

The Mennonite

A portrait of Marcus Smucker, an older man with a white beard and glasses, wearing a grey suit jacket over a blue and white striped shirt. He is sitting in a red chair and pointing his right hand towards the camera. The background is a bookshelf filled with books.

**Marcus
Smucker:**
pastor,
teacher,
spiritual
director

May 2014

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INSIDE:

- From tragedy to apocalypse
- Relentless love
- We are your spoiled, entitled brats
- Get ready for summer reading
- FAQs for *The Mennonite*

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ON THE COVER: Photo by Jonathan Charles

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Time out for clarity

Ervin Stutzman's reference to the Quaker tradition of "communal indifference" in group discernment reminded me of a comparable term used by English Quakers in business meetings—"time out for clearness." ("Cultivating Indifference," March). When differing opinions precluded agreement, the clerk of the meeting might ask for "time out for clearness"—a period of silence when each participant is asked to think about "that of God" as expressed in the other's point of view. Frequently this led to an agreed minute. If not, the issue might come up at a subsequent meeting.—*Harold D. Lehman, Harrisonburg, Va.*

MC USA still not Evangelical

The use of the term "Evangelical" in the title of Myron S. Augsburg's excellent article "Anabaptist and Evangelical" (March) once again raised dismay in my heart (as a former "Evangelical," now of the Anabaptist persuasion) at the idea that an activity of the Anabaptists is being described as Evangelical when the author is actually writing about evangelism. Both words come from the Greek word translated into English as "gospel" or "good news." The word evangelical is both a noun and an adjective. As an adjective it describes a set of doctrines or beliefs, as well as organizations that adhere to those beliefs, whereas as a noun it

names a person or organization that adheres to those beliefs. Evangelism (noun) refers to the proclamation of that good news and entails the making of followers of Jesus. Certainly, Mennonite Church USA should be doing this evangelistic work. What separates Anabaptists and Mennonites from Evangelicals is the understanding of what the gospel is and how a disciple lives. A better title could have been "Anabaptist and Evangelistic."

—*Robert V. Clausen, Greenville, Ill.*

A new papal office?

Do we have a new papal office, namely, "director of Mennonite Church USA," as *The Mennonite* insists on naming it? If so, what is the relationship to the offices of "moderator of the delegate assembly" and the moderators of our area conferences? Is the office bishop of the national Mennonite church? In a conversation with Ervin Stutzman, he made clear that he is chairperson of the staff of the Mennonite Church USA Executive Board. Does that make him executive director of the board? And how is the board related to the church? Do we have a new Vatican with a small v?

I have great respect for the skill and dedication of Stutzman. But are we not loading an institutional position with official authority that our polity does not accommodate? Are we not confounding a bishop's role with an executive's role? The Roman Pope is a bishop (spiritual office) with executive authority. We say something about our ecclesiology when we designate the executive of the board staff as executive director of the church.—*C. Norman Kraus, Harrisonburg, Va.*

Abortion responses

I share the hope that Matthew Ingersoll expresses in his letter, "MCC and Abortion" (March), that "we seek first the kingdom of God and realize we are subjects first to his authority and allegiance." The Mennonite Central Committee U.S. Washington Office addresses a range of domestic and foreign policy priorities that grow out of

MCC's programs. We carry out this work without regard to partisan concerns, regularly affirming and critiquing proposals by members of both political parties. Abortion is an important "right to life" issue and one that can be addressed in many ways, not limited to the public policy sphere. There is much, for example, that local congregations can do to support women facing difficult decisions so that fewer women choose the option of abortion.

—*Rachelle Lyndaker Schlabach, director, MCC U.S. Washington Office*

The letters on abortion in the February and March issues assume that making abortion illegal solves the abortion problem. Before *Roe vs. Wade*, I worked at a large urban hospital where we often saw young women who suffered from botched or attempted abortions. At times, both the fetus and the mother lost their lives. After abortion became legal, our hospital, being a government-charity hospital, was mandated by law to provide abortions. At first I participated as a team member in performing abortion procedures. I soon decided not be a part of any abortion procedure because I felt it was both morally and ethically wrong. I believe we must strongly teach against abor-

tion. However, legislation to make it illegal will not solve the problem.

Whether abortion is legal or illegal, we as a society must bear some of the moral burden for the resultant death of young women and their unborn children.—*Willard H. Albrecht, Indianapolis*

Rule of Christ skipped for Yoder?

From its beginning, the Anabaptist movement emphasized the redemptive process of the Rule of Christ (Matthew 18:15-17). This process seems to have been skipped in the case of John Howard Yoder. One can empathize with the petitioners not desiring to face the accused or be named. To be sure, the charges could have been made through an intermediary. Fortunately, there was a conference/congregational process lasting four years that eventuated in genuine reconciliation.

John M. Bender, Prairie Street Mennonite Church elder, sums up the results of the process in 1996: "The charges against John have been satisfactorily settled and closed. ACTION: Moved and carried to recognize John's continued membership at Prairie Street. ... The meeting (Feb. 1, 1997) turned the tables for me in terms of apology, repentance on the part of John,

restitution and restored fellowship with the congregation. ... John wanted to make things right as much as he could, but the multiple parties in the process had no clear lines of communication with each other" (Letter to Gross, 2013). Yoder himself had established a fund to be used for those he had hurt. Those involved in the process concluded that Yoder was aware of needed boundaries and would from then on stay within such boundaries. Indeed, Yoder apologized publicly for the "inappropriateness of his actions and his desire for healing for the people he hurt" (Ted Grimsrud, 1998). We gave Yoder his life back, rejoicing that an errant had repented.—*Leonard Gross, Goshen, Ind.*

Insensitive to what some hold dear

"Easter Beyond Explanation" (April) invites us to the "place of not knowing" whether Jesus was really resurrected, interpreting Easter as a thinning of boundaries between heaven and earth and God and human, and meaning, "You are divine, and God is human." Did you really want to run an article trampling on what a vast majority of your readers hold extremely dear?—*Harold Miller, Broadway, Va.*

(Continued on page 54)

IN THIS ISSUE

Our cover story this month (page 12) is on Marcus Smucker, a church conflict mediator who lives in Lititz, Pa. In October 2013, Ron Adams, pastor of Madison (Wis.) Mennonite Church and one of our Grace and Truth columnists, wrote to us suggesting we feature Smucker's story to "celebrate his work in the church."

"Through his teaching career at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, Ind., his spiritual direction trainings, his conflict resolution work across the denomination, he has influenced and blessed Mennonite Church USA in many ways," wrote

Adams. "He deeply loves the church and has devoted himself to helping it be as healthy and faithful as it can be." We also want to thank Jonathan Charles, a professional photographer from Lancaster, Pa., who volunteered his time to photograph Smucker.

Also in the feature section is a piece by John D. Roth (page 16) that addresses conflict in the church surrounding LGBT issues. He encourages us to find hope and see our current situation through the lens of apocalypse, not tragedy. "Though we generally associate the word 'apocalypse' with end-time scenarios of destruction, the more appropriate

meaning of the term is 'revelation' or 'disclosure of something that is hidden,'" Roth writes.

Our news section features two original news stories (pages 38-39) from the Southwest. The first story covers a conference that explored a Christian response to the unparalleled environmental crisis today. It was held in April at Albuquerque (N.M.) Mennonite Church. The second story is on Tina Schlabach of Tucson, Ariz., who visits women in detention centers. The story is written by our intern, Kate Yoder, who we say thank you and goodbye to the end of this month.—*Editor*

Weekly prayers ask for unity and wisdom

ELKHART, Ind.—Instead of eating lunch on Fridays, some members of the Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS) community are gathering for prayers for Mennonite Church USA.

David Miller, associate professor of missional leadership development, initiated this in early March with his own commitment to pray and fast every Friday at lunch time.

Similar to many in Mennonite Church USA, Miller was troubled in reading the “Rule of Love” and the “Transformation Letter,” proposing different paths for Mennonite Church USA to respond to people in same-gender relationships.

Some of Miller’s discomfort comes because he knows many of the people who have signed both letters. “These are people with whom I have served and studied; they are people who have been my students. They are people I trust and with whom I have shared at the Lord’s table,” he says.

When he made the commitment to fast and pray each Friday, he invited others from the seminary community, the Mennonite offices and the surrounding area to join in.—*AMBS*

Hege receives Goering Award for an outstanding music alumnus

NORTH NEWTON, Kan.—The first recipient of the Erwin C. Goering and Verna Kaufman Goering Music Award is Daniel Hege, Janesville, N.Y., music director and conductor of the Wichita Symphony Orchestra and a 1987



Bethel graduate.

The family and friends of Verna Kaufman Goering, Moundridge, Kan., and the late Erwin C. Goering established the award named for the couple.

The award honors a Bethel College alumnus of outstanding character for distinguished achievement and recogni-



Bowmansville wins 40th Bible quiz tournament

Coaches for Bowmansville Mennonite Church’s (Breaknock, Pa.) Bible quiz team talk strategy during a timeout at the 40th annual ACC Invitational Tournament. Seated, left to right, are Devin Weaver, Brett Haller, Erin Shirk and Derick Weaver; standing are Ethan Yoder (left) and coaches Audrey Haller and Donna Horst. On March 23, at Lancaster (Pa.) Mennonite School, Bowmansville 2 won first place, beating Petra 1 (New Holland, Pa.) in overtime. The event brings Bible quiz teams from Ohio, Virginia and Pennsylvania for Mennonite March Madness. This event dates back to when the Ohio and Eastern Conference’s youth pastor, Don Yoder wanted a program to bring the youth from a distance together. This conference eventually became two conferences: Ohio and Atlantic Coast.—*Dale D. Gehman*

tion in music. The awardee may be a professional musician or a volunteer who has served the community, may demonstrate excellence in instrumental music, vocal music and/or conducting or may be a donor whose gifts have strengthened Bethel’s music program.

The award carries a cash gift of \$1,000, which was to be presented to Hege at Bethel College on April 27 during the annual Masterworks concert.—*Bethel College*

Iraqi Kurdistan trainees picnic to support Plowshares activists

IRAQI KURDISTAN—Participants in Christian Peacemaker Team’s Iraqi Kurdistan training planned and participated in a demonstration March 9-11 on behalf of Megan Rice, Michael R. Walli and Greg Boertje-Obed, three American peacemakers imprisoned because of their nonviolent action at the Y-12 Oakridge Tennessee Highly-Enriched Uranium Manufacturing Facility.

On July 28, 2012, Rice, Walli and Boertje-Obed, unimpeded by security, crossed four fences and walked for two hours in the area before the guards found them. They splashed human blood on the walls and spray painted peace messages. While waiting for the facility security, they picnicked, and when the guards arrived, they offered to share bread with them. For this action, which exposed to the world the threat of the nuclear weapons, the peacemakers received sentences of five (Walli and Boertje-Obed) and three (Rice) years in prison.

To mirror the Plowshares’ action, the trainees held a picnic outside the U.S. consulate in Erbil, the capital of Iraqi Kurdistan. The group of eight (trainees, trainers and a support person) arrived with a picnic carpet, apples, leaflets, photos of the prisoners, cookies tagged with Internet links and banners stating: “Being a peacemaker is *not* a crime” and, “Thank them, don’t punish them.”—*CPT*

Values-based Leadership Program registration

GOSHEN, Ind.—Registration for the 13th class of the Values-based Leadership Program is open. The program is comprised of two sessions, scheduled for Oct. 28-30 and for Feb. 24-26, 2015, both at Laurelville Mennonite Church Center, Mount Pleasant, Pa.

The Values-based Leadership Program helps individuals in leadership roles gain a fresh perspective, one that views leadership and organizational processes through a uniquely Anabaptist lens. This perspective guides participants in following Jesus' servant leadership model while celebrating both community and diversity. A participant will come away grounded in leadership practice in faith, values and life experiences.

Registration is limited to 45 participants for this five-day program, which

Bluffton University photo



Appalachian roots

Self-described "Affrilachian" writer Crystal Wilkinson talks with Bluffton (Ohio) University student Justin Neufeld Weaver, a sophomore from Bluffton, following her forum presentation April 1, at which she shared her experiences of growing up black in rural Kentucky and learning to embrace her heritage. Much of the region's black population can be traced to slavery, she said. Her roots have enabled her to write about what she sees, not just what she feels—a common mistake for a beginning writer, she said.—*Bluffton University*

is divided into two parts. Leaving a time gap between part one and two allows participants to reflect on and begin implementing what they are learning and bring real-life experience back to the second session.

Tuition for the two-part program costs \$945 before Aug. 31 (\$1,045 afterward). Participants are responsible for expenses associated with transportation, materials, and lodging and meals during the program. Register and learn more at www.vblp.org/register or call 800-839-1021.—*MEA*

Goshen College students win state awards for campus publications

GOSHEN, Ind.—Goshen College students involved with campus publications won awards for their work at the Indiana Collegiate Press Association (ICPA) competition for print media, held April 5 at Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis.

Among the winners were staff members of *The Record*, the student newspaper, and *Red Cents*, the student arts journal.

Eleven staff members of *The Record* received individual awards, including Phil Scott, Isaac Fast, Kate Yoder, Doreen Arnold, Seth Zimmerman, Logan Miller, Twila Albrecht, Lauren Stoltzfus, Becca Kraybill, Alex Pletcher and Christina Hofer.

The awards cover the calendar year 2013, during which Kate Stoltzfus served as editor during the fall semester and Ariel Ropp during the spring semester. Duane Stoltzfus, professor of communication, serves as the paper's advisor.

Red Cents, a literary and arts journal edited and published by Goshen College students, took several honors for its 2013 edition, including third place for Best Literary Magazine of the Year. Mary Roth served as editor for the 2013 *Red Cents* edition. Ann Hostetler, professor of English, and Jessica Baldanzi, associate professor of English, co-advise the magazine.

The association's annual contest rec-

ognizes the best student work in Indiana college newspapers and other publications. *The Record* is entered in Division III, for colleges with a non-daily publication and an enrollment of 2,000 or fewer full-time students, and *Red Cents* competes in a single division against all colleges and universities in Indiana.—*Goshen College*

Hesston College students travel for learning

HESSTON, Kan.—Travel for continued learning was a popular option for Hesston College students during spring break March 8-16. Four groups traveled around the globe to experience their majors of study in new locations and cultures and learn beyond typical campus projects and interactions while serving others.

Eleven nursing students and two sponsors experienced firsthand just how different India is from the United States in everything from cultural practices and hospitality to stark differences in health care. A group of nine nursing students traveled to Russia with faculty leader Gregg Schroeder and his wife, Cindy. Education instructors Tami Keim and Marissa King led eight students to Puerto Rico, and 14 students spent the week serving with Mennonite Disaster Service (MDS) in Duluth, Minn., accompanied by Disaster Management Program director Russ Gaeddert and campus pastor Todd Lehman.—*Hesston College*

Arvada Mennonite now Living Light of Peace

ARVADA, Colo.—After 54 years as Arvada Mennonite Church, the congregation celebrated a new name and officially installed Jeni Hiett Umble as pastor on March 30. The new name is Living Light of Peace.

The church continues its affiliations with Mountain States Mennonite Conference of Mennonite Church USA and the Church of the Brethren Western Plains District. It is a publicly affirming member of the Supportive Communities Network.—*Janice Ediger*

Earthly examples of resurrection



Cyneatha Millsaps is pastor of Community Mennonite Church in Markham, Ill.

Do you know that in 2011, 688,384 men and women—approximately 1,885 individuals a day—were released from state or federal custody? According to the U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics, 4.8 million offenders were under community supervision by the end of 2011.

These men and women are expected to emerge from places of darkness and even personal hells and be able to function properly in our society. These men and women are given little guidance and assistance in the re-emerging process. Actually our society makes it extremely difficult for them to re-engage with family and communities because of our unwillingness to trust and forgive.

What does the Resurrection of Christ mean to us? Can the Resurrection only relate to Jesus, or do we see resurrecting moments in each other?

As Christians, we celebrate this Easter season reminding ourselves of the ultimate gift Jesus gave for all humankind. Jesus opened the windows of heaven for everyone who seeks the love and redemption of God. What does it mean to live a resurrected life? What earthly examples are there for the fallen, broken and confused? What is required of Christians to assist our friends and our enemies in their own resurrections?

There was a young woman who became strung out on drugs in the late 1980s. She had several children, but because of her addictions she could not properly care for them. Her extended family assisted her in raising the children over the years. The children watched their mother struggle to survive on the streets and even be sent to prison for drug possession.

For more than 15 years this was their life, one nightmare after another. Late-night calls from friends and family warned them that the young woman had again been spotted around town in an awful state. At times the family wondered if she would survive or if a call would say she was found dead. But by the grace of God, she stumbled into a Christian drug rehab program for women. She checked in and gave herself to the process. She spent almost two years in the program, trying to get back her mind, emotions and spirit. She

emerged from the center new, resurrected and loved. She never returned to the streets or drug life, even when times were hard. She talked about experiencing the love of God from strangers. She talked about experiencing genuine love, in spite of her past and her terrible mistakes. Because good people were willing to forgive her past and help her get on her feet, she lives a resurrected life.

When men and women re-emerge from jail and prison, it is vital that the community of faith wraps its arms around them. Re-entry programs need not be major activities within the church, but programs that provide transportation to job interviews, funds for new identification and driver's licenses, safe spaces for monitored supervision with estranged children, lending libraries and pastoral counseling are helpful. For many returning from jail or prison, the greatest struggles are from within, Am I forgiven? Where do I start? What is this place [society]?

Our society is full of success stories and likely just as many failures, yet we serve a God who shows compassion and mercy. Christians are called to do the same. What does it require for us to help men and women recover from addictions and incarceration? How hard is it for us to forget the past and allow people to start again?

“For there is no distinction, since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God; they are now justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,

whom God put forward as a sacrifice of atonement by his blood, effective through faith. He did this to show his righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over the sins previously committed; it was to prove at the present time that he himself is righteous and that he justifies the one who has faith in Jesus” (Romans 3:22-26).

We celebrate the Resurrection of Christ because it affords us the opportunity to be resurrected in this life and the one to come. We must look for those earthly examples of resurrection to encourage one another and ourselves. **TM**

When men and women re-emerge from jail and prison, it is vital that the community of faith wraps its arms around them.

Is the Reformation still relevant?

On June 17, 1913, some 60 people, representing eight different missionary societies, met in Kikuyu, Kenya, for a landmark conversation about the future of the growing Protestant church in the region. Although the Kikuyu Conference of 1913 is largely forgotten today, the debate that unfolded at the gathering had far-reaching consequences. And the issues they raised continue to be relevant for the church today.

As in many colonial settings, the first Protestant missionaries to East Africa agreed to focus their efforts in distinct geographical areas, with the Presbyterians, Anglicans, Lutherans, Methodists and other groups each concentrating their work in a defined region. Over time, however, the introduction of the railroad, improved roads and new forms of employment led to growing geographic mobility. As a result, members of one Protestant church frequently relocated to regions that were dominated by another denomination. So the question emerged: Did newcomers need to “convert” to the new church, or could they participate in Communion and the life of the local congregation while still retaining membership in their home denomination?

When church leaders gathered at Kikuyu in 1913 to discuss the matter, the conversation took an unexpected turn. Instead of simply defining a policy regarding Communion and membership, participants asked an even more fundamental question: Should the growing Christian church in East Africa continue to replicate the historic denominational churches of the West? Or should it create a new body—a united Protestant church—defined by the distinctive cultural context and theological priorities of its indigenous members?

The questions raised by the Kikuyu Conference of 1913 have not gone away. In the coming decade, most of the major groups that emerged from the Protestant Reformation—Lutherans, Anglicans, Reformed and Anabaptists—will commemorate the 500th anniversary of their origins. Those commemorations will inevitably recall the historical details of the founding heroes and remind members of the theological principles that were at stake in the divisions of the 16th century. What is less clear is exactly what these divisions 500 years ago mean for the global church in cultures and contexts far from Europe and North America. Should the church-dividing debates of

the Reformation still matter to Christians in Ethiopia, Indonesia, Bolivia or the Congo today?

One way of answering that question was suggested by a recent gathering in Guatemala of nearly 120 Latin American Mennonite church leaders. Meeting as a “Consultation of Anabaptists in Latin America,” leaders from 19 countries recognized their shared challenges. In many Latin America countries, theological identity is shaped within a complex kaleidoscope of Catholic, indigenous, liberationist, evangelical and neo-Pentecostal influences. The legacy of colonialism continues to find expression in political instability, autocratic forms of leadership, and vast disparities of income. And the insatiable North American hunger for illegal drugs fuels a booming narco-trafficking business, with all its attendant violence.

Yet as the group worshipped, read Scripture, reflected, prayed and argued together, several distinctive theological motifs emerged in response to these challenges. Most participants, for example, acknowledged that God’s gift of forgiveness, compassion and grace was to be shared with others, including those on the margins, and even the enemy. The church, they agreed, was not an institution but a living community of real people, whose love for each other witnessed to the coming kingdom of God. True Christian leaders would be recognized by their humility and readiness to draw on the gifts of all their members.

To be sure, disagreements were also evident. Some church leaders took issue with the critique of neo-Pentecostalism, and not all were enthused about ecumenical conversations with Catholics. But the conversations were open and honest. At stake was not a defense of “Mennonite” identity. Nonetheless, the consultation concluded with a strong affirmation for a distinctive witness in Latin America, one with an Anabaptist inflection.

The legacy of the Anabaptist movement still matters to the global Mennonite church 500 years later. And I hope the leaders who gathered in Guatemala in 2014 will also gather in Switzerland in 2025 to commemorate Anabaptist beginnings. But the goal is not the preservation of a denominational identity inherited from the missionaries. Rather, it is to nurture a living tradition, enlivened by local readings of Scripture, strengthened by the insights of many members, enriched by conversations with other Christians, that bears witness to the gospel in a rich variety of cultural forms. **TIM**



John D. Roth is professor of history at Goshen (Ind.) College, director of the Institute for the Study of Global Anabaptism and editor of *Mennonite Quarterly Review*.

Should the church-dividing debates of the Reformation still matter to Christians in Ethiopia, Indonesia, Bolivia or the Congo today?

Reasonable risks are good for children

When I was a boy, I and my friends wandered the neighborhood unsupervised. We walked to school and didn't worry about strangers. We had a tree house and built forts; we used our imagination to play various games.

Now that seems like a different world from today. I rarely see children playing outside in our neighborhood. And if they do, it's usually in their own yard.

No, I'm not just being nostalgic. This change in our culture has unhealthy consequences for our children. An article in *The Atlantic* (April) addresses this reality and calls for change.

In "Hey! Parents, Leave Those Kids Alone," Hanna Rosin points out that when kids face what to them seem like "really dangerous risks" and conquer them alone, this builds self-confidence and courage.

She quotes Joe Frost, a safety crusader whose influence brought drastic changes to playgrounds in the '80s but has now become concerned that we've gone too far. Adults have come to the mistaken view "that children must somehow be sheltered from all risks of injury," Frost writes, but "in the real world, life is filled with risks—financial, physical, emotional, social—and reasonable risks are essential for children's healthy development."

There has been a drastic change in parents' supervision of children. Rosin refers to a U.K. study that showed that "in 1971, 80 percent of third-graders walked to school alone. By 1990, that measure had dropped to 9 percent, and now it's even lower."

Parents routinely tell their children never to talk to strangers, "even though all available evidence suggests that children have about the same (very slim) chance of being abducted by a stranger as they did a generation ago," Rosin writes.

In fact, overall, crimes against children have been declining. One exception is family abduction. "The explosion in divorce in the '70s meant many more custody wars and many more children being smuggled away by one or the other of the parents," Rosin writes.

Ellen Sandseter, a professor of early-childhood education in Norway, published a paper in 2011 on children's risky play. She concluded

that children "have a sensory need to taste danger and excitement," at least in their minds.

She identifies six kinds of risky play: (1) exploring heights, (2) handling dangerous tools, (3) being near dangerous elements, (4) rough-and-tumble play, (5) speed and (6) exploring on one's own.

The last one, she says, is the most important: "When they are left alone and can take full responsibility for their actions, and the consequences of their decisions, it's a thrilling experience." And they gain self-confidence.

She writes that "our fear of children being harmed," mostly in minor ways, "may result in more fearful children and increased levels of psychopathology."

Today, writes Rosin, "failure to supervise has become, in fact, synonymous with failure to parent." And this has resulted in a "continuous and ultimately dramatic decline in children's opportunities to play and explore in their own chosen ways," according to psychologist Peter Gray.

In an essay called "The Play Deficit," Gray chronicles the fallout from the loss of the old childhood culture: depression, narcissism and a decline in empathy, "a familiar list of the usual ills attributed to Millennials."

Rosin concludes: "We can no more create the perfect environment for our children than we can create perfect children. To believe otherwise is a delusion, and a harmful one."

Fear breeds fear. Raising children without phobias may require letting them play without parental supervision, letting them experience the thrill of reasonable risks.—Gordon Houser

Pontius' Puddle

Joel Kauffmann



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“If you don’t subscribe to your local paper or pony up to get behind its online paywall, who’s going to pay reporters to cover the news where you live? A free press isn’t that kind of ‘free.’—Rachel Maddow in the *Washington Post*”

The benefit of thanks

“Concrete benefits come to kids who literally count their blessings,” writes Diana Kapp in the *Wall Street Journal*. Research shows that teens who had learned to be grateful had better grades, less depression and envy, and a more positive outlook that paid off in numerous ways. According to one study, jotting down three things to feel grateful for boosted well-being as much as an hour of therapy. Couples who kept gratitude journals experi-

2%

of counties in the United States are responsible for all death sentences.

—*New York Times*

enced a measurable positive change in how they perceived their partners. Those same journals also boosted resilience and helped people bounce back from physical and workplace setbacks.—*The Marketplace*

A nation of ‘takers’

In his March 26 column, Nicholas Kristof names five public welfare programs that are wasteful and turning us into a nation of “takers.”

1. Welfare subsidies for private planes. The United States offers three kinds of subsidies to tycoons with private jets: accelerated tax writeoffs, avoidance of personal taxes on the benefit by claiming that private aircraft are for security, and use of air traffic control paid for by chumps flying commercial.

2. Welfare subsidies for yachts. The mortgage-interest deduction was meant to encourage a home-owning middle class. But it has been extended to provide subsidies for beach homes and even yachts. In the meantime, money was slashed last year from the public housing program for America’s neediest.

3. Welfare subsidies for hedge funds and private equity. The single most outrageous tax loophole in America is for “carried interest,” allowing people with the highest earnings to pay paltry taxes. They can magically reclassify their earned income as capital gains, because that carries a lower tax rate (a maximum of 23.8 percent this year, compared with a maximum of 39.6 percent for earned income).

4. Welfare subsidies for America’s biggest banks. The too-big-to-fail banks in the United States borrow money unusually cheaply because of an implicit government promise to rescue them. Bloomberg View calculated last year that this amounts to a taxpayer subsidy of \$83 billion to our 10 biggest banks annually.

5. Large welfare subsidies for American corporations from cities, counties and states. A bit more than a year ago, Louise Story of *The New York Times* tallied more than \$80 billion a year in subsidies to companies, mostly as incentives to operate locally.—*New York Times*

34%

of millennials watch mostly online video or no broadcast television.

13%

of Americans got most of their news about national and international issues from the Internet in 2001.

41%

of Americans got most of their news about national and international issues from the Internet in 2010.

41%

of Americans had read a newspaper in the past 24 hours in 2002.

23%

of Americans had read a newspaper in the past 24 hours in 2012.

—*Columbia Journalism Review*

By age 23,

49 percent of black men in the United States have been arrested, “which can hurt their ability to find work, go to school and participate fully in their communities,” a new study in the journal *Crime & Delinquency* found. By age 23, 44 percent of Hispanic males and 38 percent of white males have been arrested.—*The Week*

Numbers to ponder

- Percentage change in the past 25 years in the net worth of Americans 65 and older: 42
- Percentage change in the past 25 years in the net worth of Americans 35 and younger: 68
- Number of college graduates working as astronomers, physicists, chemists, mathematicians or web developers: 216,000
- Number of college graduates working as waiters and bartenders: 216,000
- Estimated portion of sexually explicit text messages that are sent to the wrong number: 1/10
- Average number of times each week U.S. surgeons operate on the wrong patient or body part: 40
- Percentage of white live-in fathers who help their children with their homework daily: 20
- Of black live-in fathers who do: 41
- Percentage of black male teenagers who don’t have a job: 85—*Harper’s*



Pastor, teacher, spiritual director

**Marcus Smucker
has served
congregations
and pastors in
gaining a more
vital experience
of God's presence.**

by Sue Conrad Howes

An eighth-grade education, Amish faith, and farm chores don't usually lead to urban ministry, a Ph.D. in spirituality and expertise as a church conflict mediator, but Marcus Smucker is far from what one expects. In fact, even he is surprised at where his life has led.

Marcus Smucker at home.
Photo by Jonathan Charles

Now retired and living at Landis Homes in Lititz, Pa., he has come full circle in some ways, having just moved from his family farm in Bird-in-Hand, Pa., where he first lived as a child with three older brothers and three younger sisters. His father, a farmer, left the Amish church just before Smucker's birth, but his mother remained Amish, creating tension in the household and within the broader family. Perhaps Smucker was destined to study family systems and relationships and use that knowledge as a church consultant, though he never imagined his childhood years as helpful at the time.

Uninterested in farming and the youngest of the boys, Smucker had hand-me-down clothes and hand-me-down chores, which did not increase his love of farm life. When his father died at age 45, Smucker was just 12. After completing eighth grade, he wanted to attend Lancaster (Pa.) Mennonite High School. However, his mother urged him to stay home, saying she needed him on the farm. But his desire for more education never left him.

Sadly, death was not something new to Smucker, even at age 12. He had already experienced the death of his maternal grandmother, who lived with his family six years prior to her death. Losing two significant people by age 12 left its mark. It sensitized Smucker to suffering, loss and death, making a powerful impact on his long career in pastoral care and counseling.

Smucker suffered intense anxiety and fear as a teenager, for reasons that he never fully understood. He struggled with sleeplessness and confusion as he grappled with feeling uncomfortable with the world around him. Although he was baptized at age 15 in a Beachy Amish church, he didn't feel much different or experience any sense of comfort from the baptism. Three years later, he joined Maple Grove Mennonite Church in Atglen, Pa.

At age 18, the transformation from Amish to urban began. He had no idea what to expect when he left the farm to spend nine months in voluntary service (VS) in Hannibal, Mo. His life changed. Hannibal may not be considered urban, but for this Amish farm boy, the chance to get off the farm felt like a whole new world.

After VS, Smucker returned to the family farm, and in 1953, at age 21, he was drafted. As a conscientious objector, he had the option of returning to Hannibal to work in a hospital or going to Germany to work with PAX. "There was always an adventuresomeness in me that I didn't recognize

for some time," he says. While his time in Hannibal was enjoyable and affirming, he chose to go to Backnang, Germany, to build houses for refugees. Eventually he was asked to serve as the unit leader.

"It was different for me that anyone would ask me to be a leader," says Smucker. "[Before PAX] I had never recognized that in me. Becoming a leader in Germany really blindsided me and opened me up to seeing something in myself."

Because of his knowledge of Pennsylvania Dutch, Smucker easily learned the German language and developed a strong, lifelong interest in the Russian Mennonite refugee experience. Partway through his two years in PAX, he moved to Berlin to serve as an interim leader at Mennoheim, a temporary home for Mennonite refugees.

Returning to the United States in 1955, Smucker knew he didn't want to be on the farm, so he earned his GED and enrolled at Eastern Mennonite College in Harrisonburg, Va. Never having had math or science beyond an eighth-

Becoming a leader in Germany really blindsided me and opened me up to seeing something in myself.

grade level, he says, "[college] almost did me in." His lack of educational preparation made college difficult at times, but fortunately, he excelled in the social sciences, and he stayed in school. He took a few semesters off to help with a family business when his brother died unexpectedly at age 31. Smucker graduated from EMC in 1960 with a degree in Bible and history.

Smucker taught history for a year at Belleville (Pa.) Mennonite High School, then went to seminary. "I wanted to attend a non-Mennonite school," he says, so he studied at New York Theological Seminary from 1960 to 1963. It was in New York City that he met a Mennonite woman, Dottie Wenger, from Newport News, Va., who also moved to New York for some adventure. Dottie and her love was a new experience for Smucker.

"During my teen and young adult years, I wasn't able to have strong friendships. There weren't any deep connections. Dottie was my first experience of being loved and accepted and wanted. I know that my mother loved me, but I didn't feel it. I felt like I was put up with. Dottie was my first experience of someone saying to me,

'I like you. I love you. I want to be with you.' Being valued and enjoyed for who you are is a profound thing. I have often struggled with the question, Am I valued for what I do or because of who I am? It has been an undertone in my life."

The couple met in 1960 and married later that year, and their son Greg was born just over a year later. Even at age 29, Smucker admits he probably wasn't ready for marriage because "I had so much unfinished business. We had to work at growing together in our marriage. We had many struggles, but when I go to bed each night, I thank God for

I realized that in order to continue to be open to God, I also had to continue to keep facing myself and keep becoming self-aware.

—Marcus Smucker

Dottie." Receiving and accepting Dottie's love also helped Smucker understand God's unconditional love for him.

After seminary, Smucker and his new family moved to Portland, Ore., where he became pastor of Portland Mennonite Church. "Portland was where I found myself in a new way," he says. Feeling respected as a pastor, he continued studying counseling and developed a significant counseling ministry in the church. It was during a sabbatical, studying for a Th.M. degree in pastoral counseling, that Smucker realized how much anger he had brewing within him. "I could have gone a totally different direction had I not sought counseling for myself."

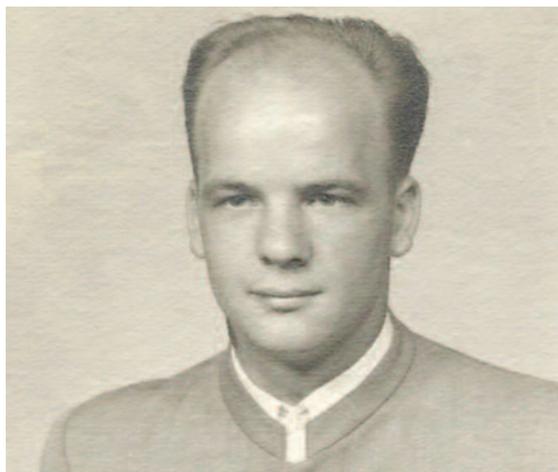
Early in his time with the congregation, he came to understand the power he possessed as a

pastor. One day, a church lay leader asked, "Are you aware there are people in the church who are afraid to talk with you if they disagree with you?" Smucker was shocked. For the first time in his life, he had to really think about power. "As a middle child growing up, I never had authority, but now I had to realize I did. I was emotional, educated, relational, male and articulate. I wanted to learn how to live with power so that I empowered people rather than lording it over others. One of the most important lessons I had to learn was how to live powerfully with both strength and vulnerability."

Using power effectively has been a lifelong goal of Smucker's and led him to study conflict mediation. "When I realized I had power, I had to learn to feel comfortable using it ... and also know when not to use it. There is very little I will run from," he says. "I will stand up to it, and I can be quite intentionally powerful at points, but I always try to do it with respect so that the person does not feel overpowered." As a result of his reflections, Smucker began to embrace conflict. "I had to learn not to be afraid of conflict. Conflict is always an invitation to something new, it doesn't always get there, but it's an invitation."

While attending Union Theological Seminary in Richmond, Va., to pursue further studies in pastoral counseling, he met Dr. William Ogelsby. "I owe a lot of who I have become to one of my professors, Dr. Ogelsby. He was the one who recognized that I was full of rage, and he was not afraid of it. With Dr. Ogelsby, I felt respected, but I knew he also saw me clearly." Smucker's studies in conflict mediation and family systems opened up new relationships for him with his family of origin.

However, at age 42, Smucker found himself burned out. For months, it was hard to preach, hard to pray and thus hard to do his job. Portland Mennonite gave him time off for renewal. Among other things he went to a cabin alone for a few days in Mount Hood Forest. "I met God there in a way that was both reassuring and disturbing. I realized that in order to continue to be open to God, I also had to continue to keep facing myself and keep becoming self-aware. From then on, it was more about opening myself to God rather than just searching out God. It has been a tremendous relief. It was then that I began to study and experience God through contemplative prayer and spirituality. I became increasingly aware of how God had been working in my life through all these years. Romans 8:28 took on new meaning for me."



Marcus age 21. Photo provided

Smucker took his newfound interest back to Portland Mennonite Church. In the late 1960s, he began to co-teach with a young lay leader, Marlene Kropf, in the area of Christian spirituality. While Smucker reflects on this time of collaboration with Kropf as one of the most powerful things he has done, Kropf acknowledges the profound influence Smucker had on her and the broader church. “I believe Marcus’ greatest contribution to the church, beyond mentoring hundreds of leaders, was his passionate commitment to integrate early Anabaptist spiritual understandings with contemplative spiritual practices. He forged a path of spiritual integrity for many who longed for a more vital experience of God’s presence—not only in prayer but in lives of justice and service,” says Kropf.

While pastoring at Portland Mennonite Church, Smucker served on the Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary board, and Marlin Miller, AMBS president, invited Smucker to share his work in spirituality at AMBS. The Smucker family (now including daughter Deb) moved to Elkhart, Ind., in 1979, and Smucker began Ph.D. work in religious and psychological studies at The Union Institute and began teaching part-time at AMBS in 1982. With Marlene Kropf and others, Smucker pioneered a degree program in Christian formation and spiritual direction at AMBS.

In 1998, Marcus and Dottie decided it was time to leave Elkhart. While Marcus never had any intention of moving back to Lancaster County, that was where they ended up. “When we moved back to Pennsylvania at age 67, I remember saying, What in the world will I do with the rest of my life?” Soon after their return, Smucker was asked to help develop spirituality in a Lancaster Conference leadership program. Since moving to Lancaster County for “retirement,” Smucker has taught courses for Eastern Mennonite Seminary Lancaster campus, Kairos School of Spiritual Formation and led mediation and consulting in congregations.

In his retirement years, Smucker has made family relationships a priority. Being a grandfather has been a profound experience for him. Through his experience of love and enjoyment of his grandchildren he came to new levels of awareness of God’s love for him. “Even as I enjoy them and love them unconditionally, so God also loves me.”

In his older years, teaching and providing spiritual direction have become the capstone of Smucker’s life. “Being able to continue to share what I have learned and to learn about God, my-



Marcus and Dottie, his wife. Photo by Jonathan Charles

self, ministry and life has been profound. It has offered me the opportunity to see life and the church through the eyes of younger generations.”

Serving congregations and pastors has been Smucker’s life vocation. Sometimes when the church seems to struggle for vitality and is caught up in so much disagreement and conflict, he can feel disappointment. “Nevertheless,” he says, “I believe the church has been created to be one expression of God in the world and that God is will-

He forged a path of spiritual integrity for many who longed for a more vital experience of God’s presence—not only in prayer but in lives of justice and service.

—Marlene Kropf

ing to work with our mess. God became incarnate in the world to keep breaking through and working with us in all our messes. God is willing to work with a mess.”

As he looks back on his life, Smucker reflects on his legacy as pastor, teacher and spiritual director. “I feel grateful for my life and the opportunities I’ve had. As for a legacy, I suppose it’s that I have sought to be faithful to God in ministry and to speak the truth with God, myself and others.”



Sue Conrad Howes is an ordained minister in Lancaster (Pa.) Mennonite Conference.

From **tragedy** to **apocalypse**

Why we can be hopeful about the future of the church

by John D. Roth

In classical Greek tragedy, the driving force of the story often hinges on a conflict between two incompatible moral obligations. Both obligations seem equally compelling, yet they are fundamentally irreconcilable with each other. In “Antigone,” for example, a play by the poet Sophocles, the lead character commits a capital crime by honoring her brother, Oedipus, with a proper funeral despite the fact that the king has declared him to be a traitor and therefore unworthy of a burial. Should Antigone obey the law of the land, or does she have a deeper obligation to her family?





Once the moral conflict becomes clear, the characters in a Greek tragedy are locked into an unfolding story line whose only possible outcome is an agonizing, irresolvable moral conflict—in other words, a tragedy.

There are times when it feels like Mennonite Church USA is in the midst of just such a drama. For some, the question of full LGBT inclusion in the church—be it marriage or ordination—is the civil rights issue of our day. If the church cannot extend love, compassion and full acceptance to LGBT individuals, it denies the gospel and becomes complicit with the mean-spirited, fear-driven bigotry of the larger culture.

For others in the church, the pressure to redefine marriage and traditional sexual ethics, especially in the larger context of the sexual revolution, has become the bright-line test of biblical authority. Yielding on this point feels like a capitulation to disordered desire—an ethics based on personal experience and the idolatry of western individualism.

An apocalyptic reading of this moment in the history of Mennonite Church USA calls for the discerning insights of many.

In light of the conflicting trajectories of various Mennonite conferences, the passion of convictions expressed in social media and the painful experiences of other denominations who have attempted to resolve this issue, it would be easy to conclude that we

have become actors in a Greek tragedy. All that remains now is for each of us to play out our roles, following with earnest conviction the logic of our own moral obligations. But the outcome—a future of anguish, Pyrrhic victories, resignation and division—is not really in doubt.

As a historian of the Anabaptist-Mennonite tradition and a person committed to the unity of the church, I struggle almost every day with the temptation to read our current circumstances through the lens of tragedy. Yet as a Christian, I know better. For Christians, the appropriate lens for interpreting our times is not tragedy but apocalypse.

Though we generally associate the word “apocalypse” with end-time scenarios of destruction, the more appropriate meaning of the term is “revelation” or “disclosure of something that is hidden.” In the biblical tradition, the book of Revelation is sometimes called the Apocalypse of

An apocalyptic reading of this moment in the history of Mennonite Church USA calls for the discerning insights of many. So what follows is only a provisional beginning, a few thoughts that have emerged for me in my personal quest to resist the seduction of tragedy.

First, an apocalyptic perspective recognizes that the Spirit is often present precisely when we are most vulnerable. At one level, we know that vulnerability—particularly within the covenant of marriage or a trusting group of friends—is a path to intimacy and joy. Yet we often avoid vulnerability at all costs. Especially in times of cultural upheaval, the absolute certainty of conviction—on either side of the issue—provides a welcome sense of security. Yet our tradition is littered with the wreckage of well-intended groups whose moral clarity led to endless fragmentation and division; or, at the other extreme, with groups who sought to resolve conflict by retreating to the safety of spiritualism and the invisible church and simply disappeared from history altogether. If a tragic perspective on the future offers the security of predetermined outcome, an apocalyptic perspective calls us to live into the vulnerability of the unknown, trusting that the Spirit can work in ways that none of us can fully anticipate.

Second, an apocalyptic perspective on this moment in our history reminds us that the God we worship is not coercive. The gospel invites, but it does not compel. For those of us in the free church tradition, this means that the decision to remain in fellowship with other Christians, like the decision to follow Jesus, is voluntary. The authority the church, and the basis for our unity, is anchored not in our structures or policies—important though they are. Rather, the church’s authority ultimately rests on our testimonies of healing, the transparency of honest confession, the practices of hospitality and the daily rhythms of repentance and transformation in response to the gift of God’s grace. This commitment to a noncoercive testimony does not mean that we back away from the clarity or depth of our convictions. But it does suggest that we hold those convictions with a posture of gentle intensity; that we pursue Truth with humility; that we hunger for God’s righteousness first and foremost in our own life; and that irresolvable disagreements end in a spirit of lament and confession rather than anger.

Finally, an apocalyptic perspective recognizes that throughout history, the body of Christ has taken on many different expres-

The church’s authority ultimately rests on our testimonies of healing, the transparency of honest confession, the practices of hospitality and the daily rhythms of repentance and transformation in response to God’s grace.

John. At a time when Christians were facing the overwhelming and brutal force of Roman imperial power, John offered an alternative lens for interpreting the times. His “revelation” made it clear that despite all visible evidence to the contrary, God was ultimately in control of human history. Though the immediate experience seemed otherwise, John recognized that history was moving toward a day when the rough places would be made plain, the lamb would lie down with the lion, and people from every tribe and nation would gather around the throne of God, joining their voices in praise.

To read history apocalyptically rather than tragically is a spiritual discipline. Like all spiritual disciplines, it begins as an act of will—a conscious decision that gets easier with practice as we become more attentive to the presence of the Spirit and the patient providence of God in human history.

sions. For most of the 20th century, the Mennonite church in North America organized itself in congregations that related to the denomination through membership in a local conference or district. The denominational institutions that emerged helped congregations support the work and witness of the larger church in areas like education, mutual aid, publications, missions, service and relief projects. In recent decades, support for those institutions has waned. In the face of these changes, it is tempting for some of us to anxiously defend those structures or the particularity of our identity, confusing a particular model of being the church with the kingdom of God. But

the opposite impulse—retreating to the local congregation, ignoring the accountability of a collective witness, rejecting all structures and boundaries—suggests an idolatry of a different sort. So we live, apocalyptically, in the dynamic tension of the Incarnation.



John D. Roth is professor of history at Goshen (Ind.) College, director of the Institute for the Study of Global Anabaptism and editor of Mennonite Quarterly Review.

Planting sequoias

On a family vacation many years ago, we visited Sequoia National Park. In rapt silence, dwarfed by the towering sequoias, we gazed in awe at the majestic forest. Some of the trees, already ancient at the time of Christ, were more than 300 feet high and measured 60 feet in diameter. Through the centuries, they have survived earthquakes, forest fires and the spread of human civilization. Each year, their massive trunks steadily add one more tiny ring of growth.

Not long thereafter, we encountered a former student of mine who was working for the National Parks Service. Not long ago, he said he had spent several weeks planting sequoias—digging holes for tiny seedlings, barely more than sticks, in the hope they would take root. Those images—of the ancient, towering, mature trees and the simple repeated act of planting a tiny sequoia sprig—have lingered with me ever since.

An apocalyptic view of the church calls each of us to take the audacious step of planting a sequoia—to make some small, risky, impossible gesture of hope in the knowledge that it may take decades, maybe even centuries, for that gesture to flourish and bear fruit. Yet we do so—we participate in small acts of planting, watering, pruning or nurturing—in the confidence that God is capable of making something majestic and beautiful out of our weak efforts.—*John D. Roth*



A Memorial Day reflection on
1 Samuel 24

Relentless love

by Sabrina Falls

Memorial Day was established to remember those who served and died in the armed forces. For many people, it's a time for picnics and cookouts or just a nice day off from work. But for some, Memorial Day is anything but a nice day. If you have a loved one who died in war because of their military service, it may be a time of sadness and grief. It's not just a day to honor veterans of long-ago wars. People today are mourning loved ones who died in the more recent wars of Vietnam, Iraq and Afghanistan.



Some of us are mourning everyone who has died in war, not only those who were in the military. It's a time to reflect once again on the cost of violent conflict. It's a time to be reminded of the higher, better way God would have us resolve our conflicts.

Will there always be battles to fight? Is war inevitable? Are hatred and revenge built into our very being? Will we always have enemies?

When faced with these basic questions and dilemmas, we turn to the Word of God. When I think of the paradox of human nature—how we can feel and exhibit both such great love and such base brutality—I think of one of my favorite people in the Bible: David.

The one known as the shepherd boy and healing harpist—who wrote the beautiful Psalms we so often turn to in prayer and worship—was also the one who slew Goliath, had victory over the insidious Philistines and as the second king of Israel was able to unite its long-bickering tribes. He did not achieve all this without fighting many bloody battles. Many died at his hands.

Some may be uncomfortable looking to David as an example of how to behave. But even as much as the Bible spins his story to glorify and establish his kingdom, it also doesn't shy away from showing his flaws and weaknesses.

We only have to read his Psalms to learn the depth of his despair over his darkness and sinfulness and betrayal of God. Or the stories of how he handles some of the temptations and conflicts he faced. He didn't always pass the morality test.

But in 1 Samuel 24, we see the David we aspire to be—perhaps the David in whom God saw king potential when no one else could, seeing not the outward appearance as people do, but looking instead upon the heart (1 Samuel 16:7).

Let's review chapter 24, a vignette from David's long saga of battles, both physical and spiritual. It begins with Saul, the first king of Israel, returning from yet another battle with the Philistines.

Who are these Philistines? They seem to pop up everywhere in the Hebrew Bible. That's because they are everywhere, a constant threat to the Israelites.

They first appeared around the end of the 13th century B.C. and came to Canaan by land and ship, destroying many nations along the way. Their great success and power may have had something to do with their mastery of the technology of iron. In the book of Judges, we read about the constant clashes between them and Is-

rael and their dominance over the Israelite tribes and the entire Canaanite region.

Earlier in 1 Samuel is the story of the battle at Ebenezer, when the Philistines captured the ark of the covenant and destroyed the holy shrine at Shiloh, where Samuel himself first heard the voice of God calling him as a child and where he was raised by the high priest Eli.

In short, the Philistines were relentless. They are perhaps the main reason the Israelites demanded a king to lead them in war and finally rid themselves of this plague. The result of this was the anointing of Saul as the first king of Israel. And from day one of his reign until his last day, Saul fought the Philistines.

So as our story begins, it's just "another day, another battle with the Philistines."

Except for one other thing—Saul's relentless pursuit of David. Who knows, maybe Saul would have had quicker success against the Philistines if

Is war inevitable? Are hatred and revenge built into our very being? Will we always have enemies?

he focused more on defeating them and less on defeating David. The shepherd boy who soothed him with harp music when he was sick and ill-tempered, the beloved best friend of his son Jonathan, was enemy #1 to him.

Even worse than the Philistines was David's ability to have success over them. Whenever David fought them—from that first encounter with Goliath through various other battles—he had so many victories that Saul became jealous. All he could see in David was someone who made him look weak and ineffective and unworthy to be king. It seemed his life's mission was more to defeat David than the Philistines.

Now he's back from another battle with the Philistines, and his men inform him that David is in the wilderness of Engedi. David is hiding out, because he knows Saul is after him, and he lives as a fugitive even though he hasn't done anything wrong. Saul, as if he were about to go back to war with the Philistines, gathers 300 of his best men and goes hunting for David.

Along the way, he needs a break and goes into a cave. He doesn't know that David and his men are hiding inside that very cave. While Saul is there, David's men are getting all excited and tell David: "This is the day God is saying to you, I've delivered your enemy into your hand and you'll do to him what seems good to you."

In the darkness of the cave, David slithers over to Saul, snips off a corner of his robe and slithers back to his men. And you can imagine his men. You have to figure they're dumbfounded. What just happened here? You could have been rid of this guy. You could have been free of this constant threat against your life. You could stop hiding in caves and hills and valleys and start living your life.

He didn't kill Saul, but it was killing him inside that he would even ever-so-slightly disrespect 'the Lord's anointed.'

But no. In the stricken silence, David is already brooding. Yes, this is the character we know from the Psalms he writes later, the one who feels everything and overthinks everything.

The Bible tells us that after he cut off the piece of Saul's robe—didn't kill him, just snipped some robe—"his heart smote him."

Some translations have it—"he was stricken to the heart" (NRSV) or, "he was conscience-stricken" (NIV). One translation (CEV) says, "David was sorry" for what he'd done.

That doesn't cut it. The original Hebrew has it much stronger, much more deeply-felt. David's "heart smote him." He didn't kill Saul, but it was killing him inside that he would even ever-so-slightly disrespect "the Lord's anointed."

Keep in mind that in biblical Hebrew, the word "heart" ("lev") means not only the physical organ or even just one's emotions but also one's mind and personality and courage. All these are rising up to slay him because he would even come close to slaying God's anointed one. And yes, the word for anointed one here, meaning the one chosen by God to be anointed king, is the same word used for the "messiah" ("mashiach").

After Saul leaves the cave, David goes out after

him. After all his hiding, he's suddenly so brave, running out into broad daylight and revealing himself to anyone who might be out there—including Saul's troops.

But all we see is the encounter between these two men. We can almost imagine there's no one else around. David calls Saul—not by name but with great respect—lord and king. And when Saul turns and sees him, David prostrates before him on the ground. This is a humble, vulnerable position to be in at any time, let alone now.

Then he says, "Why do you listen when people say I want to harm you? Today your eyes have seen how God gave you into my hand. Others urged me to kill you, and I could have—but I spared you. And I said, I won't raise my hand against him, because he is Yahweh's anointed one."

And we can feel the depth of his feelings even more as he continues: "See, my father. See, the corner of your robe in my hands. This is proof that I would never betray you. I've never sinned against you, even though you're hunting me, even though you'll stop at nothing to take my life."

Then he makes his case: "May Yahweh avenge me. May Yahweh plead my case and be the judge and give the sentence and vindicate me. But my hand won't be against you."

For me, this is one of the most brutally honest and heart-wrenching scenes in the Bible. I can see David and Saul standing there, facing each other, or maybe David is still on the ground and crying out to this man he loves like a father. And with tears streaming down his face he's asking, "Why do you listen to these lies? How can you believe that I'd ever think of killing you?"

And Saul, moved to tears and reaching out to this man he loves like a son, cries, "Is that your voice, my son David? You are more righteous than I, doing good to me when I've done evil to you. When a man finds his enemy, does he let him go away unharmed? Who does that?"

And Saul asks God to reward David for this act of incredible mercy.

Then Saul affirms David's calling to become king and only asks that David not cut off his descendants or wipe out his name, and David promises him.

And they live happily ever after.

Unfortunately not. I wish I could say that, but the fact is, just two chapters later (1 Samuel 26), the same thing happens. Saul is back at it again—hunting him down—and David nearby with yet another opportunity to sneak into his camp while



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Saul's asleep and kill him. And again he refuses to do it because he's the Lord's anointed. And again he turns it over to God, saying, "God himself will strike Saul. But God forbid that I should lay a hand on him."

Saul finds out again and is again filled with remorse and asks God to bless his son David. But really, the search for David never ends, and he continues relentlessly to seek David's life until his own life ends fighting ... the Philistines.

This brings us back to Memorial Day and the act of remembering—year after year—those who have fallen in battle and the fact that, despite all the misery and anguish and grief and loss and destruction of war, no war was ever miserable or agonizing or cruel or destructive enough to end all wars.

It seems relentless. The Philistines are relentless. The Sauls are relentless. Jealousy is relentless. Greed is relentless. Pride is relentless. Lies are relentless. Misunderstanding is relentless. Miscommunication is relentless. Desire for revenge is relentless. Desire for power is relentless.

One is tempted to throw up one's hands and say it's hopeless. But our enemies within are much fiercer than our enemies without. Much more

powerful than any nation or despot or terrorist or criminal are the enemies in our hearts and minds. And how we respond to the enemies within will likely reflect and determine how we respond to the enemies without.

Much more powerful than any nation or despot or terrorist or criminal are the enemies in our hearts and minds.

When I say we, I mean each of us individually facing our personal demons and those we regard as our enemies in life as well as all of us collectively as this nation we call the United States.

Whether speaking of ourselves as individuals or as a nation, I want to ask, What if we were to take some cues from David? The first cue we might take is to fight God's battles. It is said on several occasions in Scripture that David fights God's battles, not his own (1 Samuel 17:47, 25:28).

What if, like David, we turned the whole battle-

fighting thing over to God? When faced with the temptation and the opportunity to kill—even for a righteous cause—David leaves it to God to decide if, when and how to take action.

Can you imagine what would happen if we—and our government—always first asked, “Whose battle are we fighting? Is this God’s battle or mine?”

A second cue we might take from David is to pay attention to the state of our hearts. What if we—and the decision-makers of our society—felt slain by our hearts whenever we treated another disrespectfully? Jesus said, “Anyone who is angry with a sister or brother will be subject to judgment. Anyone who insults a sister or brother will be taken to court. And anyone who says ‘You fool!’ will be in danger of the fires of hell” (Matthew 5:22).

We’ve got to yield our lives, our actions, our decisions—even our thoughts and feelings, minds and hearts—to God.

Can you imagine what would happen if we—and our government—always first felt violated and victimized and stricken when we so much as treated others unkindly, let alone harmed or killed them?

A third cue we might take from David, as Saul himself so eloquently stated, is to do good to those who do evil to us. Paul wrote: “Do not repay anyone evil for evil. ... Do not take revenge. ... Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good” (Romans 12:17, 19, 21). Instead we are to feed our enemies if they’re hungry, give them a drink if thirsty.

Can you imagine living in the upside-down kingdom where, instead of an eye for an eye, we were always to first love our enemies?

A fourth cue we might take from David is to see “that of God in every person.” What if, like David, we were always to first ask, “Is he or she the anointed of the Lord?” We know that each person is a beloved child of God, chosen and cherished by his or her Creator. Before we—or our armed representatives—lift a hand or aim a weapon at anyone, we might first say, like David, “I can’t do this. This is the Lord’s anointed.”

Can you imagine lifting a hand against the “mashiach”—against Christ—himself?

Yes, the Philistines are relentless. The enemy will always be with us. But as Paul wrote to the Ephesians, “Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against ... the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil” (Ephesians 5:11-12).

Saul was bitterly jealous of David because David had greater success and victory than he over a seemingly insurmountable enemy. Instead of rejoicing in the vanquishing of their common foe, all he could think about was that it was David and not he who was responsible for their defeat.

What he didn’t understand was that neither he nor David was responsible for victory over the Philistines. Or that it wasn’t even David who was responsible for his dominance over Saul.

According to the story, David yields his life, his actions, his decisions—even his thoughts and feelings, his mind and heart—to God. This is the only way he is able to see the anointed one of God instead of seeing his archenemy.

And this is the only way things will ever change. This is the only way we will ever stop the insidious, relentless onslaught of the Philistines of this world.

We’ve got to fight God’s battles, not ours.

We’ve got to attend to the state of our hearts and minds. We’ve got to render good for evil. We’ve got to see Christ in every child of God.

We’ve got to yield our lives, our actions, our decisions—even our thoughts and feelings, minds and hearts—to God, putting our trust and faith in Jesus Christ, who alone has the victory over relentless evil and who alone can save us by the power and grace and relentless love of God.

Maybe then Memorial Day will be a time to remember only faraway and long-ago losses. And we can truly rejoice and relax and enjoy our picnics and celebrate with glad hearts the reign of God among us.



Sabrina Falls is a member of Shalom Mennonite Church in Indianapolis. This article is adapted from a sermon she gave on May 26, 2013.

Wounded and wounding words

God forgives our wounding others and our wounds from others



by Ted Lewis

One of the wisest statements about human nature I have ever heard came from a seventh-grade girl. I was leading a discussion on bullying prevention with a circle of middle-school students. At one point I asked, "What makes bullies bully?" After a pause, one girl raised her hand. "Bullies bully," she said, "because they've been bullied before, and they don't want to be bullied again." Wow, I thought to myself. ►



This insight helped me better understand what I had been observing in my restorative justice work. Many offenders harm others out of the unhealed energy of their past pain. When confronted with the truth of their actions, their default reaction is usually to protect themselves. Why is that?

We all experience hurts; we all hurt others. It is part of being human.

Deep down, they do not want to be vulnerable or, better, they do not want to be vulnerable again.

We've all had small bleeding injuries on our hands from camping or gardening and because we may not be able to cover the wound and keep the dirt out, it gets infected. A day or two later, the wound is more sensitive to the touch; every bump hurts even more than the initial injury. Consequently, it takes several more days for it to heal well, assuming we help it heal. In many ways, this is a picture of how our relational wounds can last over time.

Whenever I meet with offenders in preparation for a dialogue with victims, it is common for them to protect themselves. They feel bad about what they've done, and deep down they feel hurt by wounds from their past. I'm always amazed how they let down their guard when they are

treated with dignity and respect. This transition toward openness is important for them to eventually make amends and for them to heal some of the ongoing infection that is tied to their negative choices.

I've also worked with victims at the front end of a dialogue process, watching them similarly move from a protective place to an open place. Rebuilding trust is central. These facilitation experiences have led me to a new conclusion: All of us, at some level, have victim and offender aspects within ourselves. We all experience hurts; we all hurt others. It is part of being human. Below the thresholds of criminal law, all of us have an inner victim and an inner offender.

In my reflections I have also come to see that Jesus provides a powerful way for us to find healing and forgiveness not only for our wounding side but also for our wounded side. In his death, he experienced what both offenders and victims experience. The reconciliation that flows from the cross happens at many profound levels, and the level I want to focus on is between our wounded side and our wounding side.

The two Hagar stories in Genesis have become for me a window into seeing how one person can be both victim and offender. These stories, each with the same two-scene structure, show the complexities of relational conflict as well as the spiritual aspect of relational healing. Scene One involves the escalating tensions between Hagar, Sarah and Abraham. Scene Two involves Hagar in the wilderness and her encounters with God.

Hagar clearly bears the brunt of Sarah and Abraham's anxieties and lack of trust about being



childless, but she is also not innocent in the whole affair. We read in Genesis 16 that after Hagar knew she was pregnant, she despised Sarah. Out of deep pain, Sarah is stirred by this negative energy and overreacts in two ways: She blames Abraham and she projects her negativity back onto Hagar. Abraham (in this interesting study of family systems) is passive. Sarah's inner turmoil turns into abuse toward Hagar, and Hagar flees into the desert.

I want to note here that when Hagar flees, she is not only feeling hurt but likely feeling some personal shame for adding to the escalating tensions. This is a picture of how all of us, at times, are not just a victim or not just an offender but more often a combination of the two. Some months ago, I lost a job in an unfortunate situation where I felt hurt by others as well as shame for my part in the issues. This dynamic can make healing and resolution a more challenging process.

It is significant that Hagar, fully pregnant, finds a spring in the wilderness. She has enough esteem to tend to her own care. Next, we learn that God reaches out, engaging Hagar in therapeutic conversation. In brief, God emboldens Hagar to return to her family system and transcend the hardships, knowing she will bear a son that will have many descendants. Her son is to be called Ishmael, meaning "God hears" the one in misery.

We may think relational healing must involve all parties finding a way to sit down and talk things through. That is not always possible, and it is not always advisable. But here we see how we as individuals, in our spiritual journeys, can have our relational hurts addressed. Hagar, who experienced a kind of invisibility in her role as child provider, now experiences a deity who has seen her. She thus names the spring "Lahai Roi" after the "Living One Who Sees Me."

In the second story, the family system now includes Isaac and Ishmael (Genesis 21). Again, Sarah's negativity, triggered by Ishmael's episode of mocking Isaac, draws the drama into needless escalation, but this time Abraham takes better responsibility in his role. With a more mature faith in God, Abraham sends Hagar and her son into the wilderness; however, they lack sufficient provisions to survive in the desert heat.

The first time she fled; this time she was rejected. Not every close relationship is sustainable. Imagine Hagar's intense mix of emotions. All seems lost, and she begins to sob. The boy will die of thirst. But true to Ishmael's name, God



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hears the boy crying and again the promise of blessing is pronounced. The first time Hagar found a spring; this time God "opened her eyes," revealing a spring. The spring allows for new life

Between our hurts and our healing is opportunity for us to receive help and to grow in humility.

and a new future. Ishmael then lives to father many nations, including today's Arab Muslims.

These stories have spoken to me during my own time of healing and job transition. They help me see how the entanglement of relational conflicts, sometimes too complicated to untangle, can lead to a resolution that begins with a fresh encounter with God. They also help me see that my wounding side *and* my wounded side can find what I call "parallel healing." If they started together, they can heal together.

As we apply these insights, a four-part frame-

work emerges that can help guide any type of relational problem, whether or not there is good dialogue with another person or other people.

1. Hurts
2. Help
3. Humility
4. Healing

After a situation of conflict or clashing, certain parties will experience ongoing emotional **hurts**. Recall again the illustration of the hand injury that does not get ointment and a band-aid but gets infected. Without receiving **help** from others and without having the **humility** to see the hurts for what they are, one's journey from hurts toward **healing** will be stalled.

Let me return again to restorative dialogue with victims and offenders of crime. A key goal for any facilitator is to prepare both parties to come together for safe, constructive conversation. A good facilitator will have confidence that any face-to-

face-to-face for safe, constructive dialogue.

Once we begin to see that our own woundedness and woundingness are wrapped up in each other's history, energizing each other, as it were, we open ourselves up to new realms of forgiveness and compassion. In my own experience, I had a profound moment of encountering God's forgiveness. As my mind was troubled by sorting out the side of me that felt hurt and the side of me that felt shame, I experienced a new release, knowing that God's forgiveness covers both sides.

This is where a broader view of Jesus' ministry and death on the cross can help us greatly. He bore not only our sins but also our sorrows; not only our wounding habits but also our wounds. *This bearing of everything that weighs us down* frees us up then to bear the sins of others; we grow in compassion as we understand how their hurting actions stem from deeper, unhealed hurts.

Consider the time when Jesus encountered the paralyzed man, forgiving his sins before healing his body. What sins were forgiven? Certainly not sins of greed or violence or indulgence. His sins amounted to the social stigma of being a "bad person" deserving of a physical handicap. Jesus releases him from this weight of sin. Similarly, Jesus' forgiveness for prostitutes is not just for their sinning but for their wounded sinned-uponness.

The reconciling work of Jesus, therefore, not only brings peace between God and humanity and, by extension, between people as enemies; it also brings peace between an individual's inner victim and inner offender. Having dignified us through divine invitation, God has provided a safe, constructive way for us to face the hard truths about ourselves. God pronounces forgiveness for our wounding others and for our wounds from others.

Just as Sarah's past pain was touchy in relation to current rubs, so our past pains are linked to our current sins of hurting others or even hurting ourselves through compulsive addictions. But the cross of Jesus broke the wounded-wounding cycle. That's how the resurrected Jesus could say to Thomas, "Touch my wounds. Experience them as healed wounds." They were not touchy, where Jesus might say, "Ouch." Rather, we touch the wounds to gain Spirit-power for ministries of peacemaking and forgiveness.

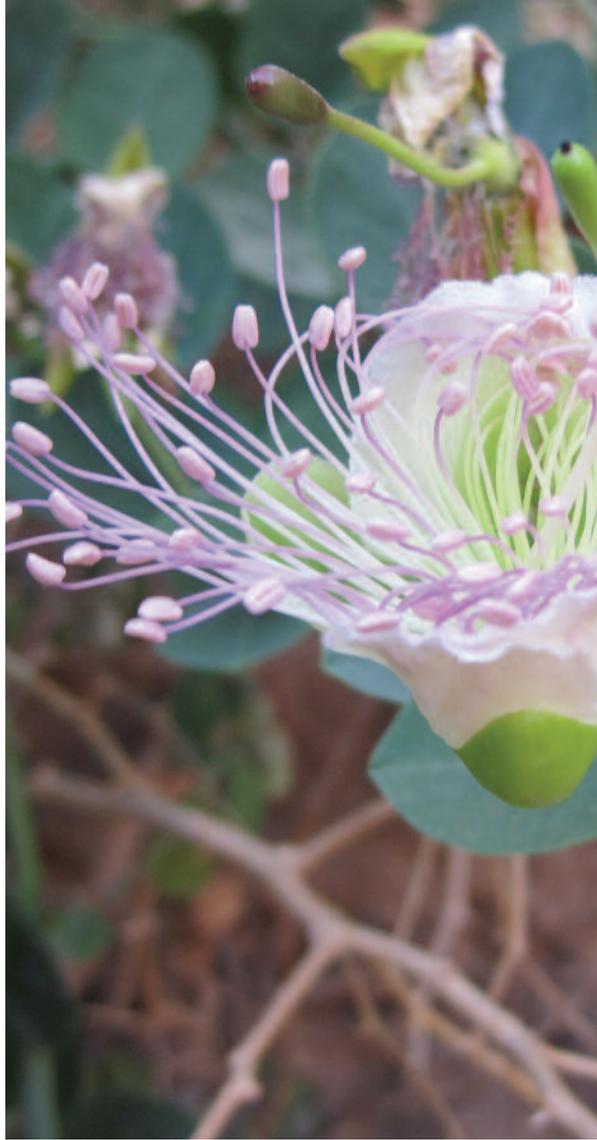
A few years ago my teenage daughter told me about being bullied by other high school girls. My first reaction was to find those girls and verbally shake them up so that they would stop. But on further thought, I knew they were complex indi-

God has provided a safe, constructive way for us to face the hard truths about ourselves. God pronounces forgiveness for our wounding others and for our wounds from others.

face meeting (which is always voluntary) will result in positive outcomes for everyone. The most straightforward cases—involving one remorseful offender and one empowered victim—go the fastest and smoothest toward resolution.

But not all cases are straightforward. Multiple offenders or victims can add complexity. Sometimes a victim, say of an assault, may have been a part of an earlier provocation, making both parties a mix of offender and victim. Even in the dispute resolution cases I've mediated, hurts and regrets can be on both sides. The more complex the clients, the more complex the resolution process.

And what if there is not an opportunity for safe, constructive dialogue with others in your lives, where walls are more prominent than bridges? What then? This is where Hagar's story is helpful. Between our **hurts** and our **healing** is opportunity for us to receive **help** and to grow in **humility**. This can involve some personal work where our own inner offender and inner victim come



'Restorative theology' on the rise

When restorative justice started in the mid-1970s with the help of Mennonites working in the justice system, it was clear that a biblical vision of peacemaking and reconciliation was foundational for this new model. This movement of providing alternative ways for victims and offenders to resolve crimes without punishment and isolation has had immense, worldwide growth since its inception in Ontario and later in Indiana.

Within a decade, Native American and other indigenous groups recognized the affinities between restorative justice and their own traditions. Both seek to repair the harm done for the good of the community. Both understand the power of telling stories in a 're-storing' process. And both recognize how healing conversations enter a sacred zone where apology and forgiveness can happen.

While restorative justice has these religious and spiritual roots, it is only in recent years that one finds a fertile engagement between Christian theology and restorative justice. Specifically, there are now several scholars who write about "restorative theology." They all recognize the rich interplay between the dynamics of restorative practices and biblical themes of atonement and peacemaking.

A major pioneer in this field is Christopher Marshall from New Zealand. Being both an academic theologian and a restorative justice practitioner, Marshall has promoted what he calls a "two-way traffic of ideas" between restorative practices and biblical theology. His three main books are:

- *Beyond Retribution: A New Testament Vision for Crime, Justice and Punishment* (Eerdmans, 2001)
- *The Little Book of Biblical Justice* (Good Books, 2005)
- *Compassionate Justice: An Interdisciplinary Dialogue with Two Gospel Parables on Law, Crime and Restorative Justice* (Cascade Books, 2012).

More recently, Derek Flood has written a book called *Healing the Gospel: A Radical Vision for Grace, Justice, and the Cross* (Cascade Books, 2013), which reformulates all aspects of the death of Christ in the light of an explicit restorative theology. This adds much to traditional debates over atonement, as Flood's comprehensive perspective addresses both our hurting habits and our past hurts.

Michael Gorman, in his book *Inhabiting the Cruciform God* (Eerdmans, 2009), writes about "cruciform justice," where God did not deal with his enemies in retaliation or violence but in reconciliation and love. "That is, God acted with restorative rather than retributive justice." Gorman's book shows how Paul's writings point toward Christian formation into God's nature, and this happens as we participate in the humble, nonviolent pattern revealed in Jesus.

As both restorative theology and the practice of restorative justice find new points of commonality in years to come, it is inevitable that both will be enriched by each other in this growing partnership.—*Ted Lewis*

viduals who were hurting inside. As bullies, they had once been bullied. I told my daughter, "When you see them again, think about how underneath their insecure actions of bullying is a source of pain. Seeing them that way will give you compassion for them, and you will no longer fear their presence."

In a similar way, I have found that with God's **help** and with greater **humility**, I can see myself in a new light, where my victim and offender sides can now meet each other in the grocery store of my heart and greet each other face-to-face, no longer captive to the energy of avoidance. Thankfully, this God-born compassion and reconciliation has given me a way to lean away from a past of **hurts** and lean toward a future filled with the fruits of **healing**.



Ted Lewis lives in Duluth, Minn., and works as a restorative justice trainer, mediator and consultant for conflict resolution programs and church communities.

Own it. Work it. Share it. Be it.



Claire DeBerg
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Leadership abilities are like muscles: Take them through exercises and they'll grow.

I finally accepted the markers of my leadership prowess this year. There has always been some way in which I experienced the groups around me spread away from me to make space for my leading. But instead of recognizing those experiences as affirmations of my gifts, I chose those moments to feel untouchable.

Here's how it manifested for me as a little girl: I was welcomed as a guest into tight circles of friends but was not considered truly part of any solid group. I was no one's best friend. At sleepovers I was invited as the anomaly—the girl who offered cliques a fierce way of approaching everything from ghost stories (telling scary ones) to nail polish (knowing zero about it) but too powerful to have as an actual friend.

As a teenager, it looked like this for me: I attended a boarding school for the arts, and as a dancer it was a relief to be in an environment welcoming people like me in their pursuit of art. Great divides emerged, and I was not invited into any inner circle mostly because I didn't smoke or break curfew. I was struggling with what it meant to be in relationship with God, and while my peers were impressed with my faith, I was treated (ironically) like a piece of art: Observe but don't approach.

As an adult, choosing to be a single mama gave me a new kind of space to inhabit. I wore my single motherhood like a shiny, extremely heavy necklace, blinding the people around me while simultaneously slowing me down. I was invited to participate in moms circles, but the point of interest I brought was the realities of parenting solo. The wall of partnered mothers would shake their heads concluding they were so glad they weren't me. I was a token attendee.

I realize now that all those scenarios and the feeling of being unwelcome or untouchable had nearly nothing to do with the other people and everything to do with me. I allowed groups to dictate my role instead of harnessing my power myself. I had the power to gather people, to move them to action, to inspire their deepest desires. I was like this raging bonfire: mesmerizing and bright, but get close and eventually I'd burn too hot, turning people away.

Here's what I know now about the steps to take toward being a leader:

Own it. Owing your gifts as a leader does not look like self-aggrandizement. Owning it looks like the gentle way you carry an egg fallen from a nest. Leadership abilities are delicate powers; they can both create and destroy. This dichotomy requires careful attention, and the first step of attentiveness to a leadership skill is owning that it exists in the first place. When I reflect on my past, I am aware that denying the leadership abilities spinning up in me looks like a host of lost opportunities.

Work it. Leadership abilities are like muscles: Take them through exercises and they'll grow. Ignore them and they'll stunt, lacking usefulness. Once the discerning people in my life let me in on the secret of myself (that I was a leader) I took zero initiative in working my gifts. I had owned it but I hadn't done any leadership strength training. Working those leadership muscles looks like getting training or seeking out leader mentors or praying around the possibilities for your leadership.

Share it. Accept roles that align with your leadership qualities. If you've owned it and trained it, it is likely that opportunities will present themselves so you can share your leadership gifts. If I had tried on leadership roles in the past, perhaps I wouldn't be at such a crisis trying to catch up on years of gift neglect.

Be it. This is the pinnacle of leadership. After owning the gift, nurturing it and putting it into practice, then you get to do the truly powerful work of leadership: Be it. Be in this world the way your leadership shows up. Not all leaders lead every situation, team, conversation, space, group, forum, organization or family. Some leaders are the observant ones sitting back, thinking two moves ahead. Some boom into a room, captivating attention with electricity. Leaders come in so many delicious packages, but what I love about the ones who have owned and worked and shared their skills is that they live in a new realm of being: leader. There is a calm in these leaders because they neither deny what is stirring up nor refuse to accept the truth or neglect their strengths. To arrive at being a leader is like an extended exhale.

I look forward to the exhale. For now I've owned it: OK. Yes, I am a leader. 

Disparity between us and our world neighbors

In March 2013, Mennonites in the Harrisonburg, Va., area were invited to a gathering at one of our local churches to welcome and support two prominent leaders of the Ethiopian Meserete Kristos Church and the Meserete Kristos College. Only about 100 people attended, a fourth of whom were a part of various singing groups providing special music for the guests. The event raised about \$3,500.

I wonder how Kiros Teka Haddis, the president of the fledgling Meserete Kristos College, or Kelbessa Muleta Demena, the associate secretary of the MK Church and chair of the board of the school, felt about no official representatives of either Eastern Mennonite University (EMU), Eastern Mennonite Seminary or the Virginia Mennonite Conference being present.

In spite of our being a part of a global Anabaptist community through our membership in Mennonite World Conference, we are worlds apart in having grassroots connections with each other, to say nothing of the disparity in our wealth and standards of living.

Let's compare some numbers:

We locals represented the well-to-do sending church, Mennonite Church USA, which helped launch the mission effort in Ethiopia some 60 years ago. Today MC USA has a declining number of baptized members, around 98,000, while the Meserete Kristos ("Christ the Foundation") Church has over 225,000 members, plus an attendance of twice that number. The Ethiopian church continues to grow rapidly, with 726 congregations and 839 church-planting centers.

The average U.S. income is over \$48,000. Ethiopia, one of the poorest countries in the world, has a per-capita income of just over \$400.

MC USA has five colleges and two seminaries with a combined enrollment of over 5,000. MKC has one college with an enrollment of 180 men and women who are being trained mostly for various forms of church leadership.

Our five colleges have well-financed development departments working year round to raise budgets of millions for each of their institutions, plus having expanding (and expensive) admissions departments competing with each other in recruiting students from a shrinking pool of students. MKC has no problem attracting sufficient students but struggles to meet its annual operat-

ing budget of \$325,000, which I'm guessing is less than our U.S. colleges spend on lawn care.

Tuition and room and board for a school like EMU is over \$37,000 per year, with considerable financial assistance available. At MKC it only totals \$2,500, and students also have to rely heavily on financial aid.

My alma mater, EMU, has raised over \$5 million toward a \$7 million fund-raising effort to renovate its Science Center, and other MC USA colleges are engaged in similar capital fund-raising projects. By contrast, MKC is having difficulty raising enough money to complete a \$500,000 women's dormitory.

Is there something wrong with this?

I think so. If you agree, you may consider supporting some of the other Mennonite colleges and seminaries around the globe, such as Meserete Christos College, the Mennonite Theological College of East Africa, STAKWW (Disciples of the Word College of Christian Religion) in Indonesia or the Latin American Anabaptist Seminary (SEMILLA) in Guatemala City.

Here are some other ways we might help address the above concerns:

1. Have each MC USA college or seminary adopt a sister institution outside the United States or Canada to exchange information, students and faculty as appropriate.
2. Appoint representatives from the Global South as advisory members of the decision-making boards of each of our church educational institutions, participating via Skype or teleconference.
3. Consider a moratorium on new construction or expansion of our institutions until our world neighbors have more of their needs met.
4. Have all MC USA colleges and seminaries become one "multiversity" (with some different specialties located on separate campuses) in order to reduce competition with each other for needed dollars and student enrollment.
5. Have at least one of these U.S. campuses offer a low-cost, no-frills education specifically designed to prepare students for global involvement and to serve as a training center for needy students from other countries.

More needs to be done to reduce the disparity between us and the rest of the world, with our goal being not to have our partners become more like us but for us to become more like them. 



Harvey Yoder is pastor of Family of Hope in Harrisonburg, Va.

We are worlds apart in having grassroots connections with each other, to say nothing of the disparity in our wealth and standards of living.

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

CLC offers direction to Executive Board

Leaders urged to ‘trust God and trust each other’ and listen respectfully

Eighty-four leaders from across Mennonite Church USA gathered March 20-22 for the spring meeting of the Constituency Leaders Council (CLC) at Bethel College in North Newton, Kan.

CLC members spent the majority of their time together offering feedback to six questions (see box) regarding church structure, polity and relationships, in reference to a decision by Mountain States Mennonite Conference (MSMC) to license a pastor on Feb. 2 in a committed same-gender relationship. The questions were developed by a task force commissioned by the Executive Board (EB) and chaired by moderator-elect Patricia Shelly.

Leaders urged CLC members to “trust God and trust each other,” to listen deeply and respectfully to one another and to spend time in worship and silence listening for God’s leading for Mennonite Church USA.

Members of the Newton community set up a prayer room across from the CLC meeting space, and members of local Mennonite congregations were invited to come and pray for CLC members and their ongoing work.

“The level of care for each other was extraordinary,” said David Boshart of Wellman, Iowa, task force member, CLC member and executive conference minister of Central Plains Mennonite Conference, in a report to the group on March 22. “If we can carry that sense of extraordinary care to the rest of the church, they would be astonished at how God can work in human hearts.”

On March 20, MSMC leaders talked about the year-and-a-

half-long discernment process that led to the decision to license Theda Good for ministry at First Mennonite Church in Denver. MSMC leaders told their story using Scripture, prayer, worship through song and personal sharing. They also presented a timeline to CLC participants that illustrated the steps in their process. Those present had the opportunity to ask clarifying questions regarding MSMC’s process the next morning.

In response to what was shared, both Herm Weaver, MSMC conference minister, and Ervin Stutzman, executive director of Mennonite Church USA, identified some points of regret and things they might have done differently throughout the process.

The CLC spent March 21 responding to the questions posed by the task force in table groups and then reporting back to the larger group. CLC members acknowledged that MSMC’s actions place the area conference at variance with the relational covenant the conference made when it joined Mennonite Church USA in 2005.

Table groups offered suggestions for how the EB could respond to the variance reflected by the MSMC decision as it impacts relationships with the rest of the church. The task force will compile and synthesize the table groups’ responses and report back to the CLC by May 1. The task force will then draft a recommendation for consideration by the EB at its June 26–28 meeting in Chicago.

CLC members urged the task force and the EB to tend to the relationship with MSMC. In addition, they encouraged the EB and task force to address the broader conversations and disagreements across the church regarding same-gender relationships.

The CLC also expressed a strong hope for finding a way to be together, suggesting that the EB explore new models for relationship among area conferences and congregations.

The Purposeful Plan—a 10-year strategic plan for Mennonite Church USA—was held up as a guide for the work that churchwide agencies, area conferences and congregations can collaborate on in spite of disagreement in other areas.

The CLC also called for a confessional report recounting the process and interactions between the EB and MSMC. Task force members will engage this work as they compile and interpret the responses from the table groups.

People repeatedly named the importance of face-to-face conversation. Several area conference leaders said they are looking for ways to promote healthier and more frequent interconference conversation and relationship building in the future.—*Mennonite Church USA staff*

Questions from task force for CLC

Having heard from Mountain States Mennonite Conference and the report of the task force, what feedback does the CLC want to communicate to the leadership of MSMC?

What is God saying to us and to Mennonite Church USA as we listen and reflect?

Are there better ways than our current organization (and written statements) to cultivate relationships among congregations, area conferences and the denomination?

How will we tend our common life as Mennonite Church USA, especially in light of differing beliefs and practices?

What direction can the CLC offer the Executive Board as it tends to the relationships among congregations, area conferences and the denomination at this time in our history?

What direction can the CLC offer the Executive Board as it responds to MSMC’s recent credentialing process?

CLC a 'referendum on the membership guidelines'

Ervin Stutzman speaks candidly about responses he's heard from the church.

At the first of two meetings of the Constituency Leaders Council (CLC) open to the public (and the press), Ervin Stutzman, executive director of Mennonite Church USA, called the meetings “a referendum on the membership guidelines.”

CLC members—representing area conferences, agencies and constituency groups—met March 20-22 on the campus of Bethel College in North Newton, Kan. The opening session and the hour-long closing session were open to the public.

In a candid talk he called a confession, Stutzman reflected on various people's desire to be right. “One of the fundamental ways we can all be right,” he said, “is to be right about our desire to follow Jesus Christ.”

Referring to verses in Philippians 1, he added, “We're right if we come to listen and to love one another with the affection of Jesus Christ.”

Stutzman said he looks forward to meetings where people come to confess their sins rather than point out the sins of others. He presented a “state of the church” and acknowledged that “over the past few weeks, I have felt both despair and hope in regard to the church's future.”

He said that he had received hundreds of emails that he categorized into three groupings: (1) greater inclusion of LGBT individuals, (2) faithfulness to the traditional stance and (3) unity.

Stutzman called this a time of learning, an “accelerated course in how people feel.” He learned that written communication does not work as well as face-to-face communication. He said he received letters from people he's known for 30 years who said they weren't sure they could trust him.

“That's hard on me,” he said. And when people say he's cooperating with systematic violence, that's also hard. “Is there any space in the world for me to care for people on both ends?” he said.

He said he received letters from many who confided in him about their experiences as LGBT individuals or parents of LGBT individuals. Many other letters called for him “to be faithful to our traditions.”

Membership guidelines: As executive director, Stutzman said, he is a custodian of the documents adopted by the church. But he is also a custodian of the change process, he said.

One of his confessions, he said, is that “I was naïve then [in 2001] in thinking the membership guidelines were accepted.”

One pastor told him the guidelines “papered over our differences.” Stutzman said, “Some of us have come to the place where if we'd known how people felt about [the guidelines], we wouldn't have voted for them.”



Hannah Heinze/kehrt

Geri Jeanguneat (right) of Clinton, Miss., a representative for Native Mennonite Ministries, and Beny Krisbianto, pastor of Nations Worship Center in Philadelphia, serve Communion to Karen Cox (left), moderator of Mountain States Mennonite Conference and pastor of Boulder (Colo.) Mennonite Church.

The guidelines, worked out in the first CLC meeting in 1999, when Stutzman was moderator-elect and CLC chair, were adopted at Nashville 2001, when Mennonite Church USA was formed. He asked how many were at that first CLC meeting. Fewer than 10 raised their hands.

Since then, there have been changes that sociologists would say are unprecedented. Some say, “Those are somebody else's guidelines.”

Stutzman noted that no one wants the Executive Board to speak for them, unless it's something they agree with. He said he's “genuinely unsure how large” the different groups representing those three categories of responses are in the church.

He said the Executive Board hopes to conduct a congregational survey in the coming months to learn more.

Discernment: How well CLC engages in genuine discernment of God's will depends on many factors, Stutzman said, “including the willingness of people across the church to take the time that is needed to find a broad consensus in the church.”

He called for several attitudes and actions to counteract the polarizing debates about human sexuality: (1) a deep humility that demonstrates commitment to learning during a time of rapid change, (2) a commitment to spiritual discernment that requires “shedding” our commitment to positional advocacy through “indifference” to all but the will of God, and (3) a new era of discovery with representatives of all subgroups in the room, willing to discover a different way of framing the question or approaching the issue.—*Gordon Houser*

Dreams guide ministry of setting captives free

Exaucée Toffa a leader in Christian social ministries in Benin for 24 years

Lynda Hollinger-Jantzen



Ruth celebrates her graduation from a pastry apprenticeship. She landed in one of Benin's prisons after she was coerced by her family to participate in crimes. During a 2011 Jette le Filet seminar, Ruth cried uncontrollably when she heard how, in love, Jesus came to set the captives free. She invited Jesus to take control of her life that day. She was released from prison a year later and completed her training as a pastry chef on March 7.

Exaucée Toffa grew up in a well-developed tradition of spiritual prophesy. So when God used dreams to tell her to leave the security of her job as a midwife at Bethesda Hospital, she obeyed—eventually.

Since 2008, Toffa has ministered to minors behind bars in Benin. In that time, she estimates, she has helped about 700 youth get out of prison and into apprenticeships or school.

Every morning, she prays that God will provide for the needs she will encounter that day.

Helped to launch health ministry

Toffa has dedicated her life to alleviating human need. From 1974 to 1989, Benin was a Marxist state with socialized medical care. In the chaos of transitioning to a democratic government in 1990, health services were interrupted. Only the wealthy were able to pay private doctors' fees. So Mennonite Mission Network joined 30 denominations in Benin to provide health care through Bethesda Hospital for people who couldn't afford it otherwise.

The health-care center began small, in a few rooms of a rented house, with dedicated Christian personnel, like Toffa, who volunteered their time. Over the past 24 years, Bethesda has grown into a multibuilding complex with a reputation as one of the best hospitals in the nation.

Initially, consultations and prescriptions at Bethesda cost

30 cents. Although prices have increased slightly over the years, they still remain affordable to most families.

Toffa contributed to the sacrificial giving, hard work, integrity and Christian love that produced this growth. But after 18 years, God called Toffa to a new leap of faith.

Gift of spiritual prophesy and dreams

Hearing God speak was nothing new for Toffa. In her youth, she attended an African-Initiated Church called The Eternal Sacred Order of the Cherubim and Seraphim. She became a visionary in the church and channeled God's messages to members of the congregation.

During her studies at Institut Biblique du Bénin (Benin Bible Institute)—another institution created through partnership between Mission Network and the churches of Benin—Toffa encountered Jesus in a new way.

In 1996, Toffa left the Cherubim and Seraphim Church and joined a church that placed more emphasis on Jesus' teaching and less on an Old Testament understanding of the relationship between God and people.

Twelve years later, Toffa began having a recurring dream. She would find herself in a vast open space with a crowd of teenage boys who were calling her Mama.

She didn't understand what it all meant. By day, she pushed dreams from her mind. Then, one night, things changed. Toffa was in the same place with the boys, but all she could see were their backs. They were walking away from her without saying a word.

Deeply troubled, Toffa could no longer ignore the dream. In April 2008, she went to see a Christian psychologist, who told her she was resisting God's call to a new ministry.

Through prayer, Toffa understood that God was calling her to evangelism in Benin's prisons. A month later, she handed in her resignation as a midwife at Bethesda Hospital.

Holistic ministry

After working with a prison ministry organization for three years, Toffa wrote a proposal for her own nonprofit organization, Jette le Filet (Cast the Net), in 2011. Although it can normally take up to 10 years for the government to finalize paperwork for nonprofit organizations, Toffa had her approval documents within 10 days.

Benin's 10 prisons offer little to inmates, but Toffa, as president of Jette le Filet, tries to provide for all aspects of young people's needs—their spiritual well-being, food, clothing, health and education.

Families can bring food and clothing, but the reason many of the youth are in prison is because they lack family support. Also, there is no guarantee that provisions will get to the intended prisoner.

Some of the most appreciated aspects of Toffa's ministry

are the three- to four-day seminars that include Bible studies, life skills and literacy classes. Certain prison officials even send their own children.

Seminar participants make meals together, learning to cooperate and to cook nutritious food at the same time. They are given a medical checkup and provided with medicine if needed.

At the end of a seminar, Jette le Filet offers a meal to the prison guards and administrators to thank them for their cooperation and to assure smooth collaboration in the future.

The young prisoners are also taught skills—how to create macramé shoes and shopping bags or knit hats and blouses. Materials cost about a dollar, and the finished product is sold for \$2.50. These earnings help the prisoners pay for food.

“I see so much suffering,” Toffa says. “Sometimes I come home crying when I don’t have the means to help people in such desperate need.”

Funded by faith

The income for all these programs comes through prayer and people responding to God’s nudging.

Pascal Agossou is a businessman who was impressed with Toffa’s ministry. He was attending a meeting in Canada when God awoke him one night and told him to be Toffa’s first financial partner.

Jette le Filet’s vice president, Alan Hougnon, operates an agency that cleans office buildings. He gives generously of his income and uses his car for trips to prisons in the northern part of the country.

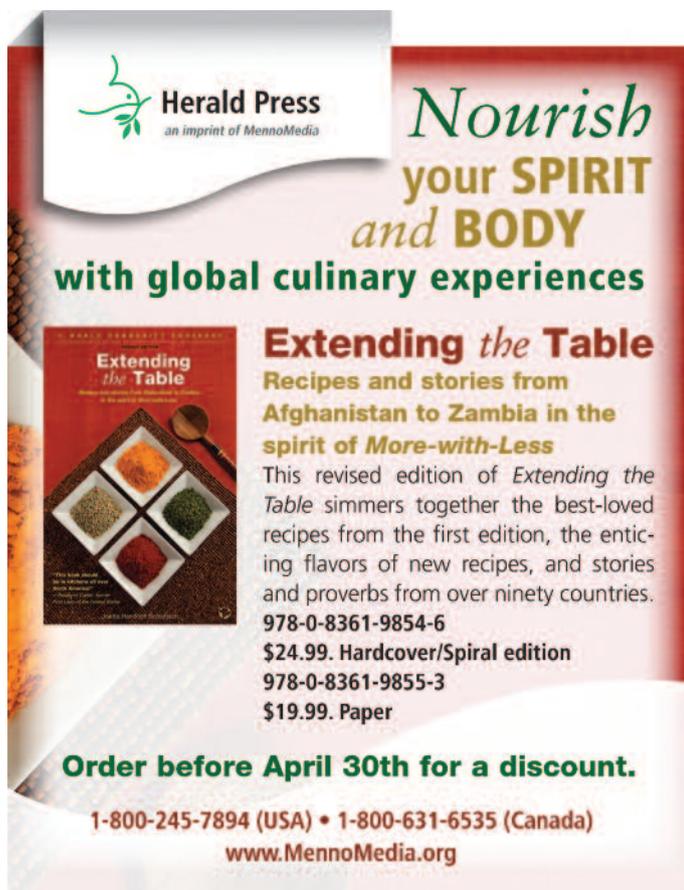
The family of a national government minister pays Toffa’s monthly rent.

Rehabilitation after prison

Jette le Filet serves as an intermediary between offenders, their parents and judges. When prisoners are freed, Toffa works to find a place for them in a rehabilitation center. In the past six years, she has helped about 700 children get out of prison and reintegrate into society—400 of them in apprenticeships and another 100 in school or working in family businesses or farms. About 200 of the released young people have returned to prison cells.

“This makes me so sad,” Toffa says. “Poverty and the problems in their lives devour [the young people] so easily.”

Toffa says that finding rehabilitation placements for the young people when they are released from prison is her biggest problem. She dreams, and this is a wide-awake-brick-and-calculations dream, of building her own rehabilitation center that will provide apprenticeships with Christian businesspeople who will mentor the young people as well as teach them a trade.—*Sara Alvarez for Mennonite Mission Network*



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Mennonite leaders visit Israel/Palestine

Series of learning tours planned in response to Kairos Palestine appeal

Fifteen board members and staff representing various Mennonite agencies and organizations traveled to Israel/Palestine Feb. 24–March 4 to take part in a “Come and See” learning tour. The tour marked the beginning of a denominational initiative to send 100 Mennonite leaders to the region on similar tours over the next five years.

The tour was organized in response to a 2009 appeal from Palestinian Christians called “Kairos Palestine: A Moment of Truth” (www.kairospalestine.ps).

A coalition representing a range of Christians in Palestine—including Orthodox, Catholic, Protestant and Evangelical—issued the open letter to the global body of Christ as “a word of faith, hope and love from the heart of Palestinian suffering.” They invited Christian organizations and faith groups to “come and see, in order to understand our reality.”

“I am inspired by the steadfastness of Palestinians and Israelis alike in working for peace in the face of many years of disappointments,” says Chad Horning of Goshen, Ind., Chief Investment Officer of Everence and a member of the tour.

The tour followed the path of Jesus’ life by traveling to Bethlehem, Nazareth, Galilee and, finally, Jerusalem. Along the way, they visited Bethlehem Bible College, Nazareth Village, refugee camps, settlements and community organizations, meeting local activists and villagers in each setting and hearing their stories. In Jerusalem they spent time at Yad Vashem, the Holocaust memorial, and attended a Jewish Sabbath service. The group also connected with people serving with Mennonite Central Committee, Mennonite Mission Network and Christian Peacemaker Teams. Mennonites have been involved in relief work, service, witness and peacemaking in the region for more than 65 years.

Madeline Maldonado, associate pastor of Iglesia Evangélica Menonita Arca de Salvación, Fort Myers, Fla., and board chair for Mennonite Mission Network, was a first-time visitor to the region. Before leaving, she said, “I hope to experience the culture and the conflict. I hope to feel the pain and frustration that are felt there. I pray that I can see God in what seems impossible for my Western and Latina mind to comprehend. I pray that God opens my eyes.”

Isaac Villegas, pastor of Chapel Hill (N.C.) Mennonite Fellowship and Mennonite Church USA Executive Board (EB) member, shared reflections four days into the tour: “I’ve seen too much. Towering walls stretching for mile after mile, turning Palestinian cities into open-air prisons. Can I choose not to see ... the used tear gas canisters I held in my hand—used against Palestinian youth, bought with my taxes, manufactured by a U.S. company in Pennsylvania?”

The group was also encouraged to consider questions of faith in a new light.



Ryan Rodrick Beiler

Participants in the Mennonite learning tour of Israel/Palestine visit the separation wall in the Aida Refugee Camp in Bethlehem. The wall cuts off the camp from an olive grove where residents used to work and play. From left: Isaac Villegas, Stanley Green, Ann Graber Hershberger, Mohammad Al-Azzah (Palestinian tour guide), Joy Sutter, Joanna Hiebert Bergen (MCC Jerusalem staff), Ron Byler, Tanya Ortman, Chad Horning, Ed Diller and Duane Oswald.

“Our experience gave us new insight into Jesus’ life and ministry, as well as the current situation,” says André Gengerich Stoner, director of holistic witness and interchurch relations for Mennonite Church USA. “We return better prepared to pray and work for God’s peace and blessing for everyone in this land.”

In 2011, Mennonite Church USA Executive Director Ervin Stutzman—in consultation with the EB—responded to the writers of the Kairos Palestine letter, committing to expand opportunities for Mennonite leaders and members to visit Palestine and learn firsthand about the suffering there. Stutzman and the EB also wrote a letter to members of Mennonite Church USA, asking them to read and discuss the Kairos document, to study Scriptures together on the matter and to consider how their financial lives may be enmeshed in the occupation of Palestine by Israel.

In 2013, the EB underscored its desire to help the church more fully understand both the Israeli and Palestinian experiences and the role of Christian Zionism in this conflict. A “Come and See” fund was established with initial contributions from Mennonite Central Committee U.S., Mennonite Mission Network and Everence to offer some scholarships for learning tours. Individuals, agencies and local congregations covered the remainder, according to Stoner.

The next Israel/Palestine learning tour is scheduled for October and will include participants from Franconia Mennonite Conference, Eastern District Conference and Atlantic Coast Conference.—*Jenn Carreto for Mennonite Church USA*

What does the Bible say about God's body and gender?

Roman Catholic scholar presents annual Theological Lectureship at AMBS.

Does God in the Bible have a body? Does God have gender and sexuality? These were two questions Mark S. Smith, professor of Hebrew and Judaic studies at New York University, asked in this year's Theological Lectureship March 19-20 at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS), Elkhart, Ind.

His answers demonstrated what Ben Ollenburger, AMBS professor of Old Testament, described as Smith's strength: bringing the Bible into conversation with our time.

First, Smith explored whether God in the Bible has a body. Although it might seem that God should not have a body, "there is no denying the vast amount of human language used for God in the Bible," Smith said.

The Bible describes three bodies for God, Smith pointed out, and each helps us as humans understand something about God. One is a natural body, human in scale, that walks, eats and drinks, as when God appeared to Abraham in Genesis 18 and 19. The second is a superhuman body, such as when God's hand covers Moses so Moses will see only the God's backside. The third body of God described in the Bible is a cosmic, mystical body, seated over the heavens and earth, as described in the first chapter of Ezekiel.



Mark S. Smith

"While the first two bodies of God express special divine presence that may inspire us, God's mystical body is for us to contemplate and to help us sense the divine working in our lives and our world," Smith said.

The second lecture asked why God is angry in the Bible. While many see God in the Old Testament as a God of angry judgment and God in the New Testament as a God of love, "both love and anger are attributed to God in both testaments," Smith argued. "God's anger and God's love are closely related."

God's anger appears in the Old Testament at times when Israel has challenged or disregarded divine authority and when Israel fails to keep its covenant with God. God's anger is part of God's love, comparable to that of a parent toward a child or one spouse toward another. Smith sees this language of anger and love as a poetic way of expressing the mystery of the divine-human struggle.

The final question Smith addressed is whether God in the Bible has gender or sexuality. "The male understanding of God is true of much of what we see in ancient Israel and in Israel's Bible, yet this is hardly the whole story," Smith said.

"God may be represented as male in most passages, but several passages complicate this picture either with female

imagery or representation of God as beyond gender," Smith noted. More female images and references for God appear in the texts as Israel embraced monotheism, and the goddesses that were part of their religious landscape became less prominent.

Moving to the New Testament, Smith examined gender language for the Trinity. God the Father and Jesus the Son emphasize their special relationship, not their maleness, he said. "What counts in the Trinity are the relationships of the three persons and more specifically the relationship of love, not some sort of divine male essence."

The Roman Catholic scholar of the Hebrew world of the Old Testament admitted our modern liturgy has room for more inclusive language for God. Acknowledging the different voices in the church on this issue, Smith said, "That the ending is not yet written but open-ended may be the best news at the moment." He left listeners with the challenge to continue struggling with the question; there is an opportunity "to reconsider not only what the question of sexual and gender language for God discloses about God's transcendence but also for what it hides."—*Mary E. Klassen of AMBS*



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Conference explores 'Watershed Discipleship'

Albuquerque Mennonite Church seeks to live in light of environmental crises.

On a warm weekend in April, a cadre of Mennonites from the top to the bottom of the Rio Grande watershed came together to plant along the storied river's banks. But they weren't scattering cottonwood or piñon—they were seeds of a movement that could help Christians find a way through the unparalleled environmental crisis facing the world today.

The meeting April 4-6 at Albuquerque (N.M.) Mennonite Church was a conference to explore the topic of "Watershed Discipleship," a term coined by Ched Myers and Elaine Enns, the weekend's keynote speakers, who laid out its philosophy after framing the size and scope of the converging environmental crises. See www.watersheddiscipleship.org/.

Enns and Myers, from Oak View, Calif., are part of Bartimaeus Cooperative Ministries, an organization committed to radical discipleship, bioregional eco justice, restorative justice and Sabbath economics.

The watershed paradigm not only holds the key to the survival of our species but can also spark the next revitalization of the church.—Ched Myers

In the opening plenary session, Myers quoted Thomas Merton, speaking at the height of the Cuban Missile Crisis: "Christian hope begins where every other hope stands frozen stiff before the face of the Unspeakable."

"It seems to me that whether or not Merton's claim will be vindicated utterly depends on how we Christians choose between discipleship and denial," Myers said. "Our faith and practice from now on will unfold in light of or in spite of the crisis we have just broadly named."

On April 5, Myers and Enns laid out the central assumptions of Watershed Discipleship as a way forward:

- We can't save the world, but we can save places.
- We won't save places we don't love.
- We can't love places we don't know.
- We don't know places we haven't learned.

For a Watershed Discipleship community, the epicenter of thought and action is not the state, country or world but the community's own watershed, Myers said. This means that church communities must be students of their watershed, becoming acquainted with its history, resources and limitations.

It also requires the church to engage in restorative justice for all those who have been wounded by human develop-

ment—plant, animal and human alike.

"Bioregional thought and practice has spread widely over the past century, yet it has been almost entirely ignored by Christian theology," Myers said. "We are convinced that the watershed paradigm not only holds the key to the survival of our species but can also spark the next revitalization of the church."

Approximately 75 participants from Alamosa, Colo.; Brownsville and McAllan, Texas; Santa Fe, N.M.; and Albuquerque used the weekend to discuss personal practices of simplicity, strengthen ties between churches up and down the region and consider ways to bring the Watershed Discipleship movement to fruition.

Participants also shared in an experience called Losing Turtle Island, led by Erica Littlewolf and Karin Kaufman Wall from Mennonite Central Committee. The activity simulated the loss of land and life indigenous Americans experienced over the course of 300 years as disease, relocations and war ravaged Native communities, and the American government annexed land for white expansion.

The conference kicked off Albuquerque Mennonite Church's long-term commitment to make Watershed Discipleship their mission focus for the next few years. It also comes on the heels of the church's More With Less Fest, in which people in the community involved in simple living pursuits shared their wisdom.

Clayton Roberts, the church's mission elder, says these events are forms of outreach to the community, building on the reputation Mennonites have as Christians who are concerned about peace and justice and practitioners of a land-based ethic.

"We're going to continue finding out what it means to be a community of faith that finds its own authentic way to build community around watershed issues and see how we can become people of place," Roberts said.

One idea that emerged out of the weekend included a 25/75/100 Bioregional Food Covenant, in which signers pledge to purchase 75 percent of their food from within a 100-mile radius by 2025. Another was a proposal to create a confederation of minicommunities dedicated to living out the tenets of Watershed Discipleship.

For Myers and Enns, the need for change in the church and in the world is urgent, but the good news is that it gives the church a purpose.

"Once again in the history of the church, the Spirit is inviting us to radical discipleship," Myers said. "The longer-term task, for however long we have, is nothing less than changing culture. But culture change takes a long time, and we don't have a long time."—*Andrew Clouse*

Volunteer visits immigrants in detention

Tina Schlabach sees many mothers separated from their children.

Juanita hasn't seen her daughter in three years. She lived in Georgia for nearly 20 years before she was picked up, detained and deported to Guatemala, her country of origin. Determined to be reunited with her daughter, Juanita decided to come back to the United States. Border Patrol caught her in the desert soon after she crossed the Arizona-Mexico border.

For over a year, Juanita has been detained at Eloy (Ariz.) Detention Center—60 miles south of Phoenix. She communicates with her daughter, who now lives with an aunt in Texas, through phone and letters.

"This is a case of really difficult family separation," says Tina Schlabach, who visits Juanita and other women who live in detention centers. Schlabach is a member of Shalom Mennonite Church in Tucson, Ariz.

Most of the women Schlabach visits are immigrant mothers who lived in the United States for 10 to 20 years before being detained for some offense, usually a misdemeanor. After serving their sentences, they were placed in detention centers.

Like Juanita, some detainees have children who are U.S. citizens. Others came to the United States because of domestic violence and poverty and have children back in their country of origin being cared for by family members.

Schlabach says these mothers experience suffering and stress because they are separated from their families and unable to help them. "There are a lot of amazingly resilient women," she says. "Many have a strong sense of faith, and this helps them continue."

Schlabach says the average stay in a detention center can be days, weeks, months or years, depending on the situation. "The psychological burden of not knowing when they'll be released is very, very great," she says.

According to Schlabach, about 30,000 people across the United States are in detention. Many of them are in private, for-profit detention centers like Corrections Corporation of America's Eloy Detention Center, which contracts a certain number of people to fill its beds. "It's a business, and they're earning money," Schlabach says.

She observed that detention centers are often placed "out in the boonies." She says, "It's difficult to visit detention centers, and I think that's not an accident."

Schlabach says she has always been interested in hospitality toward immigrants. As a young adult, she studied in Spanish-speaking countries and worked with immigrants from

Latin America. While on the pastoral team at Waterford Mennonite Church in Goshen, Ind., she worked alongside others to encourage joint worship services with Comunidad Cristiana Adulam, a neighboring Hispanic immigrant congregation.

When her family moved to Tucson from Goshen in the summer of 2012, Schlabach wanted to be involved in immigration advocacy. A friend suggested she volunteer with Casa Mariposa—a community in Tucson that offers friendship and support to immigrants detained in the area.

"We want to visit them to let them know they're not forgotten—that there are people who care about their situation as a Christian brother or sister," Schlabach says.

This aligns with Mennonite Church USA's recently revised churchwide immigration statement, which renounces the mistreatment of immigrants in the United States.

Schlabach visits detention centers with one or two other women from Casa Mariposa. "I started out going by myself, but it was too emotionally heavy to do that," she says.

When she arrives at Eloy Detention Center, usually around 7:30 a.m., a guard calls together the women who wrote to Casa Mariposa requesting visits. Schlabach visits in the morning, since it's more difficult to find the women in the afternoon, when they have work assignments—such as kitchen work, cleaning or working in the library.

"They earn a dollar a day for their work," Schlabach says. The women save money to buy supplies, such as phone cards and stamps, from the shop in the detention center.

Schlabach and the women from Casa Mariposa listen to the detained women's stories. They support and affirm the women, who try to make the best decisions they can in difficult situations—whether that means choosing deportation to their home country or remaining in detention custody to try to find a legal avenue to stay in the United States.

"We're very clear—we're not attorneys, we're visiting them as friends," Schlabach says. She says fewer than half the detainees have an attorney, so many of them have to represent themselves in court, often in a second language.

Schlabach sees her volunteer work with detainees as a faith response inspired by "God's imperative to love the foreigners among us" from Leviticus 19:33-34.

"Wherever we live, there are immigration detention centers just a few hours away," she says.—*Kate Yoder, intern for The Mennonite*



Tina Schlabach

U.S. Mennonites visit K'ekchi' Mennonites in Guatemala

Learning and service trip provides mutual encouragement.

Eighteen U.S. Mennonites visited members of the K'ekchi' Mennonite Church as part of a learning and service trip to Guatemala led by former Eastern Mennonite Missions' (EMM) workers Larry and Helen Lehman Feb. 26-March 8. Travelers from Franklin Mennonite Conference in Pennsylvania were joined by participants from Juniata, Lancaster and Mechanicsburg, Pa., and from Washington, D.C.

The group served at Bezaleel, the K'ekchi' Mennonite Education Center in the province of Alta Verapaz, where 135 rural youth live and study. Trip participants worked with school staff to paint and build a wood shed for the kitchen firewood. Mary Minor, a retired U.S. school teacher and EMM board member, spent several days assisting the high school English teacher.

On March 2, participants attended K'ekchi' worship services and had lunch in K'ekchi' homes. The group later met with leaders of the churches to learn about the history of the K'ekchi' church and its present reality.

"More than 45 years ago, Helen and I arrived in Guatemala to begin working among the K'ekchi'," said



Photo provided

EMM board member Larry Lehman (in blue baseball cap) interacts with students from Bezaleel, the K'ekchi' Mennonite Education Center in San Juan Chamelco, Guatemala.

Larry Lehman. "At one point, the team in Guatemala, including Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) personnel, grew to more than a dozen people. Now, the church has matured into having national leaders, and only one couple, Galen and Phyllis Groff, remains to provide coaching and support."

The first baptisms in the K'ekchi' Mennonite Church occurred 41 years ago, and since then the church has grown to include more than 130 congregations. In addition to providing training for its pastors and leaders, the church provides Sunday school lessons for its congregations, administers a large health program and runs Bezaleel. The K'ekchi' Mennonite Church continues to grow and share its faith with its neighbors.

In addition to learning about the church, trip participants also learned about the suffering endured by the K'ekchi' people as a result of European colonization. Former MCC worker Rob Cahill took the group to a Dominican monastery in Carchá that visually illustrates how the Spaniards conquered the K'ekchi' and other indigenous groups and used them in forced labor on their plantations.

Thousands of K'ekchi' were killed in the 1970s and '80s during the Guatemalan Civil War; their mass graves are still being uncovered. Cahill said this legacy of oppression continues to affect the K'ekchi' to this day.

Galen Groff, EMM regional representative in Central America, expressed appreciation for the strengthening of the relationship between the K'ekchi' church and the church in the United States. "Even though the K'ekchi' church is operating independently, its members will always need to know they are a valued part of the international body of Christ and that we are committed to walking with them."

—Chris Fretz of Eastern Mennonite Missions

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Sister Care manual translated into K'ekchi'

Phyllis Groff distributes 300 booklets to pastors and district women's leaders.

Women from seven Central American countries gathered in Guatemala City in February 2013 for a Sister Care Seminar led by Rhoda Keener and Carolyn Heggen. There was laughter, sharing, time for silent reflection and time to talk. Sister Care is a ministry of Mennonite Women USA.

Maria Chub and Eva Luvia Cuc, two K'ekchi' women, attended the Sister Care study. They said it felt a bit intimidating to be the only ones who wore traditional indigenous clothing and who spoke Spanish as a second language.

Inspired by the retreat's impact and the commission to reach out to others with the teaching received, Eastern Mennonite Mission worker Phyllis Groff translated the Sister Care material into the K'ekchi' language, working closely with two K'ekchi' women. Eva Luvia Cuc, who had attended the workshop, helped grapple with the terms and "roughed out" a translation. Then Carmela Caal proofread the translation for detail and grammar. Fran Eachus, a Wycliffe translator who spent her life work on the K'ekchi' Bible translation, assisted in correcting the final draft.

Along with the Spanish version, Groff requested a copy in



Phyllis Groff

Vilma Yat Chen (at right) receives her K'ekchi' Sister Care manual from Vincenta Pacal Caal.

English to make it easier to translate the Sister Care booklet into K'ekchi'. As they worked together, Groff and Luvia both deepened their understanding of the material, and the translation process deepened their friendship.

Finally, at the K'ekchi' General Church Assembly in January, Groff distributed the 300 printed K'ekchi' Sister Care booklets to pastors and district women's leaders, encouraging them to read the book and share what they learned with other women. Franklin Conference Mennonite Women funded the printing of the manuals.

One pastor, Sebastian Ical, came to Phyllis requesting more copies, as he has a large congregation with many women leaders. Because the women leaders are mostly illiterate, Sebastian planned to teach the study first. He called Groff by phone later to ask if a woman from a different church in their community would be able to receive the book and study.

When Groff attended a district women's meeting, women came to chat with her. One said, "The other week, when you gave us the Sister Care book, you told us we must first be healed ourselves before we can help others heal. I was afraid, as I held many hidden hurts in my life. I felt sad for my past. I prayed and asked God to remove those painful memories. I felt healed as God lifted me up from my fallen knees in a dream."

She continued, "I'm concerned about a broken relationship with a relative who attends my church. She refuses to talk with me. I want to be reconciled but don't know how, as she doesn't want me to visit her. I know this is wrong. What can I do?" Groff talked about the importance of prayer and asking God for someone who would meet with her for prayer and later visit this relative.—*Mennonite Women USA*

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Everence, Praxis commit \$3.5 million to green bond

Purchase supports consumer loans and leases through Toyota Financial Services.

Everence and the Praxis Intermediate Income Fund have purchased a total of \$3.5 million in the auto industry's first-ever asset-backed green bond through Toyota Financial Services.

Issued in March, the \$1.75 billion Toyota Financial Services green bond offering (which was increased from its original \$1.25 billion due to strong investor demand) is a momentous offering in the asset-backed securities market as the first green bond from an auto finance company. Proceeds from the bond will fund new retail finance contracts and lease contracts for qualified Toyota and Lexus hybrid or alternative fuel power-train vehicles.

"This green bond is really the first of its kind for the auto industry, helping people get loans for energy-efficient vehicles," says Benjamin Bailey of the Praxis Intermediate Income Fund. "It fits well into our goal of purchasing investments that make both social and financial sense, and our commitment to support renewable energy projects."

"At Everence and Praxis, we are just as concerned about the impact our investments have on others as we are about the financial returns we receive," says David Gautsche,

president of Praxis Mutual Funds. "We're excited about this inaugural asset-backed green bond through Toyota Financial Services and are glad to be part of it."

Everence and Praxis Mutual Funds have long been leaders in green bond investments. The Praxis Intermediate Income Fund has a history of purchasing bonds that make a social impact. In 2009, the Praxis Intermediate Income Fund became one of the first socially responsible investors to purchase a U.S. dollar World Bank green bond.

High social impact investments now make up more than 10 percent of the Praxis Intermediate Income Fund. Beyond auto industry asset-backed securities, market rate investments include bonds in solar and wind installations, vaccines, medical research and community infrastructure. The fund's high social impact investments also include community development investments, which benefit disadvantaged communities in the United States and around the world.

Praxis Mutual Funds, advised by Everence Capital Management, is a leading faith-based, socially responsible family of mutual funds designed to help people and groups integrate their finances with faith values.—*Everence*



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Opening DOORs in Atlanta

The first all-African-American youth group serves with DOOR Discover in Atlanta.

Every day since last November, Denise (a pseudonym), a DOOR Discover participant, told her mother she wanted to drop out of school. But Denise's DOOR experience gave her determination to stay in school.

The service club from Turner Chapel participated in Atlanta's DOOR program Jan. 24-26. The African Methodist Episcopal congregation in Marietta, Ga., has more than 6,000 members. It is the first church of its size to partner with DOOR. Yolanda Davis, the director of Youth Discipleship at Turner Chapel, was drawn to DOOR for its understanding that God is already present in the city. Davis was grateful for the "middle and high school youth to experience urban social issues from a Christian perspective."

"Many of our youth walked away wrestling with the number of homeless people living in the city and our faith community is addressing or not addressing the issue," she says.

Turner Chapel also became the first all-African-American youth group to take part in Atlanta's Discover program, which lasts for a week or a weekend. African-American youth groups and those of other minority cultures have served in other DOOR cities around the United States, but for Atlanta, this was a first.

Tonya Greene, city director for DOOR Atlanta, was concerned there wasn't more diversity among participants who come to serve and grow in their faith.

Greene, who is African American, says, "We don't have to go overseas to be mission workers; we can do this right here in our community," said Greene. DOOR participants from Turner Chapel didn't need to go far.

Turner Chapel's youth served at Gateway Center, a community that helps people overcome homelessness. The group also spent time serving at Global Soap. This agency helps prevent hygiene-related diseases through recycling and distributing hotel soaps. Becca Cranford, a DOOR service group leader, helped the youth group interpret what they saw. She guided them to various places and led discussions about what the Bible says about poverty and the role of Christians to help each other overcome it.

Each evening, DOOR leaders invited participants to reflect about their experiences through worship. Often, this included guest speakers from the local community. One evening, Denise sat with her group from Turner Chapel and listened to Angelica (a pseudonym). Angelica studies hospitality at Le Cordon Bleu University, but her challenges exceeded that of most college students. She has no home.

As Denise listened to Angelica share her story, she realized that her own struggles could be a lot worse. Even though Denise didn't enjoy school, she had a home to return to. The determination in Angelica's voice gave Denise hope

that she could persevere and finish high school.

On a Sunday, the youth from Turner Chapel worshiped with Mercy Community Church in Atlanta, which is committed to heal a broken world, starting with those in their pews. Most of the people who attend the church struggle with homelessness, addiction or both. "[The Mercy congregation] loves people where they're at," Greene says.

"We all came with our different and sometimes conflicting perspective on things, but we can all agree on one thing: this [DOOR] experience was truly transforming," says the youth newsletter for Turner Chapel, reflecting on the group's experience.

Both Greene and Davis hope to continue the relationship between DOOR and Turner Chapel. Greene has already visited the 275 youth who attend there. Greene says she was thrilled that the predominately African American congregation chose to serve with DOOR. She hopes that other minority cultures will do the same.

"If God is present [in the city already], then as Christians we should be present, too," says Davis.—*Kelsey Hochstetler of Mennonite Mission Network*



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How to choose a Bible for a child

Kathy Meyer Reimer offers guidance to parents and congregations

Looking for a Bible to give as a gift to a child? As a congregation, do you celebrate the transition of starting school by giving all the first graders their own Bible?

Both choosing a Bible for my children or the children in my congregation and my professional interest in children's literature have given me the opportunity to look at many Bibles for children and realize how critical our choices are to the theology our children learn. Any time we try to simplify the text for children, we strip the writing and the ideas to their essence and keep the focus sharp. Part of the art of writing for children is that the writer must be succinct and clear—no extraneous description, no wasted lines.

But it is this winnowing and sharpening of focus that brings the discussion of “which Bible?” to the fore. In each decision about what to cut out, what to shorten, what language to change, what exact words to use, the writer is bringing an interpretation of the text, of the meaning of the text and of its intent. We are using our theological under-

Part of the art of writing for children is that the writer must be succinct and clear—no extraneous description, no wasted lines.

standing of the story to simplify it, and that means each story carries implicit assumptions about what is the most important message that Bible story has to offer.

The choice you make in your gift giving or congregational use is important. It is consequential to how your children will understand the Bible. And it is worth the time and energy to think carefully about what to choose.

There are a number of kinds of biblical text we typically use with children: single Bible stories published as a book, Bible storybooks and Bibles for children. Single Bible stories take an individual story, such as the creation story, the flood or the exodus and lift that story from the Bible and tell it in a paraphrased or narrative form. Bible storybooks move through the Bible, picking out the most common stories told to children and tell each as an individual story but in chronological form to match the order that would be in the Bible. Bibles for children are simplified or paraphrased but include the whole Bible from Genesis to Revelation. Depending on the intended age of the audience, these may include some of the more troubling and difficult-to-interpret passages as we move through the Old and New testaments.

There are also plenty of books that look at topics related to the Bible or directly from the Bible but do not directly reference the biblical text. Biblical people in a biographical form (a book about Joseph or Esther), books that look at biblical plants or animals or books that cover biblical time periods can be wonderful sources, but they do not claim to be biblical text. These will not be considered in this article.

In this article I will focus on how we might think about choosing Bible storybooks—those books written for younger children or early readers that are chronological and may or may not be comprehensive of all the stories in the Bible.

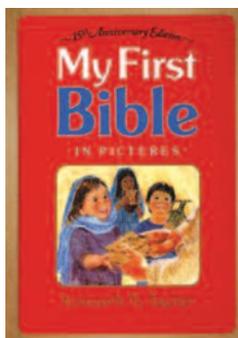
One way to start thinking about reviewing Bibles is to choose a couple of stories you think are critical in the telling of the biblical narrative. A sample of the stories I have chosen over time include: Adam and Eve in the garden and the eating of the fruit, Abraham being asked to sacrifice Isaac, Noah and the building of the ark, Jonah and the big fish, Joseph being sold into slavery, and the crucifixion of Jesus. I have chosen these because I care about what my children learned about God and the Bible from these stories. Also because they often expose the theology of the paraphraser or re-teller who is writing.

It is troubling to think of a father being asked by God to sacrifice his own son. I cared about how my son understood this text when he was growing up. Getting banished from Eden was not a pleasant event. I cared about how my daughter understood why Eve and Adam were banished. Being hung on a cross is a dark and sad event. I cared how my children understood sacrifice, atonement and forgiveness.

Caring about these things meant it mattered to me how the text was simplified, how it was interpreted, what were the given reasons and results of these actions of people and of God.

Let me give an example of how our theology comes out clearly in how we simplify a text for children. I'll use the story of the crucifixion both because it is key to understanding the arc of the biblical story and because it is fairly easy to see theological differences in how we tell the story.

I will also note here that there are numerous Bibles for the very young (2- to 4-year-olds) that do not tell the crucifixion story. That can be an appropriate decision in thinking about the developmental age of the child. If the intended goal is to have the child know God loves them, and there are only a few stories represented in the Bible storybook because of constraints of attention, there are other stories in the Bible that send that message more clearly. Many, however, do choose to include the crucifixion and Bible storybooks for the 4- to 8-year-old range almost always do.



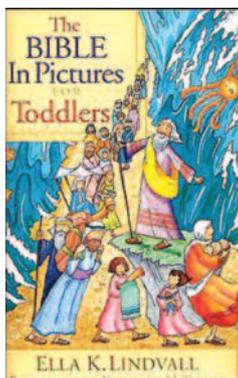
For our example of how theology becomes clear in the biblical text, let's start with Kenneth Taylor's *My First Bible in Pictures* (Tyndale Press, 1989). This is the text explaining the crucifixion:

"They are killing Jesus. He is dying on a cross. Why are they killing him? Has he done anything wrong? No! He is dying because of the wrong things you and I have done. Jesus is

letting God punish him because of our sins" (from Luke 23).

In this retelling of the crucifixion, the focus is on God's punishment for sin. In this case it is Jesus taking the punishment. But Jesus is taking the punishment because of us. This makes Jesus' death on the cross personal to today—almost as if it was the fight you had with your brother yesterday that was the reason Jesus was killed on the cross. While I want my boys to be kind to each other, I have to ask myself if this is the main message or the theology of the crucifixion that is parallel to my Anabaptist beliefs. This paraphrase suggesting God's intention was punishment for doing wrong and that the crucifixion was God's punishment, which ended up landing on Jesus, is not closely matched with Anabaptist understandings of God's role in Jesus' death.

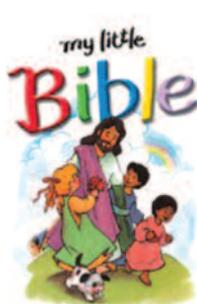
I'm also interested that the writer chose to use the present ("He is dying because of the wrong things you and I have done") when referring to an event that happened in the past. For young children, this mix of time frames can be confusing.



Another telling of this story for young children in a Bible storybook focuses more on atonement. Ella Lindvall's *The Bible in Pictures for Toddlers* (Moody Press, 2002) tells the story this way: "See the crosses? Men put Jesus on a cross to die. But when they did that, God did something wonderful. God put on Jesus the bad things we do, and He died for us. He did that because he loves us" (John 19:16-18).

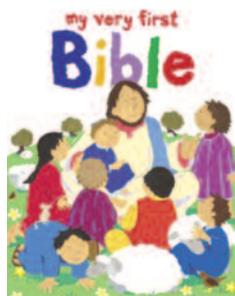
Here the crucifixion is still about the "bad things we do" (again in the present tense, which, as I mentioned above, can be confusing when mixed with the past), but it is because Jesus was willing to substitute for us, and God loved us rather than punished us. Here the theology is substitutional atonement, and the reason for that is love. Once again, we have a chance to think about how that may or may not fit with the Anabaptist theology of Jesus' death and God's intervention.

A third popular Bible storybook for young children is *My Little Bible* by Mary Hollingsworth (Word Publishers, 1988). She tells the story this way: "God's son, Jesus, was killed on



a cross by His enemies. It was a dark, sad day. Jesus' friends took Him down from the cross. They wrapped Him in special cloths and buried Him. But three days later Jesus came back to life! Jesus is more powerful than death. That is why Jesus can save us from our sins and that is good news!" (John 19:16-20:18).

This retelling mentions death and sadness, but the emphasis is on the power Jesus had over death; Jesus is a powerful person and is God's Son. The crucifixion here is not about punishment or about substituting Jesus for the sins of people but about the power of God. Jesus' power is what saves people, and that is good news. Again, power over death and salvation is a theological statement. These are the areas of critical focus in this telling of the crucifixion.



In Lois Rock's *My Very First Bible* (Lion Publishers / Good Books, 2003), she tells the story of the crucifixion this way: "The next day, Jesus was put to death, nailed to a cross of wood. In the evening, a few friends came and took the body to a tomb. 'We must say goodbye,' said one. The sky was getting dark. 'This must be the end of Jesus making the world a better

place,' they wept."

This Bible speaks less to the death or the reasons for it and more to the meaning behind it—Jesus's friends had to say goodbye; he was making the world a better place, and now that was going to end. This passage does not speak as much to the action of God or Jesus in the crucifixion but to the work Jesus was doing while he was alive; the work that would now end. This references God's intervention in the world through Jesus or God's mission in the world. God was making the world a better place, and Jesus was carrying out that mission—another theological approach to this story.

Pat Alexander's retelling in *My First Bible* (Lion Publishers, 1997, Good Books, 2002) goes like this: "All night long, Jesus' enemies asked him angry questions. Then, early in the morning, they took him to the Roman Governor. 'Jesus has done nothing wrong,' the Governor said. He wanted to let Jesus go. But the crowd would not let him. 'Kill him! Nail him to a cross!' the crowd

shouted angrily. It was Jesus they wanted to kill! But why? Jesus was good. He had done nothing wrong. These people hated Jesus. 'He tells lies about God,' they said. They did not believe he really was God's promised King. ... They

took him to Skull Hill and nailed him to a cross. There were two other prisoners on crosses, one on each side of Jesus. Above Jesus' head was a notice: 'Jesus of Nazareth: King of the Jews.' Jesus' mother, Mary, stood close to the cross, with his special friend John. 'Look after her for me, John,' Jesus said from the cross. And from that day on John took care of Mary. Jesus did not hate the soldiers who nailed him to the cross. He did not hate his cruel enemies. 'Father, forgive them,' he prayed. At last Jesus cried: 'I have finished my work.' Then he died. It was the saddest day."

This retelling is a bit longer and stretches the age range higher, which allows it to nuance the meaning a little more. It focuses on the reasons Jesus was on the cross, who else was around and that Jesus forgave those around him. It is also interesting that it mentions his mother and Jesus' concern for her. The overarching message of this retelling is one of forgiveness. When bad things happened that Jesus didn't deserve, he forgave. It is a theology that is a bit less personal; it is not necessarily involving or including the reader or the reader's actions; God is not referred to directly as the focus is on what Jesus did. Jesus forgave. That is a theological statement as well.

It helps me understand the basis of the simplification, the perspective and interpretation a particular author is bringing to their retelling of biblical text when I compare different

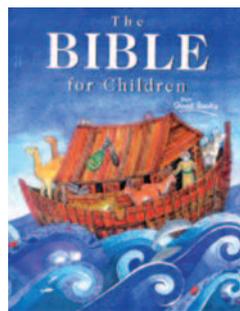
Illustrations are an integral part of the message of the text, especially when we are working with the biblical text for young children.

passages, and it helps me understand their theological frame. The first retelling here focused on God's punishment, the second on Jesus substituting for us, the third on Jesus' power, the fourth on Jesus' work in the world and the fifth on Jesus' innocence and forgiveness of others. These are theological stances or understandings about what the story has to tell us, not just different words paraphrasers or retellers have chosen to use.

The different ways this story gets told points to different aspects of God or different ways we understand and make sense of God, Jesus and the Bible. These stories communicate our deepest understandings of God to young children early in their lives. It matters what we communicate and, for my children and now my Sunday school children, it is helpful to have a theology that is consistent with what they hear on Sunday morning in worship and what they are learning in their Sunday school curriculum.

The last two retellings, by Lois Rock (*My Very First Bible*)

and Pat Alexander (*My First Bible*), happen to be the ones I chose in order to talk with my children about the crucifixion.



For the younger child, Rock's retelling focusing on God's work in the world through Jesus opened the conversation to the whole story of Jesus and the Bible. As my children got a bit older, the second one more satisfactorily answered their questions about why someone would do that. And who did this? And why were they so angry? And what hap-

pened to his family? They also matched my understanding of Anabaptist theology more closely with the emphasis on God's work in the world, Jesus' innocence, mismatched expectations of a king, and forgiveness. (Lion/Good Books also publishes *The Bible for Children* written by Murray Watts for school-aged children, 6 to 12 years old, which is beyond the scope of this article, but I have found it to be a good match in text and illustration for the older elementary child, and it is one of my favorite Bible story books for children.)

Illustrations are also critical to interpretation of text for children. You may recall the images in the Bible you had as a child and always see certain scenes, even in your adulthood, with those illustrations attached. When I do Bible workshops, I'm always amazed at the number of people who recognize a certain Bible I have by the illustrations. Illustration is also a form of interpretation—it communicates time, context and character as much as the words.

In a Bible storybook from the time I was growing up, the illustration with Noah's ark is a pen-and-ink drawing. The people who are not in Noah's chosen family as the ark sets off are included with their feet off the ground and hands extended as they hang onto the edge of the ark with their fingers. The illustration is of Noah walking along the edge of the boat peeling people's fingers back so they fall back into the rising water to drown—as they were not those elected to be on the boat. This image is seared into my mind—more powerful than any of the words attending the story. It was not that the text talked about those left behind, but the illustration said more to me than anything else in the story about God and about Noah, and that is the image that comes to my mind when I hear of Noah's Ark.

How does that contrast with what image might come to your mind if you grew up with a Bible that included colored illustrations of animals happily walking onto the ark two by two. Or an image of Noah romping with the animals even after 35 days at sea (and the ark being amazingly clean). Or with Noah and family and all the animals rendered as Precious Moments characters. Those are all different images to have in your mind as you read, and that would allow for a different interpretation of the story from my image of Noah.

Illustrations matter. They are an integral part of the mes-

sage of the text, especially when we are working with the biblical text for young children.

This article has examined Bible storybooks—telling the Bible through stories and illustrations for young children. We could do the same with Bibles for the elementary school aged child or even with Bibles for teenagers. Particularly with the advent of the graphic novel Bible and with themed Bibles (e.g., the Green Bible, the Love Waits Bible) we have a much larger selection of teen Bibles than we did 15 years ago, when we generally picked a translation our congregation used to give our teens.

Within specifically Anabaptist contexts we have a new resource that will soon be available and about which I am excited. *Shine!*, the new Anabaptist Sunday school curriculum, is accompanied by a children's Bible with the title *Shine On* (MennoMedia/Brethren Press, 2014). It includes Scripture quoted from the NRSV and edited by Rebecca Seiling, Anna Spicher and Rose Mary Stutzman. It is in the process of being printed. I have seen a preprint version. It is not reviewed in this article because it is aimed at the elementary school aged child (6-12 years), and this article focuses on the younger child, but it is a Bible I am eager to see in print.

It matters what we read to children and what they hear from the Bible. How the Bible stories are told will influence how they understand God and God's work in our world. May

we hold the text carefully, share it with our children generously and cherish it.—*Kathy Meyer Reimer, professor of education/literacy/children's and adolescent literature, Goshen (Ind.) College*

Bibles referred to in the article:

My First Bible by P. Alexander, illustrated by Leon Baxter (Good Books, 2002)

My Little Bible by M. Hollingsworth, illustrated by Stephanie McFetridge Britt (Word Publishing, 1988)

The Bible in Pictures for Toddlers by E.K. Lindvall, illustrated by R. Langton (Moody Publishers, 2002)

My Very First Bible by L. Rock, illustrated by Alex Ayliffe (Good Books, 2003)

Shine On, edited by R. Seiling, A. Spicher and R.M. Stutzman, illustrated by M. Miller (MennoMedia and Brethren Press, 2014)

My First Bible in Pictures by K.N. Taylor, illustrated by Richard and Frances Hook (Tyndale House Publishers, 1989)

The Bible for Children by M. Watts, illustrated by Helen Cann (Good Books, 2002)

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Flowers, David D., was licensed as pastor at Christiansburg Mennonite Fellowship, Christiansburg, Va., on Jan. 12.

Heistand, Daryl, was ordained as lead pastor at Risser Mennonite Church, Elizabethtown, Pa., on April 6.

Schwartz, Matthew, was ordained as associate pastor at Eastside Church, Harrisonburg, Va., on Feb. 23.

OBITUARIES

Alderfer, Stanley H., 85, Harleysville, Pa., died March 15. Spouse: Eva D. Rittenhouse Alderfer. Parents: Jacob A. and Edna K. Hunsberger Alderfer. Children: Connie Sue Souder, David Noel Alderfer, Phillip Grant Alderfer, Michael Scott Alderfer; three grandchildren; eight great-grandchildren. Funeral: March 19 at Salford Mennonite Church, Harleysville.

Bontrager, Kenneth L., 76, Glendale, Ariz., died Jan 6. Spouse: Mary Lou Wengerd Bontrager. Parents: Andrew and Nora Yutzy Bontrager. Children: Neil, Troy; four grandchildren. Memorial service: Jan. 12 at Trinity Mennonite Church, Glendale.

Brunk, Marjorie Frances Secrest, 95, Sterling, Ill., died March 24. Spouse: Boyd Austin Brunk (deceased). Parents: Verne and Clara Secrest. Children: Barbara Metz, Timothy, Philip; five grandchildren; six great-grandchildren. Memorial service will be held at a later date at Science Ridge Mennonite Church, Sterling.

Coffman, Donald V., 92, Shipshewana, Ind., died March 13. Spouse: Margaret P. Mishler Coffman. Parents: Victor and Vinetta Garber Coffman. Children: Barbara Hirschy, Carolyn Miller, David, Paul; 10 grandchildren; eight great-grandchildren. Funeral: March 18 at Shore Mennonite Church, Shipshewana.

Cordell, Beulah Martin, 85, Chambersburg, Pa., died Dec. 24, 2013. Spouse: Bishop Merle G. Cordell. Parents: Charles and Lula Holsinger Martin. Children: Doris, Ruby, David, Richard; five grandchildren; four great-grandchildren. Funeral: Dec. 29 at Marion Mennonite Church, Marion, Pa.

Detweiler, Alta Mae Beachy, 94, Phoenixville, Pa., died March 4. Spouse: Solomon B. Detweiler (deceased). Parents: Menno and Fannie Christner Beachy. Children: Howard, Fannie Thomas, Anna Louise Detweiler, Paul, Leroy; seven grandchildren; 14 great-grandchildren. Funeral: March 22 at Frazer Mennonite Church, Frazer, Pa.

Diseroad, Victor "Gene" Eugene, 86, Souderton, Pa., died March 10. Spouse: Jane S. Alderfer Diseroad. Parents: Victor Hugo Diseroad and Rebecca Kessler Diseroad. Funeral: March 22 at Blooming Glen Mennonite Church, Blooming Glen, Pa.

Eichelberger, Duane, 94, Mackinaw, Ill., died July 24, 2013. Spouse: Mildred Stutzman (deceased). Parents: Albert B. and Una Williams Eichelberger. Children: David, Don, Daniel; nine grandchildren; eight great-grandchildren. Funeral: July 27 at Hopedale Mennonite Church, Hopedale, Ill.

Frankenfield, Marian Suzanna Nester, 91, Emmaus, Pa., died March 17. Spouse: Asher Russell Frankenfield (deceased). Parents: Elmer Calvin Nester and Mabel Andora Fegley Nester. Children: James A., Barbara McLaughlin; five grandchildren; 12 great-grandchildren. Funeral: March 22 at Upper Milford Mennonite Church, Old Zionsville, Pa.

Frey, Willard James, 89, Archbold, Ohio, died Jan. 21. Spouse: Valetta Beck Frey (deceased). Spouse: Delores Ann Short Frey (deceased). Parents: Edward B. and Fannie Rupp Frey. Children: Sue Ann Overholt, Mary Jo Wilson, Peggy Arndt, Lee; 10 grandchildren; 17 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Jan. 24 at West Clinton Mennonite Church, Wauseon, Ohio.

Glick, Mary E. Umble, 92, Lititz, Pa., died March 30. Spouse: Pastor Herman N. Glick (deceased). Parents: Elam H. and Anna Kauffman Umble. Children: James, Ann Derrick, Virginia Graybill, Susan Roth; nine grandchildren; eight great-grandchildren. Funeral: April 4 at Maple Grove Mennonite Church, Atglen, Pa.

Hershberger, DeElda "Dee" Eicher, 95, Milford, Neb., died March 12. Spouse: Edgar Hershberger (deceased). Parents: Warren and Anna Kremer Eicher. Children: Gordon, Gregory, Ray; five grandchildren; two step-grandchildren; seven great-grandchildren; three step-great-grandchildren. Funeral: March 16 at Bellwood Mennonite Church, Milford.

Hershberger, Winston Mark, 65, Springs, Pa., died March 24. Parents: Ray M. and Grace Miller Hershberger. Funeral: March 27 at Springs Mennonite Church.

Hofer, LaVonne D., 72, Freeman, S.D., died March 23, of M.S. related complications. Parents: David D. S. and Matilda D. Hofer. Funeral: March 27 at Hutterthal Mennonite Church, Freeman.

Hunsberger, Martha A. Shelly, 91, Telford, Pa., died Feb. 25. Spouse: Winfield R. Hunsberger (deceased). Parents: Erwin and Cora Alderfer Shelly. Children: Duane, Glen, Dawn Miller, Roger Lee; 11 grandchildren; 14 great-grandchildren. Funeral: March 16 at Blooming Glen Mennonite Church, Blooming Glen, Pa.

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

Kaufman, Richard "Dick" R., 71, Hesston, Kan., died Jan. 26. Spouse: Barbara A. Claassen Kaufman. Parents: Dick and Lizzie Yutzy Kaufman. Children: Christine Schweitzer, Mara Kaufman; one grandchild. Funeral: Jan. 30 at Hesston Mennonite Church.

Kinsey, Ray Jacob, 78, Archbold, Ohio, died Dec. 27, 2013. Spouse: Grace Waidelich Kinsey. Parents: Walter and Alma Hauck Kinsey. Children: Randy, Karen Kelley, Janet Myers, Wesley, Julie Boykins; 12 grandchildren. Funeral: Dec. 31 at West Clinton Mennonite Church, Wauseon, Ohio.

Landes, Esther K., 100, Lansdale, Pa., died March 23. Spouse: Wilson S. Landes (deceased). Parents: Melvin and Sallie Koffel Ruth. Children: Gladys Kopp, Beatrice Ruth, Dorothy Stover, Elaine Weiler; 10 grandchildren; 13 great-grandchildren; two great-great-grandchildren. No memorial service.

Litwiller, Brent D., 48, Hopedale, Ill., died Jan. 4. Parents: Dale and Rosina Kauffman Litwiller. Funeral: Jan. 8 at Hopedale Mennonite Church.

Litwiller, Elmer G., 86, Hopedale, Ill., died Dec. 2013. Spouse: Ethel I. David Bachman. Spouse: Maxine Newlin Litwiller (deceased). Parents: John E. and Phoebe Good Litwiller. Children: Wayne, Sandra Morris, Janice Eck, Nancy Cunningham, Edward; 11 grandchildren; seven great-grandchildren. Funeral: Dec. 16 at Hopedale Mennonite Church.

Litwiller, Marguerite A. King, 92, Minier, Ill., died Aug. 3, 2013. Spouse: William E. Litwiller (deceased). Parents: Elmer R. King, Sr. and Lena M. Kennell King. Children: William E., Rita Litwiller, Karen Yoder, Rosalie Semic, Roberta Bean; seven grandchildren; one great-grandchild. Funeral: Aug. 8 at Hopedale Mennonite Church, Hopedale, Ill.

Miller, Leo J., 88, Orrville, Ohio, died Feb. 27. Spouse: Dorothy Gingerich Miller. Parents: John and Lucy Yoder Miller. Children: Jenell Ulrich, Rhonda Savage, Gail Manickam, Renee Koshmider; 10 grandchildren; three great-grandchildren. Funeral: March 4 at Orrville Mennonite Church.

Paden, Roxanne, 52, Belleville, Pa., died April 1, of cancer. Parents: Tom and Freida Paden. Funeral: April 4 at Maple Grove Mennonite Church, Belleville.

Roggie, Pauline Haggerty, 88, Lowville, N.Y., died March 22. Spouse: Garmon A. Roggie (deceased). Parents: Leonard and Nellie Dunn Haggerty. Children: Bruce, Dona Barney, Sharon Boshart, Judy Williams, Garmon Jr., Boyce; 13 grandchildren; many great-grandchildren and great-great-grandchildren. Funeral: March 26 First Mennonite Church of New Bremen, New Bremen, N.Y.

Roth, Shirley Ann Swartzendruber, 75, Scottsdale, Pa., died March 13, of kidney failure. Spouse: Kermit D. Roth. Parents: Jacob and Emily Swartzendruber. Children: Timothy, Ronald, Laura Roth Howard; six grandchildren. Funeral: March 16 at Robert B. Ferguson Funeral Home, Scottsdale.

Sands, Lila Brenneman, 85, Delavan, Ill., died Feb. 17. Spouse: Russell Sands. Parents: Jacob and Leone Seaton Brenneman. Children: Douglas, Gale Rogers, Steven; four grandchildren; eight great-grandchildren. Funeral: Feb. 22 at Hopedale Mennonite Church, Hopedale, Ill.

Sarfarzi, Faith Ann Stahl, 53, Ocala, Fla., died Feb. 26, of a blood clot. Spouse: Moshen Sarfarzi. Parents: William M. and Joann Kleinsasser Stahl. Children: Ariana, Parisa, Cameron. Funeral: March 6 at Hutterthal Mennonite Church, Freeman, S.D.

Smoker, Calvin L., 82, Honey Brook, Pa., died March 10. Spouse: Mabel D. Zook Smoker (deceased). Parents: Reuben and Anna Lapp Smoker. Children: C. Richard, Beverly Smoker, Ronald L., Larry Q., Mona Lu Shuman; 10 grandchildren; five great-grandchildren. Funeral: March 17 at Tel Hai Chapel, Honey Brook.

Stauffer, Frances Lucile Christophel, 102, Goshen, Ind., died March 16. Spouse: Earl R. Stauffer (deceased). Parents: Elmer and Mary Hartman Christophel. Children: Norman Clair, Loren Alan; six grandchildren; nine great-grandchildren. Funeral: March 21 at Waterford Mennonite Church, Goshen.

Sommer, Ann Kaiser, 89, Hopedale, Ill., died July 31, 2013. Spouse: Clarence N. Sommer (deceased). Parents: Benjamin and Anna Plattner Kaiser. Children: Allan Sommer, Dr. Brian Sommer, Diane Milosevich; seven grandchildren; one great-grandchild. Funeral: Aug. 4 at Hopedale Mennonite Church.

Suter, Kathryn "Kate" Landis, 87, Bridgewater, Va., died March 12. Spouse: Eldon L. Suter (deceased). Parents: John and Pauline Landis. Children: Donna Clayton, Diana Berkshire, Joy Halterman, Eldon "Eldie," Jewel Knicley; nine grandchildren; nine great-grandchildren. Memorial service: March 24 at Harrisonburg Mennonite Church, Harrisonburg, Va.

Thomas, Coevel W., 88, Telford, Pa., died March 20. Spouse: Marie Miller Thomas (deceased). Parents: Elmer and Elda Livingston Thomas. Children: Karen Loker, Lois Thomas, Bruce; four grandchildren; six great-grandchildren. Funeral: March 23 at Blooming Glen Mennonite Church, Blooming Glen, Pa.

Wittrig, Marie Moushon, 95, Hopedale, Ill., died Feb. 22. Spouse: Glenn W. Wittrig (deceased). Parents: George W. and Mary Wyss Moushon. Child: Rena Schaefer; four grandchildren; seven great-grandchildren. Funeral: Feb. 25 at David Mortuary, Hopedale.

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A FORUM FOR THE VOICES OF MENNONITE CHURCH USA

RESOURCES

Mapping Exile and Return: Palestinian Dispossession and a Political Theology for a Shared Future by Alain Epp Weaver (Fortress Press, 2013, \$39) offers a political theology of redrawing Palestine compatible with a binational vision for a shared Palestinian-Israeli future.

Jacob's Choice: Return to Northkill, Book One by Ervin R. Stutzman (Herald Press, 2014, \$29.99) is the first book of a trilogy of Amish historical fiction. Based on actual events, it tells the story of one man's pursuit of restoration that leads to a complicated romance, an unrelenting search for missing family members and an astounding act of reconciliation.

Living Thoughtfully, Dying Well by Glen Miller (Herald Press, 2014, \$12.99) invites readers into conversation about the spirituality of dying and explores a variety of beliefs about death and dying.

Dare We Speak of Hope? Searching for a Language of Life in Faith and Politics by Allan Aubrey Boesak (Eerdmans, 2014, \$18) meditates on what it really means to hope in light of present political realities and growing human pain in South Africa. It argues that hope comes to life only in situations of vulnerability.

Prophetic Rage: A Postcolonial Theology of Liberation by Johnny Bernard Hill (Eerdmans, 2013, \$25) argues that prophetic rage, or righteous anger, is a necessary response to our culture of imperialism and nihilism. The most powerful way to resist meaninglessness, it says, is refusing to accept the realities of structural injustice, such as poverty, escalating militarism, genocide and housing discrimination.

Hauerwas: A (Very) Critical Introduction by Nicholas M. Healy (Eerdmans, 2014, \$23) examines three main areas of theologian Hauerwas' thought and says his overriding concern for ethics and church-based apologetics so dominates his thinking that he systematically distorts Christian doctrine.

The Good of Politics: A Biblical, Historical and Contemporary Introduction by James W. Skillen (BakerAcademic, 2014, \$22.99) draws from biblical sources and major streams of the Christian tradition in service of a distinctively positive vision of civic responsibility for our common life.

Who's Afraid of Relativism: Community, Contingency and Creaturehood by James K.A. Smith (BakerAcademic, 2014, \$19.99) introduces the philosophical sources behind postliberal theology, such as Ludwig Wittgenstein, Richard Rorty and Robert Brandon, and offers a provocative analysis of relativism.

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

Want a website? We spent time, energy and money building beautiful church-specific WordPress themes so you can focus on your message. For more info about reasonably priced managed hosting plans, call 888-868-7099 or email info@mennonite.net.

Kalona Mennonite Church of Kalona, Iowa, a congregation of about 250 members, is seeking a **full-time associate pastor**. This person will serve alongside a lead pastor and have normal preaching and administrative responsibilities. Other duties include a focus on youth and young adult ministries as well as nurturing spiritual growth and faith commitment. Interested people can request a position description and congregational information by contacting Frank Yoder at franklin-yoder@uiowa.edu or conference minister Tim Detweiler at timdetweiler@centralplainsmc.org. All candidates must have an updated Ministerial Leadership Information Form (MLI) on file with Mennonite Church USA.

Accuracy, brevity, clarity. I do **editing/writing** of stories, articles and books. Contact roseanne.b.stewart@gmail.com.

Camp Deerpark is seeking a **construction supervisor** for our Children's Camp Village, which when completed will consist of eight cabins, a program center and pump house. The qualified candidate must be comfortable with nonconventional construction practices. While this is a supervisory position, the role requires extensive hands-on craftsmanship. Tasks include: operating wood-mizer sawmill, excavating equipment, plumbing, etc. A three-year commitment is required. Compensation includes salary, medical and housing. Contact Ken Bontrager at 845-754-8669 or admin@campdeerpark.org.

Bethesda Mennonite Church, located in Henderson, Neb., is seeking a **full-time pastor** to be part of a multipastoral team. The candidate should have a strong commitment to Anabaptist values and theology along with strong preaching, communication and community outreach skills and interests. An M.Div. degree with pastoral experience is desired but not required. The Bethesda congregation, located in rural Nebraska, is a member of Central Plains Mennonite Conference and Mennonite Church USA. Interested people should contact Central Plains Conference Minister, Tim Detweiler, P.O. Box 352, Kalona, IA 52247, or call 319-458-0224.

First Mennonite Church of San Francisco seeks a **half-time to three-quarter-time associate pastor** to partner with our pastor in serving our growing congregation. FMCSF is a vibrant, open and affirming, urban Anabaptist congregation of about 150, 20 percent of whom are children under the age of 18. Details: <http://www.menno.org/>.

Connexus Language Institute in South Korea seeks **university graduates to teach elementary school students English** while living in Christian community. One- to two-year commitment. Round-trip airfare provided. Email master@connexus.co.kr.

Covenant Mennonite Fellowship in Sarasota, Fla., seeks **half-time pastor**. We are a small, intellectually engaging and welcoming church. Our congregation seeks to live historic Anabaptist values—peacemaking, community and following the way of Jesus—with progressive Christian attitudes. Mennonite with M.Div. preferred. We are in process of joining Central District Conference. Contact Lois Kaufman at 800-662-2264 or confmin@mcusacdc.org.

Are you the one God has been preparing for us? **Fairview Mennonite Church** is seeking a **full-time pastor**. Located in rural northern Michigan, with weekly attendance around 100, the heart of FMC's vision is to build relationships in the community that meet people's needs. If you are interested in exploring possibilities at Fairview Mennonite Church, please email the search committee at fmcpastorsearch@gmail.com or call Don Haskin at 989-335-3153.

Calling all artists. **Greencroft Goshen** is requesting proposals from **artists** (any medium) who would suggest ways to use art to honor two sets of donors on the Greencroft Goshen campus. Budget is up to \$20,000. Deadline for RFPs is Aug. 1. One donor recognition piece would have the names of 90 donors but would need to be expandable. A second donor recognition piece would be static (permanent) with 460 names. For the complete specs on these projects, contact JimN@greencroft.org.

Explore God's love with the new Shine Sunday school curriculum! **Shine: Living in God's Light** has engaging stories and activities that will teach children the Bible, understand that they are known and loved by God, and learn what it means to follow Jesus. Find sample sessions, Bible outlines and more at www.shinecurriculum.com.

Is there a Mennonite spirituality? Read **Present Tense: A Mennonite Spirituality** by Gordon Houser to learn how Mennonite spiritual practices may succeed or fall short of what lies at the heart of Mennonite spirituality. Available for \$16.95 from Cascadia Publishing House. Order from cascadiapublishinghouse.com, amazon.com or bn.com.



We are your spoiled, entitled brats



Peter Epp teaches Mennonite studies in Gretna, Manitoba. He can be reached at p_epp@hotmail.com

We avoid criticism and accountability because we're already terrified that we're not living up to our potential.

By now it seems self-evident that accountability isn't really my generation's forte. You've heard it before: We want the church to change, but even if it did, we probably wouldn't show up. We expect you to listen sensitively, but we expect to be independent. Surely, it must sometimes feel like we're a bunch of spoiled, entitled brats.

And maybe we are. But here's the reality: Like it or not, we are your spoiled, entitled brats. You raised us, after all.

Consider three of the guiding principles that most of us were raised on. They're far from the only principles you raised us on, but I think they hold some of the keys to understanding our differences. They are:

1. You can be anything you want to be, if you just put your mind to it.
2. Always be true to yourself, no matter what.
3. Never, ever forget the Golden Rule.

They're great principles, for the record. They've served us well. They explain our creativity, our entrepreneurial spirit and our commitment to social justice. But they also explain why we can be so excruciatingly difficult when it comes to accountability and church.

Let's start with the first principle: You can be anything you want. Out of the three, this one may indicate the biggest improvement from previous generations' parenting. At the same time, it may also be the biggest lie. While on the one hand it represents the beautiful ways you gave us nearly unlimited opportunities, it's also something we couldn't live up to. Sure, we're mostly fine with our teaching, nursing and carpentry jobs, but we could have been the next Gandhi—if only we'd put our minds to it. So we avoid criticism and with it accountability because we're already terrified that we're not living up to our potential.

While the you-can-do-it principle left us overly sensitive to accountability, the second—always be true to yourself—has sometimes left us wondering why we need your version of accountability at all. Again, we've reaped huge benefits from this principle. We tend to have strong moral compasses. We tend to pay attention to those compasses and feel the need to follow them diligently. On the flip side, though, we're also accustomed to doing what is right because it feels right,

not because someone else says we should. We don't do or commit to things because we're supposed to. That feels insincere to us, and, if we're being insincere, we're certainly not being true to ourselves. So, in that sense, we see accountability differently from previous generations. Your version of accountability—accountability to the community—strikes us as guilt-laden obligation, and obligations, to us, feel dishonest. In fact, I think we often feel like we're lying to you simply by showing up for church when we'd rather be sleeping in.

The third principle, admittedly, is as old as morality itself. We're far from the first generation to be raised on the Golden Rule. Still, in the context we've grown up in, it's produced unique results. While I assume the Golden Rule used to be applied to your little brother, your actual neighbor and maybe a needy person you passed on the street, we tend to apply it to larger social justice issues. We've grown up in a post-civil-rights society that measures someone's integrity by his or her treatment of underprivileged populations. Since the church hasn't always had the greatest track record with some of these issues, we're already uneasy. On top of that, our be-true-to-yourself ethic makes it hard for us to feel good about any discrimination-related compromises. So, where the church uses a process of mutual accountability to move slowly and deliberately through tough issues, my generation feels guilty committing to an institution that sees those issues as debatable at all.

Despite how different we can be across this generation gap, these differences also stem from our connection to one another. There are values and ideas we both share. We're just embodying some of those ideas in ways you may never have expected. As sensitive and self-conscious as we can be, we'll probably need to know that you understand this before we can take our first (and, in my opinion, desperately needed) baby steps back toward community accountability. Luckily, the principles that guided you as parents, even if they didn't always produce exactly what you expected, have shown you to be more than gracious enough to offer understanding. **TM**



FILM REVIEWS

Noah (PG-13) is not your typical biblical epic. Director Darren Aronofsky takes liberties with the text and creates an imaginative story that includes some sci-fi elements and intense drama. Noah is a tragic figure. The film also serves as a parable about the dangers of human domination over nature.—*Gordon Houser*

Cesar Chavez (PG-13) tells the story of the famed civil rights leader and labor organizer torn between his duties as a husband and father and his commitment to securing a living wage for farm workers. It serves both to inform those unfamiliar with this movement and to inspire people to seek just wages for workers. It is especially relevant today, when corporations and government seek to dismantle unions, and wages are declining rapidly.—*gh*

Divergent (PG-13) is another big-budget movie based on a young adult sci-fi novel with a young female lead. It does not measure up to *Hunger Games* but is worth seeing in order to discuss it with teen viewers. It addresses the impact of virtual reality testing, identity in social groups and whether pacifism is a viable societal solution. Halfway through, though, it regresses into a typical thriller with faulty plot lines.—*Anna Groff*

BOOK REVIEWS

The Awakening of Hope: How We Practice a Common Faith by Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove (Zondervan, 2012, \$14.99) looks at seven ancient Christian practices and how they nurture a faith that leads to action. Wilson-Hartgrove uses narrative in a way that engages readers.—*gh*

Following Jesus: The Heart of Faith and Practice by Paul Anderson (Barclay Press, 2013, \$17) presents radical Christian discipleship from an evangelical Quaker perspective. Anderson wants to present Christians' "highest common purpose." More stories illustrating his points would have made it more engaging.—*gh*

Get ready for summer reading

Summer is coming, and for some that is a time for more relaxation, vacation trips perhaps. If it is also a time for extra reading, here are some books to consider.

Hutterites: *Pacifists in Chains: The Persecution of Hutterites During the Great War* by Duane C.S. Stoltzfus (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013, \$29.95) documents the disturbing history of four pacifists imprisoned for their refusal to serve in World War I.

Stoltzfus, who is communication department chair at Goshen (Ind.) College, has done extensive research to unveil the antipacifist climate when the United States entered World War I and drafted men for the army. While noting the courage of the Hutterite men and their suffering, he refuses to romanticize them. Among the nuggets from his research, we learn that James Madison wanted to include in the Second Amendment a provision for conscientious objection to military service.

Constantine: In *Constantine Revisited: Leithart, Yoder and the Constantinian Debate*, edited by John D. Roth (Pickwick Publications, 2013, \$24), 11 scholars, some of them Anabaptist, respond to Peter Leithart's book *Defending Constantine* (2010). The essays are gracious yet clear in countering Leithart's arguments, point by point. The book helps us learn more about the early church and the clear change that occurred with the rule of Constantine in the fourth century A.D.

Sexuality: An important resource in the ongoing discussion of same-sex relationships is *Bible, Gender, Sexuality: Reframing the Church's Debate on Same-Sex Relationships* by James V. Brownson (Eerdmans, 2013, \$29).

Brownson critiques both traditionalist and revisionist readings and asks, "What is the moral vision regarding gender and sexuality that Scripture commends?"

He carefully considers the biblical understanding of patriarchy, "one

flesh," procreation and celibacy. Then he explores the "boundary language" of Romans 1:24-27, looking at the meanings of lust and desire, purity and impurity, honor and shame, and nature.

Brownson makes the point that "what is normal in Scripture is not necessarily normative." For example, the sun going around the earth and slavery are normal in Scripture.

He uses the concept of "moral logic," which asks not only *what* is commanded and prohibited in Scripture but *why*. This helps us translate such commands across cultures.

Finally, Brownson looks at the "seven passages" commonly understood to refer explicitly to same-sex erotic relationships.

Disabilities: *Amazing Gifts: Stories of Faith, Disability and Inclusion* by Mark I. Pinsky (Alban Institute, 2012, \$18) collects 64 stories of people with disabilities, their family members and their congregations.

Pinsky points out that the 2000 U.S. Census counted 54 million people with disabilities—one in six Americans—and that number has only grown since with many wounded Iraq and Afghanistan war veterans swelling the population.

"Faith is a powerful thing," writes Pinsky, "and children and adults with disabilities ... benefit from expressing it and being part of a community of family, friends and fellow believers who share it in worship."

The stories reveal three main barriers to full participation of people with disabilities: architecture, communication and attitude.

This is a helpful and needed resource that will help us all be more welcoming. 



Gordon Houser is associate editor of The Mennonite.

(Continued from page 5)

I want to express dismay at the Easter article. I applaud the authors' attempt to comprehend the incomprehensible. But Andrea Lommen says, "You are God, and God is you. ... It also means you are God just like the next person to you." That, of course, is total untruth.—*Stan Weaver, Glendale, Ariz.*

Self-fulfillment not ultimate value

In the March issue, C. Norman Kraus asks us to reframe the LGBT issue and put people ahead of issues. I propose we try a balance of Scripture and people while we talk about marriage. In another article, 150 signatories call for change in church policy to recognize gay couples as married on an equal basis, based on the fact that the Holy Spirit falls on gay and straight alike. This is true, but the Holy Spirit also falls on military officers like Cornelius today, but that does not change what Jesus taught about loving our enemies. In 16th-century Europe, the king's authority was the ultimate social value.

Today, individual self-fulfillment is the ultimate value, and, consistent with this ultimate concern, our culture has turned marriage into a commodity rather than a sacrament. As a commodity it needs to be available to all, but if we hold to family and the faith community as ultimate, then we cannot agree with a consensus that seems to assume having sex to be a basic human right. As a sacrament we're dealing with mystery and holy fire. See www.galileanfellows.org/page/4/.
—*Philip E. Friesen, Minneapolis*

Learning from Lederach

Paul M. Lederach (Obituaries, March) was the conference minister who, in 1986, faced the situation at Hyattsville (Md.) Mennonite Church, where the first openly gay person had been accepted as a full member. In 2003, he showed me in a presentation how Paul dealt with the circumcision controversy, which was extremely divisive in the early church. Then he compared

that early controversy to the present-day controversy regarding same-sex relationships—making the case for inclusion. Lederach was honored at a memorial service in the very same community from which the young man migrated to our city in 1986, asking for acceptance in our congregation after he had been alienated in his home church. Urban Mennonite congregations are all too commonly challenged with figuring out how to relate to these victims, who come to us with their heartrending stories of expulsion.—*Melvin D. Schmidt, Hyattsville, Md.*

What would Jesus do?

Members of the Mennonite Church USA Executive Board seem to think "the church's organizational structure and official agreements" are more important than Mountain States Mennonite Conference's "sincere desire to follow Christ" ("Excerpt from EB Statement," March). Do they think congregations and conferences cannot be trusted to discern God's will? That is sad (and perhaps not very Anabaptist). I have observed that the congregations who are "welcoming and inclusive" are busy doing God's work in their communities. I also don't understand why congregations say they will leave if everyone does not believe exactly what they do. I wonder, What would Jesus do? Maybe ask us to simply disagree in love? If we could do that, we sure would have a lot more time and energy to share God's good news.—*Joyce Hostetler, Goshen, Ind.*

I wonder if now is one of those times when we must listen more and talk less, especially those older and the men. I pray for those in leadership as they wrestle with the issue of LGBT members in the church. I was moved by Issac Villegas' cover article and his column, "Stay With Us" (April), and Anna Groff's courage. How can we exclude anyone who looks to Jesus and says, "Remember me"? WWJD may be hackneyed, but it's still our common calling.—*Joe Haines, Amherst, N.Y.*

I thank Villegas for his understanding of the invitation, "Stay with us." I thank him also for recognizing the love LGBT has for the Mennonite Church USA in spite of how we have pushed them away. I pray we continue to learn love from each other.—*Marilyn M.R. Yoder, Archbold, Ohio*

Knowing someone who is LGBT

What I share here is not a position for either side but a plea for a rational approach to the changes we are seeing.

Part of my grieving has to do with the hypocrisy and imbalance surrounding the issue. Take the issue of divorce and remarriage. There are currently no sermons and conferencewide declarations stating that those who have been divorced and remarried are to be disbarred from church membership. Yet Jesus spoke sternly on that issue. The same goes for those who have served in the military. I think the reason there is such an outrage about homosexuality is that so few people relate to it. My estimate is that around 5 percent of population is gay. So when pastors deliver pious sermons against the evils of homosexuality, they are essentially talking to those who are not tempted in that area. Before church people get so morally invested in the topic of homosexuality, I would recommend that they actually get to know a gay person, particularly a gay Christian.—*Tim Schultz, Monroeville, Pa.*

Shenandoah Confession

I want to express my appreciation for the Shenandoah Confession (April). I pray that we may all be able to freely and unconditionally come to the Table of our Lord. The process that Mennonite Church USA is putting forth on same-sex relationships will not bring us together. The confession can be much more helpful if we can "confess together" without needing to agree on the current issues that divide us.
—*David Helmuth, Goshen, Ind.*

Things that are difficult to talk about

Some things are hard for us to talk about in public. At times we refer to them as “the elephant in the room,” the anxiety-ridden topics we cannot comfortably broach around certain people or situations. These elephants may crowd the pulpit in church, just as they inhabit our family living rooms and lumber about in the public square.

In the midst of the current debates about human sexuality, and especially same-sex relationships, I often hear reference to the sentence in Article 19 of the *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective*—“We believe that God intends marriage to be a covenant between one man and one woman for life.” I heartily support that commitment and note that the *Confession* goes on to say: “According to Scripture, right sexual union takes place only within the marriage relationship.” This, too, I affirm. It highlights the church’s commitments to celibacy for the unmarried and sexual fidelity for those who are married.

Whereas we’ve often referred to homosexuality as the “elephant in the room,” I wonder if an even bigger elephant in the room has to do with the many ways we fail to live up to the stated norms of celibacy and fidelity. For example, it seems that we are hesitant to publically address the incest that plagues our church families, the sexual abuse of women and children in our congregations, the hookup culture that lures our teenagers, the problems with sexually transmitted diseases, the practice of couples living together before marriage, addiction to pornography, or the infidelity that breaks up marriages.

Let me be clear—having an elephant in the room doesn’t mean there’s no talking going on. There may be plenty of whispering, gossiping, finger-pointing accusations, under-the-breath muttering and even sorrowful lament of shortcomings to a confidant. But it’s difficult to have a public discussion about these matters, even in church. It’s much safer to live with a “don’t ask, don’t tell” approach.

Why? Is it because most of us realize we fall short of God’s highest calling, and we don’t want others pointing their fingers at our failures any more than they want us pointing our fingers at theirs? Or is it because the church’s stated con-

fessions no longer reflect our heartfelt convictions? Does our silence suggest that we no longer expect celibacy, a standard the church has expected from singles—whether never married or formerly married—for generations? Have we come to accept the societal assumption that the regulation of one’s sexual desires is outdated and potentially harmful?

The statements on human sexuality adopted at Saskatoon (1986) and Purdue (1987) were adopted more than a generation ago, before the widespread use of the Internet or social media. The immediacy and accessibility of social media has introduced immense changes in the way we communicate with each other, even about the most intimate spaces in our lives.

Where then is the place to have meaningful public conversations about life-giving intimacy and genuine interpersonal relationships, with encouragement to love and to be loved in keeping with God’s intent? Too often, in its preoccupation with “shoulds” and “ought nots,” the church has not been a healthy place for that discussion.

Over the past few years, we have spent a disproportionate amount of time discussing homosexuality, creating an imbalance of the church’s public voice on sexual matters. In light of the current debate on same-sex relationships, our youth could easily get the mistaken impression that church people only engage in same-sex relationships.

I’m not suggesting that we set aside the difficult and divisive topic of same-sex unions in the church. I’m simply saying that we need to spend a much greater proportion of our time discussing the nature of healthy heterosexual relationships and the ethical behaviors we expect to live by as followers of Jesus, whether single or married. Sometimes, the hardest topics to address reveal our greatest need for God’s healing touch. 



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FAQs for *The Mennonite*



Anna Groff

We are especially interested in personal stories of Mennonites exercising their faith.

As interim editor of *The Mennonite* since February, I have received many questions regarding our publication, its purpose, who it serves and more. In this editorial, I address some of the frequently asked questions (FAQs).

What is the purpose of *The Mennonite*?

Mennonite Church USA established three purposes for publication: (1) to provide a forum for the voices within the denomination, (2) to promote the ministries of Mennonite Church USA and (3) to offer an editorial voice distinct from but collaborative with other leadership voices. It serves and is owned by members of Mennonite Church USA through the delegate body. The Mennonite, Inc., publishes content across three media: a monthly print magazine, two free ezines (*TMail* and *Meno Acontecer*) and a website, www.themennonite.org.

What is the *The Mennonite's* relationship to Mennonite Church USA? *The Mennonite* is an entity of Mennonite Church USA, not a church-wide agency. This offers some separation between *The Mennonite* and Mennonite Church USA leadership.

What about the relationship to the Mennonite Church USA Executive Board? The Executive Board appoints three members of our board of directors. A representative of the Mennonite Church USA communications office is permitted as a nonvoting observer at all directors' meetings, except executive sessions of the board. That person is Hannah Heinzekehr.

How is the publication funded? Mennonite Church USA bylaws require *The Mennonite* to be a "self-supporting entity." We are funded primarily through paid subscriptions, as well as donations and print and web advertising. Our new website—launching this fall—will offer a viewer-friendly PDF of the print magazine to nonsubscribers for a donation each month in the amount of his or her choice. Otherwise only a select amount of mate-

rial from the print magazine will be available for free on our new website.

How do you decide what to print? Many of our pieces are unsolicited. We make an effort to include pieces by women, underrepresented racial/ethnic people, young adults and other writers from across the United States. Send your submissions to editor@themennonite.org or annag@themennonite.org.

What kind of articles are you looking for?

We wish to publish articles that help our readers glorify God, grow in faith and become agents of healing and hope in the world. We are especially interested in personal stories of Mennonites exercising their faith. Writing should be concise, accessible to the general reader and with strong lead paragraphs.

In March, someone wrote on our Facebook page that *The Mennonite* is "doctrinally confusing" on the sexuality issue, citing that we ran an article by a gay man who is committed to abstinence as well as an article calling for LGBT inclusion in Mennonite Church USA. A variety of perspectives on this issue and other issues is precisely what we seek to publish, as *The Mennonite* is intended to serve as a "forum for the voices within the denomination."

Why do you use "LGBT" instead of "homosexual," "gay" or "LGBTQ"? The initialism LGBT, in use since the 1990s, refers to lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people. The Associated Press, whose stylebook is widely used by many news organizations, including *The Mennonite*, restricts the use of "homosexual." At this point, we do not use the Q, which stands for "queer" or "questioning," as LGBT is most frequently seen in current usage.

Who do I call with a question about my subscription or about advertising in *The Mennonite*? Please call 800-790-2498.—*ag*