

Mennonite World Review

Putting the Mennonite world together

Nigeria's next chapter

President sees national church poised for growth



Victor UmoAbasi, national president of Nigeria Mennonite Church, describes some of the church's development initiatives to James Krabill, Mennonite Mission Network's senior executive for global ministries.

By **LYNDA HOLLINGER-JANZEN**
Mennonite Mission Network

IKOT ADA IDEM, Nigeria — A burning passion to become active in the global Anabaptist community fuels Victor UmoAbasi, national president of Mennonite Church Nigeria, and his high-octane ministry. Africa's two largest Mennonite populations are in Congo and Ethiopia. Although Mennonite Church Nigeria is small by comparison — 18,700 members, according to Mennonite World Conference — UmoAbasi is pouring energy into its growth.

If we are concentrating on building, it is because in the nearest future, Mennonite Church Nigeria will be large in terms of numbers. — Victor UmoAbasi

"My vision is for a church that anybody in Nigeria can be proud of, a church that sees the dignity of [the human being], a church

[of] integrity, a church that makes people feel like they belong," UmoAbasi said. "A church like this will go viral." UmoAbasi expressed appreciation for his relationship with Mennonite Mission Network and the agency's director for Africa, Steve Wiebe-Johnson, saying they had opened doors to the worldwide church community. "They have been powerfully in support of everything that we do, a source of encouragement to the work in Nigeria," he said. "It is like a family. When it seems like we don't understand each

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ONLINE UPGRADE

MWR has redesigned its website to better serve a growing online readership. The new site features a digital subscription option, easier-to-use navigation tools and an improved commenting system. The World Together Blog, which accounts for 25 percent of MWR's website traffic, is featured more prominently, with a new logo. See page 2.

Modern 'Mirror'

■ Building on spiritual legacy of 'Martyrs Mirror,' Bearing Witness Project website gathers stories of costly discipleship



By **ELIZABETH MILLER**
For Goshen College

GOSHEN, Ind. — A Congolese pastor who forgave the armed men who had forced him to dig his own grave. A Ukrainian Mennonite Brethren family displaced to labor camps throughout the Soviet Union and finally reunited in Kazakhstan, only to face further resistance from the government in their new home. A missionary who accompanied Christian communities in China during World War II, though she had to be in hiding much of the time. These stories are part of a story-gathering initiative called the Bearing Witness Stories Project, an online collection of testimonies of Anabaptist believers who have lived out their faith despite significant opposition and suffering. Though still in its infancy, the website, martyrstories.org,

Bearing Witness aims to encourage faithfulness to the way of Jesus and strengthen relationships within global Anabaptism.

serves primarily as a repository for stories of 19th- and 20th-century Anabaptists who have persevered in their faith. For centuries, *Martyrs Mirror*, Thieleman van Braght's 1685 collection of martyr stories, has been the main source for Anabaptist stories of costly discipleship. While *Martyrs Mirror* re-
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Lancaster to re-evaluate relationship to MC USA

By **PAUL SCHRAG**
Mennonite World Review

The Lancaster Mennonite Conference Board of Bishops has called for the conference to re-evaluate its relationship to Mennonite Church USA. "For many in Lancaster Conference, the question of our affiliation with Mennonite Church USA is back on the table," said Keith Weaver, who chairs the board, in an interview. In a Feb. 28 letter to creden-

tialed leaders, the bishops announced "a time of discernment and exploration" during what they described as an "experience of conflict in the church." The letter did not cite reasons for the call to re-evaluate. Weaver said one reason was Mountain States Mennonite Conference's licensing of a lesbian pastor, which has sparked controversy across the denomination. Other concerns, he said, include a recent letter by 150 pas-

See Lancaster, page 3

Court hears religious rights case

By MWR staff and news services

A Mennonite-owned cabinet-making business in Pennsylvania was part of a challenge to the Affordable Care Act on March 25 at the U.S. Supreme Court. The justices heard arguments that the ACA violates the religious rights of company owners who object to providing insurance coverage for certain kinds of birth control. Combining questions of religious rights, corporate rights,

Obamacare and abortion, the case is, for many people, the most important the Supreme Court will decide this year. The court heard a case brought by two companies: Hobby Lobby, a chain of 500 stores with more than 13,000 employees owned by the Green family, who are evangelical Christians; and Conestoga Wood, a Lancaster County, Pa.-based company with 950 employees owned by the Hahn family, members of Weaverland Mennonite Con-

ference, an Old Order group. The business owners are seeking a religious exemption from the requirement that large employers provide insurance that covers a full range of contraceptives, including four that the owners believe can cause abortion. Government lawyers insist that for-profit corporations are not entitled to exercise religious rights. A decision is expected by late June. *Justices hear oral arguments — story on page 8.*

NEW WAYS TO RELATE?

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COME AND SEE

Tour group answers Palestinian Christians' call to 'understand our reality' / 9

NEWS

MWR redesigns website, offers digital subscription

By Kelli Yoder
Mennonite World Review

Mennonite World Review has redesigned its website to better serve a growing online readership. With nearly 14,000 unique visitors a month, the mennoworld.org website plays a key role in MWR's Anabaptist news ministry. The site now features a digital subscription option, easier-to-use navigation tools and an improved commenting system.

Digital subscription

For the first time, MWR is offering a digital subscription. The \$36 yearly rate is one-third off the print edition's price. The digital edition is a PDF (portable document format) version of MWR's pages, exactly as they appear in print. Subscribers can download or read the digital edition online on the Wednesday before MWR's every-other-Monday publication date. The digital edition is free to print subscribers. If you already subscribe to the print newspaper, you can create an account at mennoworld.org/subscribe to access the digital edition at no additional cost. Mennoworld.org/subscribe is also the place to start a subscription to the digital edition only. The digital edition responds to a growing preference for pa-

perless and device-friendly reading options. For readers whose postal delivery is slow, the digital edition offers quick access to the latest issue. For international readers, the digital edition will be much cheaper and faster. The MWR website remains free to all. It offers about half of the newspaper's content. A free website enables MWR to draw the widest possible audience while also encouraging online readers to become subscribers, whose financial support is essential.

Navigation

The World Together Blog has steadily grown in popularity and now accounts for 25 percent of MWR's web traffic. It now has its own logo, designed by Rachel Lapp Whitt, chair of the MWR Inc. board of directors. The blog is featured more prominently on the MWR homepage. A growing number of readers come to the site from the social media networks Facebook and Twitter, in addition to Google News and MWR's Weekly Update emails. The new design includes lists with popular and shared stories on each page to guide readers toward content others are finding useful. A wider variety of social media sharing buttons are more prominently located on each article. On the new homepage, read-

DIGITAL EDITION

- The digital edition is a PDF version of MWR's pages, exactly as they appear in print.
- The digital edition is free to print subscribers. Go to mennoworld.org/subscribe to create an account.
- A digital-only subscription is \$36 per year, one-third off the print edition's price. Subscribe at mennoworld.org/subscribe.
- The MWR website remains free to all, offering about half of the newspaper's content.

ers can easily sign up for the Weekly Update featuring new and recent stories, some of which have not yet appeared in print, and the week's most visited content.

Commenting

Readers' comments online have become an important part of the dialogue about MWR's content. A new comments policy and an upgraded commenting system promote constructive dialogue and raise the standards of credibility and accountability among those who join the online discussions.

Mennoworld.org now uses the popular commenting system Disqus. To comment on a blog or article, readers are asked to sign in, using a social media account or email address so that comments can be shared easily and connected to one identity. Users can reply directly to a specific comment, and the reply is then marked as such. After signing in, readers can vote other comments up or down. Comments with the most votes rise to the top. Comments are monitored before they are posted. Editors select the comments that appear, just as with letters in the print edition. Anonymous comments, and those with false or incomplete names, are not accepted. Selected online comments, or portions of comments, will be published in print, in the same format as letters to the editor.

Other things to know

- The redesign offers more options for advertisers, improv-



The World Together Blog, which accounts for 25 percent of MWR's website traffic, is featured more prominently, with a new logo.

ing the website's financial sustainability. Ad space is newly available at the top of the homepage, as well as on the blog. Advertisers can see more specific information about the website's audience demographics and reach at mennoworld.org/advertise. The search function is now easily found in the upper right-hand corner of every web page. Content published online before 2014 will remain accessible at mennoworld.org/archived. More improvements are possible as readers respond to the redesign. We welcome your comments. Upgrading the website reflects the importance of multiple formats during a time of media transition — "From Gutenberg to Google," as board member John Longhurst put it in his presentation at the recent Mennonite World Review Inc. annual corporation meeting. Both the print and digital versions give life to MWR's ministry of independent Anabaptist journalism.

Nigerian church sees growth chapter beginning

Continued from page 1

other, Bruce [Yoder] tries to figure it out with love," UmoAbasi said. Yoder is a mission worker based in Burkina Faso and the most regular MMN contact to Nigeria in the past 12 years.

Abandonment?

Mennonite Church Nigeria hasn't always appreciated the mission agency. In 1954, MMN predecessor agency Mennonite Board of Missions received a letter from a group of African-Initiated Churches in southeastern Nigeria stating that they wanted to join the denomination. Ed and Irene Weaver, mission workers sent to assess the situation, determined that there were already so many varieties of churches in this highly Christianized region that working toward church unity and leadership training were higher priorities than adding yet another denomination. While this decision led MMN into a new mission paradigm of respecting cultural context and working alongside indigenous churches, it didn't endear them to the Nigerians wanting to become Mennonites. They perceived the resulting actions as abandonment by their North American brothers and sisters.

The exodus of most expatriate Mennonite mission workers from Nigeria at the onset of the Biafran War in 1967 further increased the alienation between Nigerian and North American Mennonites, which continued for more than three decades. James R. Krabill, MMN's senior executive for Global Ministries, outlined the history of Mennonite Church Nigeria in three periods — a long birthing process (1954-76), a time of internal leadership struggle (1977-95), and a reconciliation process of binding wounds and healing (1996-2013). Now we are seeing the beginning of the fourth chapter, Krabill said — the blossoming and growth of Mennonite Church Nigeria.

Prophetic words

UmoAbasi and others in church leadership embraced Krabill's words as prophetic during a seminar with MMN personnel Feb. 22-25. Signs of growth are evident — a new church headquarters in Ikot Ada Idem with offices and a guest house, a Bible school, renovated church buildings, the Mennonite Star School, a drinking-water bottling project and development projects that include life skills and apprenticeships. Perhaps the surest indication of all is a committed and dynam-

ic group of young adults. Psalmist Ekpedeme Jackson, national youth president, said that Mennonite Youth Fellowship Nigeria aims to "bring together all young men and women to focus on preaching Jesus' gospel of love, peace and progress, as well as encouraging our members to pursue education or embark on a trade." Musician Sampson Ukeme Etim is training a 1,500-voice youth choir to do evangelism through song, drama, dance and

campaigns. They are also preparing to share the good news of Jesus through agricultural projects and community health initiatives to fight against the spread of HIV/AIDS, malaria and other communicative diseases. Mennonite Church Nigeria is investing heavily in buildings. According to UmoAbasi, this is a way of showing financial accountability to church members. They have visual proof of how their giving is being used. It is also a form of African hospitality.

"When our church members come to a gathering, we need to accommodate them in a decent [lodging] and feed them and give them a sense of pride," he said. Most of all, the buildings are a place of welcome. "If we are concentrating on building, it is because in the nearest future, Mennonite Church Nigeria will be large in terms of numbers," he said. "Building in Africa is not an exhibition of wealth. It is [a form] of evangelism."

Mennonite World Review

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EDITORIALS

BLOG

Mennonite World Review

Amid the revolution

What do you do when the old model is broken?

It is no coincidence that the Protestant Reformation shook the foundations of Christendom less than a century after Gutenberg invented the printing press. A revolution in communication sparked a revolution in religion. It happened 500 years ago, and it is happening now.

When ideas and information spread quickly to more people, old institutions and authorities break down. In the early 1500s, as Martin Luther’s writings churned off the presses and people read the Bible for themselves, the Catholic Church lost its monopoly on religion.

In the 20th century, Christendom felt the earth shift again. Christianity lost its dominance in Western culture as people found new sources of meaning and fulfillment. By the early years of the 21st century, the Internet freed people from centralized sources of information. It sped up the rejection of old authorities and the weakening of traditional loyalties.

Our time is a lot like Gutenberg’s, says John Longhurst of Winnipeg, Man., a member of the Mennonite World Review Inc. board of directors. He presented “From Gutenberg to Google: Stories from the Front Lines of the Digital Revolution” at the nonprofit corporation’s annual meeting in North Newton, Kan.

Longhurst quoted Clay Shirky, author of *Here Comes Everybody*, on the impact of social media: “During revolutions, the old stuff gets broken faster than the new stuff is put in its place.”

Today we find ourselves, Longhurst said, “in a new hybrid land called Gutengoogle, or

maybe Googleberg. It’s a time in between, when the printed word is still alive but giving way to the digital world. It’s like we’re a ship on the ocean, one world behind us, the other one somewhere in front.”

The challenge for the media — and the church — is to steer a course when we don’t know what’s on the other shore.

Longhurst suggested starting by acknowledging there’s no going back. In the print media, everyone can see the old model is broken. In the church, it is becoming clear that the old way of doing things — running institutions and planning Sunday morning worship services — isn’t working like it used to either.

Like the print media seeking to understand what 21st-century readers are looking for, the church needs to understand what people need from it today. It may not be Sunday morning pew-sitting. And probably not an institution to join. But it may possibly be a community that, in the words of British author Alain de Botton, “seems sufficiently good, forgiving and sane that one might want to contribute to it.”

The church could be like that. De Botton, whom Longhurst quoted, wasn’t referring to the church. He was talking about the media’s need to go beyond the murders, scams and fatal crashes that make the world look more dangerous than it really is. As Longhurst noted, people are drawn to positive, uplifting stories. The church — and the church media — has many of those. The challenge for both is to find the best ways to share them in this new and unsettling time. — *Paul Schrag*

Like the print media, the church needs to understand what people need from it today.

By different names

Don’t let labels get in the way of following Jesus

Speaking at the recent Anabaptist women’s theology conference in Virginia, Erica Littlewolf, from the Northern Cheyenne tribe of Montana, said she doesn’t like to call herself a Christian.

She prefers terminology from Native American educator and author Richard Twiss. He followed and called people to “the Jesus way.” In his experience, Christianity meant violence, broken promises and rejection of his culture. But his experience with Jesus was life-giving.

“Following the ways of Jesus seemed one thing, becoming a white Christian quite another,” he wrote in *Leadership Journal* in 2012.

For many, Christianity comes with negative connotations. Christianity has been used to deny rights and commit violence on the basis of race, gender and sexual orientation. Christians have written books using the Bible to advocate borderline-abusive parenting. Some use Scripture to support their desire to accumulate wealth.

Christianity’s damaged reputation has made identifying as Christian a conversation stopper in certain contexts. For those who can’t imagine calling their faith anything else, this can be hard to accept. We protest: Don’t judge my faith by the bad examples. Sometimes we might want to leave altogether. The reality is hard to face.

Should deciding to follow Jesus be contin-

gent upon the labels used? Probably not. But when violence is attached to a group, labels get in the way. Rejecting a Christian label can help certain people — some of whom are surely seeking a new vision for a broken world — see Jesus differently.

But what Jesus calls humanity to is greater than labels. Jesus called people to a new vision. It’s a vision that can exist, as Twiss demonstrated and Littlewolf believes, despite cultural differences. And by different names.

“Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins,” Paul writes in 1 Peter 4:8.

When Christians focus less on condemning others’ sins and more on embracing the power of love to change lives, our faith’s negative associations fade into the background.

Jesus acknowledged the pain and hate-filled bits of humanness without diminishing them. At times he called them unjust. He called for repentance from sin. But his primary focus was clear. Again and again he urged his followers simply to love. “Love your neighbor as yourself,” he said (Matt. 22:39).

The center of our faith should be love. It doesn’t matter whether you call it Christianity or the Jesus way. God is love.

As we show love, labels will be less important to us. And others may begin to see it that way too. — *Kelli Yoder*

When Christians focus on love, our faith’s negative associations fade.

It’s hard to have Christian friends

By BEN COREY

Not long ago, my wife and I reflected on our life one year after moving back to our home state. We both lamented how few dependable, Christian relationships we had to show for it.

While it shouldn’t be this way, I think the reality for many of us is that having Christian friends is . . . hard.

This isn’t because our Christian siblings aren’t nice people or incapable of being good friends. Rather, this is because somewhere along the line you and I were taught a horrible lie.

We were taught that we have to agree on everything in order to be in relationship with each other.

For the last 2,000 years, instead of following the one who came to reconcile “all things” back into one body, we’ve been dividing up into so many sub-tribes that it’s impossible to keep track of all of them.

As kids, our “Christian” summer camps left us worrying our friends would all leave us when we got back home. As adults, we’ve refused to worship with people who worship the same Jesus differently than ourselves.

We’ve created our own subcultures. Even within those, we’ve told people: You can’t be a part of this community unless you are in full harmony with every line of this 28-page statement of faith.

We’ve looked at a finger and called it the body, when really it was just a finger doing its own thing.

We’ve come to believe we must agree on nearly every issue to be in relationship together.

How destructive. How anti-Christ.

Such norms are making it harder to live the Christian life as it was intended — many parts of one body in community with each other. It’s keeping us from experiencing the abundant life Jesus promised.

I find myself with beads of sweat pouring down my head each time I get ready to push the “publish” button for a new blog post. Will I lose any

friends over this? If I take a theological stance on this issue or in this direction, will it be too much for some people to be in relationship with me?

Several months ago I was getting ready to do an interview when my wife wished me luck and gently asked: Are you willing to accept the consequences for this?

I knew what she meant: Are you prepared to have very few Christian friends?

It’s heartbreaking that we even have to ask these questions. We shouldn’t have to agree on all of our theology or politics to be in relationship.

That being said, I do think there’s a time to draw lines. As part of a transracial family, I’m not willing to be in relationship with people who are racist. That’s one of my lines.

However, I don’t think we are as hesitant to draw these lines as we should be. We should resist it at all cost, reserve it for the rarest of cases, and wherever possible find ways to erase the lines we too quickly drew.

Christian culture has become so “tribe exclusive” that my favorite, most trustworthy friends . . . are atheists. They love me for me and want to be in a relationship simply for the relationship. They aren’t going to stop being my friend if my theology shifts.

I’d love to feel the same relational safety with my Christian friends.

I long to live in a world where someone says, “I really need a good friend,” and the response that comes to mind is, “You should go find some Christians.”

Let’s repent and strive to create a culture where Christian friends say: “Oh, you disagree on that theological issue? Fine by me, as long as we’re still playing tennis together on Saturday.”

Ben Corey is an author, writer, speaker and minister from Auburn, Maine. This appeared on MWR’s blog and his own: patheos.com/blogs/formerlyfundie, where he discusses the intersection of faith and culture from a progressive/emergent/neo-anabaptist vantage point.

We’ve looked at a finger and called it the body, when really it was just a finger doing its own thing.

Recent posts on MWR’s blog

The World Together at mennoworld.org

- How I ditched formal evangelism, by Kathleen Quiring
- Sex and the city of God, by Jerry Kennell
- Entitlement and the young adult, by Glen Balzer
- Nicodemus and being born again, by Joanna Harader

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COLUMNS

To love and resist

Love and resistance. This is how I think about the way of the cross. Compassion, curiosity, humility and grace linked with courageous opposition to sin, injustice and evil. Jesus held these things together. That is a rare thing.

Along with other Mennonites, I have long thought of the cross as the ultimate expression of Jesus' unlimited love. This was a love that was willing to give everything and that reached out to everyone, even enemies. I have often recited the stirring crescendo in Romans 5: While we were weak . . . while we were sinners . . . even while we were enemies . . . Christ so loved us that he gave his life for us.

Some years back, however, a phrase in a book by Jesuit priest John Dear jumped out at me. He spoke of "the cross of non-violent resistance and love." Resistance, he reminds us, is central to the way of the cross. Jesus resisted religious rules that had become more important than people. He refused to participate in practices that labeled some as unclean or outside the realm of grace. He healed on the Sabbath, ate with sinners, cleansed the temple. And it led him to the cross.

One of the most powerful Lenten experiences I have ever had was with an ecumenical group of Christian peacemakers six years ago. The group Christian Peace Witness for Iraq had brought us together: Presbyterians, Catholics, Baptists, Mennonites and many others. We gathered in a circle in the lobby of the Hart Senate Office Building to sing and pray and witness against the practice of torture being inflicted by our government on the bodies of men and women in Iraqi prisons and elsewhere.

The spirit of the group was prayerful and determined, joyful and serious. A large stone art piece nearby reminded me of the cross. In the shadow of this

CHURCH TO CHURCH



Andre Gingerich Stoner

Resistance is central to the cross. Jesus resisted religious rules that had become more important than people.

cross, one by one we were arrested and led off to a waiting police van.

We had started the day with a nonviolence training that included a "milling" exercise. We moved around the room and then stopped and stood in silence in front of another person. We were asked to reflect on the journey of that person, the struggles, disappointments, wounds that person carried. We held them gently in our thoughts and prayers.

And then we started milling again, stopping at some point in front of another person. This time we thought about the wonderful unique way this person had been created. That they were blessed and beloved by God. Beautiful. Gifted. Created in the image of God.

It was a wonderful way of opening ourselves to the people we encountered. Of learning to see

the way God sees us.

And now, as we were being arrested we encountered the police officers, too, in that same way — as beautiful and broken, wounded and beloved. There was a spirit of respect, care, almost reverence, even as we were deliberately and clearly saying "no" to the practice of torture. Love and resistance.

In the church, too, among brothers and sisters, we need to constantly learn how to be honest about our convictions and concerns even as we are generous, gracious, patient and compassionate.

The challenge isn't to somehow balance these values. The invitation is to move deeper in our capacity both to love fiercely and generously and to live the truth we have been given with humility. "For we have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth."

Andre Gingerich Stoner is director of interchurch relations and director of holistic witness for Mennonite Church USA.

Vision of abundance

LIVING SIMPLY



Celeste Kennel-Shank

What resources can we share freely to those who also have assets to share in return?

A man stood on a street corner selling magazines produced by an advocacy organization for the homeless — vendors keep part of their sales and build job skills. When a passerby told him she didn't have \$2 in cash that day, he responded, "I accept smiles, too!" and gave her one, which she returned.

He had transformed the interaction from one of guilt and unmet need into one of mutual gift, reminding all who heard of what we have to give away freely, without limitation.

The Christian practice of giving up something for Lent can be a way of deepening discipleship. Those who practice whole-life stewardship often already give up a great deal, though we can hope to no longer desire some of the luxuries society claims we must have. But sometimes living simply can make a person feel deprived.

This particular Lent comes at the end of the most brutal winter of recent memory for much of North America. (Even from part of the polar vortex with a wind chill in the negative 40s Fahrenheit, the plight of the southern U.S. so unaccustomed to cold appeared more poignant.) With shortages abounding, perhaps our Lenten fast came early.

Further, those of us who live with illness and disability know limitation and loss. We are often denied things that others take for granted.

In the midst of all that, an alternative Lenten practice could be to celebrate and nurture a sense of abundance.

What resources do we have that we can share freely to those who also have assets to share in return? What creativity and energy can we tap into that we might otherwise not notice? By focusing on abundance — all ultimately belonging to God and shared with us — we can participate in a greater vision.

Vincent Harding, a scholar and activist for freedom and justice, returned to Chicago for a visit in

March. He was a pastor in the late 1950s and early '60s of the interracial community at Woodlawn Mennonite Church, which met from 1951 to 1971 on the city's Southeast Side.

More than 200 people gathered for a dialogue on ideas from his recent book *America Will Be!* Harding invited people to form small groups around several questions: "What is your dream of America? What could America be that it is not now? What could America be in its education system, health care system, transportation system? With its relationship to the rest of the world?"

He noted that in a democracy the people have the responsibility to build a new country.

"What does that new country look like in your dreams?" he asked.

This does not mean only looking to a positive future but also acknowledging mistakes of the past.

"One of the great signs of maturity is the capacity to recognize where we've gone wrong," he said, and to "go through and figure out what to do with it."

In small groups and wider discussion afterward, people spoke of dreams for nonviolent communities, fairness in education, health and wholeness, and money spent for the common good rather than war.

Putting the conversation in the context of dreams brought into focus the abundance of resources before us as people who worked with youth empowerment, teaching, health care, peace-making, storytelling and more.

From our shared dreams we could face injustice with a sense of purpose, to build a new society that honors each person. It was a vision of abundance to foster and sustain new growth in ways that could only begin to be seen.

Celeste Kennel-Shank is a hospital chaplain, editor and community garden-er in Chicago.

Recovering catholicity

I still remember the words of my tour guide in St. John Lateran in Rome. She referred to our group's Protestants with loving disdain. She announced, "For the Protestants here, I want you to remember that this was your 'Vatican' — the center of the Western church for centuries before you splintered away. Your faith has come to you through this space."

I sought to find my own story in the midst of the grand, bright cathedral on Rome's east side, close to the city wall. In my six months living in Rome, this worship space became significant as I worked to reconcile myself with the "catholicity" of my faith.

Walter Klassen's book *Anabaptism: Neither Protestant nor Catholic* was published a year after I was born. His phrasing shaped many of the ways we Anabaptists have understood ourselves within the Christian story — as belonging to neither tradi-

tion. Upon reflection later in life, Klassen suggested the book might have been better titled with "both/and" rather than "neither/nor."

I'd say it is clear that Anabaptists have been Protestants, but we have yet to live into what might be possible if we take our catholicity seriously.

In these days of Mennonite Church USA turmoil, what does it mean to embrace the best of catholicity?

Anabaptists are more than local, temporal communities. *New York Times* columnist Thomas Friedman writes that to flourish in a global era, organizations will need to embrace both their local and global nature. In the church, this suggests both the local and the catholic (global)

ON THE WAY



Stephen Kriss

are essential for identity and decision-making.

While many of us are biased appropriately toward our localities, we cannot ignore our catholicity, our togetherness. Privileging local discernment alone can ignore both the possibility and responsibility of living within and incarnating God's *shalom* intended for all of the world.

Localities can be just as toxic, menacing and oppressive as dis-

Neither our locality nor our temporality alone will effectively shape our trajectory in a global age.

Our faith and movement is undeniably interconnected (even though at times we wish it weren't) and providential (part of the holy intention of the Spirit to cultivate a peoplehood beyond racial, ethnic, socioeconomic, national boundedness).

Localities can become self-referential and ignore the voice of the other. Our willingness to tell the story of a God who loved the world so much must be tied to a

tant and hierarchal systems that don't understand the local or respect the relational context — where we sit face to face, see eye to eye, in relationship with one another.

Neither our locality nor our temporality alone will effectively shape our discernment and trajectory in a global age.

willingness to do likewise across the chasms of difference of experience and interpretation.

Our lifetimes will be filled with relentless questions and complexities presented by the gospel and our cultural contexts. Though it may be easier to disintegrate into 100 million blooming localities, I wonder if the time and the Spirit might not require more of us. I can't shake the idea that Jesus' final prayers for us included a plea for "oneness." I hear this as an invitation to catholicity — a community that goes beyond the local, into the holy intention of mutuality.

Withdrawing into familiar localities is the invitation of the spirit of our age but not the invitation of the Spirit of our Lord. The Spirit and the Word require much more of us.

Stephen Kriss is a teacher, writer, pastor, student and follower of Jesus living in Philadelphia.

LETTERS & COMMENTS

Theologian’s reconciliation with his church

There is an essential side of the John Howard Yoder story that begs to see the light of day. Here is that story:

From its beginning the Anabaptist movement emphasized the redemptive process of the Rule of Christ (Matt. 18:15-17). This process seems to have been skipped in the case of John Howard Yoder. Given the circumstances, one can empathize with the petitioner’s not desiring to face the accused, or even to be named. To be sure, the charges could have been made through an intermediary. Even in a public court case, the “who” needs to be identified, in conjunction with the “what.” Fortunately, there was a conference/congregational process lasting four years that eventuated in genuine reconciliation.

John M. Bender, Prairie Street Mennonite Church, Elkhart, Ind., elder, sums up the results of the process: “Dec. 6, 1996, Elder meeting minutes: ‘... It was not-

WRITE TO US

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ed from Conference communication that the charges against John have been satisfactorily settled and closed. Action: Moved and carried to recognize John Howard Yoder’s continued membership at Prairie Street Mennonite Church. . . .’ Elders and John and Annie again met for dinner on Feb. 1, 1997. . . . The meeting turned the tables for me in terms of apology, repentance on the part of John, restitution and restored fellowship with the congregation. I recall it as a turning point, a moment of grace that

summed up all previous steps of accusation, discipline, counseling, apology, repentance and efforts to make things right. . . . 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 Leonard Gross, April 22, 2013).

John himself had established a fund to be used for those whom he had hurt. Those involved in the process came to the conclusion that John was aware of needed boundaries and would from now on stay within such boundaries. Indeed, John apologized publicly for the “inappropriateness of his actions and his desire for healing for the people he hurt” (Ted Grimsrud, “A Faithful Teacher in the Church,” *The Mennonite*, March 3, 1998).

We gave John his life back, rejoicing that an errant had repented!

Leonard Gross
Goshen, Ind.

Commenters appreciated hearing about Native American boarding schools in “Light of Truth Shines on Indian Schools’ Sins” by Jenn Carreto. Hannah Dusseau commented: “The reality of abuse for these people and children was heartbreaking. I was glad to read how the Mennonite church has been taking responsibility and initiative to reach out to those in need. . . . Sometimes all that needs to happen is for someone to come alongside and give a helping hand and a comforting, listening ear.” ■

Joanna Harader’s blog about doubt and life in Christ, “Nicodemus and Being ‘Born Again,’” brought discussion. Jerry Pankratz wrote: “So it’s OK that my Christian journey can be called evolutionary, although I’m a creationist? Curiosity is healthy in driving our learning and maturing processes with regards to our relationship with God.” ■

THE ONLINE CONVERSATION

comments from the MWR website, mennoworld.org

Some commenters took issue with Shane Claiborne’s blog, “The First Year of the Pope’s Revolution.” Debra Bender said: “Francis might well be a nice guy, but certainly not someone whose office should be glorified in Mennonite publications.” Herbert Reed responded: “No one has a corner on the truth, not the pope, not the Mennonites. But when Pope Francis embraces many of the same concerns as Mennonites do . . . how can we not welcome his voice?” Joetta Schlabach said the blog gave her hope that “the church, too, can find a way out of our deep division.”

Goal of tolerance

In the church, the notion of discernment carries an assumption that if the process is proper and prayerful, then the outcome will suggest a common approach and a clear way forward. God’s will — which it is assumed can only be one way — will become known. Sometimes things work out this way. But 2,000 years of history show that more often, common ground is not found.

Well-intentioned people can experience the same discernment process and still come out of it with honest differences of opinion on what God might be saying. Each says to the other, “Why can’t you hear the voice of God here?” A split ensues.

Instead of assuming discernment produces commonality, perhaps we should assume discernment will produce tolerance and a humanizing of the other and her point of view. Let the goal be tolerance.

We are 6 billion people, each as different as a snowflake. It is the

way things were meant to be. It is fruitless and counterproductive to try to make all the snowflakes the same. Let us celebrate our diversity. It is our ultimate strength. It is, I believe, God’s way.

Jim Bowman
Harrisonburg, Va.

Embarrassing news

I find the news about the licensing of a gay pastor troubling. When I saw a news item about it in *The Christian Century*, with the headline “Denver Mennonites Move Toward Lesbian Ordination,” complete with photo, I became more troubled still. It then becomes embarrassing to identify myself as Mennonite, especially when among evangelical scholar colleagues.

Elmer A. Martens
Fresno, Calif.

Humans, not issues

As a human who is queer, I have a request. First, some facts: I am a human, with a life partner

and a stepson. I am not an “elephant,” an issue, a burden, a problem, a question or a challenge. I am not “homosexuality.”

When you discuss (insert euphemism for me here: “LGBT issues,” “the elephant in the room,” “the dilemma in the church”), remember that you are discussing me. You are discussing whether you would like me to be a full member in the church, whether you would mind if a Mennonite pastor joined my partner and me together for a lifetime, whether you would mind if God called me and the Mennonite church licensed me as a minister.

You are talking about the way my chest tightens when I walk into a Mennonite church, the way tears are never far from my eyes. You are talking about the way I nearly panicked when I was accepted as a member of my congregation, because I’m not sure the people around me understand my membership means we could all be kicked out of our conference. You’re talking about the shame and confusion I felt when I was younger, the fear of

violence and rejection.

Here is one small thing we humans can do. We can use human-first language: A person who is a lesbian. A person who is gay. A person who is transgender. A person who is bisexual. A person who is queer. I would even ask that, at least for now, we drop the shorthand LGBTQ, so that we are sure to focus on humans.

Jennifer A. Yoder
Pittsburgh

Three forces

Majority rule, *Martyrs Mirror* and postmodernism have shaped and continue to shape our Mennonite communities. Reflecting on the tension between these forces may help us understand what some have labeled as a Mennonite tendency to split.

J.P. Siegrist
Lancaster, Pa.

Let God judge

I read with sadness about the controversies, divisions and sep-

arations within the Mennonite conferences over sexuality and other issues. Similar things are happening in our Baptist associations and in other church groups. Jesus’ prayer, “That they all may be one . . . that the world might believe,” seems ignored. Well-meaning people who disagree still need to respect each other’s views, letting God be the judge.

Even if we feel there are “tares in the wheat,” Jesus said to let them grow together until harvest, and God will do the separating (Matt. 13:30). When we try it, there is danger of doing great damage because of our imperfect judgment and knowledge. When Jesus’ disciples found someone casting out demons in his name, Jesus said, “Do not stop him, for whoever is not against you is for you” (Luke 9:50).

A parody in a Christian publication showed a pastor standing before a nearly empty sanctuary and saying, “I think you will all be pleased to know that we have finally achieved our goal of doctrinal purity.” Judging and separating

See Letters, page 10

COLUMN

A gift that saved a life

More than 3,000 Canadians are waiting for a kidney transplant. Many will die while on the waiting list.

Carol Penner thinks that’s wrong. So wrong, she donated a kidney herself to help someone who needed the life-saving procedure.

“These are needless deaths,” she says of those who will die before receiving help. “There are millions of healthy kidneys in Canada.”

Penner, pastor of Lendrum Mennonite Brethren Church in Edmonton, Alta., was moved to donate one of her kidneys after her husband lost one of his to cancer in 2008.

“I didn’t realize how easy it is to live on one kidney,” says the 53-year-old.

After thinking about it for a

couple of years, in 2011 she offered to donate a kidney as an undesignated donor. Her kidney would go to whoever needed it most.

What followed was a year of medical appointments, tests and questionnaires.

Once accepted, Penner — then the pastor of First Mennonite Church in Vineland, Ont. — was put on the list to donate a kidney when the need arose.

In October 2012, she received a call and had surgery to remove one of her kidneys. Soon after, someone living somewhere in Canada received her gift of life.

Why did she do it?

NORTH OF THE 49TH



John Longhurst

Donating a kidney to someone she didn’t know was one of the most joyful things she has done.

“People across Canada are dying of kidney disease,” she says. “If I could save someone’s life, why not do that?”

Her faith also played an important role.

“Our body is the biggest gift God has given us, especially if we’ve been given good health,”

she says. “We can share it with someone who needs to get healthy.”

She also thought of the words of Jesus, who instructed his followers to love their neighbors as themselves.

“If I needed a kidney, and there was no family match, I would want someone to donate one to me,” she says.

Penner says donating a kidney was “one of the most joyful things I have done in my life.”

Now she is on a quest to encourage more people to help save the lives of those awaiting a new kidney — starting with Mennonites in Canada.

“As Mennonites, we could lead the way,” she says of the 200,000 or so Canadian Mennonites. If just a fraction of that number donated a kidney, “we could wipe out the waiting list in a year.”

She acknowledges it won’t be easy. But “we are constantly encouraged to give money to help others without needing to know who they are,” she says. “Why not do the same with a kidney?”

After all, Penner says, “the rewards are huge. You can save someone’s life.”

According to the National Kidney Foundation, more than 99,000 Americans are awaiting a kidney transplant.

John Longhurst, of Winnipeg, Man., is director of resources and public engagement at Canadian Foodgrains Bank.

BIBLE

Jesus’ righteous anger, and ours

The texts listed here are meant to be studied on the final two Sundays of Lent. Our anticipation is meant to grow with each passing week as we empty ourselves and turn toward the cross. The promise of resurrection dawns in the background, its light casting long shadows over the spiritual landscapes we inhabit.

In the Gospel of Mark, when Jesus enters Jerusalem for his final confrontation with the powers that be, the first place he goes is the temple (Mark 11:11). He looked around at everything there, but since it was already late, he went out to Bethany (roughly two miles away) with the Twelve to spend the night. He returned the next day to carry out the protest we call the cleansing of the temple.

This is an important detail, for it paints a picture of a Jesus who premeditates this angry outburst rather than marching in with proverbial guns blazing.

Indeed, in the cleansing of the temple, Jesus uses his anger for righteous reasons rather than



letting righteous anger get the better of him.

Yes, love can be angry. Love can burn with angry passion.

Contrast this effective use of anger with the display we see in the reading from John. Here we read again of anger. Only this time it is anger unbridled from love. The soldiers and the crowds are controlled by their anger, reacting from fear rather than responding in love. Fear, too, can be angry and burn with passion.

So much of our religious experience today is reactionary. Someone wounds us. Someone makes us angry. Someone belittles a cause we believe in. Suddenly we reach a breaking point. We snap. We react.

We flip the proverbial tables

SUNDAY SCHOOL SCRIPTURES

April 6 – Isaiah 56:6-7, Jer. 7:9-11, Mark 11:15-19
April 13 – Jer. 23:5-6, Zech. 6:9-15, John 19:1-5

Patrick Nafziger

Until we acknowledge our complicity in the corruption of Christ’s church, we will continue to live in the shadow, not the resurrection.

within our religious system, and we depend upon this story from Mark to justify our actions. After all, we tell ourselves, Jesus was angry too. Anger can feel good. We feel self-righteous when we exercise it.

But I fear we might forget that

the crowds were angry too, heaping scorn on the only one who can save us. Not all righteous indignation is of God. Jeremiah has harsh words for those who hide their true motives behind religiosity and proper etiquette.

There are good words in these passages for the Mennonite churches today. Our anger should not be avoided. It should instead be reflected upon, and its root should be exposed, lest we unwittingly heap more scorn upon our Savior.

The scandal among Mennonites today is that it is easier to love our enemies who live in Syria or Afghanistan or Iraq than to love our neighbors as ourselves. It is easier than ever to surround ourselves with like-minded friends and family, happily ignoring those who think differently, happily turning blind eyes to the brokenness rather than seeking to bind it up for healing.

This is not the way of the Christ we profess, who cared enough about the brokenness at the temple to stir things up with

an angry word accompanied by angry actions, carried out in love.

We are the ones crying for crucifixion. Until we acknowledge our fear and our complicity in the corruption of Christ’s church, we will continue to live only in the shadow cast by the dawning of the resurrection, not in the resurrection itself.

What fears do you carry? In what ways is your anger using you? How might Christ’s healing love reach out through you to friend and foe alike?

Patrick Nafziger works alongside his wife, Christine, as co-pastor of Millersburg (Ohio) Mennonite Church.

CORRECTION: The Feb. 17 Bible column stated that Solomon was the illegitimate son of David and Bathsheba. In fact, Solomon was conceived after David and Bathsheba were married.

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BOOK REVIEW

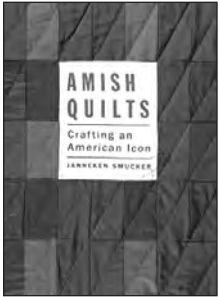
The humble quilt, a work of art

In recent years, scholars of Amish life and culture have focused on 20th-century transformations due to the success and proliferation of Amish businesses. A common theme has been the adaptation of Amish groups to new technologies and off-the-farm entrepreneurial initiatives.

Historian Janneken Smucker’s beautifully illustrated volume *Amish Quilts* deepens our understanding of one such sector central to many Amish women’s lives: the creation, preservation, use and marketing of quilts and other textiles.

Smucker is a quiltmaker who has long been interested in Amish and Mennonite women’s history and its overlap with the broader artistic and cultural roles of American quiltmakers and their craft.

“Prior to the late 1960s,” she notes, “‘Amish quilts’ were just quilts — made, used and displayed in Amish homes — rather than iconic works of art worth



AMISH QUILTS: CRAFTING AN AMERICAN ICON

By Janneken Smucker
Johns Hopkins, 2013

Reviewed by Rachel Waltner Goossen

lots of money. It is easy to forget . . . that these objects were the products of homes and were used, loved, neglected, cherished or stored away before they were ever sold, photographed or hung on walls.”

In Smucker’s telling, the phenomenon of Amish quilting has been a thriving practice for nearly a century and a half, with at least three phases:

- Utilitarian quilt ownership by the Amish community itself;
- The “discovery” by outsiders who regarded Amish quilts as art; and
- The more recent, consumer-oriented marketing phase, in which thousands of Amish and non-Amish women produce less-expensive quilts and related home décor.

One of the most fascinating aspects of the book is Smucker’s discussion of Amish quilting’s origins. European Amish did not bring the craft on transatlantic crossings to the colonies. Rather, they later embraced this cultural practice in America:

“Likely, an innovator within the Amish community learned to quilt in the mid- to late 19th century, borrowing patterns and techniques either from friends or neighbors of non-Amish sectarian groups such as Mennonites or Church of the Brethren, or perhaps from Quakers, Scots Irish or

By the early 1990s, the high point of Amish-quilt capitalism, top-selling quilts were passing out of dealers’ hands to collectors for \$40,000.

Welsh quiltmakers . . . [and] quiltmaking soon became common.”

As early as the 1880s, when more and more Amish families were making quilts for their own use, Amish women were adapting new technologies, using treadle sewing machines to make quilt borders. Smucker points out that unlike other innovations taking hold in American culture at around that time — telephones and automobiles — quilts and quiltmaking technologies were essentially noncontroversial and prompted no divisions in Amish religious life.

However, the remarkable uptick in quilts’ perceived value over the next century would alter Amish women’s roles in their communities. At present, Smucker notes, a handful of successful Amish quilt business owners exercise economic leadership in their communities sim-

ilar to roles traditionally reserved for men.

Amish Quilts’ narrative moves deftly from historical changes within Amish communities to outsiders’ engagement with Amish quilts as aesthetic objects — and specifically as “abstract art” suited for gallery walls rather than as bed coverings.

By the early 1970s, art collectors and curators, as well as investors, were beginning to seek out old Amish quilts from Lancaster County, Pa., and other regions. A knock at the door became a commonplace experience for Amish families who might, or might not, be willing to part with their family heirlooms and more recently crafted quilts.

By the early 1990s, the high point of Amish-quilt capitalism, top-selling quilts were passing out of dealers’ hands to collectors for \$40,000. Amish quilts seemed destined to end up in corporate showrooms and museum collections, photographed and extolled in influential art

history textbooks and film documentaries.

Yet the 1990s also ushered in a new trend — “Amish-inspired” quilts made for the consumer market, often factory-made, at bargain-basement prices and marketed online.

Smucker’s meticulously-researched account of the Amish quilting industry includes memorable accounts of several Amish individuals in Indiana and Pennsylvania who served as intermediaries between their Amish neighbors and urban dealers, negotiating quilts’ values along the way.

Here, as elsewhere in the book, Smucker’s findings help to erode stereotypes about the Amish. She argues that while well-known emphases such as community-mindedness, humility and thriftiness are central to the story of Amish quiltmaking culture, so too are individual initiative, negotiation and business savvy.

Rachel Waltner Goossen teaches history at Washburn University in Topeka, Kan.

BOOKSHELF

All My Puny Sorrows by Miriam Toews (Random House, 2014). To be released April 15, the new novel by acclaimed Canadian Mennonite writer Miriam Toews offers “a startling demonstration of how to carry on with hope and love and the business of living even when grief loads the heart,” according to the publisher’s website. The story centers on sisters Elfrieda and Yolanda — one glamorous, wealthy and suicidal, the other divorced, broke, hoping to find true love and desperately trying to keep her older sister alive.

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WORLD & FAITH



Paramount Pictures

Russell Crowe as Noah in the Paramount Pictures film.

‘Noah’ film spotlights one of world’s oldest stories

By SARAH PULLIAM BAILEY
Religion News Service

FILM

In recent years, Hollywood has made a concerted effort to lure religious audiences to the local cineplex with such films as *The Passion of the Christ*, *Son of God* and even dark-horse hits like *Facing the Giants*. And most of the time, it’s worked. But the Russell Crowe film *Noah* is stirring different emotions as it touches on a beloved Bible story near and dear to people of several faiths. Before its world premiere in Mexico City on March 10, director Darren Aronofsky told the audience to expect the unexpected. “It’s a very, very different movie,” he said. “Anything you’re expecting, you’re wrong.”

The \$130 million film opened in theaters on March 28. The National Religious Broadcasters suggested it couldn’t support Aronofsky’s film unless Paramount included a disclaimer that the movie was “inspired by” the story of Noah rather than be seen as literal scripture. Despite its overtones of death and destruction, the flood story has given birth to rainbows, countless Sunday school lessons, nursery decorations and Fisher Price toys. Many recountings of Noah’s story leave out the time, after the flood, when he passed out naked and drunk inside a tent. The name “Noah” has scored in the top 10 most popular names for newborn boys since 2009, according to the Social Security Administration. The biblical narrative of the flood is a touchstone in many religious circles, a story that’s told and retold within Judaism,

Christianity and Islam. Advocates for creationism and environmentalism draw on the story of Noah for their causes. So what makes the simple story of Noah so popular? “For Jews and Christians, and possibly Muslims, it’s a sign of judgment, that judgment is real and there will be judgment,” said Joseph Blenkinsopp, a professor emeritus at the University of Notre Dame who has studied Noah. “The flood story was a symbolic representation of that judgment.”

Universal morality

In Judaism, the story of Noah generated the Seven Laws of Noah, laws for basic human morality that non-Jews were bound to observe, such as prohibiting murder or theft. “The Noah story is the birth of the idea of universal morality, that everyone should be moral,” said Rabbi Scott Perlo of Washington’s Sixth & I Historic Synagogue. “Noah’s ark is about how goodness survives, even after things go bad, good things can come again.” Robert Gregg, a religious studies professor at Stanford University, has studied how different faiths tell the same story. In the Quran, he said, the emphasis is less on the ark and the animals and more on Noah’s relationship to the people who didn’t believe him that a flood was coming. “The repeated motif is that Noah was told: ‘You’re only a man, you’re not a god. If we get spoken to by God, we expect an angel,’ ” he said. “It’s about a prophet who goes unheeded.”

Do companies have religious rights? Supreme Court to rule

Justices take up challenge to contraception mandate

By LAUREN MARKOE
Religion News Service

WASHINGTON — When two corporations owned by Christian families, one of them Mennonite, filed suit over the Affordable Care Act, they described their complaint in simple terms: The government is forcing them to either break the law or betray their faith. But at the Supreme Court on March 25, nothing was so clear as the justices explored the murky territory where an employer’s religious rights collide with the interests of its employees or the government. On the one side is the Hobby Lobby arts-and-crafts chain and Conestoga Wood Specialties cabinetry company. On the other is the federal government, which argues that the landmark 2010 health care law gives women a statutory right to choose among 20 methods of birth control. The court, judging from the justices’ questions, is clearly divided on this potential earthquake of a religious rights case. It could be yet another instance where Justice Anthony Kennedy

U.S. LAW

provides the swing vote — in this case whether a corporation has religious rights, and whether those rights have been trampled. Hobby Lobby and Conestoga object to paying for the full range of birth control drugs and devices as required by the Affordable Care Act. To them, a handful of the methods they must cover could cause abortion. Justice Elena Kagan took up the government’s case from the bench, avowing that the families’ religious convictions were beyond doubt. But she suggested that exempting them from the law would open the door to exemptions for a slew of employers who didn’t want to cover a host of medical services — from vaccinations to blood transfusions. Kagan suggested the corporate owners had another choice: “Hobby Lobby could choose not to provide insurance.” Under the health care law, the companies would have to pay a tax instead, but it would be comparable to the costs of insurance, she said. Paul D. Clement, the lawyer for the companies, countered that such a tax would better be described as a penalty and that the corporations would suffer for it,

having to raise wages to compensate for their lack of a health care plan. Clement leaned heavily on the language of the other law that’s central to this case: the 20-year-old Religious Freedom Restoration Act, which requires the government to meet the most stringent legal test before impinging on religious rights. Solicitor General Donald B. Verrilli, who argued the government’s case, tried to poke holes in Clement’s position by questioning whether the companies have a right to sue under RFRA in the first place. After all, he argued, RFRA refers to a “person,” and a company is not a person and does not have religious rights. If the court decided that companies do have religious rights, it would be “a vast expansion of what Congress thought it was doing” in passing RFRA in 1993. Looming in the background of the case was the court’s 2010 Citizens United ruling, in which the court decided that corporations have free speech rights. Supporters of the Green family behind Hobby Lobby and the Hahn family behind Conestoga have argued that surely other First Amendment rights extend to corporations as well.

‘One faith’ connects Russia, Ukraine

By SOPHIA KISHKOVSKY
Religion News Service

ORTHODOXY

MOSCOW — Before Crimea seceded from Ukraine and joined with Russia on March 17, Patriarch Kirill of the Russian Orthodox Church called for prayers “that brothers of one faith and one blood never bring destruction to one another.” Russia has prided itself on its revival of Orthodox Christianity after decades of Soviet persecution, but conflict with Ukraine could cause division within the Russian Orthodox Church. That church has its roots in Kiev, Ukraine, where Prince Vladimir baptized his people as Christians in 988, an event viewed as a cornerstone of Russian and Ukrainian identity.

The Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate, which has 12,500 congregations, is the largest of three Orthodox churches in Ukraine. But while it has some degree of autonomy, with a Synod of Bishops that elects its own members, the church’s leader has to be approved by Moscow. In his sermon at Christ the Savior Cathedral in Moscow on March 14, Kirill, who has been known for his support of Russian President Vladimir Putin, suggested Ukraine has a right to self-determination. But he also said it must not be trapped into a spiritual division from Russia. “What we are referring to is

the Russian world, the great Russian civilization that came from the Kievan baptismal font and spread across the huge expanse of Eurasia,” he said. For the churches in Ukraine, the protests that toppled President Viktor Yanukovych also galvanized a religious awakening. Dramatic images of clergy with crosses standing between protesters and government forces went viral as the standoff escalated in January and February. “The churches in their majority on different levels supported the justifiable demands of the Maidan,” said Cyril Hovorun, a former chair of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church’s Department of External Church Relations, referring to the square in Kiev where the protests took place.

Phelps’ hate-filled legacy opposite of what he intended

By CATHY LYNN GROSSMAN
Religion News Service

Fred Phelps, the 84-year-old founder of Westboro Baptist Church and media-master of hate speech campaigns, died March 20 after devoting decades to damning Americans for tolerating homosexuality. “God Hates Fags” was the Westboro philosophy, detailed in vile slogans on signs that a tiny band of relatives toted to 40 sites a week around the country. All told, the church in Topeka, Kan., claims to have staged some

53,000 protests. Whenever there was a newsworthy death — be it Matthew Shepard, the gay teen murdered in 1998, or a soldier killed in action, a movie star, or an innocent child victim in a mass murder — Westboro would add it to the church’s picketing calendar. Phelps lived long enough to see American public opinion soar in exactly the opposite direction. The message he spread never took root, and in fact helped galvanize the gay rights movement and put other Christians on the defensive. The image of Christi-

anity he painted was a hateful, judgmental collection of rabble-rousers — an image that, paradoxically, did more to help his targets than advance his message. Experts say Phelps’ ultimate legal and social impact on the American religious landscape will be a footnote. Religious leaders lament the damage they say he did to Christians who preach God’s love and mercy. Born on Nov. 13, 1929, in Meridian, Miss., Phelps report-

OBITUARY

edly quit West Point to study at Bob Jones University and became an ordained Southern Baptist minister in 1947. But he left the SBC for a more fundamentalist theology and launched the Westboro Baptist Church in Topeka in 1955. While once considered a champion of civil rights, Phelps turned to focus lifelong enmity toward gay rights and began his notorious picketing campaign in 1991. In 2011, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled 8-1 that Westboro’s picketing was “free speech, however hateful,” said Steven Sha-

piro, legal director for the American Civil Liberties Association. Free-speech advocates uncomfortably embraced Phelps’ cause, if not his message. Albert Mohler, president of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., and a leading evangelical voice, said that by making religion appear hateful and intolerant, Phelps actually served as “an effective agent for the normalization of homosexuality. . . . He will be held accountable for a massive misrepresentation of the Christian faith.”

NEWS

‘Come and See’: Leaders visit Israel/Palestine

■ Series of learning tours planned in response to Kairos Palestine appeal

BY JENN CARRETO
Mennonite Church USA

Fifteen board members and staff representing Mennonite agencies and organizations traveled Feb. 24-March 4 to Israel/Palestine on a “Come and See” learning tour.

The tour marked the beginning of a Mennonite Church USA initiative to send 100 Mennonite leaders to the region on similar tours over the next five years.

Mennonites have been involved in relief work, service, witness and peacemaking in the region for more than 65 years.

The tour was organized in response to a 2009 appeal from Palestinian Christians called “Kairos Palestine: A Moment of Truth,” located online at kairopalestine.ps.

A coalition representing 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.”

The tour followed the path of Jesus’ life by traveling to Bethlehem, Nazareth, Galilee and Jerusalem. Participants visited Bethlehem Bible College, Nazareth Village, refugee camps, settlements and community organizations, meeting activists and villagers and hearing their stories.

In Jerusalem they spent time at *Yad Vashem*, the Holocaust memorial, and attended a Jewish Sabbath service. They also connected with people serving with Mennonite Central Committee, Mennonite Mission Network and Christian Peacemaker Teams.

Participants were left with much to contemplate and share with their faith communities.

“I am inspired by the steadfastness of Palestinians and Israelis alike in working for peace in the face of many years of dis-



Ryan Rodrick Beiler/MCC

Participants in the 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 are Isaac Villegas, Stanley Green, Ann Graber Hershberger, Palestinian tour guide Mohammad Al-Azzah, Joy Sutter, MCC Jerusalem staff Joanna Hiebert Bergen, Ron Byler, Tanya Ortman, Chad Horning, Ed Diller and Duane Oswald.

appointments,” said Chad Horning of Goshen, Ind., chief investment officer of Everence.

Horning gained a better understanding of the terms often used to describe life in the region.

“Words like security, wall, border, military, settler, outpost, tear gas, demolition, rubber-coated bullet and confiscation have more meaning when I tell the stories of people we met and who live in the context of these sterile terms,” he said.

Culture and conflict

Participants brought a range of experience and familiarity with the region. Some had visited or served there, but most were visiting for the first time.

Madeline Maldonado, associate pastor of *Iglesia Evangélica Menonita Arca de Salvación* in Fort Myers, Fla., and MMN board chair, was a first-time visitor. Before leaving, she shared, “I hope to experience the culture

*I pray that I can see
God in what seems
impossible for my
Western and Latina
mind to comprehend.*

— Madeline Maldonado

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 an MC USA Executive Board 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?”

Questions of faith

In addition to questions about the U.S. government’s involvement in the region, the group was encouraged to consider questions of faith in new light.

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

In 2011, MC USA executive director Ervin Stutzman — in consultation with the Executive Board — responded to the writers of the Kairos Palestine letter, committing to expand opportu-

nities for Mennonite leaders and members to visit Palestine and learn firsthand about the suffering there.

Stutzman and the board also wrote a letter to MC USA members, asking them to read and discuss the Kairos document, to study Scriptures together on the matter and consider how their financial lives may be enmeshed in the occupation of Palestine by Israel.

In 2013, the board underscored its desire to help the church understand both the Israeli and Palestinian experiences and the role of Christian Zionism in the conflict. A “Come and See” fund was established with initial contributions from MCC U.S., MMN and Everence to offer some scholarships.

The next Israel/Palestine learning tour is scheduled for October and will include participants from Franconia, Eastern District and Atlantic Coast conferences.

After Philippines typhoon, MCC partner cares for the caregivers

BY MELANIE HESS
Mennonite Central Committee

When Typhoon Haiyan struck the Philippines in November, it not only left a trail of ruined homes, flattened businesses and uprooted trees but also emotional trauma.

Those with emotional scars included pastors and other caregivers who would be called upon to help people in their communities and churches as soon as the wind, rain and storm surges subsided.

“I felt so helpless. I didn’t know how to protect my family,” Pastor Janar Ruiz said. “We all went to the church during the typhoon, and we couldn’t do anything but cry. I put my children under my shirt next to my skin.”

Peacebuilders Community, Inc., a Mennonite Central Committee partner, realized pastors would need assistance. PBCI is a Philippines organization with ties to the Integrated Mennonite Church of the Philippines and is a ministry of Mennonite Church Canada Witness.

Based on the assessment, PBCI developed a plan to provide 50 pastors with an opportunity to talk about their experiences and to be trained in psychological first aid, disaster risk reduction and peace and reconciliation. MCC supported the assessment and the plan.

The first group of pastors from the Philippines Council of Evangelical Churches met Feb. 4-6 in Ormoc City for the first training. Clinical psychologist Bennette



Tenecio led pastors in sharing about their feelings during the typhoon and afterward.

Pastor Jonathan Pobadora, who lost his home and whose

family was still living in a tent three months after the typhoon, found new meaning in his emotions.

“Fear is what allowed us to

Pastor Jesusa Garba and other Filipino pastors take a break from sharing about Typhoon Haiyan to play a group game.

Jeanne Jantzi/MCC

survive,” he said. “We evacuated and stayed away from danger areas. God made us survivors by giving us fear. I am thankful for these emotions.”

This psychological first aid training prepared the participants to walk alongside people suffering from disaster.

The training also helped pastors, who historically have not looked to each other for support, to establish closer personal connections, said Jeanne Jantzi, who attended the training in her role as an MCC area director for Southeast Asia. She and her husband, Dan, also an area director, are based in Chiang Mai, Thailand, and are from Lowville, N.Y.

“When there are people who care for us, it lightens the pain,” said Pastor Eufemio Surigao.

MOSAIC

A patchwork of Anabaptist news and ideas

Sloth is more than laziness

Of the Seven Deadly Sins, we might think sloth is the one least likely to afflict Mennonites, says columnist Melissa Miller in *Canadian Mennonite*. But sloth is more than avoiding work. “In spiritual terms, a sloth is not tuned into God’s voice or is neglecting what God has spoken,” Miller writes. “Sloth can be expressed as dull cynicism. Some of us may know it as a sneaky, life-sucking voice that distracts us with messages of pessimism and hopelessness.”

The messy parts are important too

There are a lot of messy stories in the Book of Judges. Conference pastor Ward Parkinson writes in *The Messenger*, the magazine of the Evangelical Mennonite Conference, that incest, rape, idolatry, murder and other sins are carried out by both the bad guys and the saints. The stories’ inclusion in the Bible is important, because the Bible deals with reality, meeting sinners where they are. “The individual stories of Scripture, like pieces of a puzzle, come together to display God’s glorious story of creation, redemption and restoration.”

MB church uses a dojo to preach peace

North Kildonan Mennonite Brethren Church in Winnipeg, Man., has been home to a karate *dojo*, or training facility, since 2012. The project is intergenerational, writes Karla Braun in *Mennonite Brethren Herald*, the magazine of the Canadian Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches. Forty-five people between the ages of 5 and 50 take part in a weekly devotional as part of their training. “People who know how to fight don’t; they stop fights,” says youth pastor Ben Harapiak. “We want to teach people how not to fight — and we want to build Christian community.”

Get back to discernment

Clyde G. Kratz, executive conference minister of Virginia Mennonite Conference of Mennonite Church USA, laments in the conference newsletter *Connections* that the broader church has not called for discernment on faith issues at conference and denominational gatherings. “It is my perspective that much of our decision-making at these gatherings is approval of minutes, receiving well-written reports and gaining feedback,” he says. “It is my

hope to provide opportunity in Virginia Mennonite Conference to clarify our core beliefs in ways that can contribute to revitalization of our faith and life as followers of Christ.”

EMMC loses U.S. churches

The Evangelical Mennonite Mission Conference — located predominantly in Canada — was informed in December that churches in its U.S. region were withdrawing from the body after a year of evaluating their distant relationship. The four churches are located in Sublette, Kan., Seminole and Tigertown, Texas, and Storm Lake, Iowa, and have organized themselves as the Active Mission Conference. The U.S. region represented 425 of EMMC’s 5,334 members.

Pigeon-breeding scheme collapses

Arlan Galbraith was sentenced to seven years in prison March 18 in Kitchener, Ont., for fraud — what prosecutors described as a pigeon-breeding pyramid scheme that targeted hundreds of mostly Mennonite, Amish and Hutterite U.S. and Canadian farmers. Investors lost an estimated \$20 million when Galbraith’s Pigeon King International collapsed in 2008. Bill Top, a former salesman for the company, testified at sentencing about how traditional communities would be targeted for sales of pigeons for up to \$500 per pair. “The strongest comment he made . . . was they were aliens and he didn’t know why they would live that way in this day and age,” said Top, as reported by *Metro* newspaper.

Go to college, lose your faith

The Eastern Pennsylvania Mennonite Church opposes higher education because of its negative effect on Christian faith, writes editor Bruce A. Stauffer in *The Eastern Mennonite Testimony*. When Mennonite youth began to pursue college educations, “the majority returned with contempt for their former faith,” Stauffer writes. Mennonites started their own colleges, but these too were “invaded by the same secular thinking.” Higher education leads to professional lifestyles, which have a detrimental impact on the home. It takes youth away from parental guidance, making peer pressure the most important influence at a time when they are most vulnerable. Pride is flaunted, and few become more humble. It is far better to seek the accreditation of the heavenly Father.

Does the Spirit need our Towers of Babel?

I’m grateful for an independent *MWR* serving the people of the church, especially on topics like Eastern Mennonite University’s “trial balloon” on hiring gay faculty and Mountain States Mennonite Conference’s licensing of a lesbian pastor.

Denominational colleges always face tension between promoting church dogma and the academic freedom needed to educate their students in critically engaging the surrounding culture. To resolve such tension, many have left their church behind and become private elitist institutions. If EMU is censured for potentially hiring gay faculty, why not for diluting/confusing Mennonite peace witness by its training military chaplains?

Many Mennonites have moved to the Mountain West

not just for fresher air and greater sunshine but to escape the spiritual claustrophobia they felt in their church communities in the East and Midwest. Mountain States congregations are mostly small, scattered, highly congregational in outlook and often have many members from non-Mennonite backgrounds. I fear that if Mennonite Church USA faces a choice between losing large, wealthy congregations in the East and Midwest or expelling a small regional district, it will choose the pragmatic option.

Whether in church or society, decades of theoretical dialogue rarely produce major changes in long-held positions. Tipping points come when someone “breaks the rules” and accepts the consequences — as in 19th-

century abolition/suffragette movements and 1960s civil rights. Ironically, in the merger of the Mennonite Church and General Conference Mennonite Church, MC USA lost the Canadians and several thousand conservative members and had to cajole some conferences to join — and now it may expel one?

After the Jerusalem Conference (Acts 15), Paul and Barnabas separated. The Spirit blows where it wants; does it really need Towers of (bureaucratic) Babel to do its work? After 17 years, Germantown Mennonite Church in Philadelphia is succeeding as an independent congregation. Is separation *sin per se* — even if it can be accomplished without animosity?

Dan Leatherman
Fort Collins, Colo.

Continued from page 6

rating weakens our ranks, holds us up to ridicule and hurts our efforts to share the good news. Why can’t we be more like Jesus instead of like the Pharisees?

Bill Cowell
Hutchinson, Kan.

Inclusive, like Jesus

I was astonished by the number of articles and letters on homosexuality in the March 17 *MWR*. Is this because many church people consider homosexuality evil and a choice rather than a genetic condition over which the individual has no control? Scientists overwhelmingly agree that homosexuality is biologically determined and is not learned nor open to choice. Human life is a process, and over time countless attitudes, understandings and practices change. It would be ironic if the secular culture would be more accepting of gays and lesbians than most Christian churches. Jesus never referred to homosexuality, and he was inclusive in his approach to people. We should ask, “What would Jesus do?”

Jacob D. Goering
North Newton, Kan.

Who serves whom?

I wonder if David Martino, when writing in his March 17 letter that “*MWR* serves the church, not the other way around,” is confusing the church leadership with the wider church. Publishing censored accounts of board meetings may serve the leaders, but does it serve the church?

Clint Stucky
Wichita, Kan.

I agree with Paul Schrag (“Media Control,” Editorial, March 5). There is no need to send a reporter to Mennonite Church USA Executive Board meetings if he or she is not allowed to report from a professional viewpoint. What does Acts 15 tell us? “So Paul and Barnabas were appointed, along with some other believers, . . . to see the apostles and elders about this question. The church sent them on their way.” Let’s read Acts 15 and ask how it applies today. One thing is clear in Acts 15:35: “But Paul and Barn-

abas remained in Antioch, where they and many others taught and preached the word of the Lord.” The issues were left behind. The focus was on moving ahead with Christ and evangelism. If we focused on proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ and not on issues, would there not be more unity and a growing church?

Carl L. Smeltzer
Harrisonburg, Va.

Hold voices together

Given our long practice of nurturing and calling people to leadership positions from within the congregation, it should surprise no one that congregations who have members with an LGBT orientation might, sooner or later, call forth those gifted for leadership. Natural as the process may be in our polity, some now see this as a point of crisis. In response, even though Jesus warned against it, we seem much more comfortable with judging than with facing each other in conversation.

Leadership is being called to make decisive statements, but leadership itself should be doing the calling. The call is to become a constituency with the guts to face one another, speak honestly, listen carefully and persevere as long as it takes to sense together the guidance of God. Leadership should invest resources and trained facilitation in regional, conference and local groups of un-like-minded Mennonites to embrace this challenge. Some will object that they are tired of talking, but I suspect our tiredness is miniscule compared to God’s weariness with our whining, while we won’t do the hard work of discernment (Heb. 5:14).

Is God in this conversation? If we believe so, then we must hold the disparate voices together in disciplined conversation. If we turn our backs on one another, neither the world nor the church will have gained one iota of wisdom, and God’s grace, like our body, will once again be broken.

Don Rheinheimer
Lombard, Ill.

Love and law

This is a letter of encouragement to those who accept the Bible’s statements that God de-

clares homosexuality as sin.

What is the “rule of law” and the “rule of love” cited by the writers of a letter urging inclusiveness of people in same-sex relationships in Mennonite Church USA? Jesus loved us even when we were sinners. His love does not trump our sin but forgives our sin. We become new creatures in Christ. Continuous practicing of sin stops. If a candidate for membership cannot accept Scripture or the teaching of leadership, the dialogue should stop until there is more prayer and fasting. It is troubling for a brother or sister to say, “I am going to do my thing,” no matter what Scripture or the Confession of Faith says. Is that the rule of love?

Pastors and Christian organizations are helping people to be delivered from same-sex relationships. The teaching on deliverance from homosexual addiction has not been forthcoming from Mennonite publications or leaders.

Sanford Oyer
Wooster, Ohio

Resist empire’s lies

Does *MWR* seek to inform its readers about world events? We are much in need of help. My most direct experience of the “full-spectrum dominance” that is U.S. policy occurs when I receive the mainstream media’s reporting. Whether via NPR or Fox News, this reporting masks U.S. responsibility for violence and evil and creates a false pretext for us to fear others.

Consider the gassing of children in the suburbs of Damascus in August or the utter collapse of the agreement Ukrainian President Yanukovich reached with the leaders of three protest groups and European Union leaders on Feb. 21. Western mainstream media have given us the false impressions that the Syrian army gassed the children and that the new government in Ukraine came to power because Yanukovich lost political support.

Because Jesus is Lord, we resist the empire’s lies and refuse to accept its story about the world. If *MWR* does not help us with this, where should we go for understanding?

Berry Friesen
Lancaster, Pa.

NEWS

WORLD REPORT



Ryan Rodrick Beiler/MCC

Beside a section of the wall that divides Israeli and Palestinian communities in Bethlehem, J. Daryl Byler, right, talks with members of a 2011 MCC learning tour from Ontario. Byler will pull from his experience of serving with MCC in Palestine and Israel and surrounding countries as he leads monthly conversations at U.S. churches in 2014.

Peace conversations planned

■ **MCC U.S. offers monthly gatherings for Christians who want to support peace in Palestine and Israel**

BY **LINDA ESPENSHADE**
Mennonite Central Committee

AKRON, Pa. — To encourage the pursuit of peace in Palestine and Israel, Mennonite Central Committee U.S. will launch monthly gatherings in the U.S. this year for people who want to explore their beliefs, concerns and understanding of this conflict.

The main idea and core value of the Conversations for Peace in Palestine and Israel initiative is “our strong belief that Christ’s love is available for all people, all the time, and it is not assigned exclusively to a particular people or group,” said J Ron Byler, executive director of MCC U.S.

“Focusing this effort on the conflict in Palestine and Israel gives participants an opportunity to explore how Christ’s love leads us to respond to this conflict.”

J. Daryl Byler — former MCC representative with his wife, Cindy Lehman Byler, in Palestine and Israel, Iran, Iraq and Jordan — will facilitate the monthly conversations with churches and groups who invite him. Byler is now executive director for Eastern Mennonite University’s Center for Justice and Peacebuilding in Harrisonburg, Va.

Topics will include:

- Paths to peace for everyone in the region;
- Theological understandings about the state of Israel;
- Fundamental justice issues in the region; and
- Stories of Palestinians, including Palestinian Christians.

“Agreeing on ways to love and encourage peace in the context

of the Middle East is a challenge for Christians in the U.S., including MCC supporters, because many have different theological perspectives about the modern-day state of Israel,” Daryl Byler said. “As we explore these topics together, I hope our understanding of others’ perspectives and the needs of Palestinians and Israelis will grow.”

Learning tours

In addition, MCC U.S. is working closely with Mennonite Church USA on learning tours for church leaders to Palestine and Israel during the next five years. MCC welcomes the opportunity to develop similar plans with other supporting denominations.

More information about participating in Conversations for Peace or learning tours is available from susanwenger@mcc.org or 717-859-1151.

INDIA

Women theologians meet for first time

BHILAI — The first national gathering of Theologically Trained Anabaptist Women in India was a milestone in India’s Anabaptist history, organizers said.

About 20 theologically trained women participated from nearly all the eight constituencies of the Mennonite churches in India.

The Jan. 3-5 gathering’s theme, “Streams of Living Waters,” was taken from Song of Solomon 4:15. Jesus is the living water, and those who are in him become the source of living waters for the church and its ministries to the oppressed.

A session on Anabaptist distinctives was helpful for providing encouragement and an understanding of theological heritage. Other sessions addressed violence against women in the home, society and church. This initiated interest in extending ministries for such victims.

A desire for uniting an association of women theologians in India was realized through a series of meetings and the cooperation of Mennonite Christian Service and Fellowship of India and All India Mennonite Women.

The Theologically Trained Anabaptist Women in India association was inaugurated at the triennial conference of the All India Mennonite Women in October 2012 at Cuttack.

“We praise God that a history is made for his glory and that theologically trained

We praise God that a history is made for his glory.

— Rechal Bagh

women in India are united now, having a platform which will further sustain them in their continuing education, spiritual life and

its contribution in the life of the church,” said Rechal Bagh, the association’s president.

Bagh said it was encouraging to know that Mennonite women in other countries were also working to extend the association’s ministry.

Theologically Trained Anabaptist Women in India requests prayers that it can be a channel of ministry in a challenging Indian context.

— TTAWI

MDS partners with Catholic Charities in N.J.

Catholic Charities, Diocese of Metuchen and Mennonite Disaster Service

PERTH AMBOY, N.J. — Catholic Charities, the Diocese of Metuchen and Mennonite Disaster Service have partnered to repair and restore homes destroyed by Hurricane Sandy. After more than a year, thousands of families are still unable to inhabit their homes in New Jersey.

The partnership between the diocese and MDS is making it possible for families to return to neighborhoods, in homes rebuilt by MDS volunteers. The workers are housed by the diocese, which also provides building supplies.

“There are so many reasons we have loved working with the MDS volunteers: they are brilliant builders, they have a strong sense of mission and genuine humility. All we had to do was provide shelter and building supplies. They arrive with everything they need, including a cook,” said diocese executive director Marianne Majewski. “This

partnership has meant that we can repair or restore damaged homes for a fraction of the cost.

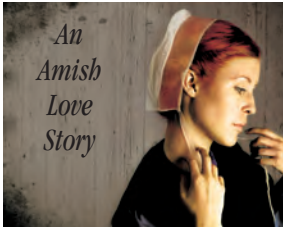
More families can be served and return to their homes in a short-time frame.”

Wanda E. Brunstetter’s
Half-Stitched
The Musical



Join the Half-Stitched Amish Quilting Club in a delightful musical journey of self-discovery, healing and humor. In an exciting tale only *New York Times* bestselling author Wanda Brunstetter could spin, “six loose threads and an Amish widow” bind together like scraps of fabric stitched under the loving guidance of their Amish teacher.

Beverly Lewis’
the CONFESSION
THE HIT MUSICAL



Treat yourself to this captivating, inspiring story of a young Amish woman caught in the middle of secrets and lies, love lost and found and personal heartache and healing. Blending foot-stomping music with heartfelt ballads, the hit musical weaves together *New York Times* bestselling author Beverly Lewis’ trilogy, *The Shunning*, *The Confession* and *The Reckoning*.

Martha Bolton’s



the new musical

Emmy- and Dove-nominated writer Martha Bolton, the genius behind adaptations of *The Confession* and *Half-Stitched*, brings to the stage this entertaining, inspiring story of Plain common sense triumphing over politics. As Amish farmer Josiah Stoltzfus gets spirited onto the national stage as a write-in candidate for President, you’ll love this refreshing new take on Beltway politics.

Bird-in-Hand Family Restaurant & Stage

Bird-in-Hand, PA
“Half-Stitched” Apr. 1-Nov. 29
800-790-4069
www.EnjoyBIHStage.com

Blue Gate Theater

Shipshewana, IN
“Half-Stitched” Apr. 29-July 5
“Josiah for President” July 14-Dec. 13
888-447-4725
www.BlueGateTheater.com

Carlisle Inn

Sugarcreek, OH
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NEWS

COMFORTING GESTURE



Mennonite Church of Normal

Project coordinator Gerry Schrock, in purple at the pulpit, speaks during a Feb. 2 dedication at the Mennonite Church of Normal, Ill., of more than 20 comforters completed to share with people in the Washington, Ill., community who were hit by Nov. 7 tornadoes. People of all ages participated.

Religious liberty expert speaks on war taxes

■ **Decision in Conestoga Wood Specialties case will impact claims of conscience**

By **BERRY FRIESEN**

LANCASTER, Pa. — Conscientious objection to paying for war is not protected by the U. S. Constitution. But it might be protected under the Religious Freedom Restoration Act, depending on how the Supreme Court rules in two cases challenging the Affordable Care Act’s birth control mandate. Constitutional law attorney and First Amendment litigator Peter Goldberger spoke on “Religious Conscience, the Law and the Taxes That Support Perpetual War” March 15 at the Friends Meeting House in Lancaster.

1040 for Peace, a group that encourages conscientious reflection about the payment of taxes that support war, sponsored the event. One of the ACA challenges, *Conestoga Wood Specialties Inc. v. Sebelius*, involves Mennonites who own a family-controlled corporation. The plaintiffs seek a broad interpretation of the Religious Freedom Restoration Act, a 1996 federal law that forbids a substantial burdening of religious exercise unless the government demonstrates it cannot achieve a compelling purpose in a less restrictive way. Even if the court rejects Conestoga’s appeal, Goldberger said, religious tax resisters will have new legal legs if the court interprets the Religious Freedom Restoration Act broadly. The intentional failure to pay \$10.40 of taxes owed — as the

1040 for Peace group advocates — is a misdemeanor under federal law. It is punishable by imprisonment for up to a year. Goldberger noted, however, that “in 30 years of representing tax resisters, I have seen that penalty applied only when tax resisters acted like tax evaders and deviated from the values of truthfulness and transparency.” He cited the example of Robin Harper, a Quaker cabinet-maker who has resisted payment of federal income taxes since 1958 and has never been criminally charged. Goldberger also commented on the Religious Freedom Peace Tax Fund Act, legislation in Congress that would permit taxpayers to direct payments away from Pentagon activity and related expenditures. “If you are a conscientious ob-

jector to war and believe paying for war is participation in war, enacting the Religious Freedom Peace Tax Fund Act is the answer,” he said. “We’re living in an era of boundless and endless war. Yet it is a different kind of war, without traditional armies following the rules of war.” Because the war never ends, it is considered normal. Nations and their citizens no longer decide whether or not to commit themselves to organized violence; it is always present. Thus, they no longer have times of assessment and self-examination. Civil disobedience may be the only way this will change, Goldberger said. “I have seen civil disobedience bring about legal reforms that lobbying and other forms of advocacy never would have achieved,” he said.

MC Canada assembly will run wild

By **DEBORAH FROESE**
Mennonite Church Canada

WINNIPEG, Man. — The Mennonite Church Canada assembly July 3-6 in Winnipeg will explore living out Christian faith in a world where attitudes and ideals are shifting. The theme, “Wild Hope: Faith for an Unknown Season,” is based on Mark 4:35-41, the story of Jesus calming stormy seas. “Being engaged with God means we’d better hold on for a wild ride,” said executive minister Dave Bergen. “Not everything is predictable and tame, and that’s the ‘wildness’ of Wild Hope. The other end of this is an assurance. Our God is a God who offers hope for a world so much in need of it.” A children’s and junior youth assembly will be held on site at Canadian Mennonite University for kids up to age 14. Plenary sessions will feature updates from and discussions with the Being a Faithful Church and Future Directions task forces. Keynote speakers are Brian Quan, minister of English ministries at Toronto Chinese Mennonite Church; Betty Pries, a conflict management specialist with Associates Resourcing the Church; and David Driedger, associate minister at First Mennonite Church in Winnipeg. A minister’s conference, “Prayer That Heals the Heart,” is scheduled July 3. Led by Karl and Charlotte Lehman, a husband and wife who are a psychiatrist and a pastor, the event will equip leaders to stay healthy in times of change.



Carol Peters

Volunteers participate in Mennonite Central Committee Central States’ annual comforter blitz March 10-11 in Yoder, Kan. Workers completed 168 comforters, many of which will be sent around the world. MCC annually ships around 60,000 comforters overseas.



Marjorie Shoemaker

Women from several churches tie a comforter at the Mennonite Central Committee Central States annual comforter blitz at the Yoder, Kan., campus of Journey Mennonite Church.

Hundreds tie up comforter blitz

YODER, Kan. — Nearly 300 workers representing 57 churches completed 168 comforters at the Mennonite Central Committee Central States annual comforter blitz March 10-11 at the Yoder campus of Journey Mennonite Church. Participants make the pieced tops ahead of time and to bring to the blitz, where the top is

matched with a back, batting is added and the comforter is stretched in a quilting frame to be tied. The hems are stitched by machine. About 10 comforters were set aside to be sold at the Kansas Relief Sale April 11-12 in Hutchinson. The rest are given directly to MCC to be used for refugees.

Jordan recently requested another 20,000 comforters and blankets because of Syrian refugees crossing into the country. Participants came from as far as Indianapolis, Saskatchewan and Mexico to take part and learn how the event functioned, in hopes of replicating the activity elsewhere.

NEWS



Linda Shelly/MMN

Elena Salas, Ana María Roca and Basilia Toro Orellana practice making origami animals at the *Equipo Sirviendo a Cristo* workshop in November. They'll later teach origami to children at vacation Bible school.

VBS passion inspires, shapes young leaders in Bolivia

By SARA ALVAREZ
Mennonite Mission Network

Nearly 30 neighborhood children gathered for a week in December — a summer month in Bolivia — at Josué Roman Cavero's home, where he and his mother organized a vacation Bible school.

In addition to the weeklong session at his house, Josué, who is 14, helped lead two other VBS sessions. He traveled as far as 90 minutes by bus each way to help bring Bible lessons to the children.

Josué started as a VBS student at a young age, but last year he decided to take more responsibility and start training to lead VBS. He attended the youth leadership workshop, *Equipo Sirviendo a Cristo* (Serve Christ Team), offered by the Bolivia Mennonite Church.

"I loved that I got to learn about Jesus and Moses [during VBS]," he said. "I like to share the word of God, and now that I'm old enough, I wanted to learn how to teach the kids."

Margrit Kipfer Barrón, a mission worker with Mennonite Mission Network and *Schweizerische Mennonitsche Mission* (Swiss Mennonite Mission), helps organize the youth discipleship workshops and VBS for Bolivian churches. She sees the

sessions as important to forming strong spiritual lives. MMN helps fund the youth and children's programs.

When she started working in Bolivia in 1994, Kipfer Barrón wanted to start youth camps like she had enjoyed during her childhood. But Bolivian church leaders told her that camps would not work at that time because of their high cost. She chose to start VBS since they could achieve the same goals for less money. The church has since added camp experiences.

To train more VBS leaders, Kipfer Barrón and the Bolivian church developed the *Equipo Sirviendo a Cristo* workshops in 2006. During these classes, the youth study Scripture so that they aren't just reciting the curriculum. Then, they learn kid-friendly ways to communicate the message.

There are two workshops each year. Forty participants came to the session in November. Thirty of them helped during at least one session of VBS. In December, 13 VBS sessions reached about 700 children.

Kipfer Barrón sees the classes as a place for youth to mature in their spiritual lives.

"[Josué] is a very young leader yet, but he is showing a lot of dedication to the work of the Lord," she said.



Dale D. Gehman

The Bowmansville (Pa.) 2 Bible quizzing team receives the first-place trophy in the Invitational Tournament hosted by Atlantic Coast Conference of Mennonite Church USA on March 23 at Lancaster Mennonite School. Bowmansville 2 beat Petra 1 in overtime. This was the 40th annual event that brings teams from Ohio, Virginia and Pennsylvania together for Mennonite "March Madness." From left are Derick Weaver, Ethan Yoder, Devin Weaver, Brett Haller (with trophy), Erin Shirk, quizzing coordinator Fred Hertzler and coach Audrey Haller. Another coach, Donna Horst, is behind Fred Hertzler.

Website gathers Anabaptist stories of struggle

Continued from page 1

mains inspiring and relevant, it does not include the testimonies of the Anabaptists who have also suffered for their faith in the years since 1685. Building on the spiritual legacy of *Martyrs Mirror*, the Bearing Witness Stories Project's new website will gather and circulate these stories of costly discipleship within the Anabaptist global communion, from the 1500s to the present.

Bearing Witness aims to encourage faithfulness to the way of Jesus while also strengthening relationships within the global Anabaptist church. Initiated by Goshen College's Institute for the Study of Global Anabaptism, the project is a collaborative endeavor with a steering committee that includes representatives from six Anabaptist groups.

The website invites users to

read the stories while also providing opportunities for deeper and broader engagement. Stories can be shared via a variety of social media platforms. A comment forum follows each story, allowing further conversation.

John D. Roth, professor of history and institute director, hopes the website will inspire people who are already deeply committed to a Christian ethic of peace as well as those who have been disappointed by more institutional forms of Christianity.

"I hope that the site could become a useful resource for teachers at church-related schools, Sunday school teachers, pastors looking for sermon illustrations, perhaps individuals looking for weekly inspiration/devotional material," he said.

The website also hosts a blog that will explore issues of spirituality, gender, interreligious

and ecumenical relationships, political advocacy and other themes that relate to the website's growing story collection.

The stories come from Anabaptist faith communities from around the world. One of the site's main purposes is to elicit further storytelling, especially from communities who may not have yet had the chance to share their stories beyond a local or regional level.

"One Guatemalan church leader noted that the generation of Christians who lived through the Contra wars of the 1980s is now aging," Roth said. "His hope was that the project could provide a framework for his church to gather the stories of ordinary people who suffered deeply during those years."

Anyone with a story to tell can submit it via the "Share a Story" form on the website.

EMU speaker links Christian shalom, Native harmony

By STEVE SHENK
Eastern Mennonite University

HARRISONBURG, Va. — The "harmony way" of Native Americans is a lot like the shalom taught by Jesus, said a seminary professor from Oregon who spoke March 12-13 at Eastern Mennonite University.

Randy Woodley is a Cherokee Indian who has spent a lifetime studying the ways of his people as well as the teachings of Jesus.

"It may at first sound strange to you," he said at an academic forum in the Common Grounds Coffeehouse, "but the more I learned about Jesus the more he seemed like an Indian spiritual leader or a medicine man to me."

Woodley, professor of faith and culture at George Fox Seminary in Portland, spoke at EMU's annual Augsburg Lecture Series on Christian evangelism and

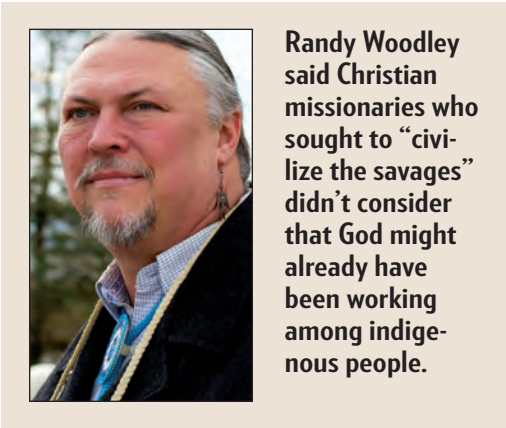
mission.

In 28 years of Christian ministry among Native Americans, Woodley has seen their core values of harmony and balance in a similar light to the Christian concept of shalom. He chose this as the subject of his doctoral dissertation from Asbury Seminary.

"Shalom is woven into the very fabric of being indigenous," he said.

"Shalom is a lot more than peace," Woodley said at a university chapel service. "It's the way God designed the world to be — one community, embracing all creation."

The more he studied the concept of shalom in the Bible and in church history, however, the more he came to believe that Christians have fallen short in



Randy Woodley said Christian missionaries who sought to "civilize the savages" didn't consider that God might already have been working among indigenous people.

practicing true shalom.

The first Christian missionaries to Native American communities, for example, held Western colonialist attitudes about conquering non-Christian lands and "civilizing the savages." They had little awareness their ideas and actions were devastating to indigenous cultures, Woodley said. Nor did they consider that God

might already have been working among indigenous people.

"Theologically and missionologically, we should always begin by asking in what ways God is already active in the culture," he said. "Native American values include an already-present relationship with the Creator. And Christians, at least first-century Christians, believed Christ is already present in the culture via his work as Creator."

Woodley said shalom is antithetical to most American values because it is cooperation above competition and community above the individual.

"I am urging Americans to live out Christ's values through biblical shalom and specifically through understanding the Native American harmony way," he wrote in a scholarly paper,

which he read at the academic forum.

Woodley began his address at the university chapel by speaking about his background and his ancestral roots in the Shenandoah Valley near the EMU campus — both from a Cherokee tribe and a white settler community. In the 1970s, he said, he was an angry young man with a meth addiction. After he converted to Christianity and became a "flaming evangelist," his Christian colleagues told him to ignore his Native American heritage and focus on saving "lost souls."

As Woodley read the Bible, however, he was drawn to a broader vision, especially as he studied the Christian community described in Acts. The early Christians followed Jesus' teachings — a different way of loving and living, and urged compassion for the poor and marginalized.

CONGREGATIONS

OHIO

WAUSEON

Tedrow Mennonite Church

There was a commissioning prayer for Lee and Barb Hoylman and Phil and Shirley Crossgrove, who went to Guatemala with nine people from other congregations to work on a Christian school, Jan. 16-26. They painted, worked on a steel gate and did cement work.

The JYF and sponsors Tim and Heather Myers went for a winter retreat to Camp Luz Jan. 17-19.

R. Duane Eash, 75, died Feb. 17 at his winter home in Bradenton, Fla. Survivors: wife, Mary Alice; sons Keith, Lonnie and Jason; daughters Beverly and Denise; nine grandchildren; six great-grandchildren.

Birth: Kiptyn Dale, Feb. 13, to Kirk and Leah Weldy.

Bible quizzers this year are Katie Grieser, Nikki Fetterman, Jacob Myers, Peyton Miller, Ricki Whitten and Ava Hoylman. Joan Grieser is the coach.

Commissioning was held for Kevin, Kristy, Austin, Jacob, Natalie and Joel Aeschliman on Feb. 9, for Floyd Miller on Feb. 16 and Lynn, Tami and Peyton Miller on Feb. 23. This is a time for families to share their journey and for the congregation to get to know each other better. — *Correspondent*

COLUMBIANA

Midway Mennonite Church

Worship music and sermons became available online in January on Midway’s website. Ernest Martin provided the sermon Jan. 5.

John Clark provided the sermon Feb. 9, and Bibles were presented to 12-year-olds Amanda Crum, Emily McDonald and Lydia Schmader.

Pastor Jesse Johnson and Ernest Martin teamed to lead four discussion sessions for people interested in exploring church membership, and open to others, about Anabaptist Mennonites.

Midway hosted an Ohio Conference cluster meeting Feb. 19.

Feb. 22 featured an “Apple Night,” a fun time and fundraiser to help with costs for a Midway retreat in April. — *Ernest Martin*

STRYKER

Lockport Mennonite Church

Mike and Linda Stuckey left for Duluth, Minn., to be unit leaders in January and February at the Mennonite Disaster Service unit there. Twice work groups of volunteers from Lockport joined them.

Jan. 19 was Stewardship Sunday at Lockport. Our guest speaker was

Vyron Schmidt from Everence.

Noteworthy, a musical group from Pettisville High School, under the direction of Duane Beck, led us in worship on Feb. 9.

Our lead pastor, Steve Heatwole, has returned after being on sabbatical for four months. During that time he visited Kosovo, Albania, Spain, North Africa and England. He also did service work at the Hopi Mission School and in Guatemala.

Birth: Corbin Jack, Feb. 23, to Andrew and Brittany Spotts.

Barbara (Bobbie) Beck, 67, died Dec. 31. Survivors: husband, Don; son Dustin Beck; daughter Brooke Scheidler; and two grandchildren. — *Barb Crossgrove*

PENNSYLVANIA

SPRINGS

Springs Mennonite Church

We celebrated two baby dedications. Easton Grey Brenneman, son of Trey and Wendy Brenneman, was dedicated Jan. 19, and Noah Yoder, son of Matthew and Heather Yoder, was dedicated Feb. 2.

On Feb. 2 we had our second annual Souper Bowl Challenge meal, a meal where soups were donated and a winning soup was judged according to donations received. This was a fundraiser, with donations divided between Allegheny Conference and the Bhutanese Nepali Church in Pittsburgh.

On Feb. 16, Titus Peachy of Mennonite Central Committee joined us to bring messages on the subject of peace and justice. He met with the young adult Sunday school class during the Sunday school hour and with the MYF that evening. He brought the message during the worship service.

Many of our congregation were saddened by the death of Robert Otto, who grew up in our community and congregation. He spent 40 years in Brussels, Belgium, serving as a pastor, director of a hostel for university students, helping mission workers learn French, and teaching Protestant religion classes in high schools. He died Dec. 31 at age 78. — *Lois Hepler*

BIRD-IN-HAND

Stumptown Mennonite Church

Our congregation participated in “Sanctity of Life Sunday” on Jan. 19 along with the Baby Bottle Boomerang in conjunction with Susquehanna Valley Pregnancy Services. The goal is to fill your baby bottle with a check, cash or coin. Our guest speaker on Jan. 19 was Dan Siegrist, who provided a

We welcome reports from all Mennonite congregations. For guidelines, write to editor@mennoworld.org.

related message, “Out of the Mouth of Babies.”

A Sister Care lunch was held on Jan. 26 so those taking part could get acquainted with their “Caring Sister.” We are trying a new share-and-response session after the sermon each week with a focus on responding to the message, sharing prayer requests and words of encouragement.

Several in the church are taking part in “Let’s Read the Bible Together,” in order to read through the Bible in 2014. — *Nan Brown*

PERKASIE

Deep Run East Mennonite Church

We sent a 14-member MAMA team to Honduras. This was the 26th team we have sent in 14 years.

Our church is studying “The Story” for the Year of the Bible. The theme verse is Jer. 15:16.

The men’s retreat was held at Spruce Lake Jan. 16-17, with Gordon MacDonald as speaker.

The prayer room got a face-lift, thanks to Ruthie Swartley and Barb Hackman.

Kelsie Ann Landis, daughter of Mat and Jess Landis, was dedicated on Jan. 19.

Birth: Conner Lee, Dec. 20, to Sheila and Scott Bohlman. Grandparents are Dave and Patsy Overholt.

George Wismer died Jan. 5. Survivor: wife, Lois.

Ruth Derstine died Jan. 18. Survivor: a daughter, Jeanette Baum.

Miriam Detweiler died Feb. 5. Survivor: husband, Durell.

Margaret Leatherman died Feb. 23. Survivors: two children, Rich Leatherman and Gerry Schmidt; along with 114 descendants.

— *Evelyn Nuneviller*

MARYLAND

HYATTSVILLE

Hyattsville Mennonite Church

We started 2014 with our own version of the 12 Scripture Project. We will explore scripture in a variety of ways for 12 months, and four new small groups have formed as part of this endeavor.

The adult Sunday school class is spending the first few months of the year exploring what authority means in various contexts.

ing at Pleasant Valley Mennonite Church.

■ June 19-22, **Mount Pleasant, Iowa**, Central Plains Mennonite Conference annual meeting at Iowa Wesleyan College.

■ June 21, **Ogema, Minn.**, Upper Midwest Relief Sale near Strawberry Lake Mennonite Church.

Western

■ April 4-5, **Fresno, Calif.**, West Coast Mennonite Relief Sale & Auction at Fresno Pacific University.

■ April 11-12, **Nampa, Idaho**, Idaho Mennonite World Relief Sale at College Church of the Nazarene.

■ May 10, **Fresno, Calif.**, Fresno Pacific University commencement.

■ May 16-17, **Upland, Calif.**, Southern California Festival & Sale at Pacific Christian Center.

■ June 20-21, **Kalispell, Mont.**, Pacific Northwest Mennonite Conference annual meeting at Kalispell Mennonite Church.

■ June 20-21, **Glendale, Ariz.**, Pacific Southwest Mennonite Conference annual meeting at Trinity Mennonite Church.

On Jan. 12, Catherine Maresca, from the Center for Children and Theology, preached on children’s spirituality and the Bible.

Our annual Hospitality Night was Jan. 26. More than 100 congregants met in each other’s homes to share food and fellowship.

Six women from the congregation participated in the Women Doing Theology conference in Leesburg, Va., on Feb. 20-22.

On Feb. 23, the “HMC Greens,” a congregational group focused on the environment and creation care, led worship, and Gabriel Elsner gave the message. — *Jake Short*

FLORIDA

SARASOTA

Covenant Mennonite Fellowship

In December, we accomplished our goal of eliminating our congregational debt before Epiphany.

In January, we commissioned a pastoral search committee. Our pastor, Jim Miller, is stepping down on June 30.

On Jan. 18 we hosted Ted Swartz and Tim Ruebke in a performance to benefit Christian Peacemaker Teams.

On Jan. 26, World Fellowship Sunday, several former and present leaders from Southeast Conference joined us for worship in a step toward healing in light of our departure from the conference in 2011. Eve MacMaster of Emmanuel Mennonite Church preached, and conference minister Marco Guete joined Pastor Jim Miller in a service of communion.

Carol Wise, Sara Wenger Shenk and Megan Ramer were guest preachers during the season of Epiphany. — *Linse Miller*

VIRGINIA

HARRISONBURG

Community Mennonite Church

Worship services in January and February focused on “Anabaptist Identity,” lifting up themes and practices that characterize our heritage and current Christian life. Three Sundays in January included a membership covenant renewal, providing opportunities for members and associate members to give faith statements in renewing membership for another year.

CMC was involved for the second time this winter with the Open Doors ministry to area homeless people, Feb. 6-8. Between 30 to 35 people ranging in age from 25 to 45 were served each night and received lodging. Community members provided and served meals, and two CMC members served nightly as overnight volunteers.

The congregation invited Dayna Olsen-Getty of Durham, N.C., to a full-time, four-year term as associate pastor. She will join the pastoral team in early June. She and her husband, Eric, were members of Durham Mennonite Church.

She holds a master of divinity degree from Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, Calif. They have a 3-year-old son, Noah.

New members by transfer: Jessica Hostetler, Jan. 5; Rose Byler, Jan. 19; Brendon and Heidi Boese Derstine, Jan. 26. — *Jim Bishop*

OREGON

HUBBARD

Zion Mennonite Church

Our new lead pastor, Mathew Swora, and his wife, Becky, from Minneapolis, officially began on Jan. 13. Installation services were held Feb. 23, and they were received as members. They had a renewal of his ordination vows by our executive conference minister, Katherine Jameson Pitts. District pastor Charlene Epp officiated the installation vows and gave the message. The Western Mennonite School Choir gave a short program.

On Jan. 13, a Medical Teams International dental van was in our parking lot to provide free dental work. Much of the cost of this was covered by the offerings from summer Bible school.

Our 42nd annual quilting workshop was held Feb. 20-22. Total attendance was around 850, and donations amounted to about \$4,000. The money will support the El Torno, Bolivia, senior center, which we support on a regular basis. The sale of items by One Fair World brought in \$5,000 for MCC. — *Margaret Shetler*

NEW YORK

LOWVILLE

Lowville Mennonite Church

The area winter Bible school was held at Naumburg Mennonite Church in early January. Marion Bontrager, Bible professor at Heston College, was the teacher. He was the guest speaker at our church on Jan. 12. The next Sunday, David Nisly, program director of Beaver Camp, was the speaker.

Our church celebrated its 100th anniversary Feb. 8-9. Paul M. Zehr, a retired teacher, pastor and bishop in the Lancaster, Pa., area and a Lewis County native, presented a program called “At the Crossroads” that highlighted major events from the beginning of the Amish-Mennonites in Lewis County in the 1830s to the present. The Sunday service focused on the history of music in Anabaptism. A choir sang hymns highlighting the changes in music and singing our congregation has experienced. It included listening to a portion of the “Loblied” from the *Ausbund*, the hymnbook of the Amish.

Just 10 days later our church family was shocked and grieved by the death of one of our members, Perry Steria, in a car accident on Feb. 19. His wife, Beth, was seriously injured and is recovering.

— *Bernadine Schwartzentruber*

ANNIVERSARY

Harold and Mary Ann Heiser of Champaign, Ill., celebrated their 65th wedding anniversary.

They were married March 5, 1949, at Hopedale Mennonite Church.

He is a retired farmer. She is a homemaker.

Their children are Rodney and Sandy Heiser of Champaign, Josie and Myron Bollman of Granger, Ind., and Kate Falk of Champaign.

They have five grandchildren and seven great-grandchildren.



Mary Ann and Harold Heiser

Anniversary announcements are published free of charge. Send to editor@mennoworld.org or MWR, Box 568, Newton, KS 67114

CALENDAR

Atlantic

■ April 4-5, **Harrisburg, Pa.**, Pennsylvania Relief Sale at the Farm Show Complex.

■ April 26, **Harrisonburg, Va.**, Eastern Mennonite Seminary commencement.

■ April 27, **Harrisonburg, Va.**, Eastern Mennonite University commencement.

■ June 13-15, **Mount Pleasant, Pa.**, Mennonite Healthcare Fellowship annual gathering at Laurelville Mennonite Church Center.

Great Lakes

■ April 4-5, **Eureka, Ill.**, Illinois Mennonite Conference annual meeting at Roanoke Mennonite Church.

■ April 27, **Goshen, Ind.**, Goshen College commencement.

■ May 4, **Bluffton, Ohio**, Bluffton University commencement.

■ May 24, **Irwin, Ohio**, Rosedale Bible College commencement.

■ May 24, **Elkhart, Ind.**, Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary commencement.

■ June 13-15, **Glen Flora, Wis.**, North Central Mennonite Conference annual meeting at South Lawrence Mennonite

Church.

■ June 20-22, **Goshen, Ind.**, Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference annual meeting at Goshen College.

■ June 20-21, **Wauseon, Ohio**, Black Swamp Benefit at Fulton County Fairgrounds.

■ June 26-28, **Madison, Wis.**, Central District Mennonite Conference annual meeting at Madison Mennonite Church.

Central

■ April 4-5, **Aurora, Neb.**, Nebraska MCC Relief Sale at Hamilton County Fairgrounds.

■ April 11-12, **Hutchinson, Kan.**, Kansas Mennonite Relief Sale at Kansas State Fairgrounds.

■ May 11, **Hesston, Kan.**, Hesston College commencement.

■ May 17, **Hillsboro, Kan.**, Tabor College commencement.

■ May 18, **North Newton, Kan.**, Bethel College commencement.

■ May 30-31, **Iowa City, Iowa**, Iowa Mennonite Relief Sale at Johnson County Fairgrounds.

■ June 13-15, **Harper, Kan.**, South Central Mennonite Conference annual meet-

CONGREGATIONS

KANSAS

NEWTON

First Mennonite Church

Pastor Anita Kehr had a three-Sunday sermon series in January on the Bible, where she spoke about how the Bible came about, how people use it and interpret it. On Feb. 2, John Roth, professor at Goshen (Ind.) College, shared a sermon on “By Whose Authority? Witnessing to the Living Word in a Skeptical World.” He also shared during the Sunday school hour and at a Saturday morning event.

Also on Feb. 2, at a special congregational meeting we voted to replace the current church constitution with two documents — a revised constitution and a church governance policy manual.

On Feb. 23, we commissioned John Good and Clint Litsey for an Mennonite Central Committee learning tour to Honduras and Ib and June Thomsen for short-term mission with SOOP in Arizona.

— Dana Neff

ELBING

Zion Mennonite Church

Zion shared food and hospitality with those in need on cold nights and at the Harvey County Homeless Shelter on Dec. 11, 12, 14 and 16.

Graduate: Ryan Wiebe, from Kansas State University with a bachelor’s degree in industrial engineering, on Dec. 14.

New members Reinhild Janzen and Brian Lightner were received Dec. 22.

During December, MCC relief kits were collected by individuals, families and Sunday school classes for people in urgent need.

Christmas Eve services were held with traditional carol singing, skits and reading of the Christmas story. An offering of \$4,500 went toward the MCC relief kits.

A challenge to “Read the Bible in 90 Days” started Jan. 5. Zion members joined others in this endeavor.

Volunteers from Zion helped at the MCC center in North Newton on Jan. 9. — Martha L. Wedel

WHITEWATER

Grace Hill Mennonite Church

One of Grace Hill’s “Year of the Bible” activities includes “Grace Hill Night at the Movies,” biblical themed showings about once a month. Recently, movies were shown on Ruth and Jeremiah.

The worship service theme in January was “Sojourn through Scripture,” including sermons on Jacob and Esau, Jacob in Goshen, Abraham and Abimelech, and Abraham and the Hittites.

The youth group planned and provided the worship service on Youth Sunday, Feb. 16.

Pastor Katherine Goerzen is leading the women’s book study, *The Year of Biblical Womanhood*, which meets monthly.

Grace Hill continues to participate in the Harvey County Food Pantry, the homeless shelter and other local projects.

Birth: Natalie Ann, Jan. 28, to Ashley Toews. — Judy Janzen

ILLINOIS

NORMAL

Mennonite Church of Normal

During January, Mennonite Women and the outreach committee co-sponsored the collection of “welcome kits” for women leaving incarceration in our community. These kits will be used by Labyrinth Outreach Services, an organization dedicated to helping these women make the adjustment back into society. The kits will supply them with some basic necessities.

The outreach committee is also asking for the donation of adult sweatsuits used by Compassion

Closet for patients dismissed from the Advocate BroMenn ER without adequate clothing.

At the beginning of the worship services in January, 30 knotted comforters were displayed that were made by Mennonite Women and knotted by members of all ages. These pieces were dedicated and will be taken to victims of the tornado in Washington, Ill.

Cornelius John “C.J.” Dyck, 93, died Jan. 10. Survivors: wife, Wilma; daughters Mary, Jennifer and Suzanne; and three granddaughters.

— Doris Shoemaker

FLANAGAN

Prairieview Mennonite Church

“Why Tithe?” was the title of the message Jan. 12. On Jan. 19, “A Moment of Grace” was the sermon by Pastor Fred Criminger. That evening a Song Fest was held.

On Feb. 8, a “Concert of Prayer” was held for the church board and the ministry team.

Joe Grove participated in the Polar Plunge on Feb. 22.

A “Moment in Mission” was given by Ginger Albrecht about the opportunities at the March 14-15 relief sale in Bloomington.

— E.M. Erb

INDIANA

ELKHART

Hively Avenue Mennonite Church

The deacon’s council sponsored “Spiritual Renewal” evenings on Jan. 15 and 22, led by J. Nelson Kraybill of Prairie Street Mennonite Church as resource person. His focus was the Book of Revelation.

Ryan Harker was commissioned Feb. 2 to doing an internship at Hively, filling requirements for his master of divinity degree at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary.

Central District Conference regional meetings were held Feb. 8 at the church. The theme was “Transformed Through Text and Table.” These meetings build connections between congregations.

Hively movie night was held Feb. 21, showing the movie *The Color of the Mountains*. The setting is in the mountainous region of Colombia, showing the life of a young boy and how his family tries to deal with the armed military and guerrilla rebels fighting in their area.

The Rivers of Living Water (*Rios de Agua Viva*) Church has been meeting in our sanctuary for the past two months every Sunday afternoon. They are a small church plant affiliated with the Missionary Church. — Amanda Fast

COLORADO

LA JUNTA

Emmanuel Mennonite Church

In the absence of our pastor, Jeremy Yoder, on Jan. 5, Rodger Harris was our guest speaker.

Many of Emmanuel’s members volunteer to help at Rocky Mountain Mennonite Camp. Les and Pat Miller were the most recent helpers as they assisted with two snow camps.

Super Bowl Sunday, Feb. 2, generated special interest in Colorado this year. For our congregation, Casa del Sol provided the space for the activities. Table games, snacks and even a football game kept us occupied.

Richard Wise, 77, died Feb. 21. Survivors: daughter Jeri Swann and her husband, Chuck.

— Carolyn Stutzman

BOULDER

Boulder Mennonite Church

On Feb. 2, more than 20 of our congregation traveled to First Mennonite in Denver to participate in the worship service licensing Theda Good. Our pastor, Karen

Cox, gave the message, which was accompanied by a painting of a magnificent tree projected on a screen. She told of how we are all one body, rooted in Christ, and yet, like the leaves, we are each unique as we contribute to the overall health of the church. Many leaders of First Mennonite spoke words of affirmation for Good’s gifts, as did Herm Weaver, conference minister, and Lonnie Yoder, from Eastern Mennonite Seminary, where Good studied.

On Feb. 9 the music was led by Susan Graber and Mike McKee. We commemorated the passing of Pete Seeger by singing two of his songs: “If I had a Hammer” and “Turn, Turn, Turn.” Graber shared of how he worked for peace and freedom throughout his life.

Wedding: Asher Fast and Lindsey Reinford, Dec. 7.

Birth: Violet Renee, Feb. 10, to Shalon Atwood and Nate Conklin.

— Carole Suderman

IDAHO

ABERDEEN

First Mennonite Church

On Jan. 9, Pastor Jerry Kaiser was affirmed for another three-year term. Nathan Schroeder was elected deacon; Dwight Horsch, chair; Bill Schroeder, secretary; and Roland Isaak, treasurer.

George Leppert, our regional conference minister, held a series of six Sunday meetings titled “Catch the Vision.”

We again participated in the local Humanitarian Fair at the elementary school. Proceeds went to the local women’s crisis center, the food bank, and to help fund a new playground at Posse Park.

The King’s Daughters hosted a women’s retreat Feb. 28-March 1, with Pauline Aguilar from West Coast MCC as a resource person. She brought new ideas for quilt patterns and techniques. Women worked on quilting, tying comforters and various other hand-craft projects. Women from all the Idaho Mennonite churches participated as well as guests from the local churches. — Carl Hege

NEW JERSEY

NORMA

Norma Mennonite Church

Our Focus on Scripture included reading Jude and, during February, memorizing 2 Tim. 3:16-17.

Martha Buckwalter spent two weeks in Lithuania, helping one of our missionary families, Gregg and Sharon Brubaker (her daughter) with their two sons and preparations for leaving after 12 years’ of ministries and moving to the U.S.

On Jan. 19, Bishop Al Motley, also pastor of Way Thru Christ Community Fellowship, Chester, Pa., was welcomed with his wife, Maxine, and preached the sermon.

On Feb. 15 breakfasts were held: Women of Faith at church and the men at Jim Bishop’s home. “Souper Douper Soup-Off” was held Feb. 23. Jim Bishop received the shiny, stainless steel soup spoon trophy.

— Martha Buckwalter

CALIFORNIA

PASADENA

Pasadena Mennonite Church

Our congregation was founded 28 years ago as a house church in the Pasadena home of Dorothy Smoker. On Jan. 27, she died at the age of 97. A longtime mission worker in East Africa with Eastern Mennonite Board of Missions, she was well into retirement when she helped nurture a small congregation of young people several decades her junior. As founding pastor Jim Brenneman wrote, “Spiritually, Dorothy was our

founding mother — her spiritual DNA is part of the heart and soul of PMC.” At a memorial on Feb. 22, PMC members reminisced how Smoker’s spirit and example of radical discipleship to Christ shaped the congregation.

On March 9, 19 members of the PMC community participated in the Los Angeles Marathon, raising money in support of clean water projects around the world. “Team PMC” trained together for three months and was cheered on by the rest of the congregation.

Birth: Oliver Francis, Feb. 18, to Erik and Jamie Deurmeier.

— David Lehman

OKLAHOMA

HYDRO

Bethel Mennonite Church

Jan. 12 began with worship at the Maple Lawn Manor and continued in the church. Weekly quilting and Bible classes have begun for the new year.

Global Training Disciples SRD met Jan. 22-25 at Pleasant View Mennonite Church. A banquet was the closing event. Many from Bethel and other places attended.

On Jan. 26, Merlin Schantz

shared with us about the program called Net Menders. Schantz and his family have been active in this work. It is often referred to as “People Helping People.”

Birth: William Michael, Jan. 27, to Marcia and Jason Sauer. Grandparents are Bill and Karen Entz.

— Wilma McKee

WASHINGTON

RITZVILLE

Menno Mennonite Church

Howard Reimer of Menno, along with others from Seattle, participated in a Mennonite Disaster Service project, Jan. 27-31, in Shawnee, Okla.

Bill Dyck was elected as deacon Feb. 8.

February was food bank month, and Menno church staffed volunteers and provided food donations for the Ritzville Food Bank. On Jan. 27-30, Pastor Matthew Yoder attended Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary’s Pastor’s Week.

Birth: Timothy Jacob, Jan. 22, to Rebecca and Beau Froese. Grandparents are Cleon and Elizabeth Claassen. — Sharla Dyck

IN MEMORIAM

Louise Rising Sun Fisher

Louise Rising Sun Fisher, *Mo’kee’e*, (Little Woman), 79, of Busby, Mont., died Feb. 2, 2014. She was born Feb. 28, 1934, to Elizabeth Flying and Oliver Rising Sun.

She grew up in Busby. During her teens she spent three years in sanitoriums in Rapid City, S.D., and Tacoma, Wash., recovering from tuberculosis, which interrupted her high school education. In spite of that she finished high school in two years and graduated in 1957.

She met Floyd Fisher at the Christmas Pow Wow in Birney in 1957. They were married in Billings on June 10, 1958.

She was a matron at the Busby Boarding School for many years, and she took many kids under her wing. Upon closing the dorms, she began her 20-year career as the head cook for the Little Eagle Headstart Center in Busby, where she was known as “Grama Cook.”

She was active at White River Cheyenne Mennonite Church, where she was baptized on Dec. 28, 1947. She enjoyed camping at Crazyhead Springs for the annual Mennonite Family Camp. Being a member of the Mennonite Commission on Home Ministries gave her opportunities to travel for meetings. She enjoyed traveling

in the United States and Canada to attend gatherings of Native Mennonite Ministries and Central Plains Mennonite Conference. In 2003 she traveled to Hawaii for the World Christian Gathering of Indigenous People.

She worked for many years with Cheyenne translation. She had a wealth of knowledge about Cheyenne family relationships and genealogy. She was a great-granddaughter and direct descendant of Chief Dull Knife (Morning Star), who led his people from Oklahoma back to Montana.

Survivors include her husband of 55 years, Floyd; two daughters, Elizabeth Marie and her husband, Allen Little Coyote, and Danetta Faith and her husband, Caleb Carter; a sister, Maretha Rising-sun Charette; eight grandchildren; four great-grandchildren; an adopted brother, TR Hughes; adopted son, Christopher Myron; and adopted daughter, Gladys Tallbull Limberhand.

She was preceded in death by three brothers, Ted, Collins and Orlup; and three grandchildren.

Obituaries are published for a \$20 fee and may be edited for length. Send to editor@mennoworld.org or MWR, Box 568, Newton, KS

Investment Officer

Everence is seeking an Investment Officer to provide development, oversight and support of asset management delivery for the Everence investment platform. Position is located in the Goshen, Ind., office. Significant focus includes presentation, sales-oriented interaction and performance reporting with clients. Qualified applicants will possess an undergraduate degree in business or related field with a minimum of 5 years of significant experience in investment management and/or sales; strong sales and service orientation; excellent presentation and verbal skills; Series 65 license and AIF designation must be earned upon hiring.

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CLASSIFIED ADS

EMPLOYMENT – CHURCH

LANDISVILLE MENNONITE Church, Landisville, Pa., is seeking a full-time associate pastor of youth and young adults. For more information, please contact the search committee at search@landisvillemennonite.org. (3-7)

NEW CAMPUS Ministry opening – University Mennonite Church, State College, Pa., seeks applicants for a new full time Anabaptist Campus Minister to work with students at Penn State. Visit www.universitymennonite.org for more details. To apply, contact Allegheny Mennonite Conference Minister, Donna Mast. Email: donnam@alleghenymennoniteconference.org, Office Telephone: 814-443-2007. (7)

BETHESDA MENNONITE Church, located in Henderson, Neb., is seeking a full-time pastor to be part of a multi-pastoral 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 persons should contact Central Plains Conference Minister, Tim Detweiler, PO Box 352, Kalona, IA 52247 or call 319-458-0224. (5-11)

FIRST MENNONITE Church of San Francisco seeks a one-half 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/>. (5-7)

ROSSMERE MENNONITE Church, Lancaster, Pa., is seeking a lead pastor. Located on the outskirts of Lancaster city, we are a congregation of about 90 persons committed to Anabaptist understandings. We are affiliated with Lancaster Mennonite Conference and Mennonite Church USA. Applicants are invited to contact Jeremy Brubaker by email (jeremy@rossmeremennonitechurch.org) or phone (610-223-2249). (5-7)

TRINITY MENNONITE Church, a growing, urban, Anabaptist community of faith seeking to follow God in the way of Jesus in the Phoenix area, is looking for a full-time Associate Pastor. Primary responsibilities will include creating a culture where engaging and meaningful opportunities for discipleship, spiritual growth, small groups, and service are available to every adult in the congregation. Full job description available at trinitymennonite.com. Interested candidates should contact Laurie King, search team chair, at lakingaz@mac.com. (6-8)

FRANCONIA MENNONITE Church is seeking a part-time Music Ministry Direc-

tor. The successful candidate will have training and experience in vocal and instrumental music, and be committed to a blended style of worship. Responsible for providing direction of the entire church music program to support the message being delivered and lead to an enhanced Christian worship experience. In coordination with the Pastoral Team and Worship Commission, this individual will provide leadership, vision and training to the worship teams, oversee children’s music programs, lead congregational singing, and direct choirs. Hours: Approximately 20 per week. Salary commensurate with experience. Send resume to Franconia Mennonite Church, Attn: Monique Kratz, 613 Harleysville Pike, Telford, PA 18969 or mkratz@franconiamennonite.org. (6-7)

COLLEGE MENNONITE Church, Goshen, Ind., seeks a three-fourths time Pastor of Outreach and Christian Formation. Mennonite Church USA salary guidelines will be followed. Interested candidates may contact Doug Kaufman, IN-MI Conference Pastor for Leadership Transitions at doug@im.mennonite.net. (6-7)

ARE YOU the one God has been preparing for us? Fairview Mennonite Church is seeking a full-time lead 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. (7-9)

EMPLOYMENT – SCHOOL

JUNIATA MENNONITE School in McAlisterville, Pa., is looking for a principal/administrator. The responsibilities of these positions have been handled by one full-time person, but we will consider dividing them based on the experience and qualifications of applicants. JMS is a K-12 school with an enrollment of about 200 students and 20 staff persons. For an application, please call 717-463-3211 and ask for Tim. (6-8)

HESSTON COLLEGE seeks applicants for full-time position as Director of Information Technology. Bachelor’s degree with experience in Information Technology required. Experience in higher education is preferred. Position will report to Vice President of Finance & Auxiliary Services. Director will lead all aspects of information technology including primary responsibilities of managing technology staff, client service, coordination of technology procurement, oversight of all technology systems, and policy development and compliance. Position begins July 1, 2014. To apply, please send a cover letter, resume and application available at hesston.edu/employment to Mark Landes, Vice President of Finance & Auxiliary Services, at markl@hesston.edu. Review of application materials begins immediately and continues until the po-

sition is filled. EOE. (6-7)

ASSISTANT/ASSOCIATE Professor of Computing. Goshen College seeks applications for a full-time, tenure-track position in Computer Science and Information Technology to begin August 2014. Will teach courses in Informatics, Information Technology and Computer Science, and promote and further develop the computing programs. Ph.D. preferred, Master’s required, in a computing field. Prior professional experience outside of academics preferred. For full details and to apply, see the position announcement at www.goshen.edu/employment. (6-7)

ASSISTANT/ASSOCIATE Professor of Accounting. Goshen College seeks applications for a full-time position in Accounting to begin August 2014 to teach accounting and business courses, develop curriculum, advise students and engage with the local business community. A Master’s degree in accounting or business or a Ph.D. in accounting is required, as well as a CPA or CMA certification. Prior professional experience in accounting, outside of academics, is expected. For full details and to apply, see the position announcement at www.goshen.edu/employment. (6-7)

EASTERN MENNONITE University seeks qualified applicants for an Associate Director of Technology Systems. The full-time Associate Director of Technology Systems oversees data center operations, network infrastructure, systems and servers, and application development and integration. Bachelor’s degree in related field required. Five years in positions of increasing responsibility in computer related fields with at least three years as a web, network or systems administrator. Ability to work in a team environment and with multiple customers. Aptitude for prioritizing requests and excellent problem determination skills. Ability to learn new technical environments, communicate effectively, work independently, supervise team members and select and implement new technology. Product knowledge of Microsoft Active Directory, GNU/Linux systems, Cisco and Aruba networking, PHP and Ruby development. Submit application, resume, and contact information for three references to: hr@emu.edu. For more information visit our website at www.emu.edu/humanresources. Persons who bring diversity are encouraged to apply. EOE. (7)

HESSTON COLLEGE seeks a three-fourths-time graphic designer to play a key role in institutional branding and provide communication support across the campus. Qualifications: mastery of the Adobe Creative Suite, strong design skills, demonstrated ability to produce creative work on tight deadlines, experience with corporate visual identity systems. Requirements: flexibility, excellent interpersonal and customer service skills, desire to innovate as part of a creative team. Bachelor’s degree in graphic de-

sign, digital media, art or related field preferred. Applicant must demonstrate a commitment to Christian higher education and the mission and values of Hesston College. To apply, submit cover letter, resume and work samples along with application found at hesston.edu/employment to Marathana Prothro, Director of Marketing & Communications, Box 3000, Hesston, KS 67062 or marathanap@hesston.edu. EOE. (7-8)

SERVICE OPPORTUNITIES

THE INTERNATIONAL Guest House in Washington, D.C., needs volunteer staff (one month to one year) for the ministry of hospitality. The guest house, owned by Allegheny Mennonite Conference, provides a “home away from home” for international and U.S. travelers. Priority need for short-term volunteers April-August. One year volunteer positions are available beginning March and August 2014. All volunteers receive room and board. Duties include baking, cleaning, laundry, maintenance, hosting breakfast and tea, and welcoming guests; sightseeing in free time. Contact: International Guest House igh-dc@juno.com 202-726-5808. (4-7)

CAMPGROUND HOSTS needed to volunteer at Woodcrest Retreat, a Christian retreat and summer camp ministry located in Lancaster County, Pa. Duties include greeting guests, general cleaning, light office work, and various support roles with the camp program. Seeking couples willing to commit to four or more weeks sometime during the months of June, July, August or September. RV camper provided. cliff@woodcrestretreat.org 717-738-2233. (6-9)

AVAILABLE

PHOENIX MENNO Guest House Bed and Breakfast welcomes families and business guests coming to the Phoenix area. Call 623-847-0314 or email phxmennoguest@gmail.com. (5-14)

FOR SALE – REAL ESTATE

SARASOTA, BRADENTON, Venice, North Port assistance for buyers and sellers. Larry Horner, White Sands Realty Group, 941-487-7089. (23-8)

FOR RENT

NORTH NEWTON, Serenity Silo and Woodland Hideaway guest apartments, daily rentals. Email or call for brochures: vadasnider@cox.net, 316-283-5231. (4-16)

ALLEGHENY MOUNTAIN Vacation Home. Four bedrooms, three baths; ideal for extended families. Fully equipped, handicapped accessible. Lake, stream, trails, northwest Pennsylvania. \$550 per week. Photos online. cominghome@verizon.net. (7-9)

VACATION RENTAL, Kalispell, Mont. Near Glacier National Park. Great outdoor recreation and quiet. Two bedroom,

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living room, full bath, kitchen, patio. For more info: mtgetaway@centurytel.net or call 406-755-3920. (7-9)

TRAVEL

VISIT EUROPE the Mennonite Way with Mennonite Heritage Tours! Small group Hotel Tours focusing on Mennonite/Anabaptist heritage in Holland, Belgium, Germany, Switzerland, Poland and Ukraine. www.mennoniteheritagetours.eu. (20-13)

MENNONITE TOUR. Argentina agriculture two-week tour. See how the Mennonites have developed. Visit Buenos Aires, Pehuajo, Santa Rosa, Mendoza, Santiago area in October. Approximate cost including airfare \$3,500. Dr. Butterweck, 559-822-2237, Argentine.mennonites@gmail.com. (5-7)

HELP WANTED

WESTERN HARVEST help needed, May through October, Texas to Montana. 2014 model equipment. Call Joe at 330-317-6851. eysterharvesting.com. (6-9)

CONGREGATIONS

IOWA

KALONA

East Union Mennonite Church

On Jan. 12, Michael Swartzen-druber spoke about his time in Egypt.

Birth: Lydia Ann, Jan. 2, to Victor and Megan Gingerich.

CHOW was held at the church on Jan. 8, and 8,640 meals were

packaged for Kids Against Hunger. These specially formulated meals are designed to nourish malnourished children’s bodies.

Alta Marner, 101, died Jan. 29. Survivors: son K. Francis; five grandchildren; 10 great-grandchildren.

Cleo Dickel, 91, died Feb. 24. Survivors: wife, Nora; son Keith; daughters Carol Springer and Joanne Miller; eight grandchildren; four step-grandchildren; 19 great-

grandchildren.

Dale and Linda Miller returned to Brownsville, Texas, for the winter months working with SOOP.

On Feb. 9, an installation service was held to bless our new interim pastor, Sonya Stauffer Kurtz.

The annual funfest for God’s Children’s House in Gary, Ind., was held Feb. 22. This is a mission project for kids to have a safe place to go after school, get help with homework, and hear about and see the

love of Christ. — Charlene Rhodes

WAYLAND

Sugar Creek Mennonite Church

Max and Gloria Villatoro and family were guest speakers Feb. 2. They are pastors at *Torre Fuerte Iglesia Mennonita* in Iowa City.

The MYF served a “Souper Bowl Sundae” meal as a fundraiser for a summer trip to Serving With Apalachian People.

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EVENTS & PEOPLE

USMB
director
appointed

U.S. Mennonite Brethren Conference

The U.S. Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches Leadership Board has named Don Morris interim executive director and announced a structural review.

Morris is director of Mission USA and has led USMB church planting and church health initiatives since 2004. He will continue to work from his office in Edmond, Okla.

Board chair Steve Schroeder said the retirement of Ed Boschman, executive director since 2007, provides an opportunity to review the denomination's health.

The review should take six months to a year and help determine what skills the next executive director will need.

"We believe that this time of transition is a God-given opportunity to re-evaluate the role of the national office and the effectiveness of our current denomination structures," Schroeder said.

"Recognizing that we are living in a day when many denominations are on the decline, we will be securing the services of someone from the outside who brings years of experience in helping denominations regain vitality.

"We want to do something now to insure that we can remain as effective as possible in our collaborative ministry efforts."



Morris

WHEELS FOR KANSAS SALE



Jerry Toews

Vehicles available at the Kansas Mennonite Relief Sale April 11-12 at the Kansas State Fairgrounds in Hutchinson include, from left, a 1972 Buick Tudor Hardtop, a rare 1950 John Deere MTW, a 1942 Allis Chalmers B, a 1937 John Deere A on steel wheels, a 1943 John Deere B, a 1936 John Deere A on factory tires and a pristine 1985 Lincoln Town Car with 50,000 miles. Not pictured are 1937 Minneapolis Twin City KTA and 1946 9N Ford tractors. All will be sold around 1 p.m. April 12. More photos and information are available online at kansas.mccsale.org. To bid or ask questions, contact Jerry Toews at 620-367-8257.

SOOP volunteers address many needs

By KELSEY HOCHSTETLER
Mennonite Mission Network

Finding a broken gas line or a leaky roof can be the beginning of a bad day. But having to fix it on a limited income can turn into a crisis.

Community Home Repair Projects of Arizona, or CHRPA, located in Tucson, tries to fix those problems without cost to the homeowners.

The organization was started by Mennonites in 1982 to make repairs affordable. It partners with volunteers across the country, including SOOP and Mennonite Voluntary Service participants.

SOOP participants Norm and Phyllis Lind came from Salem, Ore., to serve in Tucson for six weeks in February.

"When we see a need . . . it's hard not to get involved," said Norm, a retired radiologist.

In addition to organizations like CHRPA, SOOP participants



Arloa Bontrager/MMN

Phyllis Lind makes a fabric maze for people who are mentally and physically disabled. The project was part of her SOOP assignment at The Adaptation Center.

have a wide variety of volunteer opportunities to share their wisdom. Phyllis Lind volunteers at

The Adaptation Center in Tucson, where she collaborates with others, mostly volunteers, to de-

sign custom furniture for people with disabilities. Sometimes, this means designing and building a chair to help a child with cerebral palsy to sit up straight, or a weighted blanket to calm anxious children dealing with autism.

Lind made a fabric marble maze for people who are mentally and physically disabled. She sewed together two squares of cloth, trapping a marble inside. Then, sewing lines that wove around the square cloth, Lind created a maze for the marble to be pushed through.

"This was a rewarding experience, and I believe I made a small difference in the lives of those with special needs," she said.

Norm and Phyllis Lind are grateful that their health has allowed them to volunteer with SOOP in six different locations, and they look forward to many more SOOP experiences in the future.



June Krehbiel/Prairie View

Prairie View President and CEO Jessie Kaye, left, and director of advancement Misty Elder, right, visit with George Dyck, medical director from 1980 to 1990, and his wife, Edna, of North Newton.

Prairie View
celebrates 60 years

NEWTON, Kan. — Speaking at Prairie View's 60th anniversary dinner March 13, Mennonite Health Services Alliance President Rick Stiffney complimented the faith-based organization on its many years of service and perseverance.

"Prairie View has a big dose of focus and discipline," said Stiffney, speaking to donors and

guests, current and former board members, administrators and staff. "A critical ingredient of Prairie View's success — its capacity to serve for 60 years — is a vision and set of core convictions rooted in a Christian worldview and a community of faith. Over the years, that community of faith has grown far beyond the Mennonite/Anabaptist community of faith."

President and CEO Jessie Kaye reported that more than "200,000 transformed lives" over the 60

years have benefited by therapy and treatment provided by the mental health center's 4,700 staff. Today Prairie View's 400 staff serve patients at five locations in central Kansas.

— *Prairie View*

Earth justice seminar
April 4-6 in N.M.

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. — Albuquerque Mennonite Church will host "Re-PLACING Ourselves, Becoming Watershed Discipleship Communities," a discussion on earth justice in theology and practice, April 4-6.

Keynote speakers will be Ched Meyers and Elaine Enns of Bartimaeus Cooperative Ministries in Oak View, Calif. Meyers, an activist theologian, is nationally known for his theological and biblical work on Sabbath economics and ecological justice. Enns has worked in the field of restorative justice and conflict transformation since 1989 as mediator, consultant, educator and trainer.

The environmental crisis can seem overwhelming, with no clear course of response. Watershed Discipleship gives communities of faith a way forward and

a moral voice in the broader cultural dialogue around climate change. It is based on the premise that we cannot save the world — but we can save places — place by place. We can learn from or become "disciples" of our own watersheds. Reconciliation, healing and hope is intended for all relationships, including our own relationships with creation and the One who created it all.

A tentative schedule and registration is at abqmennonite.org.

Suggested donation is \$20 to \$40 on a sliding scale. The weekend will also include a concert by Cactus Tractor, a local band with an Albuquerque Mennonite Church connection. — *AMC*

China delegates attend
health assembly

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — More than 250 health and human services leaders convened March 6-8 for the annual Mennonite Health Assembly.

Health-care executives, board members, administrators, physicians, nurses, chaplains, mental health practitioners, disabilities advocates, educators, students and pastors explored themes of "pioneers, partners and path-

ways."

The assembly is cosponsored by Mennonite Health Services Alliance and Everence.

The spotlight focused most on eight representatives of the China Christian Council who had arrived in the U.S. a few days earlier. Under the leadership of Paul Wang, they had come to Kansas and Missouri to examine retirement communities and other church-related organizations. They were hosted by MHS director of international relations Ron Yoder.

The Chinese guests, who represent a variety of church-sponsored retirement communities in their home country, presented a workshop, "Learning from China." They set the context by pointing out that China has 23 million Christians who worship in 56,000 buildings and sponsor 23 theological schools and seminaries.

The assembly included plenary addresses by Myron F. McCoy, president of Saint Paul School of Theology in Kansas City; Teresa Cutts, a researcher and developer of collaborative health-care programs for underserved populations from Winston-Salem, N.C.; and MHS President Rick Stiffney. — *MHS*

COLLEGES & SEMINARIES

Hesston students discover secrets to happiness

■ Psychology course focuses on why people thrive

Hesston College

HESSTON, Kan. — A lot of research has been done on what makes people sick, but few psychologists understand what makes people well.

A new Hesston College course is doing what few college and university psychology departments are doing — embracing the relatively new branch of positive psychology and exploring why people thrive.

Positive psychology, first summarized by professionals in 1998, is not yet widely offered at many higher education institutions. The course at Hesston puts the college and its students in company with universities like Harvard, Yale and Boston College. The only other Kansas institution to offer positive psychology courses is the University of Kansas.

Instructor Kevin Wilder said positive psychology is congruent to a healthy view of faith and religion. Offering the course at a Christian institution presents students with another approach to the subject.



Larry Bartel/Hesston College

Hesston College students discuss class content in small groups.

“Positive psychology is a prevention model of mental health more than a cure,” he said.

With course content that relies heavily on discussion and exploration, co-instructors Wilder and campus counselor Dan Harrison operate the one-hour, one-day-per-week class in a seminar format. Students lead the planning and teaching of each week’s classroom time.

A pair of students lead the weekly lesson, preparing by re-

searching, then meeting with instructors, to process the material and create a lesson plan.

“Students show better learning results if they have a chance to display and present their knowledge,” Wilder said.

Sophomore Nikki Lowry of Falcon, Colo., said the student-led teaching keeps discussions interesting and fresh.

“I have learned techniques that may help me in a counseling career or even just giving advice

to a friend who is the dumps,” she said. “I think knowing what makes someone happy or how to maintain happiness is very important in psychology.”

Along with the course text, students are encouraged to read the Book of Ecclesiastes and write reflections.

“Reading Ecclesiastes along with the textbook has been really eye-opening,” said Isaac Dahl, a Bible major and psychology and music minor freshman from

Archbold, Ohio. “There isn’t a better biblical book that fits with positive psychology, as it’s very much a book about happiness. It is like the answer sheet to the textbook and gives us the answers to the questions ‘What is the meaning of life?’ and ‘How can I find true happiness?’”

Psychology in general, and understanding human behavior in general, can be helpful in a variety of career fields. Positive psychology offers a more specific understanding that benefits students pursuing professions like education, psychology, nursing and social work.

Beyond its professional applications, students are learning that the subject is applicable for every person on a daily basis. This spring, Wilder and Harrison will teach a community course on “What Do Happy People Know?” through the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute on the Hesston campus. For more dates and pricing, visit osher.ku.edu.

“I believe as humans, every one of us questions ourselves about our happiness,” Dahl said. “We want and need to know what it takes to make us satisfied. This is what the field of positive psychology is all about.”

Bethel alumna awardee an advocate

Bethel College

NORTH NEWTON, Kan. — Bethel College’s Young Alumna Award winner has dedicated her life to peacemaking and conflict resolution, especially with issues affecting women in the developing world.

Palwasha L. Kakar of Woodbridge, Va., just completed four years with the Asia Foundation, based in Kabul, Afghanistan. Most recently, she was the foundation’s director of women’s empowerment and development programs.



Kakar

At the end of January, she joined the staff of the U.S. Institute of Peace in Washington, D.C., as senior program officer for religion and peacemaking.

Kakar will present the Young Alumna Award lecture at 7:30 p.m. April 14 in Krehbiel Auditorium.

The event will be co-sponsored with the Kansas Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution as one of their periodic peace lectures.

Kakar was born in Seattle to medical-student parents — her father from Afghanistan, her mother from south-central Kansas. When it was time for her to go to college, she chose Bethel, the *alma mater* of her grandmother, the late Ruth (Smith) Graber.

Kakar did her undergraduate work in global studies and Bible and religion, graduating in 1999. Among the benefits of her Bethel liberal arts education, Kakar is quick to credit the opportunity for gaining practical mediation skills through KIPCOR.

Her first job upon graduation was director of the Newton Area Peace Center, which is now Peace Connections.

She has a decade of international experience in conflict and post-conflict settings in Afghanistan, including working with religious leaders and institutions on peacebuilding and women’s rights, and addressing religious differences regarding women’s issues and violence.

With the Asia Foundation, Kakar managed projects totaling up to \$21 million with non-governmental organizations in 15 Afghanistan provinces.

She organized workshops with religious leaders from all 34 provinces and arranged study visits to other countries to expand horizons of local religious leaders.

During her four years at the Asia Foundation, Kakar also served as senior program adviser on research, women’s rights, Islam and development, and program manager for the Access to Justice and Women’s Rights in Islam project.

Kakar is fluent in Pashto and English, proficient in Dari, and has basic knowledge of Urdu and Arabic. She has written extensively on women’s rights in Afghanistan and Iran.



Dallat



Fyfe

GOSHEN

Yoder Lecture an Irish literary festival April 1

GOSHEN, Ind. — Irish-born and London-based husband and wife poets Cahal Dallat and Anne-Marie Fyfe will present Goshen College’s annual S.A. Yoder Lecture at 7:30 p.m. April 1. The free event, “An Irish Literary Festival,” will take place in the Music Center’s Rieth Recital Hall.

Anne Marie Fyfe was born in Ireland and now lives in West London. A poet, creative-writing tutor and arts organizer, she has read throughout the world at events and on BBC radio and television. Fyfe’s latest poetry collection, *Understudies: New and Selected Poems*, brings together poems from her first three collections.

Cahal Dallat is a poet, critic and musician who has worked in television, publishing, public utilities, construction and information technology. He plays several instruments and writes on Irish fiction and drama for a range of literary journals, including the *Times Literary Supplement* and the *Guardian*. His poetry appears in a range of literary magazines and anthologies.

The S.A. Yoder Lecture Series honors Samuel A. Yoder, a professor at Goshen from 1930 to 1935 and 1946 to 1970.

CONRAD GREBEL

Student wins binational peace speech contest

WATERLOO, Ont. — Jacob Winter, a second-year international development student at Conrad Grebel University College, is the 2013 winner of the binational C. Henry Smith Oratorical Competition.

With his speech, “What’s Your Problem?” Winter offered reasons to think about reactions or solutions to problems.

“To design a solution, you need a proper view of the problem,” he said. Poverty can be defined as “less about money and malaria nets and more about humiliation, voicelessness, shame and isolation. Poverty is broken relationships with the earth, with others, with yourself and with God. If the problem is broken relationships, then the solution is reconciliation — shalom. Building shalom is about taking away shame, demarginalizing the vulnerable and giving voice to the powerless. It’s all about relationships.”

Winter won \$300 plus a \$500 conference scholarship.

Shortly after the 2013 winner was announced by Mennonite Central Committee, Conrad Grebel held the preliminary round of the 2014 competition. Brendan Coady, a third-year mechanical engineering student, won with his speech, “Peace Through Butter: A Commentary on Peace Through Food.”

Both speeches are available at youtube.com/conradgrebeluc.



Winter

BLUFFTON

Educators attend religion dept. seminars

BLUFFTON, Ohio — Eight Mennonite high school Bible teachers from across the U.S. spent March 17-18 at Bluffton University to learn about its curriculum and to attend seminars led by Bluffton religion department faculty.

Seminar topics included adolescent development and youth ministry, religion curriculum and church history.

Associate professor of religion Randy Keeler led the religion curriculum seminar. He shared the department’s mission for students pursuing degrees in biblical and theological studies or youth ministries. He also led a seminar on adolescence, stressing that youth ministry must adapt to ever-changing youth.

“You can’t assume the world of adolescence is the same as 20 or 30 years ago,” he said.

BETHEL

Historic organ recital coming April 5

NORTH NEWTON, Kan. — Donna Ratzlaff Hetrick will give a free recital on the historic parlor organ at Kauffman Museum at 3:30 p.m. April 5.

The recital will also feature a piece played by Bethel student Mika Patron and hymns for audience singing.

The organ is named the “Teschemacher/Deknatel/Van der Smissen Organ” for its builder, original owner and the family that brought it to the U.S.

COLLEGES & SEMINARIES

Award recognizes EMU’s sustainability efforts

Silver ranking reflects many campus calculations

By Lauren Jefferson
Eastern Mennonite University

HARRISONBURG, Va. — Eastern Mennonite University has added another sustainability accolade.

EMU and its site in Lancaster, Pa., have earned a Silver rating from the Sustainability Tracking, Assessment and Rating System, or STARS. The system, created by the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education, recognizes sustainability efforts by colleges and universities in the areas of curriculum and research, operations, and planning, diversity and engagement. Sustainability is defined as “encompassing human and ecological health, social justice, secure livelihoods and a better world for all generations.”



Lantz-Trissel

Sustainability coordinator Jonathan Lantz-Trissel led the months-long project. The data collection involved 18 contributors across departments and computing scores for everything from greenhouse gas emissions to building energy consumption. “Actually, I’m really tired,” Lantz-Trissel said with a laugh. “It is a little like winning a championship. This rating was some-

thing we had earned and worked hard on for a long time. It represents many of our sustainability efforts that have been going on for the past seven years, and I’m so pleased that people within the EMU community are getting the recognition they deserve.”

While recognizing a history of grass-roots activism on campus, Lantz-Trissel traces EMU’s formal embrace of the sustainability effort to the 2007 adoption of education for sustainability as a re-accreditation requirement. The resulting five-year Quality Enhancement Plan infused the topic into the undergraduate curriculum and focused community discussion on its diverse goals.

More than 170 of EMU’s courses concentrate on or incorporate aspects of sustainability, and 12

faculty members from diverse departments are engaged in related research. EMU also earned credits for student-led organizations and outreach campaigns, student orientation tours, the annual Recyclemania event, organic garden and outdoors program.

The most labor-intensive section of the STARS assessment surveyed EMU operations, including buildings, dining services, energy consumption, grounds, purchasing, waste and water. Gathering information to complete the greenhouse gas inventory took Lantz-Trissel nearly a year. It required calculation of “our whole carbon footprint, everything from people driving to and from the university to air travel for all the student cross-

culturals to electric, water and paper use.”

EMU also earned credits for its strategic planning; diversity, opportunity and equity programs for students and faculty; and responsible investing.

The Silver rating is valid for three years. An updated reporting system with more definitive guidelines was released in the fall. Goshen (Ind.) College was one of the first to earn a Silver rating using this reporting system.

The updates “require institutions to keep improving on their sustainability work,” Lantz-Trissel said. Because EMU opted for conservative reporting of its achievements, he anticipates plenty of opportunity for an improved rating in the future.

Bluffton group assists Illinois tornado cleanup

By Chay Reigle
Bluffton University

BLUFFTON, Ohio — While some college students migrated to Florida beaches for spring break, a group of Bluffton University students braved zero-degree temperatures in Illinois to serve others.

Members of Shining Through, Bluffton’s music ministry team, spent a day sorting through snow-covered debris from a home destroyed by a November tornado in Washington, Ill.

Shining Through student coordinator Ashley Litwiller is an Illinois native who knew of the devastation the tornado had caused.

“I knew that there was still some work to be done,” she said.

She arranged for the group to aid in disaster relief while on its spring-break tour. The members performed worship music at churches in Illinois, Indiana and Ohio.

They faced an immediate weather-created obstacle after arriving at the home site.

“As we started picking through the pile, we realized a lot of it was frozen together,” Litwiller



Bluffton University

Matt McCoy and Carly Unruh, Bluffton juniors and members of the Shining Through music ministry team, work on tornado cleanup in Washington, Ill.

said.

Fortunately for the group, a Good Samaritan stopped and offered assistance.

“The man was a neighbor and

had a skid loader back at his house,” she said. The man was able to break up the frozen rubble, allowing the group to move it more easily toward the street for

pickup. “It was such a blessing,” she added.

Shining Through’s theme this year is “God’s Love: Beyond All Measure,” which draws on Eph.

3:14-21 and focuses on “being rooted and established in God’s love.”

Although the tornado caused much destruction and heart-break, Litwiller believes acts of service allowed the group to put God’s love in perspective.

She said times of tragedy are an opportunity for churches to reach out to those in need.

“When something like this happens, God provides us with a community that will help support you through tough times,” she said.

“It’s not just family helping out family. If you are hurting or struggling, God’s kingdom will reach out to help you as Christians are called to do.”

Stephen “Tig” Intagliata, campus pastor, traveled with the group’s 11 student members.

“They were really glad to give back to a community that suffered so much devastation,” he said.

The combination of leading worship services and providing service — which was like “offering ourselves in God’s service” — was a good one and, he said, something the group want to continue to do on future tours.

EMS

Methodist minister to join seminary faculty

HARRISONBURG, Va. — Christian formation curriculum at Eastern Mennonite Seminary will be overseen by an ordained Methodist minister, Emily Peck-McClain, beginning in January 2015.

Peck-McClain has been hired as assistant professor of Christian formation, preaching and worship, said vice president and seminary dean Michael King.

Each degree at EMS has at



Peck-McClain

least one full-year required course in Christian formation. The master of divinity degree has three full-year required courses. Peck-McClain will give direction and oversight to these full-year formation courses, in addition to teaching in preaching, worship and Christian education.

Peck-McClain’s work reflects her experience growing up in an interfaith home with one Jewish parent and one United Methodist parent and her education in liberation theology. An ordained minister in the United Methodist Church, she has pastored two congregations in New York City.

“One of the things that impresses me most about EMS is how formation is valued not only as a separate discipline but as integral to how teaching and learning take place in the seminary,” she said. “I seek to balance individual journeys and spiritual disciplines with communal prac-

tices, actions and discernment in how I teach formation, preaching and worship.”

Peck-McClain is finishing her doctorate through Duke Divinity School. Her dissertation, “Revealing the Power: New Creation Epistemology for Adolescent Girls,” is on reading Romans 1-8 as a liberative source for ministry with adolescent girls. She has been a teaching assistant, co-instructor and adjunct instructor at Duke Divinity School in the areas of Christian education, New Testament and worship.

TABOR

Week to focus on human trafficking awareness

HILLSBORO, Kan. — The Tabor College Social Work Club

and other supporters are dedicating April 4-12 to awareness of human trafficking and its repercussions.

According to the Kansas Attorney General’s Office, there were 70 reported cases of human trafficking between 2011 and 2012 in the state. In 2012, 1,047 children in Kansas were abused in their own home, and 3,198 foster children ran away from home due to sexual abuse.

“Students of Tabor College’s Social Work Club developed a focused passion to bring about awareness and change on behalf of those who have been violated,” said social work program director Lara Vanderhoof. “We all have a part to play in ending modern-day slavery.”

Several people from the Set Free Movement — an organization that encourages holistic freedom and seeks to create new futures for survivors and those

vulnerable to modern slavery — will speak.

Events include:

■ April 4 — Concert featuring The Afters and Kyle Sherman, 7 p.m. at Hillsboro Mennonite Brethren Church. Tickets are \$15, available at ilivelove.org.

■ April 8 — Kevin Austin of the Set Free Movement speaking at 11 a.m. at chapel in the H.W. Lohrenz building.

■ April 8 — Human Trafficking Awareness Panel at 7 p.m. in the H.W. Lohrenz building chapel.

■ April 10 — Chapel speakers for Tabor students include Annie Schomaker and Ginger Coakley of the Set Free Movement speaking at 11 a.m. and 11:40 a.m.

■ April 12 — Running Through Traffic, a Hillsboro community 5K walk/run and biking event beginning at 8 a.m.

All proceeds from the week’s events go to the Set Free Movement.

COLLEGES & SEMINARIES

Fresno Pacific board approves new degree

Trustees also discuss performing arts center goals

Fresno Pacific University

FRESNO, Calif. — The Fresno Pacific University board of trustees approved a new degree program and discussed a continuing building project Feb. 28-March 1.

A bachelor of arts degree in health care administration will begin in August at the North Fresno Center. The program will prepare graduates to develop, plan, lead and manage health care operations and services. The program has attracted a \$100,000 grant from Fresno’s Isnardi Foundation.

Board members discussed the campaign to build a performing arts center. The PAC Building Committee, composed of administrators, faculty, staff and board members, has met several times to set requirements for the center’s structure and layout.

The goal is to construct a building that will help FPU gain accreditation from the National Association of Schools of Music, as well as future accreditation for the theater and visual arts programs.

The board also approved: ■ Purchasing land from neighboring Butler Church. Fundraising has begun.

■ Establishing the Extending Our Reach Fund for the seminary to explore options in seminary education, including a possible pastoral residency program.

■ Granting emeritus status to Ron Claassen, professor of peacemaking and conflict studies/leadership studies; Wayne Huber, associate professor of music; and Jo Ellen Misakian, associate professor of teacher librarian program. All three retired this spring.

■ Promoting Mark Baker to professor of theology; Greg Camp to professor of biblical and religious studies/Greek; Fran Martens Friesen to assistant professor of humanities; Henrietta Siemens to associate professor of education; and Diane Talbot to professor of school counseling.

■ Hiring Ronald Herms as dean of the School of Humanities, Religion and Social Sciences. Since 2006, Herms has had several positions at Northwest University in Kirkland, Wash., including associate and assistant professor of biblical studies.

LOVE IS NEVER FAR AWAY

Bluffton speaker takes part in Spiritual Life Week

Bluffton University

BLUFFTON, Ohio — The Christian story isn’t about collecting the right set of beliefs, or obeying God’s “do’s and don’ts” or trying to be a good person, an Oregon pastor told a Bluffton University audience March 18.



Good

Instead, Meghan Good said it has to do with turning around and seeing who’s always there.

“It’s the story of a God who isn’t begrudgingly merciful or benignly tolerant but who, from the very beginning, has been recklessly in love with humanity,” the pastor of Albany Mennonite Church explained. “It’s the story of a God who loved us first, before we knew what it meant, before we wanted it, before we were even vaguely worthy of it.”

Comparing the story of God’s love for us to Hosea’s love for Gomer in the Old Testament, Good, the guest speaker for Bluffton’s Spiritual Life Week,

said she’s a Christian because it “explains our reality better than any other story I know.”

She said the Christian life is “a journey of learning to echo back just a fraction of God’s passion for us.” And that, in turn, means the “most foundational Christian question” is what, or who, one loves.

“Great thinkers from St. Augustine to Dante have suggested that, at its core, the spiritual life is about ordering our desires . . . about learning to love the right things,” she said.

Quoting Jesus’ greatest commandment — “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength” — she added that “the core of faith is about getting a hold of our love lives.”

“Anyone who’s tried to keep this command — which Jesus points out is the whole law in a sentence — for more than a millisecond is keenly aware: Our love lives are seriously disordered,” Good said. “We’re good at loving a lot of things — ourselves usually chief among them — but we’re not particularly good at loving God back.

“There’s a pervasive idea in our day that people can’t choose what we love. Deeds we can control — maybe, sometimes — but desires move as they will. We can’t be held responsible for them any more

than we could for our shoe size or our taste in food.

“But I’d suggest that this idea that desire is totally unconditioned and completely unalterable is a significant error made by moderns who speak of love as something we ‘fall’ into, sort of like a giant, unforeseen pot-hole. Of course desire is conditioned and significantly alterable. That is the entire premise on which a \$36-billion-a-year online advertising industry is based.”

Falling in love with God

How does a person start to fall in love with God? Good said the first step in stirring desire is cultivating attention — taking time to be in God’s presence and being with others who love God already.

Desire is also shaped by taking things away. Good cited fasting. She calls it “a training exercise in desire.”

“When hunger stirs, that’s the moment God is waiting. But don’t wait for the feeling to strike before you start to act,” she said. “Any marriage counselor would tell you: Act like you love, and love will eventually follow. . . .

“Don’t wait to fall in love; go and throw yourself into it. This is what the Christian life is about.”

Hesston to pause, evaluate Pastoral Ministries program

Assessment finds program ‘unsustainable in its current form’

Hesston College

HESSTON, Kan. — Hesston College will take a one-year sabbatical from its Pastoral Ministries program.

A planning committee described the program as unsustainable in its current form.

The college will take a one-year respite from recruiting students and assess how it can best meet the changing leadership needs of Mennonite Church USA and the broader church.

Since 1985, Pastoral Ministries has operated as a two-year residential program focused on adult learners seeking a new career path and for whom seminary was not an option.

Low program enrollment over the past several years prompted administrators and board members to question the program’s long-term viability.

“We are trying to determine the best way for Hesston College to contribute to the pastoral and lay leadership needs of Mennonite Church USA,” President Howard Keim said.

“As a result of this careful process, we have accepted the need for transformation in our approach to meeting these needs and are moving in a direction that will allow us to shape a program that will serve the church well.”

The sabbatical will allow for a discernment process in which the college can explore changes and leadership needs in the church and position itself to prepare leaders to meet those needs.

The planning committee included people with insight on

MC USA’s pastoral needs and knowledge of the college’s program. Members include: Dave Boshart, Central Plains Conference executive conference minister; Dee Custar, 1998 program graduate and pastor of Salem Mennonite Church in Waldron, Mich.; Karen Dalke, 2009 program graduate and pastor of Des Moines (Iowa) Mennonite Church; Michele Hershberger, Bible and ministry faculty member; Kenzie Intemann, 2013 program graduate and youth program director at Camp Amigo in Cassopolis, Mich.; Tim Lichti, Pastoral Ministries program director; Rachel Swartzendruber Miller, vice president of admissions and financial aid; Carlos Romero, executive director of Mennonite Education Agency; Howard Wagler, 1992 program graduate and pastor of Journey Mennonite Church in South Hutchinson; and Norm Yoder, board member.

Lichti’s service with the college will conclude at the end of the academic year. He has served as program director since 2010. Future staffing will be based on the program’s future scope and direction.

“We are grateful for Tim’s care for the students and the needs of the broader church, as well as his contributions as part of the planning committee,” Keim said.

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