anthem was played—followed by the peace prayer of St. Francis of Assisi—but I did watch a video of it. The anthem isn’t for me, even without lyrics. But St. Francis’ prayer is for me.

I thank God for these differences, because I believe that at the heart of peacemaking is the biblical concept of shalom—God’s peace—which includes active listening, respect and celebration.

Finally, the question of hospitality. According to Jessica Rose, associated editor of In Communion, a quarterly journal from Orthodox Christians, there are three definitions for biblical hospitality, including “hospitality that is built into our shared humanity, which welcomes the stranger for no other reason than this is what is required.”

One of my favorite examples of such hospitality comes from Genesis 18, where the LORD appears to Abraham and Sarah. Three angels appear out of nowhere. Abraham and Sarah scramble to prepare food. The angels are prepared to tell their secret—that Sarah will bear a son.

Imagine this: Three angels sit down at a table, but a fourth place is empty. They’re making room for me, for you. The hospitality of Abraham and Sarah touches the best of what it means to show hospitality.

So while I continue to oppose playing the national anthem, I affirm president Brenneman’s perspective that “the anthem offers a welcoming gesture to many visiting our athletic events, rather than an immediate barrier to further opportunities for getting to know one another.”

I look forward to ongoing dialogue as I continue to make peace with the national anthem.
Construction to begin for new MC USA offices

Executive Board schedules consultation on missions and missional church.

The contract for Mennonite Church USA’s new office building in Elkhart, Ind., may be $500,000 higher than anticipated. Mennonite Church USA Executive Board (EB) learned of this increase from Bill Hochstetler, board chair of Mennonite Mission Network, during their meeting June 10-12 at Iowa Mennonite School, Kalona, Iowa.

Hochstetler and David Weaver, senior executive for finance at the Mission Network, attended the EB meeting to bring an update on the building plan. Weaver said they selected DJ Construction, the lowest of three bidders, as the general contractor for the building. DJ Construction, Goshen, Ind., also worked on the Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS) library in Elkhart, so they have experience with LEED-certified building and will work with volunteer labor and donated materials.

According to Weaver, the increase in building costs is due to the economic climate, increased cost of materials, as well as a lower expected savings from the decision to leave the lower level of the building unfinished. This increase required the EB to authorize a loan up to $2.1 million—up from the $1.5 million they authorized at the EB meetings in February in Hampton, Va.

Hochstetler said the Mission Network recognized the final decision is up to the EB; they would be disappointed if the plan did not continue but they would also be at peace.

After more than an hour of discussion, the EB approved the following recommendation: to proceed with the ground blessing on June 15 (see photo at right), sign the construction contract, authorize the increased loan amount and implement a plan for a debt-free outcome.

Before they voted, the EB discussed how to respond to opposing voices—such as Spark Renewal—a group of individuals asking for the project to be put on hold because they question how it aligns with Mennonite Church USA’s missional priorities. Marty Lehman, associate executive director for churchwide operations, and executive director Ervin Stutzman have met with this group’s leaders in the past month.

In order to acknowledge and address these concerns, the EB also voted to authorize 10 percent of the new building funds raised after June 15 until the end of the campaign to be used for racial/ethnic people’s concerns. Stutzman, who brought this proposal to the board, plans to work with Glen Guyton in developing a plan for this money. Guyton is the associate executive director for constituent resourcing.

The EB also discussed its response to the Yutzy recommendation on Mennonite Mission Network with Hochstetler. The recommendation called for the integration of Executive Leadership and Mennonite Mission Network.

But Stutzman said the EB does not assume that outcome.

The heart of the recommendation, according to Stutzman, is a consultation on the role of a mission program agency in a missional church scheduled for Sept. 7-8 at AMBS. The EB and Leaders Forum will address findings from this consultation at their meeting Sept. 23-24 in Pittsburgh.

“This is cutting-edge work,” Stutzman said. “As far as we know, there is no group that has looked at this question. There’s been a lot of missional church teaching … but as far as we know we are the first and perhaps only denomination that says we are going to be a missional church as a denomination.”

Hochstetler said the Mission Network board and executive cabinet support this plan.

Guyton told the EB that participants at the Leaders Forum will also address whether or not to meet in Phoenix for convention 2013 because of Arizona’s new immigration law. Guyton said he hopes the church will also consider how to support Hispanic churches long term in addition to this decision.

The EB also appointed Kenneth Thompson, pastor of Friendship Community Church in Bronx, N.Y., to the board. Thompson was a Grace and Truth columnist in The Mennonite.—Anna Groff
Maurice Phillips, a commercial fisher of Plaquemines Parish, La., took a group of disaster management leaders out on a small boat to “see the oil” on June 7. This is the best way to witness the destruction of the British Petroleum (BP) oil spill, members of the Grand Bayou told Paul Unruh of Mennonite Disaster Service (MDS). Unruh led the group as part of a listening tour.

After a 30-minute boat ride from homes built by MDS on the Grand Bayou, the group came to where shiny brown oil covers the banks of the marsh and Bay Baptiste. The Gulf of Mexico surrounds Plaquemines Parish, and the Mississippi River runs through it.

At places, the group detected the oil’s odor, and they could make out a sheen on the water as well as orange residue on the top of the two- to three-feet-deep water.

Booms set up along portions of the bank absorbed some of the oil. But according to Phillips, this action came too late to prevent the oil from devastating the seafood industry and the livelihood of individuals in the Parish. Just five years ago these same families lost their homes because of Hurricane Katrina.

Since the spill on April 20, the Environmental Protection Agency gradually closed the waters for fishing and shrimping, and now almost all waters are closed to fishers.

“Usually this time of the year,” Phillips said, “there would be 100 shrimping boats out.” That morning, the boat for the listening tour was the only one.

The previous night, at Paul Sylve’s home on the Bayou, Phillips described a pelican he had found covered in oil—as thick as syrup—in the water. He took the bird into his boat and delivered it to the pelican rescue at Fort Jackson, La.

Sylve, another fisher and an assistant pastor, said a friend of his went outside federal waters—which are unsprayed by dispersants—put his arm in the water and into at least a foot of oil that felt like Jello.

Phillips said the dispersants used by BP only “[sink] the oil,” and it still damages the marsh and wildlife.

At the moment, the homes in the Bayou remain unaffected by the oil.

“When you have wind and high tides, banks will be covered,” Phillips said. “I think they should have more people picking up the oil.”

According to Phillips and other fishers, BP has no shortage of people who know the waters and are willing to do the work.

James Trabeau, a fisher, finished eight hours of training with BP and is ready at any time, but he has yet to receive a call.

“I’m just sitting and waiting until my turn,” he said. “I really need to work bad.”

Fortunately, Trabeau did receive a $5,000 check for his losses for the month from BP. But that amount falls dramatically short of what he usually makes during a month of shrimping season—five or six times that amount.

Thuong Nguyen (see page 39), who has fished the waters for 20 years, also waited for a call from BP when the group spoke with him on June 7.

While the money may not be as good as shrimping, he said, BP pays $2,000 a day to large boat...
Rosina Philippe gave a cluster of marsh grasses to each member of the group to remember the Bayou.

captain like himself. Smaller boats were able to shrimp closer to the shore, where the oil has yet to reach. His larger boat must go out farther, and those waters are restricted. On June 8, Nguyen received a call from BP. He will start his first day of clean-up on June 14.

The listening tour group also met with a group of 11 pastors from the area who described their concerns with the spill as well as expressed their faith in God.

Reverend Ted Turner, from a church in Boothville, La., said many young people in the Grand Bayou and Venice, La., learned to fish from their parents, who learned from their parents and on back.

“This is all we’ve ever done, and we don’t want to do anything else,” Turner said. The last thing these families want—post-Katrina—is to have to leave the parish, find a new job and a new way of life that does not allow them to eat much of what they catch.

Paul Sylve’s wife, Carolyn, said she buys few groceries because they eat so much of what they fish.

“We live off the land,” she said the night before the tour in her home built by MDS. Referring to the 1989 Exxon Valdez oil spill, she said, “In Alaska, people committed suicides, families broke up. … Where does that leave the children?”

Carolyn and Paul’s 11-year-old daughter Jeanne said she will cry if she goes out to see the oil in the marsh.

“This Bayou is a great place, and God created it for us,” she said with tears. “Hopefully they’ll find a way to stop this oil.”

Another member of the Bayou community, Rosina Philippe, described the spill as a “product of greed.” (Her daughter took the photo on page 38.) “This is something we haven’t faced before,” she said. “It’s a new enemy.”

The group also visited the Plaquemines Parish government office. Benny Puckett, grant administrator for the Parish and chairman of Committee of Plaquemines Recovery, told the group that what is sadder than the waters closed to fishing is the threatened reputation of seafood from Louisiana.

“Overcoming that will probably be a more difficult task,” Puckett said. He also described what he calls “human collateral damage”—for example, the deck hands paid under the table who cannot prove to BP that they have a legitimate claim since they lack the required documentation.

“They’re not able to show they’re impacted,” he said. This may offer the place for faith-based organizations to step in, he said, as opposed to volunteering on site.

“We appreciate [volunteers’] passion and desire,” he told the leaders, “but we have people that are unemployed that we want to keep employed as long as possible. … Let’s find something else.”

Puckett also described the lack of control the local parish government has in the clean-up process.

Later on June 7, Unruh and Jerry Klassen of MDS provided a collaborated statement regarding a possible MDS response to the spill: “Because of the ongoing, unfinished disaster that’s unfolding and the need for support in the community, our best channel may be to return to our building program, let our hammers ring hope while we continue to listen to other opportunities to respond.”

Klassen said the fact that the oil continues to leak into the Gulf also affects the timing of a response.

“This is the longest, ongoing disaster I’ve ever worked on,” he said.

The tour included participants from Church World Service, United Church of Christ, Southern Mutual Help Association, Lutheran Disaster Relief and MDS.—Anna Groff
Reverse polarity, bomb or profiling?

Mennonite Church USA executive closes Newark, N.J., terminal.

Stanley Green, executive director for Mennonite Mission Network, may have been a target because of his race and ethnicity on April 27. Regardless whether he was or was not, the incident closed a terminal at the Newark International Airport for three hours.

“My South African citizenship in itself did not seem to be the issue,” Stanley said on May 20. “But they did ask, ‘Are you a citizen of this country?’ ‘When and how did you become a citizen?’ I am told I look like a Jordanian, and this makes it more problematic for me.”

It all began with his laptop computer as he attempted to go through the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) line for his early morning flight.

“I entered the TSA security line at 5:10 a.m.,” Green said. “At 5:15 a.m. I was asked if the computer in the screening machine was mine. I said, ‘Yes it is.’ At that point I was requested not to touch my bags but to go to the screening table.

“At the table every item in both my suitcase and my backpack were taken out and examined. … Meanwhile the TSA personnel called the manager on duty to look at the scan of my computer. They ran it a few times and seemed perturbed. They called for someone higher up in the TSA chain of command. He examined the scan and ran the computer through a few more times.”

The scrutiny escalated. Eventually the entire terminal was evacuated and all flights were cancelled.

More security forces arrived, including four bomb sniffing dogs, 16 TSA officers, four bomb disposal staff and eight police officers.

During Green’s two-hour detention, in three different locations, he was interviewed by the TSA, FBI, Port Authority Police Department, canine unit, bomb squad, Essex County (N.J.) Sheriff’s Department and Essex County Detective Unit.

The incident was also traumatic for many others who missed their flights.

“A parade of people went by,” Green said, “some nervous and anxious and obviously in a hurry to get clear of the area of the bomb scare, some frustrated and angry; and one, whom I couldn’t help feel guilty about, weeping and sobbing—she was not going to make it to wherever she was headed. I imagined, A wedding? A job interview? A funeral of a loved one? Who could tell, other than to know that it messed up more than her schedule and her day?”

At one point Green was afraid the bomb disposal squad would blow up his computer.

“Minimally, I thought they (would) need to detonate the computer,” Green said, “to justify the enormous cost to the airport, the airlines and the various people that were affected. They (could not) just close up my computer and say, ‘Sorry, it was nothing.’”

Three hours later, after Green got rebooked on a later flight and made it to his seat on the plane, he began to record his experience:

“As I write this, a passenger next to me is on the phone to his office announcing that he will arrive at 11:30 a.m. instead of 8 a.m. When I got to my seat, the couple behind me were talking about the delay and inconvenience caused by the bomb scare. The wife responded to her husband’s frustration by saying, ‘That guy should be taken out and shot.’ Wow. I guess I should be glad to be alive. When I look up, the flight attendants are talking about it and the trouble it caused. I sit there quietly hoping that no one will notice that I was the guy who occasioned all their problems (or it was my computer), while another part of me wants to say, ‘OK folks, I am the guy. What should I have done differently?’

“It is truly a helpless feeling when you are blamed for something you did not intentionally initiate/cause. I do aspire to impact people’s lives—but I never thought of it happening in this way.”

Since nothing problematic was found with the computer, Green pondered whether his experience may have been re-
$50,000 gift for those who planned 2009 assembly

Eight conferences in Paraguay agree to divide the money, $6,250 for each.

Residents of the eight Mennonite conferences who together hosted Paraguay 2009 have decided to share equally a $50,000 gift from Mennonite World Conference. MWC officers decided last October to use part of a positive fund balance following the global assembly to express gratitude to the Paraguayans for their generous hospitality. Danisa Ndlovu, MWC president, and Larry Miller, MWC general secretary, sent a letter to the presidents of the conferences to inform them of the $50,000 gift, giving the conferences the freedom to decide how to use it.

The people who had worked together to plan the assembly had finished their work, so it became the responsibility of the conference leaders to decide how to use the money. Ernst Bergen, MWC treasurer from Asunción, Paraguay, asked Theodor Unruh to initiate contact with the other leaders. “It was not very easy to come to a common accord, but we tried to do it in the best way possible,” said Unruh. “Each conference leader talked about the gift and its use in his respective conference board.”

The eight leaders, from diverse conferences, had different ideas. They did not meet, but there were many calls and a lot of talking among them, Unruh said.

In the end, they agreed to split the money equally, with each conference receiving $6,250. Five of the conferences decided to use half their share for their own projects and pool the other half to support Rancho Alegre, a camp about 50 kilometers east of Asunción. It is the one institution the five conferences own jointly. They use the camp for retreats for schools, youth, other church groups and Christian institutions.

Spanish-speaking churches in East Paraguay use the camp a lot for retreats and church-related events.

Each of the three participating indigenous conferences, which were particularly moved by the gift, will use their $6,250 for their own projects, yet to be announced. “We want to say thank you for the good gesture of MWC for sending this gift to the Paraguayan conferences,” said Unruh. “It is a recognition for the work and effort that the churches and conferences put into planning and preparing for the [global] assembly.”

The eight hosting conferences and their leaders are Convencción Evangélica Hermanos Menonitas Enlíhet (Walter Ortiz); Convención Iglesias Evangélicas Hermanos Menonitas Nivacle (Inocencio Galván); Convención de las Iglesias Evangélicas Unida—Enlíhet (Nenito Vins); Vereinigung des Mennonitengemeinden von Paraguay (Ferdinand Friesen); Convencción Evangélica de Iglesias Paraguayas Hermanos Menonitas (Juan Silverio Verón); Convenção Evangélica Menonita Paraguaya (Alfred Klassen); Evangelische Mennonitische Bruderschaft (Arnold Boschmann) and Vereinigung der Mennoniten Brüdergemeinden Paraguays (Theodor Unruh).—Ferne Burkhardt of Mennonite World Conference

Reverse polarity, bomb or profiling? (continued)

lated to racial profiling and was willing to share about his experience so others might know what some immigrants experience in the United States.

The reason given for the suspicions about the laptop: It was wired incorrectly, and the polarity (positive and negative current) was backward. But the manufacturer refuted that possibility.

Grant Martin, areawide network administrator for Mennonite Missions Network, contacted Dell, the computer manufacturer. According to Martin, Dell was not happy to hear about the situation.

“We spoke with our account representative … the week of the incident,” Martin said on May 20. “We asked him about Stanley’s model of laptop. Is it a low seller? Is it different in any way from other laptops they sell? … With the exception of the tablet features, it is exactly like another model of which they have sold thousands and thousands around the world. … There is nothing unique about Stanley’s laptop or battery. They are both standard issue.”

“Dell’s response to TSA’s [reason] was that the batteries for that model of laptop are not wired differently than any other battery they sell,” Martin said, “and that if the polarity on the battery was reversed, the laptop would not even start.”

But on May 25, a TSA spokesperson reported a different reason for Green’s detention and the evacuation of the terminal.

“The laptop alarmed twice for the presence of explosives,” said Ann Davis, who represents TSA’s northeast U.S. region. “Two alarms would require us to follow our protocols. Green’s personal property also alarmed. … False positives do occur.”

Davis said the TSA attempted to resolve the alarm but was not able to do so. Finally, the Essex County Sheriff’s Department was able to resolve the alarm, but Davis did not know how they resolved the alarm. The Essex County Sheriff’s Department did not respond to three requests for an explanation. —Everett J. Thomas
Voices in six languages set the stage for the commencement service of Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS) at College Mennonite Church, Goshen, Ind., on May 22, just one day before Pentecost. Members of the graduating class read in their first languages the call in Matthew 7 and Luke 11 to care for others the way God does (see photo). These six were part of the class of 40 who received degrees and certificates in the afternoon service.

C. Arnold Snyder, professor of history at Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo, Ont., challenged the graduating class by suggesting that the Anabaptist vision, set forth in H. S. Bender’s classic essay in 1944, must be significantly refocused. Snyder noted that Bender himself, in an article published in *Mennonite Quarterly Review* in 1961, said, “A life of discipleship is one in which the Holy Spirit works with power.” Snyder indicated that he wished this last article, published just before Bender’s death, would receive as much attention as the earlier one, because it is in this later document that Bender answers the central question of how one becomes a disciple of Jesus Christ.

“This cannot be accomplished without prayer, meditation on Scripture and cultivation of our relationship with the Vine,” Snyder said. “Take time to ponder the truth expressed by Anabaptist faith parents. Have a heart open to the living God. Then we can go forth in the confidence that we can indeed give not a stone but bread to those who hunger.”

Nineteen graduates received the Master of Divinity degree, which prepares people for ministry in a variety of settings. Five received the Master of Arts: Theological Studies, three the Master of Arts: Peace Studies, four the Master of Arts in Christian Formation, and nine received certificates in theological studies.

Three of those who received certificates completed the Seminario Bíblico Anabautista program in Dallas and were honored at an earlier ceremony: Oneida Dueñas of Ferris, Texas; Samuel Moran, pastor of Ministerios Restauracion, Portland, Ore.; and Blanca Vargas, pastor of Iglesia Menonita Comunidad de Vida, San Antonio, Texas.

Eighteen of the 40 graduates are pastors or are pursuing pastoral ministry assignments. Six will pursue further graduate studies; four are involved in chaplaincy ministry or are entering Clinical Pastoral Education programs. Others are providing pastoral counseling, spiritual guidance and bilingual therapy, are involved in area church and service agencies or are pursuing international ministries.

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

The Anabaptist Vision is not Anabaptist enough.

… Have a heart open to the living God.

—C. Arnold Snyder
89 students in Bethel College commencement

Class of 2010 comes from 14 states and five countries outside United States.

The thunderstorm passed to the north, and Bethel College’s 117th commencement exercises proceeded outdoors in Thresher Stadium, North Newton, Kan., for the third year. A few sprinkles fell on faculty, graduates and audience, and a gusty wind kept whipping mortarboards off graduates’ heads as they listened to commencement speaker Aziza Hasan give them five ways to “leverage learning opportunities.”

Hasan, of Los Angeles, is a graduate of Halstead (Kan.) High School and Bethel College, the first of four siblings to attend the college (two are also graduates and one is currently a student). Their father, the late Farouq Hasan, studied at Bethel in the 1970s. Hasan’s sister, two brothers, mother Christine Hasan of Halstead and many extended family members were present to hear her address the Bethel audience.

As southern California director of government relations for the Muslim Public Affairs Council and co-director of NewGround, a project that seeks to foster communication, respect and understanding among Jews and Muslims, Hasan is an interfaith communicator who “exemplifies in her life and profession Bethel’s core values,” said interim president John Sheriff in his introduction. “She is a graduate of whom Bethel is very proud.”

“I’m humbled by this great honor [of speaking to you today],” Hasan said. “It’s so good to be back at the place that has left its imprint on my life and work.”

She opened her address with the familiar story of “a commander-in-chief” berated, after praising the opposition, by someone who asked, “How dare you speak well of them? You should destroy our enemies.” The commander replied: “Do I not destroy my enemy by making him my friend?” “No matter how big or small the conflicts in our lives,” whether wars fought across the globe or disagreements within families, Hasan said, “they’re always going to be there.

“It’s simple—what has really helped me most since leaving Bethel has been leveraging learning opportunities,” she said. “Challenges can pull you back or they can motivate you.”

She concluded by returning to the story of the commander-in-chief. That was Abraham Lincoln, she said, speaking of the Confederacy to an audience of Union supporters.

“You turn the other cheek when you have power, not when you are weak,” she said. “The Koran says that evil and good are not equal. Use what is good to repel the evil.”

Also as part of the commencement ceremonies, vice president for academic affairs Brad Born presented the Ralph P. Schrag Distinguished Teaching Award to professor of music William Eash. The award goes to a faculty member that the academic dean’s office judges, based on both peer and student evaluations, to have made an outstanding contribution to teaching at Bethel College.

Eash is director of choral activities at Bethel College, where he is responsible for four choirs and also teaches conducting and music history.

Sheriff conferred 37 bachelor of arts and 52 bachelor of science degrees. According to a survey of graduating seniors, 35 of the graduates intend to enter health- and social service-related careers, 22 business and 10 education. Of those who responded to the survey, 44 percent plan either to enter or apply to graduate school within the next five years. At least three will follow a Bethel tradition of taking voluntary service assignments soon after graduation. The class of 2010 comes from 14 states and five countries in addition to the United States: Cameroon, China, Kenya, Sierra Leone and Tanzania.—Melanie Zuercher of Bethel College
J.T. joined the military as a last resort. After both his parents passed away—his father in a car accident and his mother from a drug overdose—J.T. moved in with his grandparents.

Mere months later, his grandmother passed away, and his grandfather died by suicide. With no one left, J.T. joined the military at age 18.

This was a decision he would later come to regret and one that prompted him, in the midst of depression and stress, to contact the Military Counseling Network for help. With the help of MCN, J.T. received an honorable discharge from the armed services on May 15.

In his work with the Military Counseling Network, Daniel Hershberger is usually involved with multiple cases like J.T.’s at any given time. His job is to provide information and counsel to U.S. service members who wish to receive a discharge from the military or learn more about their rights.

But in early 2010, Hershberger found himself particularly struck by J.T.’s case. Hershberger, who serves with MCN through Mennonite Mission Network, spoke with J.T. about his options.

“As I talked with J.T. in person and on the phone many times,” Hershberger said, “his story began to break my heart.

“Here was a young man who had lost all those important to him and saw the military as his only chance to make something of his life. Admittedly somewhat naive, he did not know what he was getting himself into.”

At target practice he found himself unable to fire at the human-shaped targets. The more it became clear what it meant to be an infantryman, the more depressed he became. —Melanie Hess

As they talked, J.T. expressed his many misgivings about the military. He didn’t like the culture within his unit, as his buddies bragged about their drug, sex and alcohol-fueled escapades.

But even more so as they joked about being killers. J.T. knew that he stood for values contrary to those of the military. At target practice he found himself unable to fire at the human-shaped targets. The more it became clear what it meant to be an infantryman, the more depressed he became.

In these moments, explained Hershberger, J.T. realized that he was a part of something he could not be a part of.

Even though he knew he needed to get out, he didn’t know what to do. It was then that he searched for help and found MCN.

At first, Hershberger and J.T. discussed his options for getting a discharge based on depression and anxiety. But as they continued to talk, J.T.’s budding conscientious objector beliefs surfaced.

Hershberger and MCN helped walk him through the process to leave the military. As part of the conscientious objection process, J.T. underwent analysis with a psychologist, and it was during this analysis that the depth of his emotional and mental issues were finally acknowledged.

“J.T.’s discharge, in the end, was not for conscientious objection,” Hershberger said, “but this all happened through him pursuing a CO discharge, as that was the route he wanted to go. The discharge was honorable, which is really the most important part, as other discharges negatively affect benefits and future job possibilities.”

The Military Counseling Network is a nonprofit organization that provides information and counseling to members of the armed services. It is supported by a variety of churches, individuals, and other organizations, including the German Mennonite Church.—Melanie Hess of Mennonite Mission Network

*Note: A pseudonym is used in the article at the request of the subject.*
MCC plans for global change

Mennonite Central Committee leaders aim to include diverse groups.

Mennonite Central Committee is changing how it does its work but not the work itself. That’s how Arli Klassen, MCC executive director, described MCC’s process of streamlining and shifting areas of responsibility among its member organizations.

Klassen shared the current models for those changes—which she said are set in gelatin—at the June 11-12 meeting of MCC’s binational delegate body in Akron, Pa.

“If there’s enough heat, they can melt, and we can re-form them,” she said.

Since January, a joint board team—with representatives from the MCC U.S., Canada and binational boards—has been providing overall leadership to design and transition teams that are proposing changes for the New Wineskins process. They are basing their ideas on MCC’s New Wine consultations, which involved more than 2,000 people from 50 countries and finished in June 2009.

One of the teams’ ideas is to shift much of the binational organization’s work to MCC U.S. and MCC Canada. MCC would create a council to coordinate strategic planning and decide which proportion of funds different continents and programs would receive. It would receive authority from its member agencies.

The joint board team is proposing that MCC Canada and MCC U.S. operate the international program together. The teams are receiving feedback and will seek full approval in 2011 from all of the boards for proposed changes. MCC expects most major changes to happen in 2012.

Meaning of global: Proposals suggest the council’s board be composed of three people from MCC Canada, three from MCC U.S. and three from Mennonite World Conference (MWC), as well as two members at large.

Amid these changes, MCC is looking at what it means to be global beyond the fact that it works in 60 countries.

MCC is one of 30 service agencies participating in the Global Anabaptist Service Consultation Aug. 6-9 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The event will explore the level of interest in developing a global service forum, network or other entity of MWC member churches and related groups.

Larry Miller, MWC general secretary, identified some of the questions the consultation may address.

“Should other Mennonite churches around the world join MCC?” Miller said. “Or should MCC in North America and the other churches do something new together?”

Pakisa Tsimika, MWC global church advocate, who is coordinating the consultation, said no single entity is asking others to join it but that the consultation will be a chance for MCC to have more global input in how it is governed.

“It has nothing to do with MCC and everything to do with MCC,” Tsimika said of the consultation. “MCC is on a journey of how they listen to the rest of the world, but it’s becoming more than just listening.”

Anabaptists from around the world have been increasingly participating in funding MCC’s work: MCC had a considerable increase in the past year in donations from countries outside Canada and the United States without fund-raising for that money. For example, $1,300 for work in Haiti came from 14 Brethren in Christ congregations in Zimbabwe.

Donations for MCC’s response to the Jan. 12 earthquake in Haiti have reached nearly $14 million, making it MCC’s largest response in one nation.

Link to denominations: In planning for change, MCC is also looking at its connection to denominations in North America. Mennonite Church USA has stated that it wants to be able to appoint members directly to the council board.

This raises two issues, Klassen said. First, the new MCC system needs to have accountability among the boards, which is why transition planners are suggesting the MCC Canada and MCC U.S. boards each appoint three members.

Second, those six seats don’t accommodate the 14 Mennonite and Brethren in Christ denominations currently on the U.S., Canada and binational boards, let alone the higher number of denominations that participate at some level in MCC’s regional and provincial work.

“We are serving in the name of Christ as an arm of the church,” Klassen said. “We want to continue to remain connected to as many of the diverse Mennonite groups as we can.”

Theological diversity: Theological diversity among those denominations has raised concerns for some. As the MCC delegate body met June 12, members of Sommerfeld Mennonite Church of Manitoba were holding an informational meeting about their participation in MCC. Members of the group have expressed concerns to MCC in recent months about theological issues.

“They relate specifically to MCC’s interfaith bridgebuilding and the perceived implications of that,” said Don Peters, MCC Canada executive director. “The question, Is Jesus the only way? is one they would express.

MCC’s theology is the theology of the churches participating in it, Peters said. MCC adopted MWC’s “Shared Convictions” as its faith statement.

“It doesn’t answer the question, Is Jesus the only way?” Peters said. “What it does say is that Jesus is Lord. Jesus is Savior. Jesus is reconciler, and we as Christians are agents of the reconciler and agents of reconciliation as we witness to Jesus.” —Celeste Kennel-Shank, assistant editor of Mennonite Weekly Review, for Meetinghouse
Schools not in The Corinthian Plan

Extra expense for higher education institutions would not reduce pastors’ costs.

At a benefits board meeting May 20–21, it was announced that the Mennonite Educators Benefit Plan (MEBP) has decided not to purchase reinsurance through The Corinthian Plan, Mennonite Church USA’s new health benefits plan. (Reinsurance is another level of insurance that protects primary insurance plans from major medical claims.)

MEBP, a self-funded insurance plan administered by Mennonite Mutual Aid (MMA), includes Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, Ind.; Bluffton (Ohio) University; Eastern Mennonite University, Harrisonburg, Va.; Goshen (Ind.) College; Hesston (Kan.) College and Mennonite Educational Agency (MEA).

“Reinsuring through The Corinthian Plan would have increased the complexity for the administration of MEBP,” says Carlos Romero, executive director of MEA. “It would also have increased MEBP’s costs by $85,000 a year without a reduction in the cost of insurance to pastors.

“Balancing this against our commitment to and support of Mennonite Church USA and the goals of The Corinthian Plan made discerning this decision a struggle,” Romero says. “MEBP was founded for the same reasons that gave birth to The Corinthian Plan—each institution’s deep commitment to mutual aid—so we spent a significant amount of time considering the implications of joining.”

Keith Harder, director of The Corinthian Plan, says that this would have been an opportunity to bring these two unique plans together in order to share risk. He noted that the decision will not affect the long-term viability of the plan.

“For MEBP to come under the umbrella of The Corinthian Plan would have been significant enough that it was certainly worth considering; it was more than just a symbolic exercise,” says Harder. “But by the same token, doing this wasn’t a ‘make it or break it’ for either plan. It was just a way of adding more strength and more critical mass to doing this together.”

Mennonite Mutual Aid’s preliminary financial models suggested that obtaining reinsurance through the plan would result in no extra costs to MEBP except for a per-month administrative fee.

However, analysts discovered after more research that the move would most likely result in additional costs at a time when the institutions are trying to find ways to shore up budget shortfalls.

Harder says that while the decision is disappointing for him, he appreciates how the heads of each institution carefully considered whether the plan was financially realistic.

“I want to applaud and affirm how much they have invested in this,” says Harder, “and that they really did seriously consider what it would mean for them to bring their plan under The Corinthian Plan. I respect the decision that they made, even though I wished it could have been different.”

The Corinthian Plan is a mutual aid insurance plan of Mennonite Church USA that went into effect at the beginning of this year. The project was undertaken after delegates at the MC USA convention in 2007 called for the denomination’s Executive Board to create a plan under which all Mennonite pastors could have basic health insurance.

A total of 453 congregations and conferences—including 503 credentialed employees and 75 noncredentialed employees—are participating. Also included are employees of Mennonite Church USA Executive Leadership, Mennonite Mission Network, Mennonite Mutual Aid, The Mennonite and the Mennonite Association of Schools and Camps.

One component of the plan is the Fair Balance Fund, through which participating congregations pay $10 per attendee to help subsidize health insurance costs for congregations with fewer resources.

Fifty-six congregations are receiving more than $400,000 in assistance through this fund.—Andrew Clouse and Rachel Nussbaum Eby

Corinthian Plan representatives named

Three part-time area representatives and one part-time wellness information coordinator have been appointed to serve The Corinthian Plan, the health insurance plan of Mennonite Church USA. They will join Keith Harder, the plan’s director.

The area representatives (.2 FTE) will attend the annual sessions of area conferences and other gatherings in their regions. They will be available to answer questions, help connect participants with resources and assist congregations with re-enrollment in the fall. They also will listen for stories and prayer requests that could be shared via the plan’s Web site (www.thecorinthianplan.org). The representatives are Joe Christophel of Goshen, Ind., Mark Fly of Souderton, Pa., and Duncan Smith of Beaverton, Ore.

Ingrid Friesen Moser of Goshen, Ind., will serve all regions as a consultant in wellness/health stewardship support and promotion (.2 FTE), maintaining the plan’s Web site and providing newsletters on wellness. The new benefits board is providing oversight of The Corinthian Plan as well as the Mennonite Retirement Trust.—Annette Brill Bergstresser
Mennonite women in conversation

Participants like to 'become more vulnerable and be who we truly are.'

Dazzling in their varying shades and hues on two Saturday evenings this spring, women across Mennonite Church USA expressed their gratitude for mothers and sisters and daughters, for husbands and fathers, friends, love and loss, sorrows and successes through stories and anecdotes.

The first gathering was held April 9-11 at Laurelville Mennonite Church Center, Mount Pleasant, Pa. The second gathering was at Cross Wind Retreat Center, Hesston, Kan., April 30-May 2. The celebrations—dubbed “Closet Couture” and “Hues of Gratitude”—marked crowning moments of Women in Conversation. Jointly sponsored by Mennonite Women USA and Laurelville Mennonite Church Center, the two events collectively attracted close to 300 women for dialogue, networking, retreat and renewal.

Sarah Shirk from Highville, Pa., described the clothing and accessories attendees wore to the banquet at Laurelville as “vehicles to draw out experiences,” prompting women to exchange memories associated with old prom dresses, extravagant hats, jewelry and such.

“It was a blast,” said Shirk. “It turned out to be one of the most meaningful times of sharing from the entire weekend.”

Megan Ramer, pastor at Chicago Community Mennonite Church, served as keynote speaker for both weekends, addressing the theme “Living a Life of Gratitude.” Participants also enjoyed a variety of workshops ranging in content from weighty subjects such as living with cancer and understanding one’s sexuality to the more playful, such as laughter and line dancing.

For her part, Ramer encouraged the women who were present to be more attentive to God’s grace and presence in everyday circumstances, to be willing to wrestle with God in pursuit of God’s blessing and to recognize the difference between gratitude and happiness.

“Living a life of gratitude does not equal living a life of happiness,” said Ramer. “Gratitude runs much deeper than (happiness). Gratitude precedes happiness, grounds happiness, and stays long after happiness has gone.”

In a workshop at Laurelville, Sue Conrad and Jen Helmuth Shenk celebrated the spiritual discipline of laughter. Conrad, associate pastor at East Chestnut Street Mennonite Church in Lancaster, Pa., identified laughter as essential to one’s life journey.

“It’s one way of celebrating who we are,” she said, pointing to the spectrum of emotions and their accompanying expressions. “We need to let people cry when they need to cry, let people be angry when they feel angry and then let them laugh ... and be gracious enough to laugh with them.”

At the Hesston gathering, Sandra Montes-Martinez guided a workshop in Spanish centered on the disposition of contentment and finding hope amid struggle. The bilingual offering attempted to accommodate an increasingly multicultural portrait of women in Mennonite Church USA (Spanish translation was offered throughout the Hesston retreat).

Celebrated at the heart of the retreat, however, was a community of women engaged in conversation, mutual support and celebration.

“There is something powerful about a group of women coming together—an unspoken understanding and camaraderie—where we are in this really safe environment where we can become more vulnerable and be who we truly are,” said Conrad.

Cyneatha Millsaps, who pastors at Community Mennonite Church, Markham, Ill., was delighted to retreat from her role as minister and engage fully in the retreat.

“I could just come and be Cyneatha,” she said, “and fellowship with other women as a woman.”

For Kristi Winings, the retreat was a gift, literally. Friends pooled their resources to cover her travel expenses and registration and even arranged child care to enable the mother of three and wife of a church plant pastor to journey from her home in Colfax, Wis., to the Hesston gathering.

“It was so nice to have people share about serious struggles and relate how God had provided contentment in the midst of (those experiences),” she said.

The next Women in Conversation retreats will take place in 2012.—Patricia Burdette of Mennonite Women USA and Brian Paff of Laurelville Mennonite Church Center.
‘I never thought I’d be a landowner’

CPI provides housing and educational opportunities for rural Hondurans.

Horacio Cardenes, 36, grins from ear to ear. His is one of 11 peasant families in a rural hillside village in northern Honduras that has just taken title to their first real house—a cement-block, two-bedroom abode that is, in his eyes, a mansion compared to what they now live in.

“I never thought I would be a landowner,” the father of four says, explaining through an interpreter that this is “the happiest day of my life.” Like his fellow villagers, some of whom can’t read or write, he has been living at subsistence levels, cutting sugar cane and doing other cultivation jobs for the more wealthy farmers in the area.

Along with 21 members of a newly formed Amigos de Tapiquilares Cooperative, he has been spending every spare day during the last year constructing the 11 houses that, through a draw, were just turned over to these families in a celebration of worship, title-signing and feasting. Cardenes can’t wait to move into his new home, where, for the first time in his life, he will have indoor plumbing, running water and protection from the weather, which, in the rainy season, brings thunderstorms and drenching rains.

Based on Habitat for Humanity’s model of a “hand-up, not a hand-out,” these families each have an interest-free mortgage of $6,000, to be paid back to the co-op over a 15-year period. Should they default on the loan or decide to move out of the village, the property reverts back to the co-op, explains Dave Hubert, chair of the project sponsor organization, Canadian Peacemakers International (CPI), located in Edmonton, Alberta.

The one-hectare plot of land surrounding the village was purchased and donated by one of CPI’s sponsors, John and Sylvia Leonard of Mancelona, Mich., successful owners of a large tire-recycling business.

Under the ceiba tree: On June 6, the Leonards and others sit under the tree with Hubert and a North American CPI supporter, Tim Neufeld, co-pastor at First Mennonite Church, Edmonton, to consult with the villagers as they consider turning their land into a productive farming operation.

The village leaders are on hand to give guidance. Manuel Tabora, general manager of the housing program (Colonia Amor Y Esperanza) and CPI’s local representative, provided interpretation. Jose (Chepe) Vasquez, chair of CPI Honduras (Canadiensis por la Paz Hondurana), puts it into language that the villagers can understand; a local Catholic catechist, he has earned the trust of the people and they take their cues from him. The North Americans, too, have earned the Hondurans’ love and affection, evidenced by the many hugs and smiles during the three-hour exchange of ideas.

Innovative computer-assisted learning: Since most of the children lack the transportation to get to school in the nearby towns, CPI has instituted a program of computer-assisted learning under the direction of Bryan Butler, formerly an educator under Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) and other nongovernmental agencies. He kick-started the Honduran project in 2009 with a $60,000 fund-raising campaign to bring systematic learning to Santa Cruz, city of 50,000, as well as to the villagers where few people have progressed beyond grade 6, due to a lack of education infrastructure and opportunities.

It is all in keeping with CPI’s overall vision, says Hubert, who founded CPI in 1997 following a 23-year career in post-secondary education, including eight years as a college president and 10 years with MCC. CPI’s vision, he says, “is to develop and demonstrate models of peacemaking and peace-building that can be emulated by others to address the structural causes of conflict in Central America. The ultimate goal is to reduce the likelihood of more war in the region.”

Hubert says CPI is using the best from their models and from Habitat for Humanity in developing housing, land ownership and education initiative in Honduras.—Dick Benner, editor/publisher of Canadian Mennonite, for Meetinghouse
Distracted driving... worth your life?

Texting and driving...23 times more likely to be in an accident!

Goodwill Mutual
New Holland, Pa.
goodville.com
800-448-4622

RESOURCES

Through Fire and Water: An Overview of Mennonite History, originally written by Harry Loewen and Steven M. Nolt; revised by Steven M. Nolt (Herald Press, 2010, $16.99) presents the Mennonite faith story within the sweep of church history. This engaging text uses stories of men and women, peasants and pastors, heroes and rascals, to trace the radical Reformation from 16th-century Europe to today’s global Anabaptist family. Written in an accessible and nonacademic style, this revised edition updates the story and incorporates new historical research and discoveries.

Toward a Biblical Theology of Marriage: A Study of the Bible’s Vocabulary of Marriage by Ernest D. Martin (Wipf & Stock, 2010, $20) reflects a pastor’s conviction that biblical revelation culminating in Christ speaks to the issues and potentials for marriage in a confused world. Martin develops a Christological paradigm for marriage that is consistent and applicable.

Multifaith Musings: Essays and Exchanges by Dorothy Yoder Nyce (Evangel Author Services, 2010, $10) endorses openness to truth in diverse faiths while being loyal to one chosen one. Essays, imagined dialogues and a play present content with themes such as water, crossing cultures, biblical and Hindu scriptures, and the paradox of world religions: conflict and peacebuilding. The foreword is by Paul F. Knitter. It is available from evangelauthorservices.com or dyodnyce@bnin.net.

The Nature of Grief: Photographs and Words for Reflection and Healing by Rebecca S. Hauder (Resources for Grief, 2009, $14.99) uses photos of nature and texts to offer 12 suggestions for healing one’s grief. The ideas are gleaned from 25 years of counseling the bereaved and from professional peers. It is available at www.resourcesforgrief.com.

The Voice of a Writer: Honoring the Life of Katie Funk Wiebe, edited by Doug Heidebrecht and Valerie G. Rempel (Kindred Productions, 2010, $21.95), includes 13 essays on Wiebe, a well-known Mennonite Brethren writer, as well as samples from her writings. The collection reflects on the significance of Wiebe’s writing and her contribution to the life of the church.

Leaders Who Shaped Us: Canadian Mennonite Brethren: 1910-2010, edited by Harold Jantz (Kindred Productions, 2010, $29.95), collects the stories of 25 people who played a role in creating the community of believers known as Mennonite Brethren in Canada. During the tumultuous years from 1910-2010, they led, sometimes cajoled, often inspired, at times sharply reproved the church they were an intimate part of and loved.
MCC sends letter about Gaza blockade

Ask for an impartial and independent investigation into May 31 clash

Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) is urging the governments of the United States and Canada to work constructively within the international community to restore the normal flow of goods and people through Gaza-Israel border crossings.

In letters to the U.S. president and Canada’s foreign affairs minister, MCC urges them to support an impartial and independent investigation into Israel’s deadly response to the Free Gaza flotilla on May 31.

The convoy, carrying 10,000 tons of much-needed aid, was attempting to enter the Gaza Strip by sea and break the Israeli blockade that has a devastating effect on the livelihoods and lives of Gaza’s 1.5 million Palestinians. The convoy was intercepted by the Israeli military before reaching Gaza, and clashes led to the deaths of nine people.

Daryl Byler, MCC’s representative in the region, said hundreds of thousands of people in Gaza live in dire conditions without employment and basic supplies because of the Israeli blockade.

Israel has long restricted the entry of goods into Gaza but tightened its blockade in June 2007, when Hamas became the ruling power after winning elections in 2006.

The severe restrictions that prevent the movement of people and goods into and out of Gaza is seen by many as “collective punishment” for electing Hamas, says Byler, who lives in Amman, Jordan.

According to the World Health Organization, more than 10 percent of Gazan children suffer from chronic malnutrition, and two-thirds of the Gazan population faces hunger on a daily basis.

Before Hamas came to power in June 2007, about 850 truckloads of food, fuel and other essential supplies were transported into Gaza every day. That number has now been reduced to 128 loads.

“They are getting only 15 percent of the goods they got three years ago,” says Byler, explaining the restrictions have created an alternative system of smuggling goods from Egypt through a network of underground tunnels.

“These goods are sold at inflated prices that most people cannot afford,” he explains. “It would be much better to have an above-ground system.”

Gaza’s agriculture and fishing industries have been decimated by restrictions on imports of livestock, seeds and feed, plastic piping, iron bars for animal shelters, water pumps, filters and irrigation pipes, fishing nets, engine spare parts, veterinary drugs and cement.

Buildings and infrastructure destroyed during the late 2008-2009 war cannot be repaired because the blockade restricts imports of building materials.

MCC has worked in Palestine and Israel for more than 60 years. In partnership with local Palestinian and Israeli organizations, MCC supports families through its Global Family education sponsorships, distributes material resources such as blankets and school kits, and oversees an income generation project that helps families raise rabbits and chickens for consumption and sale.—Ed Nyce of Mennonite Central Committee

Discover South America!

Peru & Paraguay Tour – September 2010
Lima, Machu Picchu, Asuncion, Mennonite Colonies, Iguazu Falls

Brazil & Paraguay Tour – April 2011
Rio, Curitiba, Iguazu Falls, Asuncion, Mennonite Colonies

Contact Rudolf Duerksen at 1-204-415-6836
southway@shaw.ca
www.southwaytours.com

considering seminary?

Fall online courses in:
- Old Testament literature
- church in mission
- cross-cultural discipleship
- prayer in the Christian tradition

Fall classes begin Aug. 29
Register now!

(800) 710-7871
seminary@emu.edu
Harrisonburg, VA 22802
emu.edu/seminary/distancelearning

Fall online courses in:
- Old Testament literature
- church in mission
- cross-cultural discipleship
- prayer in the Christian tradition

Fall classes begin Aug. 29
Register now!

(800) 710-7871
seminary@emu.edu
Harrisonburg, VA 22802
emu.edu/seminary/distancelearning
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 to access online forms. You may also submit information by email, fax or mail: Editor@TheMennonite.org; fax 574-535-6050; 1700 S. Main St., Goshen, IN 46526-4794.

Yoder, Martha Becker, was ordained as associate pastor a West Union Mennonite Church, Parnell, Iowa, on May 30.

Zimmerman, Micah, was ordained as lead pastor at Meadville Mennonite Church, East Earl, Pa., on May 2.


Arndt, Arlene, 80, Hartville, Ohio, died April 10. Funeral: April 15 at Hartville Mennonite Church.


Brenneman, Kathryn L. “Katie,” 78 died March 31 at Samaritan Albany General Hospital, Albany, Ore., of pulmonary fibrosis. Katie was born in Independtown, Bureau County, Ill., on October 25, 1931, to Wilbur J. and Marybelle (Stutzman) Smucker. She was raised on a farm outside of Tiskilwa, Ill., graduating from Tiskilwa High School in 1949. She left home to attend Goshen College, graduating in 1954 with a bachelor of science in nursing. She met Gerald “Jerry” Brenneman from Albany, Ore., at college, and they were married Sept. 2, 1954, at Willow Springs Mennonite Church, Katie’s home church. They moved to Albany in 1957, establishing their permanent home there when Jerry was hired as a high school teacher. Katie worked for a time at Albany General Hospital before becoming a nurse for a local doctor for over 20 years, retiring in 1989. Katie served as Sunday school teacher. Katie and Jerry enjoyed traveling, visiting family and grandchildren, and Europe four times including a trip to供求 Schürch Family Association of North America biennial reunion of the Schürch Family Association of North America will be held Aug. 6-7 at EMU, Harrisonburg, Va. For more information contact Verne Schirch at vrnschurch856@gmail.com, phone 540-433-0885 or check www.schurch.ca or www.schurchfamilyassociation.net.
FOR THE RECORD | OBITUARIES

50th anniversary trip to Ireland. Survivors include her husband, Jerry; sister Annalee Yordy; daughter Ann Stroud, sons Douglas, and Daniel; and granddaughters Leslie Stroud Romero, Dr. Sara Franzen and Maggie Brenneman. A memorial service for Katie was held April 5 at the Albany Mennonite Church in Albany.


Gingerich, Phyllis Marie Eash, 80, Kalona, Iowa, died June 9. Spouse: Leo Glenn Gingerich (deceased). Parents: Glen and Lavanda Fisher Eash. Children: Nancy Gingerich, Charles, Angela Eash; eight grandchildren; five great-grandchildren. Funeral: June 12 at Wellman Mennonite Church, Wellman, Iowa.


What people are saying about The Naked Anabaptist:

“A remarkably accessible presentation of Anabaptism as good news for people of all traditions who want to follow Jesus.”
—Allan Kreider, Jesus Radicals

“The Naked Anabaptist attempts—and succeeds, in my view—to get to the core of Anabaptism.”
—Scot McKnight, Jesus Creed

“An exciting gift to the church at large, especially those in the missional conversation.”
—Jamie Arpin-Ricci, Pastor, Little Flowers Community, Winnipeg

“A powerful book . . . the sound of an old story told with a new voice.”
—James Toews, Mennonite Brethren Herald

Have you bought your copy yet?

The Naked Anabaptist
The Bare Essentials of a Radical Faith

2010. 300 pages. Paper. $13.99 USD, $16.09 CAD
www.mpn.net/nakedanabaptist

800-245-7894 (USA) 800-631-6535 (Canada)
Herald Press is the book imprint of Mennonite Publishing Network.
Herald Press

Sexuality: God’s Gift
second edition, edited by Anne Krabill Hershberger

“Even richer than its predecessor . . . a splendid resource for all Christians who wish to live more deeply in gratitude to God for their own sexuality.”
—James B. Nelson, professor emeritus of Christian ethics, United Theological Seminary

“An important contribution to Christians seeking to celebrate their sexuality with holiness and integrity.”
—Debra W. Haffner, Executive director, Religious Institute

Part of Body and Soul, a new curriculum on healthy sexuality.

www.mpn.net/bodyandsoul

Paper: 320 pages.
$16.99 USD, $19.99 CAD

www.mpn.net/sexualitygodsgift

Ecclesiastes

In this 23rd volume of the Believers Church Bible Commentary Series, Douglas B. Miller provides a fresh look at the insights of the ancient sage for this era of uncertainty.

Paper. 400 pages.
$24.99 USD, $28.99 CAD

www.mpn.net/ecclesiastes


Lehman, Leland Charles, 90, Bluffton, Ohio, died March 12. Spouse: Dorothy Jean Burner Lehman (deceased). Parents: Alice and Leo E. Lehman. Children: Barbara Alice Boldt, Stephen, Cynthia Jean Linscheid; four grandsons; one great-grandson. Funeral: March 16 at First Mennonite Church, Bluffton.


Nyce, Paul Moyer, 87, Souderton, Pa., died May 14 of primary degenerative dementia. Parents: Howard H. and Mary L. Moyer Nyce. Funeral: May 19 at Plains Mennonite Church, Hatfield, Pa.


Reed, Lawrence “Larry” D., 51, Canton, Ohio, died March 2. Spouse: Sharon Erb Reed. Parents: Lawrence J. and Jean Reed. Children: Heather McCoy, Julie Martin; four grandchildren. Funeral: March 7 at Hartville Mennonite Church, Hartville, Ohio.


Wyse, Glenn Daniel, 76, Wauseon, Ohio, died May 22. Parents: Ira and Mable Mull Wyse. Funeral: May 27 at Central Mennonite Church, Archbold, Ohio.


Opportunities in mental health care

Join the team at Oaklawn, a major mental health provider in the midwest.

- Located in Goshen, Indiana, a mid-sized rural community
- Two hours from Chicago and three hours from Indianapolis
- Community offers a cost of living 17.6% below national avg.
- Faith-based heritage

Advanced Nurse Practitioner

- Medical care for adult inpatient and child/adolescent residential programs
- Full-time position with call limited to weekdays
- Licensed advanced nurse practitioner with prescriptive authority required

Child/Adolescent Psychiatrist

- Competitive salary, RVU-based incentive, signing bonus, relocation expense
- Call of 1:8 weekends and one weekday every two weeks
- Certified child & adolescent psychiatrist required

Visit Oaklawn’s web site at www.oaklawn.org. Send resume to Human Resources: mail to PO Box 809, Goshen, IN 46527; fax to (574)537-2698; email to humanresources@oaklawn.org. All inquiries kept confidential.
Timberline, W.Va., church retreat or church work project; $15 per night bunkhouse lodging; 800-392-0152; www.timberlineresort.com.

Fort Collins Mennonite Fellowship 35th anniversary celebration/reunion, Aug. 28-29, 2010. For more details, contact Maurice Shenk at 970-204-4217; email pamduncan1@msn.com or www.fcmennonite.org.

Coming to Montreal for school or vacation? Stay at Maison de l’amitié summer guestrooms and student residence. Student housing available for September. www.residencema.ca; experience@maisondelamitie.ca

Plymouth, Vt., 23-acre farm for sale. 1826 Cape 3b/2b and 2 barns near Killington/Okemo ski areas and Woodstock. $369,000. Call 717-569-4347, 802-672-3764, leave message or email mjcrockett@verizon.net.

Salem Mennonite Church in Kidron, Ohio, is seeking a full-time lead pastor. Candidates should demonstrate competent skills in preaching, teaching and pastoral care, with an emphasis on evangelism through lay leadership, outreach, volunteer and mission activities. Interested candidates should contact the Salem Search Committee by email at SalemSearchCommittee@salem-mennonite.us or by phone at 330-857-4131.
Life’s Encore Begins Here.

Visit Middlebury on us!

Considering a move to a continuing care living community? Visit Greencroft Middlebury and receive an overnight stay and meal at Das Dutchman Essenhaus. To qualify, call 574.825.6756 for details.

Our mission

In keeping with our Mennonite values and high standards of care, Greencroft Middlebury is committed to creating a dynamic community that embraces the creativity, contributions and challenges of aging for all.

Fresh air, Amish heritage and a country-like setting is what you can expect living in Middlebury, Indiana. Greencroft Middlebury gives you the freedom and independence you deserve during your encore years. Say goodbye to maintenance and yard work and hello to do what you want, when you want. Should you ever need assisted living or nursing care, you have priority access.
Muddy boots welcome

My favorite memory came on the second day, when I saw a friendly pub sign: “Muddy boots welcome.” It also welcomed pets (no cows, sheep or pigs), but I was particularly pleased with its welcome for my sweaty self and my muddy boots. I had chosen to walk across England for my holiday in 2007, at one of its narrower west-east stretches of 200 miles. Among other reasons, I hoped this walk would give me opportunities to ponder important matters of life and viewed the journey as a spiritual pilgrimage, listening for and seeking God along the way.

However, I discovered that instead of mind-blowing considerations of God and the universe, I was predominantly concerned about jumping over the waterfalls, not slipping on the descent, surviving the ascent, whether I would have tinned beans for dinner, how I was going to pitch my tent in pouring rain or whether I would ever be dry again. I was concerned about my bruising and blistering feet, my aching legs and back, and what the next day’s terrain would entail. My focus turned to my physical needs—water, food and shelter. I became aware of my humanity while I walked. I was awakened not only to my physical needs but also my physical mortality (perhaps it was exaggerated in the moment, but I was aware of my mortality when I encountered high winds, a storm assault, an apparently insurmountable gorge, becoming lost in the middle of nowhere, getting stuck in a bog). I also awoke to the interconnected nature of the world and to my dependency on God for my inner strength.

That’s as deep as my discoveries went—that I was human. And yet, I wonder, what more is there to know? It’s easy to forget we’re human. For example, take our approach to accepting new technology. Some people may like to call me a Luddite and thus disregard my ideas in this area. But I suggest I’m merely a hesitant technology consumer. Similar to some Amish communities, I want to see more of our communities gather together and discern the level of appropriateness for the newest technology. It has become too easy to blur the lines between necessity and convenience; we forget that convenience is not necessity.

If we take time to consider whether or not the newest technology is essential to our daily use, we possess a greater chance of remaining human—retaining our power to be active participants in life rather than passive recipients of what society tells us we need. For example, I have determined that it is not necessary to own a car in Harrisonburg, Va., where I live. Having a car is a great convenience, but in truth it is not necessary. Harrisonburg (a city of 45,000 people nestled in the rural Shenandoah Valley) is a car-friendly city and generally unfavorable to alternative modes of transport. But with careful planning and a willingness from friends to share resources when necessary, living without a car becomes remarkably doable. I have felt more human by transporting myself on my two feet and on my dependable bicycle. Rather than rushing from one enclosed space to another, I am appreciating nature and greeting my fellow humans along the way.

When I was walking in England, I stopped in at an art gallery in Richmond (North Yorkshire) that was showcasing Mackenzie Thorpe’s sculptures. One that particularly struck me was entitled “My Crucifixion” (see photo). The sculpture is a tall block tower whose top appears hinged and leans at an angle to the tower. A small man is trying to carry the weight of the top block as it bears down on him. It is a dramatic scene. To the observer it appears the small man is seconds away from being crushed. His hands are outstretched in a way recollecting Jesus on the cross.

The sculpture spoke to me about the crushing power of our nonhuman industries. These will be our crucifixion if we don’t take the opportunities before us to reclaim our humanity. I encourage you to join me in finding the places that welcome muddy boots as we strive to be fully human, as Jesus was fully human.
**FILTER REVIEW**

**Babies** (G), an unnarrated 80-minute documentary, follows the first year of four babies from four countries: the United States, Japan, Mongolia and Namibia. The film compares infant development around the world without critiquing parenting methods. The most poignant comparison is between the baby in the Himba tribal lands in Namibia, who never comes into contact with any modern technology, and the babies in Tokyo and San Francisco, who are surrounded by human-made technologies.—Anna Groff

**BOOK REVIEWS**

**The Naked Anabaptist: The Bare Essentials of a Radical Faith** by Stuart Murray (Herald Press, 2010, $13.99) is a good distillation of the basics of what is called Anabaptist faith. Despite the catchy title, which implies a simple definition of Anabaptism, Murray acknowledges the complexities and weaknesses of what is a label for a 16th-century movement and that "the cultural context is significantly different today." While the book comes out of a British milieu, it is certainly relevant to American Mennonites, who "seem more interested in purpose-driven churches or the Alpha course." The core convictions he describes are worth discussing and then seeking to practice in our congregations.—gh

**The Least of These: Poems** by Todd Davis (Michigan State University Press, 2009, $19.95) express a detailed awe for every living thing and draws on stories from Christian and other traditions. Davis, a Mennonite poet, often connects nature with a spiritual vision: "There is no pain in the dark, and when the water / surfaces, it flows by a hayfield filled with timothy / and clover. Despite the sun that shines upon its back, / there's no more or less happiness, no more or less suffering."—gh

---

**Island of Lost Souls**

Let's say someone describes a show on network TV to you that involves a set of characters who are not only physically lost from their usual surroundings but spiritually lost and lonely. Eventually these characters find meaning and communion after death as they prepare to enter a peaceful form of afterlife. You might think Evangelicals had found a way to get their views to millions of viewers.

You'd be wrong. The show I’ve described is *Lost*, which aired its final, 2½-hour episode on May 23, ending six seasons as one of the more popular shows on TV.

I wrote about the show in this column almost five years ago, following its first season. I wrote that "beneath the surface of viewers' consciousness rests questions we all wonder about: the place of faith and reason, how we can get along, what is real."

At the heart of the show is the journey of a group of characters, all of whom are isolated and experience their alienation in a variety of interesting ways. They find themselves on an island—a mysterious island, to reference Jules Verne—and face the proposition that they must learn “to live together or die alone.”

The show was at its best as it explored these characters’ lives—both before the plane crash that left them on the island and during their time there—and their relationships with one another.

The show also introduced many strange events and supernatural elements, such as a smoke monster. This year’s final season explained the origins of that, presenting a mythical tale that tied several strands together.

Many viewers found the increasingly bizarre aspects to the show—including time travel and people coming back from the dead—enticing, while many others found them offputting and stopped watching the show altogether.

Still, millions tuned in to the finale, and the response was mixed. Many found the ending emotionally satisfying, while many others were disappointed at how few answers were provided to the many questions the show raised.

In an interview published May 13 in the *New York Times*, Carlton Cuse and David Lindelof, who oversaw the show’s story, said they were leaving “a lot of intentional ambiguity.” They also said that the most important theme of the show is redemption.

Of course, they see that as internal and not necessarily Christian or any other kind of religious redemption, though it could include that. *Lost* is a good example of a postmodern sensibility. It delighted in referencing many varied sources, from Star Wars to Narnia to Tolkien to John Steinbeck to the Bible. It named characters after well-known philosophers—Locke and Hume—and included religious references. In the show’s final scene, set in a church where many of the show’s characters have gathered after death, one room includes symbols of various religions.

The show raised many questions but refused to provide clear answers. The deliberate ambiguity frustrated many viewers, especially the more modernist ones who want things to make sense.

One of the main goals of *Lost* was to entertain, to keep viewers watching, and that it did. It used high-quality production techniques, and the acting was generally excellent. All these elements made it a show many wanted to watch.

Why even care about a TV show? First, it can move us to think about ultimate issues, such as learning to live together or die alone. Second, many in our culture are drawn to such shows. These can help us enter conversations about what brings meaning to our lives.
ANIMALS

MAY 2010 CROSSWORD PUZZLE

GRASSHOPPER

WONDROUS	ANIMALS

EGG	ANT	

CATTLE

POLE
t

COBRA

LEOPARD

GAZELLE

THESE READERS SUBMITTED ANSWERS

Gladys Alderfer, Sellersville, Pa.
Blanche Althouse, Souderton, Pa.
Mark Amstutz, Eastham, Mass.
Roelf Badertscher, Goshen, Ind.
Clara Bartel, Hydro, Okla.
Norma Bauman, Middletown, Ohio
Nora Beachy, South Hutchinson, Kan.
Mary L. Beck, Archbold, Ohio
Alice Berkey, Molalla, Ore.
Marlene Birky, Valparaiso, Ind.
Carrol H. Birky, Denver, Colo.
Beth Bontrager, Moundridge, Kan.
Ruby Bontrager, Bristol, Ind.
Phil Bontrager, Berrien Springs, Mich.
Roy Bowman, Columbia, Ohio
Lovina Troyer Brandt, Baltic, Ohio
Rosie Brandt, North Newton, Kan.
Ellenor Brenneman, Rocky Ford, Colo.
J. LesterBrunaker, Lititz, Pa.
Alice Buller, Henderson, Neb.
Ed & Carol Burkholder, Elkhart, Ind.
Larry L. Burkholder, Harrisonburg, Va.
Lyle Burkholder, Waynesboro, Va.
Ruby Byler, West Liberty, Ohio
Elon Christophel, Battlefield, Mich.
Hettie Conrad, Hesston, Kan.
Glenn Cordell, Chambersburg, Pa.
Margaret Derstine, Lancaster, Pa.
Lois Detter, Sterling, Ill.
Larry & Janet Dixon, Topeka, Kan.
Ginny Doehrmann, Stroby, Ohio
Leta Eichelberger, Lakewood, Colo.
Orlin Eigsti, Hesston, Kan.
Anna Frederick, Lititz, Pa.
Grace Freed, Souderton, Pa.
Elaine Jantzen, Hillsboro, Kan.
Joel Janzen, Tacoma, Wash.
Darlene Kaufman, Canby, Ore.
Ruth Kaufman, Broadway, Va.
Wayne D. Kempf, Shickley, Neb.
Darrel & Carolyn King, Archbold, Ohio
June Kirkton, Chenoa, III.
Deborah Friesen Knickerbocker, Bucksport, Maine
Mabel Kurtz, New Holland, Pa.
Dot Leatherman, Atglen, Pa.
Ethel Lehman, Columbia, Ohio
Phyllis Lehman, Mt. Eaton, Ohio
Kathy Leichty, Wellman, Iowa
Julia Liechty, Berne, Ind.
Anna V. Liechty, Berne, Ind.
Lorna Longenecker, Edwardsburg, Mich.
Esther Martin, Zullinger, Pa.
Erma Maust, Bay Port, Mich.
Freda Maust, Springs, Pa.
Vernon Meyer, Wooster, Ohio
Sharon Meyer, Moses Lake, Wash.
Ed & Olive Miller, Elkhart, Ind.
Lois Miller, Wauseon, Ohio
Marcile Miller, Goshen, Ind.
Leona Miller, Millersburg, Ohio
Martha Mishler Miller, Harrisonburg, Va.
Cris Miller, Goshen, Ind.
Vernon & Margaret Miller, Walnut Creek, Ohio
Dave Mininger, Stuarts Draft, Va.
John Moser, Bluffton, Ohio
Frances Moser, Wooster, Ohio
Anne Mooyer, Lansdale, Pa.
Edna Mull, Narvon, Pa.
Marjorie Neufeld, Goshen, Ind.
Louise Neuwens, Salem, Ore.
Verna Nickel, Saskatoon, Sask.
Peter & Shirley Nofziger, Archbold, Ohio
Christine A. Oswald, Centreville, Mich.
Edna Otto, Leonard, Mo.
Rita Patterson, Valley Center, Kan.
Lois R. Peaches, Belleville, Pa.
Karen Penner, Newton, Kan.
Elise Pennington, Lancaster, Pa.
Jennie Peters, Mt. Angel, Ore.
Lena Pettisford, Louisville, Ohio
Imogene Plank, La Junta, Colo.
Adelle Reichter, Bremen, Ind.
Doris Reinhards, Goshen, Ind.
Elaine Sommers Rich, Bluffton, Ohio
Melda Riche, Wauseon, Ohio
Judy Robinson, Clovernole, Callif.
Odette Rolon, Archbold, Ohio
Marianna Roth, Hesston, Kan.
Bonnie Rufener, La Junta, Colo.
Marlin Rupp, Pettisville, Ohio
Paul & Martha C. Sangree, Lancaster, Pa.
Esther Sauder, Wauseon, Ohio
Margie Schanbacher, Sparta, N.J.
Rick Schanbacher, Sparta, N.J.
Stan & Alma Schlenker, Louisville, Ohio
Alma Schmidt, Newton, Kan.
Harlo Schmidt, Buhler, Kan.
Junia Schmidt, Hesston, Kan.
Helen Schmidt, Goessel, Kan.
Margaret Schrock, Grabill, Ind.
Myron & Phyllis Schultz, Greeley, Colo.
Verlene Sebes, Hanston, Kan.
Esther Schellenger, Topeka, Ind.
Beth Shank, Wellman, Iowa
Esther Shaum, Engadine, Mich.
Ruth Shaum, Goshen, Ind.
Dorothy F. Shirks, Denver, Pa.
Eleanor Shoup, South Bend, Ind.
Sharon Showalter, West Liberty, Ohio
Eugene & Alice Souder, Grottoes, Va.
Doris Spicher, Glendale, Ariz.
Edna Springer, Fisher, Ill.
Marcella Stalter, Flanagan, Ill.
Ruth Staufler, New Holland, Pa.
Marilyn Staufler, Elkhart, Ind.
Florence Staufler-Denlinger, Lancaster, Pa.
Palmer & Joan Steiner, Sun City, Ariz.
Ruth W. Stoltzfus, Honey Brook, Pa.
JoAnn Stout, Washington, Iowa
Bonnie Stuecky, West Unity, Ohio
Gabriel Stuecky, Westover, Md.
Ethan Stuecky, Archbold, Ohio
Isaac & Margaret Tiessen, Pandora, Ohio
Shirley A. Toole, Goshen, Ind.
Betty Ulrich, Eureka, Ill.
Susanna Umble, Atglen, Pa.
Maredith Vendrell, LeRoy, Ill.
Bennie Handrich Venuhizen, Isle, Minn.
Peter W. Voran, North Newton, Kan.
Josephine Voth, Goessel, Kan.
Mary Helen Wade, Sterling, Ill.
Lenore Walter, North Newton, Kan.
Jerry Weaver, Bluffton, Ohio
Martha L. Wedel, Elding, Kan.
Elizabeth Wenger, Ephrata, Pa.
Lois Whisler, Hanover, Pa.
Marjorie Wideman, Akron, N.Y.
Elaine Widrich, Croghan, N.Y.
Elmer Wyse, Goshen, Ind.
Pauline Wyse, Wayland, Iowa
Esther Wyde, Foraker, Ind.
Mary Kathryn Yoder, Harrisonville, Mo.
Merl Yoder, Bay Port, Mich.
Ada L. Yoder, Nappanee, Ind.
Duane Yoder, Mechanicsville, Va.
Florence Zehr, Mansan, Iowa
Pearl E. Zehr, New Wilmington, Pa.
John & Velma Zook, Orrville, Ohio
All references are to the New International Version.

ACROSS
1. This last Babylonian king was killed and Darius the Mede took over the kingdom.
6. Daniel had a vision of a ram and a goat by the Ulai Canal in this province (Dan. 8).
9. This sealed ____ of truth is referred to in Daniel 10.
10. After sealing Daniel in the den, the king “spent the night without ____ … and he could not sleep.” (Dan. 6)
12. The man in Daniel’s vision said to him, “Since the first day that you set your mind to ___ understanding and to humble yourself before your God.” (Dan. 10:12).
15. In the same prayer, Daniel asks: “Give ___, O God, and hear, open your eyes and see …”
16. Daniel was given a new ___ by the chief official (Dan. 1).
18. The king wanted Daniel to interpret the mysterious “____ on the Wall.”
21. During a last battle, “Many countries will fall, but ___, Moab, and the leaders of Ammon will be delivered from his hand.” (Dan. 11:41).
24. Daniel had a vision in which a goat defeated and trampled this animal (Dan 8).
25. In Nebuchadnezzar’s dream, he was the tree that grew ____ and strong, and he was told to cut it down. (Dan. 4:11).
26. “O Lord, in keeping with all your righteous ___, turn away your anger and your wrath from Jerusalem …” (Dan. 9:16).
28. Meshach’s original name.
29. The boastful Nebuchadnezzar was made to eat grass like cattle and grew hair like the feathers of an ____ …” (Dan. 3).
30. The king of the South and the king of the North, “with their hearts bent on evil, will sit at the same table and ___ to each other …” (Dan. 11:27).
31. “King Belshazzar gave a great banquet for a ____ of his nobles.” (Dan. 5).
32. Daniel is told: “Blessed is the one who waits for and reaches the ___ of the 1,335 days.” (Dan 12).

DOWN
1. Nebuchadnezzar was king of _______.
2. Daniel was thrown into their den for not obeying the law.
3. Azariah’s new name.
4. “As soon as you hear the sound of the horn, flute, ____ , lyre, harp, pipes and all kinds of music …” (Dan. 3).
5. The stone at the mouth of the den was sealed with the king’s own signet _____. “ (Dan. 6).
7. Daniel had a vision “as he was ____ on his bed” of four great beasts. (Dan. 7).
8. Darius was from this region. (Dan. 8:20; 9:1)
11. This angel appeared to Daniel. (Dan. 8).
14. Nebuchadnezzar was told to leave the stump of the ___ with its roots.
17. Hananiah, Mishael, and _______.
18. Daniel saw a vision of the Ancient of Days with this color clothing and hair.
19. Daniel prays, “All ___ has transgressed your law and turned away, refusing to obey you.” (Dan 9).
20. “The shaggy goat is the king of ____ .” (Dan 8).
22. Daniel interprets these.
23. Daniel and his friends refuse to defile themselves by eating a ___ of food from the king’s table.
27. “If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to ____ us from it …” (Dan 3).

The book of Daniel
By Jeanette Baer Showalter

RECOGNITION
To be recognized in our September 2010 issue, send the completed puzzle and form below to: The Mennonite, 1700 South Main Street, Goshen, IN 46526.

DEADLINE:
August 1, 2010

NAME (PLEASE PRINT)

ADDRESS

CITY ______________________   ______________________

STATE/PROVINCE ZIP/COUNTRY CODE

July 2010 | TheMennonite 61
Kudos for The Mennonite

The last week of April I read the April issue. I was excited and amazed. This is our church paper. It’s among the best. I went back and read January, February and March. As I finished the May issue came.

I took a block of time to study the design and format, noting the department and contents sections. By looking at and reading the five issues several things stood out to me.

First, overall design. The cover is “us,” most appropriately chosen photos. Not stock. The three photos on page three are strong lead-ins. The contents and departments are a clear guide. Your news and news analysis are far-ranging, relevant and carefully done. Your editorials deal with timely topics, invite reflection, direct readers to a biblical perspective. You are able to look at controversial issues without letting yourself become part of the controversy.

The Mennonite is timely, helps us reflect on our faith, how to live our faith and helps us think through contemporary issues. The magazine has a reverent spirit, is biblically rooted and fits who we are as a church, but it helps us see ourselves in the larger world in a wide lens. My thanks for a high-quality, sensitive publication.—Laban Peachey, Harrisonburg, Va.

Paper and ink won’t go away

For assistant editor Anna Groff’s emphasis on “offering content online and inviting reader feedback,” I extend my high respects for this evaluation (“Comments Worth Printing,” June). She is trying to reach the expanding audience readership via the formats provided by the cultural inroads of the computer in our century.

I also am so glad that Groff made the full circle to use of the old-time paper and ink. I refer to two sentences: “Despite the buzz around social networking, our print magazine redesign also presented an invigorating update for me. I’m not alone in my enthusiasm; we also saw an increase in the number of people subscribing to The Mennonite over a three-month period” (as a result of our magazine redesign).

Let’s not overlook the one-time prediction that television would replace the radio. After half a century, has poor little old radio been obliterated, tossed on the junk heap of an era’s end? No. It’s in about every one of the millions of cars and trucks on the highway. And consider the audiences of the talk-show hosts, not to mention the regular radio news and sermon listeners.

There will be library shelves 50 and 100 years from now with books removed and kept from gathering dust by librarians who’ve made the full circle of interest once again.—Paul H. Martin, Akron, Pa.

A wishfulness for peace

The year 2010 marks the 300th anniversary of the arrival of the first Mennonites in Lancaster (Pa.) County. The Mennonites practiced a wishfulness for peace. Earlier, in the 1600s, the Atlantic coastal region fringing the Delaware River was fresh frontier. This region, later called Pennsylvania, witnessed the first European settlement in 1643. The first to settle were Swedes. They were also the first Europeans to live wishful for peace.

The Swedish populace claimed only a small number who were either posted in or lived near tiny Delaware River-based forts. To their credit the Swedes not only learned to talk to the natives in their language but also adopted their place names. Because the Swedes lived almost name-featureless upon the land, today it is hard to find a Swedish name in the area of their settlement.

The great gift Swedes provided Pennsylvanians was their “wishfulness for peace.” This proactive wish aided the Swedes with a blessing: an almost complete peace with their neighbors. Their tradition was carried forward by the first ambassador of the Penn family, William Penn. Penn proprietary control lasted from 1681 to 1775.

In 1693, Penn became aware of a tribal area in what is now Lancaster County. By 1700, the area was tagged the “Conestoga Country.” In 1710, a small band of peace-wishing Mennonites settled into the area, the “nation’s first interior frontier.” These frontline residents were living, breathing peace witnesses. They were a buffer against hostilities. The tradition—a wishfulness for peace—lived onward.

Descendants of the initiating vanguard continue to live peace-witnessing lives in Lancaster County. Their anniversary is worthy of public remembrance and respect.—Thomas R. Smith, New Cumberland, Pa.

Need a different example

In the editorial “What is a Radical Yea Sayer?” (May), Everett Thomas made the important point that it’s easier to define oneself by what one is against and miss the opportunity to be a “yea sayer.” But the illustration Thomas cites is his promotion of stun guns to the Goshen, Ind., police department. The example seems marginally unorthodox for a Mennonite leader to be advocating. There are other examples that would fit the Mennonite peace and nonresistance message more appropriately. We have a directory full of organizations that are “yea sayers,” Mennonite Disaster Service, Mennonite Mission Network, Mennonite Central Committee, to name a few, would seem to have plenty “yea sayer” examples that would provide a more congruous fit to our theology and practice.—Larry Hauder, Boise, Idaho
First things first A message of first importance

For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve.—1 Corinthians 15:3-5 (NIV)

In his letter to the church at Corinth, Paul reminded the believers of first things—the basics of the Christian message. He urged them to recall the gospel message he had first delivered to them. His reminder opens a window through which we can peer into the heart of the first-century church. Paul set forth the core of the gospel message. Part of that message was that “Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures.”

It takes spiritual perception to plumb the depths of Paul’s teaching, especially his understanding of Christ’s death on the cross. I look forward to a thorough and spiritually enervating exploration of this matter at the next biennial convention of Mennonite Church USA in Pittsburgh, scheduled for July 4-9, 2011. The theme, “Bridges to the Cross,” is drawn from a passage in Paul’s second letter to the Corinthian believers—2 Corinthians 5:16-20. In that passage, Paul declares that through the cross “God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people’s sins against them.” Further, he proclaims, “God made him [Christ] who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.” All these echo the importance of what happened on the cross. To neglect that message is to deny the transforming and reconciling power of God in our lives. It will negate the message of the gospel that was of first importance to Paul.

If you read Mennonite periodicals, you will notice an occasional article or letter regarding the meaning of Christ’s death for our sins. These writings often mirror a broader theological debate about the nature of Christ’s atonement. In recent years, many have publically questioned the widely received view of Anselm and the later Reformers. Anselm understood Christ’s death as a penal substitution—a spiritual transaction by which God vented on Jesus the wrath deserved by others, releasing them of their guilt. As Anabaptists, we believe that God’s love invites us into a covenant relationship, resulting not only in forgiveness of sins but transformation of our daily lives. “And he has committed to us the ministry of reconciliation” (2 Corinthians 5:19).

Controversy about the nature of Christ’s death on the cross is not new. Beginning on the day of Pentecost, the disciples testified that Jesus’ death meant far more than met the eye of those who viewed his execution by the Romans. It was a spiritual event through which God demonstrated his ability to make right the wrongs of the world. Some of their fellow Jews responded by trying to squelch that message. Paul later reflected that the message of the cross was a “stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles.”

We do well to reflect on the many different ways the biblical writers reflected on the meaning of the cross. Taken together, the numerous metaphors and motifs in Scripture explain the heart of the matter. The cross of Christ reveals the wisdom, power and love of a gracious God who makes possible a new creation and a new community. Without a spiritual understanding of the crucified Messiah and his suffering love on our behalf, we will never experience the salvation that God intended for us.

It is sobering to reflect that as believers, we may downplay or ignore what Paul considered of first importance. Whatever theory we espouse of the atonement, let’s take to heart Paul’s reminder that Christ died not only as a martyr but also for our sins.

Ervin Stutzman is executive director of Mennonite Church USA.
FROM THE EDITOR

Boycott Arizona?

A new law in Arizona that addresses undocumented immigrants is revealing a fault line within Mennonite Church USA. It also provides an opportunity for us to reason and listen together when we disagree with each other.

Because of the decision to hold the 2013 Mennonite Church USA Convention in Phoenix, strong voices are calling for the Executive Board to cancel the contract. Doing so could cost $300,000 or more, according to Executive Leadership. But if people who would normally attend a convention boycott the Phoenix location, then the convention could suffer even greater losses.

However, the money is minor compared with other significant issues among us. Some of us think the only just way to respond is to leave Phoenix, as many of our Hispanic sisters and brothers are asking. Some of us see virtue in Arizona’s new law and will feel like those passionate about justice are once again ignoring a more politically conservative perspective.

Many of us who enjoy white privilege in this culture will be genuinely puzzled why undocumented residents should not be deported. Underrepresented racial/ethnic members of our church—especially Hispanics—will once again be frustrated if many white members decline to immediately stand in solidarity with the wishes of those most affected by the new law.

As Mennonite Church USA begins the debate about whether to pull out of Phoenix, I start with the conviction that we should be willing to lose $300,000 rather than the people who would not or could not attend because it is in Arizona.

But as the calls for a boycott emerge in other denominations and grow across the country, I can already see some important counter-arguments to consider.

“The boycott will only extend our recession by three to five years and hit those who are poorest among us,” said United Methodist bishop Minerva Carcano of Phoenix, the first Hispanic woman to be elected bishop in her denomination. Carcano was quoted in a May 26 Religion News Service article by Eleanor Goldberg entitled “Churches Tread Carefully on Arizona Boycott.”

Goldberg also reported that a group of Episcopal bishops decided to hold their meeting in Phoenix and “use the opportunity to stand in solidarity with immigrants” there.

There is a second complication to consider. At least 12 other states are considering laws similar to Arizona’s. One of those states is Pennsylvania. Depending on the outcome of the fall election, that state may have a similar immigration law on its books just as many of us head to Pittsburgh for the 2011 Mennonite Church USA Convention.

But for now, all Mennonite Church USA leaders can do is focus on Arizona and whether to pull the 2013 convention from Phoenix. According to a May 5 release, Yvonne Diaz, executive director for Iglesia Menonita Hispana, shared her disappointment in a letter to church leaders.

“I grieve the effects of this law on our Latino congregations and all Latinos in the United States,” Diaz wrote. “At the same time, I also have hope that Mennonite Church USA will rise to the task of supporting immigrant brothers and sisters. Let’s use our creativity to figure out how this can be a teaching moment for the whole church.”

If we apply such creativity to the current question, then the council and wishes of those in our church who are immigrants—from any country—should weigh the heaviest as we pray, listen and reason together.—ejt