

The Mennonite

www.TheMennonite.org

June 1, 2004



Mennonite *prayer*

Page 8

- 11 Prayer is the prescription
- 14 Labyrinths: a new and ancient way to pray
- 20 Socially irresponsible investing?
- 32 Tipping points

Teach us to pray

One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples."

—Luke 11:1, NIV



Donna Mast is co-pastor of Scottdale (Pa.) Mennonite Church.

How do we foster prayer in our congregations? The question came during a study of the Beatitudes among Allegheny Conference ministers. My conference minister grinned at me. Shortly before this study had begun, I asked what he'd intended when he suggested I lead a seminar on prayer in the congregation during our upcoming summer conference meetings.

His said too often our prayer meetings become Bible studies and our phone prayer chains become communication lines or even occasions for gossip. We don't know how to be effective pray-ers in our congregations. I said I would lead the seminar.

Now that I've said yes, what am I to do? I am a learner myself. I suppose I will lead out of what I have learned and invite other learners to add to the discussion. What follows is a bit of what I've learned.

Many of us want to connect more deeply with God in prayer and long for ways to make prayer more meaningful in our congregations. I believe God also wants to connect with us individually and congregationally. So why is it so difficult? I can think of several reasons.


Some of us are afraid of intimacy. It is risky to open ourselves to others. Will they see something there they don't like or don't approve of? What if I appear silly or vain or selfish? What if others turn away from me because of what they discover in these intimate moments? It is no wonder intimacy scares us. Prayer is an intimate endeavor. The act of praying brings us into intimacy with God. Perhaps we fear God's rejection, but God will not turn away from us. God already knows all about us and loves us. What is more likely to happen is that

as we open ourselves to God, we see ourselves more clearly. Rather than shy away from this self-understanding we can open ourselves up to God's ability to transform us.

We come to prayer with expectations. We may have had previous experiences with God that we want to recreate. When our next prayer experiences fail to meet our expectations, we may stop trying. Or perhaps we want the same experiences of prayer others have had. When our expectations are not met, we become discouraged and give up. We need to put our expectations aside as we come to God in prayer.

Our lives are cluttered with noise and hectic schedules. Too much noise and activity interfere with an effective prayer life. Most of us require discipline in our lives to ensure that prayer happens. We must carve out some space and time in our day that belongs solely to the practice of prayer. As we try to reduce the noise that we can control and devote time to God in prayer, we discover that prayer comes more naturally to us at other times in the day as well.

This is also true for congregations. If praying together as a congregation is a goal, then we must carve out time and space for prayer to happen. We must not allow other agenda to fill the time we've allotted for prayer. Our prayer-chain people may need reminders now and then that the purpose of the chain is to pass along the information people need to be informed pray-ers—not more than is needed and not speculation.

Lois Barrett was our teacher for the study I mentioned earlier. In a discussion about congregations practicing dependency on God, she said that missional congregations are those that practice dependency on God. They are congregations that pray a lot. They pray not because it is a duty but because they know God will show up and because when God shows up it makes a difference. 

TheMennonite

Editor: **Everett J. Thomas**
Editor@TheMennonite.org
Associate editor: **Gordon Houser**
GordonH@TheMennonite.org
Marketing/Advertising: **Marla J. Cole**
TheMennonite@TheMennonite.org
Secretary: **Kristene Miller**
Editorial assistant: **Nora Miller**
Design: **Merrill R. Miller**
Editor Emeritus: **J. Lorne Peachey**

Cover and pages 8-11 by ArtToday, Inc.

Vol. 7, No. 11, June 1, 2004

Offices:
1700 S. Main St.
Goshen, IN 46526-4794
phone: 800-790-2498
fax: 574-535-6050

722 Main St., P.O. Box 347
Newton, KS 67114
phone: 800-790-2498
fax: 316-283-0454

Web site
www.TheMennonite.org

The Mennonite seeks to serve Mennonite Church USA by helping readers glorify God, grow in faith and become agents of healing and hope in the world. *The Mennonite* (ISSN 1522-7766) is published on the first and third Tuesdays of each month by the board for The Mennonite, Inc. Periodical postage paid at Scottsdale, PA 15683-1999. Canada Post international publications mail sales agreement no. 40033185, GST no. R122192453. Subscription rates: \$38.75 (U.S.) per year. Group rates available. The views expressed in this publication do not necessarily represent the official positions of *The Mennonite*, the board for The Mennonite, Inc., or Mennonite Church USA. Scripture references are from the New Revised Standard Version unless otherwise noted.

Postmaster:
Send form 3579 to 616 Walnut Ave.,
Scottsdale, PA 15683-1999.





7



23



6

8 Mennonite prayer

An attitude or technique?—*Miriam Frey*

11 Prayer is the prescription

Studies show the healing power of prayer.—*Phyllis Edgerly Ring*

14 Labyrinths

A new and ancient way to pray—*Melanie Zuercher*

16 Mennonite churches USA

Scottsdale (Pa.) Mennonite Church

18 The two shall become one

The merger of the Mennonite congregations at Scottsdale, Pa.—*Daniel Hertzler*

21 From bread and chocolate to guns, war

Restaurant owner joins Christian Peacemaker Teams delegation in Iraq.—*Anna Groff*

22 Passion opens doors in Middle East

Believers have a chance to share their faith 'like never before.'

23 Eritrean believers face persecution

More than 350 held by government, many kept in shipping containers—*Holly Blosser Yoder*

24 Mennonite schools see combined gain

25 Stance on national anthem costs school

DEPARTMENTS

2 Grace and truth

Teach us to pray—*Donna Mast*

4 Readers say

6 News digest

20 Speaking out

Socially irresponsible investing?—*Michael Shank*

27 For the record

30 Resources

32 Editorial

Tipping points—*Everett J. Thomas*

Rural issues span the border

Now that it appears Mennonite Church USA and Mennonite Church Canada will hold a joint assembly in Charlotte, N.C., in 2005 (“Goin’ to Carolina in My Mind,” April 20), I would like to make some suggestions for the assembly.

Plan cross-border workshops and seminars for the North American regions arbitrarily divided by the 49th parallel. As a pastor who has served churches in the Great Plains of both the United States and Canada, I have long observed that Mennonites in rural communities on both sides of the border have more in common with each other—despite perceived rivalries—than with fellow Mennonites in our respective countries on both coasts. A shared ecology implies shared economic challenges and interests. If we want to contextualize the gospel appropriately, then we need not only national contextualization but also economic and ecological contextualization.

Such seminars and workshops could focus on the challenges rural communities face on both sides of the 49th parallel. Corporate, technical and political forces threaten rural communities in both Canada and the United States. We need understanding across the 49th parallel so that we can get on with the primary missional task in the rural church: re-creation of sustainable local rural communities.—*S. Roy Kaufman, moderator, Central Plains Mennonite Conference*

MCC has program, too

As an adoptive mother of two children born in Latin America, I would like to thank Anton Flores for his thoughtful article on the need for Christians to promote ethical international adoptions and to become involved in efforts that promote social and economic justice in these countries (“Just Adoptions,” May 4). Flores shared that his family sponsors a child through World Vision from Guatemala, the country from which they adopted their son. I would just like to add that Mennonite Central Committee also offers child education sponsorship through the

Global Family program. Global Family funds provide support for individuals, families and communities to improve educational opportunities for children. Sponsorship information is available at www.mcc.org/globalfamily.—*Karen Metzler, Chillicothe, Ohio*

Young adults need balance

Thanks to Sarah Thompson for her courageous and thoughtful Speaking Out (“Mennonite to the Point of Vomiting?” May 4). During my four years at a Mennonite college I was often reminded of the importance of sustainability for Mennonite young adults. I saw the brightest and most-driven of my fellow students dealing with mental illness, depression, disorders and other forms of burnout and breakdown. We grow up learning about all the problems in the world and wanting to make a difference, but often no one tells us about the importance of balance and saying no to overcommitment. Sarah did a great job of beginning a conversation about the risks of this approach.

As Mennonites look toward our next generation of leaders, we need to look at this issue in depth. Sarah’s article is the first published work I’ve seen on this, and I hope there is more discussion to come. I know this isn’t a uniquely Mennonite problem, but as a church that calls young people to a life of service and mission, we also need to remind ourselves of the importance of self-care, guilt-free recreation and sustainability.—*Tim Nalziger, London, England*

Title not professional

On the cover of the May 4 issue of *The Mennonite* we noticed an article titled, “Mennonite to the Point of Vomiting?” (Speaking Out). Just looking at the title was disgusting. Reading the article made me think that this article should have been printed in a medical journal. As a journalist, your choice of words for the title could have been more professional.—*Gordon Beidler, Barto, Pa.*

Law enforcement in God’s kingdom

In his Readers Say letter to the editor (“Mennonite Policeman Is Pacifist,” April 20) Gregg Rosenbery, a police officer, wrote that “lethal force is, and always will be, the last and final option in law enforcement.” But as Christians we are to be witnesses in our own lives of how God is at work in this world.

When God sent Jesus to proclaim God’s kingdom, he too was acting as a peace officer. His life and parables showed us what the shalom of God looks like. It is forgiving and patient. Yet when this world rejected God’s kingdom, they nailed Jesus to a cross and killed him. Lethal force is, and always

IN THIS ISSUE

New in this issue is a center spread (pages 16-17) focusing on the life of one congregation. The congregation we chose is the newly formed Scottdale (Pa.) Mennonite Church, and Daniel Hertzler (page 20) provides a history of Mennonite activity in and around Scottdale. We hope to run a similar photo spread on one Mennonite Church USA congregation each quarter. Central to all congregational experience, however, is prayer. This issue examines “gelassenheit” as one characteristic of a prayer-filled life (page 8), the power of prayer to heal people (page 11) and labyrinths (page 14).—*Editors*

will be, the last and final option in “human” law enforcement. However, in the death and resurrection of Jesus we see what God’s first and last option is for the law enforcement of God’s kingdom: the suffering servanthood of Jesus of Nazareth.

If this is how God deals with evil and crime, why do we have so many Christians going along with the world’s way of enforcing law where, in the end, taking another’s life is permitted and trained for? There is no greater love than when we are willing to lay down our lives for our neighbors. So in what way are we showing love when we are trained and willing to take the life of someone in the extreme case?—*Marco Funk, Rosthern, Sask.*

Accept violence against ourselves first

We tend to forget that we are called to be separate from the world’s lifestyle. Therefore, Anabaptist nonresistance in today’s church is unclear to many because of our representative form of government. We live in two kingdoms, but our supreme loyalty can be to only one. We are not all led to the same degree of participation in national government, but we are all called to give supreme loyalty to Christ. We do not protect or advance ourselves by physical force, choosing to accept violence to ourselves rather than inflict violence on others. This must be manifested in our social and political lives.—*R.J. Hower, Goshen, Ind.*

Food and power

Karl McKinney’s article relating the pursuit of food with the pursuit of power through politics was a timely article (“The Work of God Is to Believe,” Grace and Truth). It was encouraging to have someone help clarify my thoughts and ideas on this matter.—*Eli Smucker, Narvon, Pa.*

Healed by Jesus’ wounds

It is interesting to me to note the different Readers Say responses to the movie *The Passion of the Christ*. If you haven’t seen the movie, it seems strange to me that you can pass judgment

on it (April 20). When I saw it I was moved.

I too felt the beatings went on too long until I read again, “Just as there were many who were appalled at him—his appearance was so disfigured beyond that of any man and his form marred beyond human likeness” (Isaiah 52:14, NIV). The Romans were cruel—as attested by the use of the cross for crucifixions.

Mel Gibson brought out the part of the gospel we neglect: “He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed” (1 Peter 2:24, NIV). Thanks, Mel Gibson.—*Jim Mullet, Guernsey, Sask.*

People who advocate peace can be violent

I agree with Mark Amstutz (Readers Say, Feb. 3) that every issue of *The Mennonite* should feature an article that affirms pacifism as central to Christianity. This should include frequent articles condemning legalized abortion, which Mother Teresa claimed is the greatest threat to peace in the world. It should also include articles about all the types of violence condemned in the Mennonite Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective, including violence against women and children. It would be interesting to read an article about domestic violence in the Mennonite church, since it is entirely possible for people who advocate peace and justice to, nevertheless, resort to violence in their personal lives.—*Jerry Stanaway, Lombard, Ill.*

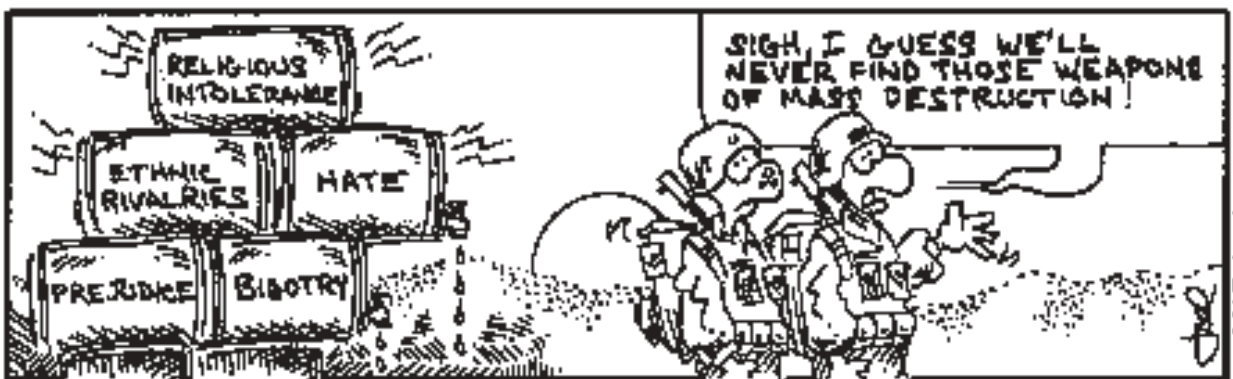
Details matter

Little details that do not matter to most of us are important to historians and to those who live them. In “Leaders Offer Apology to MPH Retirees” (March 2), David E. Hostetler is identified as having been news editor of *Gospel Herald* and *Christian Living*. *Christian Living* had no news editor. Hostetler’s record is as follows: editor of *Purpose*, 1971-1984; news editor for *Gospel Herald*, 1971-1983; editor of *Christian Living*, 1984-1990.—*Daniel Hertzler, Scottdale, Pa.*

This publication welcomes your letters, either about our content or about issues facing the Mennonite church. Please keep your letters brief—one or two paragraphs—and about one subject only. We reserve the right to edit for length and clarity. Publication is also subject to space limitations. Send your letters to Readers Say, *The Mennonite*, 1700 S. Main St., Goshen, IN 46526-4794. Or email us at: Editor@TheMennonite.org. Please include your name and address. We will not print letters sent anonymously, though we may withhold names at our discretion.—*Editors*

Pontius’ Puddle

Joel Kauffmann



IN BRIEF

Church closes its doors at age 105

Due to declining attendance, Central Heights Mennonite Church of rural Durham, Kan., held its final service May 30. The church began in 1899, with 30 charter members, as Friedenstal Mennonite Church. It joined the General Conference Mennonite Church that same year.—*Junia Schmidt*

Christian crisis in the Holy Land

Fifty leaders of evangelical and mainline Protestant, Catholic and Orthodox churches and church-related organizations in the United States delivered a letter May 10 to President Bush, asking for a full understanding of “the crisis in the Holy Land confronting Christian Palestinians, Christian institutions and those who wish to visit the birthplace of Christianity.” Stating that the “churches have directed their concerns to the Israeli government but to little avail,” the church leaders appealed for the President’s intervention to help restore the normal functioning of Christian institutions in Israel and the Occupied Territories and claimed that “relations of the churches and these institutions with the Israeli government may be the worst they have ever been.”—*National Council of Churches*

CPT workers return to Iraq, give interviews

BAGHDAD—Having returned to Iraq on May 3, CPT workers Le Anne Clausen and Stewart Vriesinga found themselves being interviewed by news organizations. CPT released a report in January with 72 testimonies of abuse and torture of Iraqi detainees, four months before the photos of abused prisoners were made public.

A Canadian TV journalist interviewed them and said, “We should have asked you about your detainee work four months ago.” NBC, Swiss TV and a Washington affiliate of CBS also contacted the workers.

In an article in the May 17 issue of *The New Yorker*, writer Seymour Hersh quotes CPT worker Cliff Kindy about the use of dogs by U.S. military to intimidate and even attack Iraqi detainees.

In London, CPT has launched CPT UK, a region-

al group of the North American-based organization, and invites Christians to participate in its peace-making work.—*CPT*

Missionary Anna Byler dies at age 90

GOSHEN, Ind.—Anna M. Byler, 90, a member of East Goshen Mennonite Church, died May 8 at Greencroft Healthcare. She married B. Frank Byler in 1941; he died July 29, 1999. She and her husband were missionaries with the Mennonite Board of Missions and served in Argentina from 1947 to 1962 and 1975 to 1982 and in Uruguay from 1962 to 1975. They were involved in church planting and the Bible institute in Bragado, and Frank taught at the Seminary in Montevideo.—*Mennonite Mission Network*



Byler

Missionary Albert Buckwalter dies at age 82

ELKHART, Ind.—Albert S. Buckwalter, whose life passion was the translation of the Bible into indigenous languages, died in his Goshen, Ind., home May 12. He was 82.

Buckwalter, with his wife, Lois (Litwiller), who survives, served the indigenous people of the Argentine Chaco from 1950 to 1993 with Mennonite Board of Missions, a predecessor agency of Mennonite Mission Network. Buckwalter, with indigenous associates, translated the New Testament and Old Testament portions into three Guaycurú languages (Toba, Pilagá and Mocoví). He also compiled dictionaries in these languages. A few weeks before his death, Buckwalter completed the Spanish-Guaycurú Quadrilingual Dictionary.

Buckwalter was a member of College Mennonite Church, Goshen, which held his memorial service on May 15.—*Mennonite Mission Network*



Buckwalter



MCC photo by Dave Klassen

Seeds and hoes help a Ugandan family survive

Aero Margaret, who lives in a camp for displaced people in northern Uganda, is grateful for seeds and hoes that will allow her to sustain her family. She has land nearby but has remained in the camp because it is safer and because she had no food at home.

Students raise money for African children

GOSHEN, Ind.—During the last several months of classes this spring, Goshen College students spent money on more than just textbooks and pizza. Student-initiated fund-raisers raised nearly \$2,500 to pay for measles vaccinations for African children, send food to Ethiopia and buy necessities for victims of AIDS.

Two members of the International Student Club, Hideat Tewolde, a senior from Germany, and Miriam Mohamed, a freshman from Columbus, Ohio, organized several events to raise money for



CPT group conducts public witness in Washington

On May 14, the Washington regional training group of Christian Peacemaker Teams conducts a public witness in front of the Supreme Court protesting the treatment of civilians detained by American forces in Iraq. At the Russell Senate Office Building, the group presented a report from CPT's Iraq team about treatment of Iraqi detainees.

the Red Cross Measles Initiative, which oversees measles vaccinations in Africa, where nearly half a million children die from the virus each year. It costs only \$1 to vaccinate a child, and Tewolde remembers thinking "even students can give that."

In another fund-raiser, 150 students gave up five campus cafeteria dinners to raise \$1,500 for the Ethiopia Emergency Fund, run by Catholic Relief Services.—*Goshen College News Service*

Friesen receives Bethel's Chair in religion



Friesen

NORTH NEWTON, KAN.—Bethel College Bible and religion professor Duane K. Friesen is the first recipient of the Edmund G. Kaufman Distinguished Chair in Religion. John Sheriff, vice president for academic affairs, announced the inauguration of the Chair and presented Friesen with a commemorative chair at the college's faculty meeting May 11.

Endowed by gifts from the late Bethel College president, the Distinguished Chair will be used to fund the salary of a professor in the Bible and religion department. The Kaufman gift completes the funding for the sixth endowed chair or department at Bethel College. Friesen has taught at Bethel since 1970.—*Bethel College News Service*

Hesston softball team seventh in nation

HESSTON, Kan.—Hesston College's softball team placed seventh at the National Junior College Athletic Association Division III National Championships, held May 20-22 in Joliet, Ill.

At the District G playoffs May 14 in Columbus, Ohio, Hesston defeated Columbus State Community College 3-2 in 10 innings and 8-0 to qualify for nationals for the second straight year.

At the national tournament on May 20, Hesston lost 1-0 to Corning (N.Y.) Community College and 8-6 to Dawson (Mont.) Community College. In the seventh-place game on May 21, they beat Suffolk County (N.Y.) College 10-1.

Hesston finished its season with a 22-13 record.

Goshen College students forced out of Cuba

GOSHEN, Ind.—The Goshen College Study Service Trimester (SST) office received notice in late May that the Cuban government would not renew student visas, which were to expire toward the end of May. The reason for nonrenewal appeared to be related to political rhetoric between U.S. and Cuban governments. Unit leaders Keith and Ann Graber Miller met unsuccessfully with Cuban officials to see if anything could be done to maintain the unit.

The Cuban SST unit relocated to Costa Rica on May 27 for their service assignments. This was discussed with parents when it became evident there was a potential problem in renewing student visas.—*Goshen College*



Mennonite Mission Network photo by Dale Nafziger

What a Wonderful world

Employees at Wonder Products of Nepal extract juice from oranges and tangerines. Mennonite Mission Network worker Dale Nafziger, who has worked in Nepal for about 18 years, is the product development engineer for the company, which employs national workers to manufacture products that are 100 percent Nepali, from growing the fruit to the bottling, labeling and advertising.



Wendling

Mennonite writer wins fellowship

Linda Wendling, a member of St. Louis Mennonite Fellowship, has been awarded the Milton Center's 2004-2005 postgraduate fellowship in writing. The Milton Center, based on the campus of Seattle Pacific University, exists to nurture writers of Christian commitment and literary excellence. Wendling's story "Inappropriate Babies," which she will expand into a novel during her year at the Milton Center, was published in *New Stories from the South: The Year's Best* (Algonquin Press).

Church leaders call Bush's clean-air policy too weak

One hundred Christian leaders told President Bush in a pointed Earth Day rebuke that they have "grave moral concern" about his clean-air policy. Coordinated by the National Council of Churches, the letter accused Bush of weakening air-quality standards and putting the elderly and young children at particular risk through his "Clear Skies" initiative.—*The Christian Century*

Mennonite *prayer*

*An attitude
or technique?*

by Miriam Frey

in my experience as a spiritual director, I hear people talking about their struggle with personal devotions and private prayer. I have read articles and books by Mennonites that suggest we need more structure in prayer. However, I prefer to pray without structure or words—approaching and being approached by God in silence. This leads me to ask why we are looking for techniques and structures when our tradition abandoned them 500 years ago.


Early Anabaptist leaders must have known about liturgies and prayer books, including morning and evening prayers. Yet they chose to relate to God more informally. Instead of using prayer books, they eventually made their daily life their prayer. When they gathered in community, they offered prayers for and on behalf of the community. Unfortunately, this did not teach individuals how to pray or clarify what constitutes a relationship to God.

When I am in the presence of my Old Order Mennonite relatives, I am struck by an attitude that permeates their lifestyle, their worship and their prayers. This attitude of “gelassenheit” (a German mystical term for letting loose of oneself) indicates “a way of total dependence, humility and trust before God” (*Westminster Dictionary of Theological Terms*). When I was a young child, the lives of my parents and extended family demonstrated gelassenheit to me. But as I have become more independent of my family and the church, relying on God has become more difficult.

Why are prayer and reliance on God so onerous? I find

When I am in the presence of my Old Order Mennonite relatives, I am struck by an attitude that permeates their lifestyle, their worship and their prayers.

*Continued
on page 10*



Affluence and reliable social structures have given North Americans an illusion of control that is opposite to dependence and trust in God.

*Continued
from page 9*

them hard because I am busy, I want to be in control, and I question whether God really hears our prayers.

1. In our busy lives, it is difficult to find time for communal worship and, even more so, private worship. How do we expect to cultivate a relationship with God and follow Christ when we are too busy? In John 15:4, Jesus invites us to consider living more simply: “Abide in me as I abide in you.” This means making choices that draw us closer to God.

2. Trusting God and praying are difficult because we want to be in control—vulnerability is understood as weakness. According to North American culture it is up to us to work hard, make wise investments and be as efficient as possible. I remember learning lessons on patience and vulnerability when I worked in Africa with Mennonite Central Committee. I could work as hard as I wanted, but in the end my planning relied on the timing of flights, the condition of roads and the availability of electricity and fuel. Affluence and reliable social structures have given North Americans an illusion of control that is opposite to dependence and trust in God.

3. Trusting God is not easy when we question whether our prayers really make a difference. Despite our prayers for peace, people around the world still suffer from war while others live in luxury. How do we come to believe that God really cares about our existence or listens to our prayers? This requires faith: “The assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen” (Hebrews 11:1). Faith requires trusting in a power beyond our knowledge or imagination.

In a culture that dismisses faith, a simple lifestyle and vulnerability it is difficult to find the time for prayer and to truly rely on the providence of God.

What can we learn about private prayer and worship from our Mennonite tradition that offers few techniques for prayer?

1. Approach prayer with an attitude of *gelassenheit*. Depending on God is not as easy as it sounds. It requires humility—the proper valuing and loving of oneself—and trusting in something beyond human effort. It means letting go of the need to control events and people—a vulnerability before God.


2. Examine our concept of prayer. Does prayer

engage our mind, body, heart and soul? Do we expect God to change the weather for our family picnic? Do we expect God to keep us from suffering? Do we expect God to speak to us? Do we expect our efforts to lead us to God? Do we expect prayer to make a difference? How we answer these questions will determine how we pray.

3. Live with integrity—ensuring all of life is honest and healthy. For centuries Mennonites have made their lifestyle their prayer. This requires the daily prayer: “Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my thoughts. See if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting” (Psalm 139:23-24).

4. Attend to our relationship with God. What brings our attention to God? For some people it is tending the garden, and for others it is reading Scripture or morning and evening prayers. For some people God is encountered in Sunday morning worship, while for others God is experienced in nature, creativity or silence.

There are many ways the Mennonite tradition has shown rather than taught individuals how to pray. Because we lack a method, Mennonites today feel ill-equipped to pray, either publicly or privately. However, if we believe God approaches us with love and mercy, then we can ask God for help. As with any relationship, if we are committed to regular communication, eventually we become comfortable in our conversation. If we approach God with humility, trust, integrity and our full attention, we can expect God to abide in us.

The Anabaptists trusted the words of Jesus recorded in John 15:5: “I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing.” As Christians, we can experience the love and presence of God in our lives. Prayer becomes an extension of that experience. How we pray may not be as important as the commitment and attitudes we bring before God. 

Miriam Frey is a teacher and spiritual director living in Waterloo, Ont. A recent D.Min graduate from Regis College in Toronto, she teaches spirituality courses and leads spiritual retreats for groups and congregations. A version of this article appeared in Canadian Mennonite.

Prayer is the prescription

Studies show the healing power of prayer.

by Phyllis Edgerly Ring

As spiritual care coordinator at New Hampshire's Portsmouth Hospital, Mary James sees prayer's effects on healing every day. But she witnessed them in a personal way when she and her husband—parents of children 12, 17 and 22—were both diagnosed with cancer.

"We had each been healthy and were quite shocked," says Mary. "Diagnosed with cancer of the throat, my husband had never smoked and had none of the risk factors for this disease. We asked everyone we knew to pray for him, including our community of faith. Whenever he was scheduled for a procedure or treatment, we'd gather friends together and pray."

He not only did well in recovery but was also spared many of the side effects that usually accompany the aggressive treatment he had, she says.

"Knowing that people were supporting him through prayer brought him a deep peace and composure. Even in some of the worst moments, he never became depressed or despondent."

Then three years ago, Mary was diagnosed with breast cancer and again, "we mobilized the prayer warriors," she says with a smile. "It was important to me to pray with people at pivotal moments. We prayed throughout my treatment, and when I was going in for surgery we were filling out the living-will forms and needed a witness, and the nurse found

Knowing that people were supporting him through prayer brought him a deep peace and composure. Even in some of the worst moments, he never became depressed or despondent.—Mary James

Continued on page 12

Continued
from page 11

a man who turned out to be a minister. He and his wife came and prayed with us, and it was wonderful.”

Mary’s surgeon and others in the operating room later told her they’d felt an atmosphere of peace and comfort all throughout her time in surgery.

“I just know that all through that time, I felt very, very cared for,” she says.

The science of prayer: Recent studies have demonstrated not only the power of prayer in healing but the infinite nature of the healing process.

Larry Dossey, M.D., former chief of staff of Medical City Dallas Hospital and co-chairman of the Panel on Mind/Body Interventions at the National Institutes of Health, is the world’s foremost champion of prayer’s healing effect. Speaking from his New Mexico home, Dossey describes his goal to “anchor the holistic health movement in a model that is scientifically respectable and which, at the same time, answers to our inner spiritual needs.”

“As typical and orthodox a physician as you could find, it was the practice of medicine that was my doorway to the infinite,” he says. “I was deeply affected by unexplained ‘miracle cures’ I witnessed. One of the most powerful involved a patient with lung cancer who refused treatment and returned a year later with a normal chest X-ray after his church congregation had prayed for him.”

“Such miracles suggest that no matter how serious an illness may be, healing is always possible, and such healing can happen for anyone, saint or sinner,” he says. “They remind us that there will always be phenomena we cannot explain.”

Recent studies have demonstrated not only the power of prayer in healing but the infinite nature of the healing process.

Dossey’s many books about prayer and healing have been described as must-reads for anyone who prays, and “even those who think they don’t.” The list includes *Space, Time & Medicine*, the best-seller *Healing Words, Prayer Is Good Medicine* and *Be Careful What You Pray For ... You Just Might Get It*. His most recent, *Reinventing Medicine*, explores the role of “nonlocal” or infinite mind in health and medicine.

He began his 1989 book, *Recovering the Soul: A Scientific and Spiritual Approach*, with the story of Sarah, a patient who experienced cardiac arrest just as her gall-bladder surgery concluded. Although under general anesthesia when this occurred, she later provided an eyewitness account of many details associated with the operating room during



the time of her arrest and of adjacent areas down the hall. What made this particularly remarkable was that Sarah had been blind since birth.

“We cannot make sense of our lives unless we acknowledge that our mind operates nonlocally,” says Dossey. “Studies in prayer reveal that we possess a quality capable of reaching out infinitely in space and time. Prayer studies therefore point like an arrow to the existence of a soul-like quality in everyone.”

In Dossey’s opinion, the best scientific studies have examined the positive effects of prayer on heart disease, advanced AIDS and infertility. “If prayer can affect serious diseases such as advanced AIDS, no disease is beyond responding to prayer,” he says.

One of the best-known studies was conducted by Randolph Byrd in the cardiac-care unit of San Francisco General Hospital. All 400 or so subjects were given routine standard care, but half the group was also prayed for by prayer groups. The group that had been prayed for showed no cardiac arrests, no need for an artificial ventilator and no deaths during their hospitalization. However, 12 members of the group that did not receive prayers faced such complications and suffered three deaths. None of the medical staff knew who was prayed for.

“If this had been a new drug or surgical procedure being tested, it would have been hailed as a great therapeutic breakthrough,” Dossey says.

Such studies ought to help religion and science



come closer together, he says. “At some level, they should be different, because they address different domains. But the science behind prayer and healing shows there’s huge room for accommodation on both sides. Love and compassion are central to scientific studies on prayer,” says Dossey, “and these have always been valued by the world’s great religions.”

The spirit of healing: “Although studies show that prayer is associated with healing, the precise mechanism that makes this true isn’t yet known,” Dossey says. “Many scholars are offering hypotheses that suggest that we are going to have to think about consciousness in a new way—as a process that extends beyond the brain and body and that is independent of space and time.”

“When folks ask, How does prayer work? we ... must first say in the face of the vast mysteries of God that we don’t actually know,” says Mary. “It can perhaps be said that prayer always works, if we trust in God. ‘Ask, and you shall receive,’ says the Gospel. ‘Knock, and the door will be opened to you.’”

“When I pray with folks here at the hospital, I notice an almost immediate physiological response,” Mary says. “They seem to relax, close their eyes, and come back to themselves. I bet if we had a blood-pressure cuff hanging around, we’d be able to actually measure this effect, which Herbert Benson described in his *The Relaxation Response*.

“Often people will shed some tears during prayer, and I think that release of emotion is always a healing thing. Also, almost as a reflex, they’ll often also

reach out to make physical contact with me.”

Afterward people express gratitude and a sense of being comforted and may often find it easier to talk in more depth, she says. “I think that peace they feel is about a sense of being connected with something greater than themselves, that has their best outcomes in mind. The relaxation, the release of emotion and a sense of connection all seem to be a consistent part of the process of prayer in healing—almost a surrender, I guess.”

One of Mary’s most memorable experiences came when she prayed with an older patient one day who seemed “weak and within weeks of dying. When I asked if she wanted to pray, it was as if a bolt of lightning went through her, and this nearly immobile woman grabbed both my hands. I spoke some words of prayer, and when I was done she indicated through her touch that we weren’t done yet—and then she prayed for me. We were both crying afterward.”

Surprisingly, Dossey says, studies show that prayer’s effectiveness in healing is not dependent on the sick person having religious or spiritual faith.


“We know this because the major studies were double-blind, and recipients didn’t know they were prayed for, plus many studies in healing prayer have been done on animals, plants and microbes. Presumably they don’t know it is happening,” he says.

However, faith makes a difference in the personal experience of the individual who is ill, Mary says. “Those with faith often make meaning out of things, put them in a context that is larger than themselves,

The breath of God we feel through prayer is just everywhere all the time, but it becomes more palpable with every breath of our own in times of illness.

and I think that in itself is profoundly healing.”

“We need to remember,” notes Dossey, “that prayer ultimately is not about getting something but about connecting with the Absolute. If we can do so, prayer won’t disappoint.”

Mary agrees. “I think what illness really does is invite us to open up to the possibilities that we don’t yet know, the ones that help bring us closer to God. Prayer is the agent in that process. The breath of God we feel through prayer is just everywhere all the time, but it becomes more palpable with every breath of our own in times of illness.” 

Phyllis Edgerly Ring lives in Exeter, N.H.

labyrinths

A new and ancient way to pray

by Melanie Zuercher

Does everyone pray the same way? How can I better focus my attention on God when I pray? How can I quiet myself and listen for God when my life is so hectic?

In the past 10-15 years, questions like these have led Christians, including some Mennonites, to look for new disciplines that help them center on God and enhance their prayer life. One of these “new” methods is in fact ancient—the labyrinth or, as some call it, “prayer walk.”

The labyrinth of Greek mythology was a maze, intended to confuse—as reflected in its current dictionary definition—but labyrinths in many other ancient cultures, as well as those that appeared in European churches in the Middle Ages, are not mazes. There is only one way in and out, and the “walls” are never more than a few inches high.

Marlene Kropf, who teaches Christian spirituality and serves as a spiritual director at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Elkhart, Ind., is probably responsible for introducing more Mennonites to labyrinths than any one person. In 1998, when she was a staff person for the Mennonite Church’s Board of Congregational Ministries, Marlene included the labyrinth as a prayer discipline in that year’s Lenten material for congregations.

“Since medieval times, the labyrinth has been a spiritual tool for Christians,” she wrote. “The journey into the center of the labyrinth signifies ‘letting go’; the return journey signifies openness to the new life God has given.”

Labyrinths are “an active way to pray,” Marlene

says. She has found that seminary students who sit in chairs all day are especially responsive to a way of praying that allows them to use a different part of their brains than the one used in the classroom.

A long-time, regular walker, Marlene says, “I discovered that I prayed more easily when I walked. Going around in a circle [in a labyrinth] is quieting and centering.”

Kropf’s first exposure to a labyrinth came at a retreat center owned and run by Beulah Steiner, an AMBS board member who lives near Wooster, Ohio. Steiner later came to Elkhart and spent a day mowing a labyrinth into the grass south of the seminary’s main building.

At least two Mennonite retreat centers and one church also have labyrinths mowed in the grass. Mary Lou Weaver Houser owns Herrbrook Retreat Cottage near New Danville, Pa. She got the idea for her labyrinth from one she saw at The Hermitage, near Three Rivers, Mich.

She opened the labyrinth to the public in April 2002 and has been “amazed at how it never ceases to move people. The most common comment I hear is that praying outdoors in that setting slows people down and makes them notice and connect with nature.

“I’ve used it in all kinds of weather, including snow and rain,” she says. “The different seasons bring out different aspects of [the walk]. In the summer, I mow it with a push mower that belonged to [my husband’s] grandpa. I do it as a prayer, remembering the people who will walk the labyrinth.”

Gwen Groff, pastor of Bethany Mennonite Church in Bridgewater Corners, Vt., also uses her church’s “lawn labyrinth” as a personal prayer discipline, including the time she spends mowing. She has used it as part of a Communion service, too.

“People take the elements at the entrance and then walk to the center, and back out,” she says. “There are grapes and goldfish crackers for the kids in the center, and they can run through it if they want to.”

Not all labyrinths are permanent. Assembly Mennonite Church in Goshen, Ind., and Lorraine Avenue Mennonite Church in Wichita, Kan., have labyrinths painted on cloth or canvas that can fit in

Web resources on labyrinths

www.gracecathedral.org/labyrinth (the Web site for resources from Lauren Artress, canon of Grace Cathedral in San Francisco, who is probably the one person responsible for re-introducing labyrinths to Western Christians as a prayer tool)

www.grouppublishing.com (do a search for “labyrinth” to find out more about the Prayer Walk, a kit for building and using a portable labyrinth)

www.stkate.edu/wisdomways (click on “Labyrinth”)

www.jillkhg.com/deephavenlabphotos.html (beautiful photos of outdoor labyrinths made of all different kinds of materials)

www.jillkhg.com/labyrinthpraying.html (part of the Web site of Jill Geoffrion, who has produced numerous resources for praying with labyrinths)



The journey into the center of the labyrinth signifies “letting go”; the return journey signifies openness to the new life God has given.—Marlene Kropf

A spiritual tool for Christians: A labyrinth on the campus of Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Elkhart, Ind.

a fellowship hall or large room. Both congregations have used their labyrinths during Lent.

Michele Hershberger, chair of the Bible department at Hesston (Kan.) College as well as director of youth ministries there, discovered labyrinths at a Youth Specialties convention in Nashville, Tenn. There, it was called a “prayer walk” and was set up in one of the convention halls for people to try. “It was just wonderful,” Michele says. As a result of her experience, she ordered a kit from Group Publishing that told how to make a labyrinth on a large piece of cloth or a tarp.

“I used it [this past September] in my Faith and Discipleship class,” she says. This course on spiritual disciplines had about 30 students and included a weekend retreat with 17 hours of silence. The labyrinth was one option Hershberger gave her students for their prayer time.

“It’s different from many—labyrinths often are about you and God, about listening and prayer. This one came with CDs of quiet music and sometimes a voice reading Scripture, so the students would wear headphones and listen as they walked. There were ‘stations’ within the labyrinth and some guided meditation. At one place there was a bucket of water and some stones, and you were invited to drop a stone into the water as a way of dropping something you need to let go.

“The walk is specifically presented as going inward five stations to meet God, [then] coming outward five stations into the world and your mission or ministry.”

Although none of the students was required to take the prayer walk, all did, Michele says. It does not work for everyone, she says, but “God meets people in different ways, and I think this is one.”

Joetta Schlabach, who lives in St. Paul, Minn., works with daily access to a labyrinth at Wisdom Ways, a resource center for spirituality that is a collaboration between the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet and the College of St. Catherine.

“The labyrinth is in the grass between our building and the college,” she says. “There’s a parking lot on one side and the chapel of the sisters, with a garden, on the other. It’s a symbolic location—our prayer is always moving us between the world and the sacred.”

Joetta doesn’t walk the labyrinth regularly, she says—“sometimes on my lunch break.” What she finds as meaningful as walking is reading the entries that people write in the journal left at the labyrinth’s entrance. “Some people come consciously or deliberately seeking an answer [from God],” she says. “Some bring their children, who sometimes draw pictures.

“One 9-year-old wrote, ‘I was afraid I’d get lost and have to start over, but when I got to the center, I knew I could trust myself.’ I think that’s a paradigm of Christian life.

“Jeremiah 6:16 says, ‘Stand at the crossroads, and look, and ask for the ancient paths, where the good way lies; and walk in it, and find rest for your souls.’ I think that’s emblematic of the labyrinth. In the walking, we do find rest.”

Melanie Zuercher is a free-lance writer and a member of Shalom Mennonite Church, Newton, Kan.

The ancient path

What do Christmas, Easter, contemporary Christian music and labyrinths have in common? All have their origins in pre-Christian or secular tradition or practice. And all are used by Christians to worship God and celebrate life in Christ.

“We might as well be up front about it—labyrinths [originated as] a pre-Christian prayer practice,” says Marlene Kropf. “But they [also] have a Christian history. The church has always borrowed from the surrounding culture and inculcated it with Christian meaning.”

Labyrinths began appearing in churches in Europe—most famously in France’s Chartres Cathedral—during the Middle Ages. “They were connected with pilgrimage,” Marlene says. “Not everyone could make a pilgrimage to the Holy Land—it was too dangerous or too expensive. So labyrinths became the substitute that could bring the same kind of peace and wholeness to the soul.

“The Psalms are full of language about ‘walking the path,’” she says.

“God has always been present in the world,” says Joetta Schlabach, who as part of her work helps people learn to use a labyrinth. “God was present before Christianity. God works through the church and beyond the church.

“I think of Paul, in Athens, saying, ‘Here’s the statue to the unknown God. I can tell you who that is.’ We can take things that aren’t Christian, but we can imbue them with Christian meaning and they can speak of God to us.”

Joetta recalls hearing a Catholic sister, a faculty member at the College of St. Catherine in St. Paul, Minn., talk about “how we make God too small—we tend to have a fixed idea of who God is and what God can do. Often, when I start walking the labyrinth, a song will emerge [in my mind]. It’s almost always a hymn or a chorus. I like to think that God has brought it to mind and that it’s intended to be part of my prayer that day.”—Melanie Zuercher

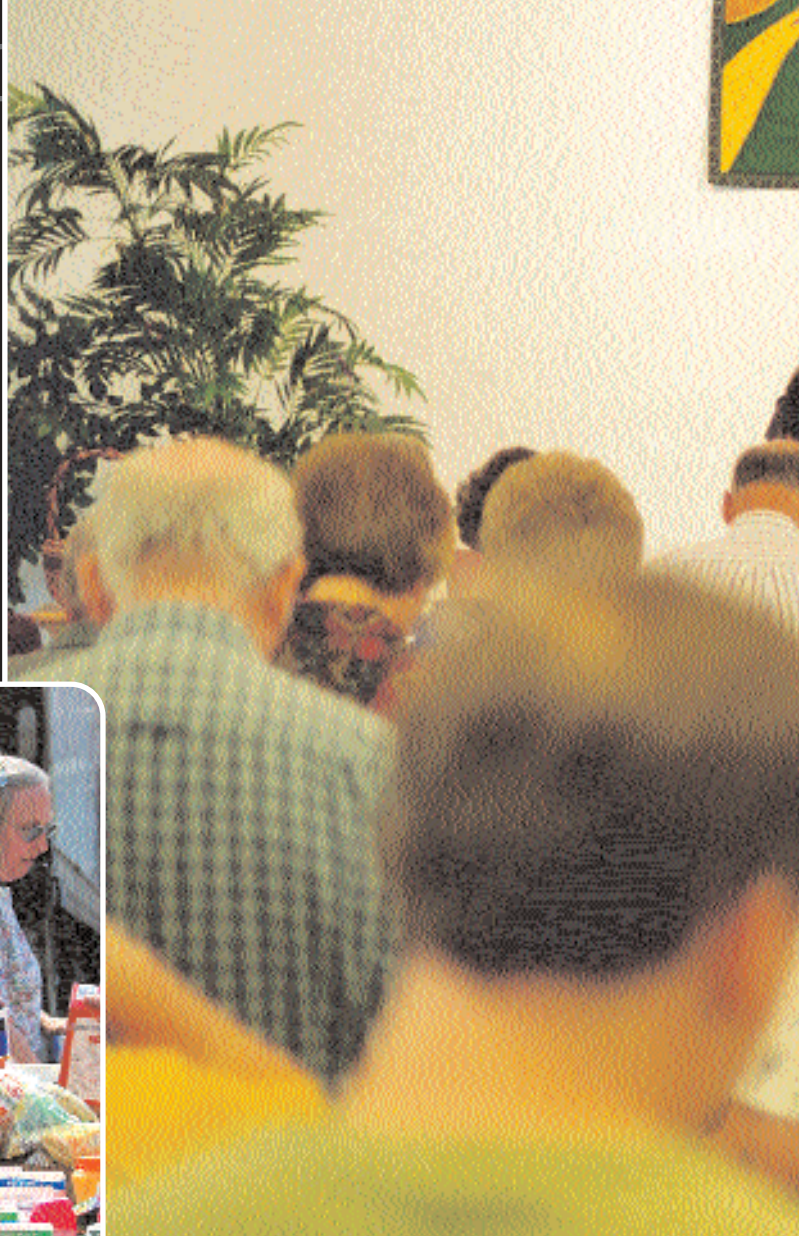
mennonite churches usa

Scottdale Mennonite Church, Scottdale, Pa.

June 1 marks the one year anniversary of the merging of Kingview Mennonite Church (KMC) and Mennonite Church of Scottdale (MCS). Both congregations were experiencing dwindling attendance due in part to Mennonite Publishing House cuts and retirees moving away.

The merger was spurred both by a letter from the youth group (which had been meeting jointly for many years) encouraging the congregations to look at merger seriously and by the looming prospect of a pastoral search by the MCS congregation.

After a year of trying out both facilities on a quarterly rotation comes the difficult task of deciding which building to permanently call home.



Above: Both former congregations hosted food distribution programs for the community. Here, Brenda Johnson (left) and Leah Beth Shetler (second from left) help out with Fresh Express.

Near right: MCS and KMC have jointly hosted a community vacation Bible school each summer. Peter Dyck (standing) presents his then & now activity to Arlene Miller's "city" group.

Middle right: Yvonne Stull and Krista Rittenhouse sign the covenant form during the inaugural worship service on June 1, 2003.

Far right: Youth programs from the two congregations have been meeting jointly for many years. The MYF is shown putting on a skit they created during their annual dessert theater fund-raiser.

Large photo: Members of both congregations join hands across the symbolic dividing center aisle as John Stahl-Wert, congregational overseer of MCS, leads in prayer.



Courtesy photos by Virgil Yoder and Julia Zehr



Above: Conrad and Donna Mast (center), are installed as co-pastors of Scottsdale Mennonite Church. Also pictured are Charles Shenk (left), interim pastor at MCS, and Kurt Horst, Allegheny Conference minister. Formerly the Masts were co-pastors at KMC.



The two shall become one

The merger of the Mennonite congregations at Scottdale, Pa.

by Daniel Hertzler

On June 1, 2003, Kingview Mennonite Church and Mennonite Church of Scottdale formed a new congregation, Scottdale Mennonite Church. Serious discussions about this had been going on for more than a year.

For eight weeks during each of the two previous summers, the congregations had met jointly with one or the other of the meetinghouses closed. In April 2002, representatives from each met with Dale Stoltzfus, Mennonite Church USA denominational minister, to clarify their congregational visions separately and together. These were found to be compatible.

This merger represented a new development in more than two centuries of Mennonite activity in Fayette and Westmoreland counties. Edward Yoder in *The Mennonites of Westmoreland County, Pennsylvania* (1940) has documented this history. Yoder's account described a pattern of expansion and contraction covering 150 years. The first 50 years, 1790-1840, involved expansion. This was followed by 50 years of decline until 1892, when two Loucks brothers were ordained for church leadership, Joseph as a deacon and Aaron as a minister. In the following year a new Mennonite meetinghouse was erected in the town of Scottdale. This ushered in a new period of expansion, which lasted more than 75 years.

Several of Yoder's observations provide perspective on this pattern of oscillation. He writes: "The desire for more and cheaper lands as well as the lure of the frontier took possession of many people of all classes. Even conservative, peace-loving Mennonites got the fever to go west and grow up with the country." Mennonite concern for worship and fellowship came along, and they erected two meetinghouses, one near Pennsville in Fayette County and the other at Stonerville (now Alverton) in Westmoreland County. The people laid out cemeteries adjacent to the meetinghouses.

Yoder reports, however, that "of the families who settled on the south side of Jacobs Creek, it is doubtful if the younger members of some of these became active members of the Mennonite congregations." Several things influenced people in Westmoreland County, including "the constant movement of the population in the country at that time. By the year 1815 the tide of migration into Ohio was under way. Many of the Mennonite settlers or of descendants whose parents had settled here 20

years earlier had joined in the wholesale trek westward in the quest for newer and cheaper lands."

Another baneful influence on the local churches included "leadership [that] was evidently lacking in initiative, and the conservative traditions were continued with too much tenaciousness." Among these traditions was a continuation of the German language in the worship services. As a result many young people joined other, more exciting groups, such as the Churches of God, the United Brethren in Christ and the Evangelical Association. Although these had been of German background, they adapted to English more readily than the Mennonites.

One family prominent among the early Mennonites was named Stoner. A telephone book showed some 85 listings of Stoner. Yet the Scottdale Mennonite directory has only two families named Stoner, both having joined the Mennonite Church in recent years.

After people built a meetinghouse in Scottdale, preaching services continued in the Pennsville and Stonerville buildings. But the center of interest and activity was in Scottdale, where vigorous programs began. Aaron Loucks spent eight months at Moody Bible Institute in Chicago during 1894-95. "After that he returned to his congregation to carry on the duties of a preacher and pastor." Mennonite Publishing House (MPH) was organized in 1908, with Aaron Loucks as the first general manager, a position he held until 1935. Included in the Yoder account is the beginning of Sunday schools in East and North Scottdale, each of them in schoolhouses. In East Scottdale (Kingview) it was first held in 1906 and in North Scottdale (a mile away) in 1934.

MPH began an expansion phase after World War II. The Scottdale Mennonite congregation and its extension Sunday schools also grew. The Kingview Sunday school erected its own building in 1950 and became an organized congregation in 1952. The North Scottdale school building was given to the church, and a congregation organized there also. In the mid-1950s the Scottdale congregation called Willis Hallman as its first salaried pastor. In 1958 Edwin Alderfer became pastor of both the North Scottdale and Kingview congregations.

Yoder observed that "the greater part of the increase in the congregation's membership has come through members and their families who moved to Scottdale from other congregations of the Mennonite faith." This was particularly true because of the close association between the

Mennonite Publishing House (MPH) was organized in 1908, with Aaron Loucks as the first general manager, a position he held until 1935.

Scottdale congregation and MPH. More than 40 years from the beginning of Sunday school in East Scottdale the congregation was organized there. Even so, local adults and young people joined these congregations.

My wife, Mary, and I were among those who moved to Scottdale from other areas. We came from Ohio in September 1952 for me to accept an editorial assignment at MPH. We were soon involved in congregational activity and joined Kingview and were members nearly as long as its 51 years as a congregation.

We raised our four sons here and sent them to Mennonite colleges. They saw limited opportunities for employment here, though one came back with his family and worked nine years at MPH. But a failure to develop many multigenerational families seemed to hamper our long-range stability. At one time Jesse and Ruth Sprinkle with their descendants represented four generations at Kingview. Then Jesse and Ruth died.

Some contraction in our church life began around 1968. Termites had invaded the North Scottdale building, and the congregation merged with Kingview (KMC). Ten years later we enlarged the Kingview building. KMC and Mennonite Church of Scottdale (MCS) continued as sister congregations for 35 years. Some may have seen them as daughter-mother, but they had developed separate identities, even though only a mile and a half apart. Many people in the congregations knew each other and worked together; leaders met to review relationships and coordinate programs. People new in the congregations may not have been aware of KMC's Sunday school background.

In the mid-1990s each congregation called a pastoral couple: Douglas and Wanda Roth Amstutz at MCS, Conrad and Donna Mast at KMC. MCS employed their couple at 1.25-time, while KMC's was a full-time position. But trouble waited in the wings. It came first in some movements of longtime congregational supporters who retired and moved to other areas of the country. The trouble was exacerbated by the dismemberment of MPH, a shock to the entire Mennonite community.

When the Amstutzes resigned and moved to Canada, MCS hesitated to look for full-time pastoral leadership. They hired Charles Shenk as interim pastor on a part-time basis. He served notice that he was not available after May 31, 2003. On June 1 the congregations merged. Leaders decided that merger should be done and details about which building to use to be worked out later, since each congregation had a functional building.

With the merger of these two congregations a new phase has begun in the history of Mennonites in our area. What will develop from this remains to be seen. On one hand, it represents a contraction.

On the other hand, the merger provides for a pooling of resources. Instead of two struggling congregations we have one with the resources to pay our local expenses and contribute a reasonable amount to outside causes.

Personnel gifts are also shared: Sunday school teachers, administrators, custodians, music leaders. KMC brought pastors Conrad and Donna Mast, who now serve the merged congregation. With our peace tradition, Mennonites represent a minority in our community, which has a strong military tradition. Although we do not stand out in a crowd the way we once did, we represent a view of Christian practice some find offensive.


Yet some are willing to join us in pursuing our vision of peace and justice. The chair of our merged congregation is Kim Turrill, who grew up in a congregation of the Churches of God, one of the denominations that absorbed Mennonites in earlier days. I told her once that it is only fair to get someone back from this group. In the Believers Church tradition it is understood that those in each generation must decide whether to embrace the faith or deny it. This introduces an element of instability in congregational life. Yet we seek to build a community that will nurture our children in the faith and attract others to practice it with us.

Conrad and Donna have the task of shepherding this merged congregation. After six months, Donna said: "It is beautiful to see how God has been working to bring the two congregations together. What

There have been hurdles and adjustments. What has been most pleasant is the sound of eager workers stepping into roles within the congregation.—Conrad Mast

once seemed impossible happened quickly and peaceably. Now that God has made us one, I'm enjoying the growing interaction. The lines that once separated us are becoming more and more blurry. I'm excited to see what more God wants to do with us."

Conrad said: "There have been hurdles and adjustments. What has been most pleasant is the sound of eager workers stepping into roles within the congregation. We rarely hear anything that sounds like second guessing the decision to merge our churches. Our energies have been better used in exploring the directions that seem to be hearing God calling us to step into the future."

As we move into our third century, we face a new reality: one congregation and MPH reduced to a shadow of its former self. What was once a noisy, pulsing building is now almost as silent as a mausoleum. But we are reminded of the words of Hebrews 13:14: "Here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come." 

Daniel Hertzler is a member of Scottdale (Pa.) Mennonite Church.

Socially irresponsible investing?

When a financial services firm such as Mennonite Mutual Aid (MMA), a company committed to socially responsible investing, makes investment decisions, they rely on a philosophy of stewardship for guidance. The firm's philosophy is guided by a set of core social values that evaluate corporate behavior to determine which companies are appropriate for MMA portfolios. However, MMA's philosophy is not consistent with its practice. Investors peering beyond the facade end up absconding, as I did, in order to invest in more socially responsible firms, like PAX or New Alternatives Fund, that are consistent with their stated social values.

According to the company's Web site, "MMA seeks to invest in companies that (1) respect the dignity and value of all people, (2) build a world at peace and free from violence, (3) demonstrate a concern for justice in a global society, (4) exhibit responsible management practices, (5) support and involve communities and (6) practice environmental stewardship." Although these guidelines articulate MMA's expectations for corporate behavior, it appears that their holdings are not behaving.

Divergence occurs between MMA's theory and practice for two reasons: (1) Studious research of corporate track records seems to be absent, and (2) new employees claim no responsibility for old share purchases. As I flipped through my first MMA Annual Report in 1999 I was appalled at the hefty share of stock in Weyerhaeuser. That year I was working for an environmental firm in Seattle and was aware of Weyerhaeuser's abominable track record as the Northwest's largest timber company, responsible for excessive and irreparable clear-cutting of old-growth forests. Weyerhaeuser was not the only shocker; corporations with even shadier track records accompanied MMA's list. I got on the phone with an MMA buyer, who defended Weyerhaeuser's treatment of employees and was reticent to believe in Weyerhaeuser's clear-cutting history.

I divested everything. My dollars were intended for MMA's core values, but since their report showcased investments incongruous with MMA's stewardship philosophy, I had to divest. Did other MMA investors care where their dollars were channeled?


Were they divesting? Why were MMA staffers so uninformed about their companies' track records?

This spring I returned to MMA's Web site to download their 2003 Annual Report, hoping to witness progress in screening processes. Again the report touted investments in McDonalds (destructive deforester, violator of labor standards), Clear Channel Communications (sponsor of pro-Iraq-war rallies), Kraft (owned by tobacco giant Altria, formerly Philip Morris), Coca-Cola (fires workers' rights advocates, abandons factories after depleting local water supplies) and Weyerhaeuser. MMA included Citigroup, Kroger and Time Warner—all companies subjected to national boycotts in recent years. Have MMA's values been put in the back seat while financial considerations take the wheel? (MMA is not the only socially responsible investment firm with a lengthy list of such companies. Domini and Green Century, firms with comparable standards, stay afloat with a "top 10 holdings" list that is incongruous with the values they espouse.)

MMA may invest in these corporations to establish opportunities for shareholder advocacy. Shareholder advocacy can be a catalyst for social change only if brokers and investors are well-informed and attend company meetings regularly. MMA, however, provides little evidence of advocacy work and, in the case of Weyerhaeuser, needed me to substantiate the timber company's destructive track record.

Shareholder advocacy or investment-abstention from corporations worthy of boycotting are the two choices afforded investors. Since MMA chose the former, my hope is that MMA and their investors are mindful of (1) Clear Channel encouraging its 1,000-plus radio stations to host pro-Iraq-war rallies, (2) Coca-Cola's trend in firing advocates of fair-labor practices, eagerness to abandon factories after depleting local water supplies, (3) Kraft's earnings profited by parent company, tobacco giant Altria, (4) McDonald's busting of unionizing attempts to monitor deterioration of workers' rights and (5) Weyerhaeuser's legacy as the Northwest's top logger of old-growth forests.

Does MMA attend the company meetings of Clear Channel, Coca-Cola, Kraft, McDonalds and Weyerhaeuser? Who's campaigning for change in these companies?

If MMA seeks to invest in companies that respect the dignity of all people, build a world free from violence, and practice environmental stewardship, then MMA should implement these values into their purchasing practices. Contact MMA at memberinfo@mma-online.org or at 1-800-348-7468 and insist on investing that is socially responsible. 



Michael Shank is a master's degree student in the Conflict Transformation Program at Eastern Mennonite University, Harrisonburg, Va.

IN THE NEXT ISSUE

- **I kneel before the Father**—Karl Steffy
- **A man I called father**—Barbara Esch Shisler

From bread and chocolate to guns, war

Restaurant owner joins Christian Peacemaker Teams delegation in Iraq.



the vigil for the detainees, an Iraqi woman came up to Bechtel, ranting and raving.

"It was all in Arabic. I had no idea what she was talking about," Bechtel says. "She was really mad. Something nasty had happened to her."

Bechtel says she shook her head to show her support and to say, "No matter what it is, I know you are hurting."

The woman drifted back into the crowd, but later came back, gesturing that Bechtel's scarf needed adjusting. Bechtel, unable to fix it properly, motioned for the woman to help. After this exchange the two women shook hands.

"Without any words, we came to a meeting place at the end where she knew that I cared and she knew that I heard," Bechtel says. "It was an amazing thing for me."

She and another delegation member flew from Baghdad to Amman, Jordan, to Chicago on April 13, while the rest of the CPT delegation left the following day.

Anxious to share about her experiences, Bechtel was scheduled to speak at six churches and with Goshen High School's Peace Club. However, the transition back to daily life is a challenge, as Bechtel finds it difficult to slide back into her old life in Goshen and at Bread and Chocolate.

"I like my hot, running water and soft bed," she says. "But I will never be the same."—*Anna Groff, communication student at Goshen (Ind.) College, for Mennonite Church USA News Service*

Without any words, we came to a meeting place at the end where she knew that I cared and she knew that I heard.
—Nadine Bechtel

Nadine Bechtel, 54, the owner of a flourishing café on Main Street in Goshen, Ind., decided to leave her restaurant to join a Christian Peacemaker Teams (CPT) delegation to Iraq. Reactions were "all over the map," Bechtel says, when she informed her friends and family she was leaving Goshen and her restaurant, Bread and Chocolate.

Bechtel does not call herself brave because she simply was "doing what I felt like I needed to do."

The CPT delegation stayed in an apartment in Karrada, a quiet, residential neighborhood right across the street from the Tigris River. When the delegation learned Bechtel owns a restaurant, they wanted her to be in charge of cooking. Bechtel enjoyed the challenge of "putting things together without a recipe" and the limitations of only cooking on top of a stove.

The twofold purpose of the CPT team in Iraq included engaging in conversations with Iraqi people and then bringing this information and experience back to the United States. The team talked with people at hospitals, clerics and people on the human rights committee in Iraq.

"The people were very friendly and very open about talking about the situation," she says.

Before Bechtel left for Iraq on April 1, she spoke with her congregation, Eighth Street Mennonite Church in Goshen, about her motives for going and what she hoped to achieve. Someone asked, "When you meet an Iraqi woman, what are you going to say?" Bechtel says she stumbled over her answer.

"I'm not sure that before I went to Iraq I had an answer to that," she says. But Bechtel had to address this question during an awareness vigil on the steps of a mosque (see photo above). At



Nadine Bechtel in her restaurant in Goshen, Ind., with employee Autumn Weimer.

Courtesy photo

Everett J. Thomas



Philippe Antonello © 2003 Icon Distribution Inc.

***Passion* opens doors in Middle East**

Believers have a chance to share their faith 'like never before.'

The film has been allowed into the Middle East because of Gibson's credibility in secular media. As a Hollywood production, the film doesn't come with the label "Christian."

While the debate over the artistic merits and theological soundness of Mel Gibson's film *The Passion of the Christ* rages in the United States, the movie has sparked a basic interest in Jesus Christ in the Middle East, according to Mennonite Mission Network partners. They report an overwhelming turnout in theaters and a new openness to learning about Jesus. In some places *The Passion* is so popular that other films have been canceled so that all theaters can run the movie.

According to Wayne and Jennie Larson (pseudonyms), who work for a Christian media production company in the Middle East, the film has been allowed into the Middle East because of Gibson's credibility in secular media. As a Hollywood production, the film doesn't come with the label "Christian" and can be distributed through the regular channels of other American-made movies. In contrast, the film *Jesus* is banned in many Middle East countries or can only be sold to Christians.

The couple reports: "Quite a number of local papers have run articles on the film—one had a 12-page insert that went through the film scene by scene and printed the Bible passage parallel for comparison. The head of the local Bible Society told me they could not have written a better piece themselves.

"Our marketing director knows the distributor. He was only allowed a license to have five copies of the film. This means only five cinemas can show it at a time. But a number of cinemas are using a technique where one copy is fed through two projectors and shown simultaneously on two screens—doubling the potential audience," the Larsons wrote in a recent letter.

One of the apparent factors in the film's popularity is the condemnation the film has received from Jewish critics for its portrayal of the Jews.

"God is using this film to communicate the gospel and the very opposite spirit that might be motivating people to go and see it," a Christian worker in the Middle East said. "The message to love your enemies and Jesus praying for them to be forgiven while on the cross would hit the Muslim theater-goers in a powerful way."

"Until now we have only been able to show the *Jesus* film in Arabic to a handful of people in the secret of a home setting," one source said. "In two short hours, more people heard the gospel than I have been able to reach in nearly five years of living here."

Local women have asked Christians for a New Testament in Arabic, saying that they and all their friends are interested in reading it. Others are asking their Christian friends where they can find the Arabic Bible on the Internet. Sources attribute this new curiosity to Gibson's film. Reportedly, even people in Saudi Arabia, where there are no movie theaters, are getting a chance to see the film through pirated DVDs.

"God knows what he's doing," one source said, quoting Paul's words in Philippians 1:15-18, "It is true that some preach Christ out of envy and rivalry, but others out of goodwill. The latter do so in love. The former preach Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely. But what does it matter? The important thing is that in every way [for example, pirated DVDs] the true Christ is preached. And because of this, I rejoice."

Mission Network's partners working in these contexts ask for prayer as Muslims they live and work with see *The Passion*. Doors are opening for conversation about the film and believers have a chance to share their faith and the love of Jesus like never before.—*Mennonite Mission Network News Service*

Eritrean believers face persecution

More than 350 held by government, many kept in shipping containers

Don't pray that the persecution will stop," Eritrean believers recently told an American missionary who visited them. Instead, they said, "Pray that we will be strong."

It's been 12 years since Eritrea achieved independence from Ethiopia, and two years since many churches were "deregistered." The missionary, who remains anonymous to protect him, visited Eritrea in April to learn how believers with ties to Mennonites are faring in the current situation.

The Eritrean government maintains that it has not closed churches and, in fact, church offices are allowed to remain open. However, believers who meet to worship together are likely to be arrested. The government views them as extremists—the Christian equivalent of Muslim fundamentalists.

Over 350 believers were being held at the time of the missionary's visit. Many of them are being held in shipping containers in tropical heat.

"We want you to tell the world about us," Eritrean believers said. But they cautioned against using names, either personal or denominational. The missionary tasted a bit of what brothers and sisters in Eritrea face as he accompanied leaders to prayer meetings.

"We went from house to house after dark," he said. "Doors were locked and lights were turned out for secrecy. It was like nothing else I have ever experienced."

"Up to 18 people would pack into a small room. The order of service started with about one hour of prayer for personal repentance, followed by repentance for the nation and prayer for the infilling of the Holy Spirit and power to resist evil. A teaching followed, and then another hour of prayer, before moving to another area and home to start the same process over. At times, when someone knocked on



Believers who meet to worship together are likely to be arrested. The government views them as extremists

the door, people seemed a bit anxious. The believers left two-by-two over a period of about a half hour, to avoid the appearance of a large gathering."

The missionary asked the believers of Eritrea what message they had for the North American Church.

"Tell the church to be strong and to stand for truth even if it is costly," they said.

The missionary reported that persecuted groups maintain denominational identities but cooperate freely. Christians in Orthodox, Catholic and Evangelical Lutheran churches are not currently under legal restrictions.—*Holly Blosser Yoder for Eastern Mennonite Missions News Service*



Everett J. Thomas

Meat canning hits half-million mark

For the first time since the Mennonite Central Committee portable canner went on the road in 1946, the annual total has broken the half-million cans mark. Danisa Ndlovu (left), president of Mennonite World Conference and Brethren in Christ bishop from Zimbabwe, visited one of MCC's meat-canning stops in Goshen, Ind., last March. Stanley Pletcher of rural Goshen, hosted Danisa on a tour of the canning process at MCC's material aid center.

The October 2003 to April 2004 canning season yielded 504,174 cans of turkey, beef, pork and broth, an

increase of 47,268 over last season's total.

The canner and canning crew travel to communities across the United States and Canada. Local volunteers donate meat—most of which is now purchased rather than raised by volunteers themselves—and help the MCC crew cut, cook, stir and can it. Already some of this year's meat is on its way to Bosnia, Haiti, North Korea and Ukraine. Meat is also distributed in the United States and Canada. A much-valued source of protein for families impacted by war, disaster and poverty, each can feeds five to 10 people.—*MCC News Service*

Mennonite schools see combined gain

But enrollment in colleges, universities dropped 5.1 percent from 2002 levels.

There is tremendous excitement about the increase in seminary enrollment at a time when [the church] has been talking about the need for pastoral leadership.—Carlos Romero

To better understand the experiences of nearly 15,000 students in the 39 schools (preschool through seminary) affiliated with Mennonite Education Agency and to identify trends, the MEA board of directors calls for annual reports from Mennonite elementary and secondary schools, colleges, universities and seminaries. The reports also help MEA identify trends in Mennonite-related education.

“MEA is mandated to represent all levels of Mennonite education in the United States and works with schools in Puerto Rico and Canada through the elementary and secondary councils,” says Carlos Romero, executive director for MEA. “By having reports from all levels we are able to get a glimpse of what is happening in Mennonite education at the local level and as a whole. This is important for understanding the challenges and strengths of each school.”

According to this year’s reports, compiled for an MEA board meeting in March, Mennonite education as a whole expanded last fall. MEA-related institutions enrolled 14,885 students for a 1.9 percent increase over the previous year. Accounting for the growth was a rise in headcounts in the seminaries (7.9 percent), elementary and secondary schools (5 percent) and adult degree completion programs (3.6 percent). The most significant rise was a 16 percent increase in students enrolled full-time in Mennonite seminaries.

“We are glad for the overall increase in enrollment,” Romero says. “There is tremendous excitement and joy about the increase in seminary enrollment at a time when [the church] has been talking about the need for pastoral leadership. At the same time, we are concerned about the areas of decrease in enrollment in undergraduate schools and gradu-

ate programs and at the younger end of the educational spectrum.”

The number of full-time students enrolled in undergraduate programs at colleges and universities fell by 5.1 percent when compared with the previous year; the difference from 2002 was sharper in the area of part-time enrollment, which dropped by 13.9 percent. Graduate programs decreased in the number of part-time students by 11.9 percent but increased by 3.1 percent in full-time enrollees.

“Our schools are reaching out in positive ways,” Romero says. “Efforts at being missional are clearly succeeding in attracting non-Mennonite students. The student experience is enhanced by going to class side-by-side both with people who are similar and people who are different in their values and how they view the world.”

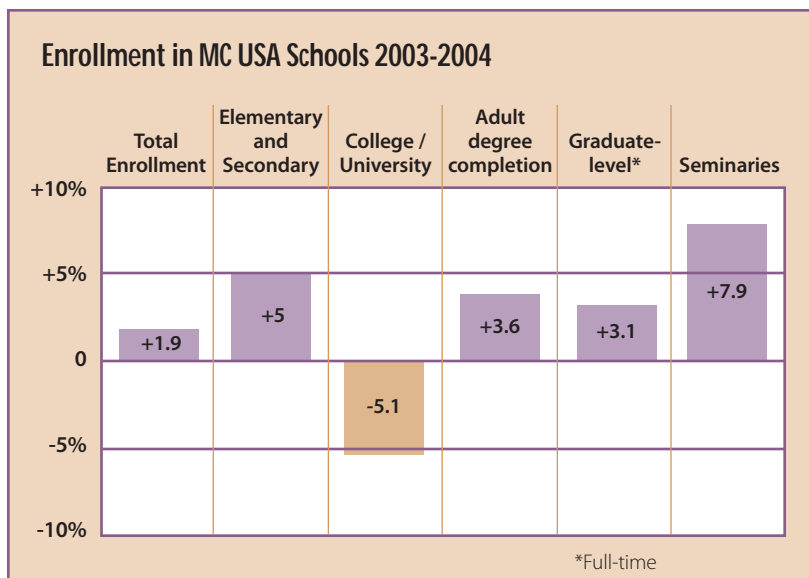
Romero also notes that the Mennonite Education Agency must address how to get more Mennonite young people to attend Mennonite schools. “We want our schools to grow, because we know Mennonite education institutions offer both exceptional academic preparation and something unique, hopeful and helpful for the world: the Anabaptist framework for understanding how we should live our lives and how that influences all our decisions.”

Romero cites a number of dynamic things happening in Mennonite schools, including responses by secondary schools and higher education to the war in Iraq and school efforts to incorporate service into their annual calendars and curricula.

The increasing diversity in the population of Mennonite schools is also exciting, Romero says. Based on headcount, people of racial-ethnic groups comprise 13.28 percent of the undergraduate enrollment, 13.99 percent of the graduate enrollment and 12.1 percent of the seminary enrollment. He observes that in this area, too, MEA schools are succeeding in missional efforts to attract non-Mennonite people of racial-ethnic groups, but must work at access issues and increasing numbers of Mennonites in this demographic.

Romero recently returned from a meeting of MEA’s Racial-Ethnic Leadership Education Advisory Council, which focused on how to increase access for students from Mennonite churches that are racially and ethnically diverse.

“We need to realize that the changing demographics of the country and the church will have—and are already having—a tremendous impact on education,” he says. “The opportunity here is to expand our tent, as we open ourselves to people of all racial-ethnic backgrounds and learn how to enjoy, appreciate, love and learn from our increasing diversity.”—MEA News Service



Stance on national anthem costs school

Central Christian School targeted by local media, Veterans of Foreign Wars

Amid a wave of patriotism surrounding the war in Iraq, Central Christian School's practice of not playing the national anthem at sporting events apparently has exacted a high toll.

In the past year, dozens of students have withdrawn. Next fall, resulting layoffs will shrink the school's staff.

Superintendent Frederic Miller says in the past year the Ohio Mennonite Conference school in Kidron, Ohio, has lost about 50 students, in part because of its adherence to Mennonite peace teachings.

In a typical year, Miller says, only about a dozen students might withdraw for various reasons. But the magnitude of these pullouts, Miller says, "was totally bizarre. ... It was a totally off-the-wall occurrence."

This year, Miller says, Central has 357 students, down from more than 400 in 2002-03, when the school had the highest enrollment in its 43-year history. Enrollment includes preschool through 12th grade.

Miller says school officials tried to determine the cause of the large pullout and eventually focused on three factors. The first was a general economic downturn, making private education harder to afford, followed by the cancellation of an on-campus orientation day due to a snowstorm. Such events often yield new enrollments.

But the issue attracting the most attention has been the school's policy of not playing the national anthem at sporting events. The policy garnered bad publicity when the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq began in March 2003.

Miller says that around the time the war began, the *Wooster Daily Record* ran a story focusing on Central's anthem policy, which has not changed since the school opened in 1961.

The story included several inaccurate assertions, Miller says, including that Central fans attending games elsewhere refuse to stand when the anthem is played. Amid the atmosphere surrounding the war, "these unfactual statements made us sound unpatriotic and even rebellious," Miller says.

It didn't stop there.

Next came a letter-writing campaign criticizing the school by members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, Miller says. Letters arrived nearly every day during one period. By the end of the spring term, Miller says, the withdrawals had begun and were outpacing new enrollments. But it wasn't until mid-summer that officials realized a serious trend was under way.

"It broadsided us all," Miller says.

Though some parents gave no reason for with-

drawing their children, "we do know of several families who were embarrassed by our stance [on the anthem]," Miller says.

This included a number of Mennonites—which Miller says indicated divided convictions about the war in the local Mennonite community.

The bottom line for Central is that the withdrawals made cutbacks in faculty, administration and staff necessary.

Once the degree of the crisis was realized, Miller says, school staff were told in January that the equivalent of eight full-time positions would have to be cut, effective this fall.

Miller says faculty and staff has been very cooperative and professional during the crisis. Teachers voluntarily took a cut in benefits, saving nearly \$200,000. So far, only minor adjustments have been made to Central's curriculum or extracurricular activities, Miller says, only a "significant restructuring" of personnel.

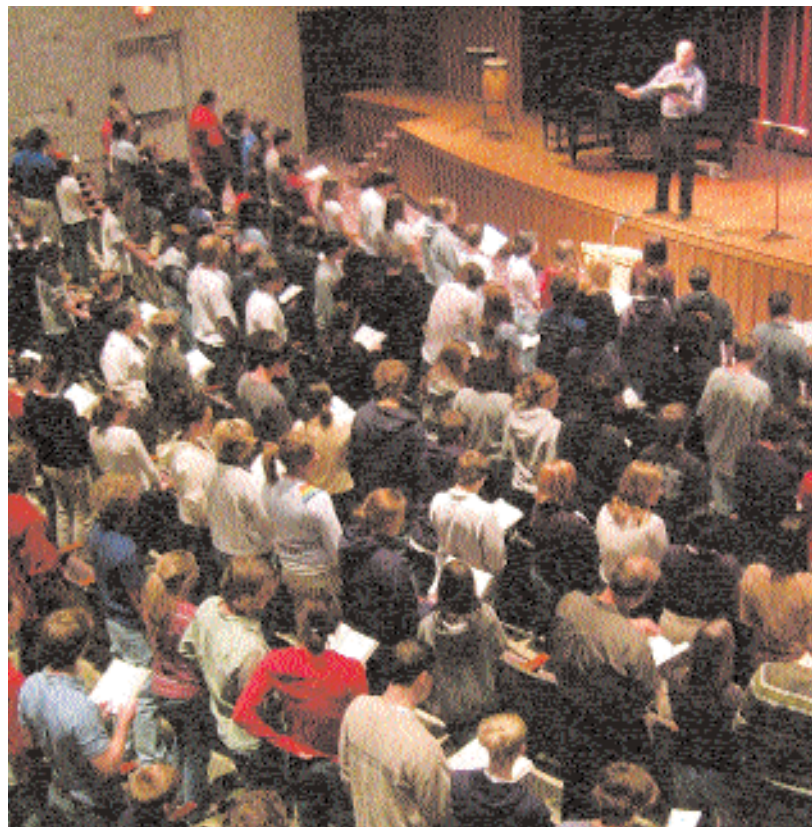
Despite the bad publicity and the withdrawals, Miller says donations have been up in the past year. A capital drive to retire school debt—the majority a result of this year's enrollment decline—is under way, with half the \$200,000 pledged. This response, Miller says, indicated to him a general reaffirmation of the school by the community.—*Robert Rhodes of Mennonite Weekly Review*



Fred Miller

Teachers voluntarily took a cut in benefits, saving nearly \$200,000.

High school chapel at Central Christian School in Kidron, Ohio



Courtesy photo

Paul's sea voyages focus of sabbatical

Stutzman couple will retrace Mediterranean Sea routes in 33-foot sailboat.

There have been many studies of Paul and his role in the development of the early Christian church, but I'm not aware of anyone else having taken this [sailing] approach.

—Linford Stutzman

Two modern-day admirers of a first-century apostle will spend the next year following his mighty big footprints. Linford L. and Janet M. Stutzman have embarked on a contemporary missionary journey from their home in Harrisonburg, Va., trying to understand what the Apostle Paul experienced in his missionary travels that crisscrossed the Mediterranean region. For 15 months, they will retrace Paul's routes to every site mentioned in the book of Acts.

Stutzman, who teaches two-thirds-time at Eastern Mennonite Seminary and one-third-time in Eastern Mennonite University's undergraduate Bible and religion department, is beginning a sabbatical year. His spouse, Janet, recently announced her resignation from the university after serving 12½ years as director of alumni-parent relations.

"Our goal is to seek to understand how the geographic areas, the weather conditions and the cities and towns themselves ... affected Paul's mission and vision for what the church could become," Stutzman says.

The Stutzmans have secured a 33-foot, two-mast ketch for sailing on the Mediterranean and Aegean seas from one port-of-call to another.

"It's old but seaworthy," they say of the craft they have rechristened "SailingActs." The couple planned to begin their itinerary on the island of Cyprus off the coast of Greece the end of May. From there, they will work their way slowly counter-clockwise around the Aegean (Turkey and Greece), ending in Corinth in October.

At each site visited, the Stutzmans will explore the geographical situation and new archeological



Jim Bishop

Linford and Janet Stutzman display a compass given them by EMU students. They will use it to navigate their sailing vessel while retracing the missionary journeys of Paul.

discoveries in an attempt to glean new insights into biblical accounts related to Paul's missionary work. They plan to interview local and regional experts of history, religion and mission along with local inhabitants in order to explore traditional and current perceptions of Paul and his legacy.

They will also sail the same sea routes as Paul, anchor in the harbors and travel overland to the sites in ways that parallel, as closely as possible, Paul's experiences detailed in the book of Acts.

"There have been many studies of Paul and his role in the development of the early Christian church, but I'm not aware of anyone else having taken this [sailing] approach," Stutzman says.

The Stutzmans plan to spend the early winter months living aboard the boat in Israel, working on sabbatical writing and teaching projects.

"That time of year is not an ideal time to be out to sea," Stutzman says, noting that Paul's shipwreck on the Island of Malta—documented in Acts 27—likely happened in November.

Stutzman is hoping to prepare two manuscripts based on their research—a reflective travelogue in popular style on what Paul's travels meant to him and in turn interpret those meanings for contemporary society and a missiology piece that applies these learnings to the globalization process, the way nations relate to each other today.

Janet Stutzman says she expects to assist with navigating and other sailing duties and buying supplies, doing some cooking on the ship and assisting her spouse with chronicling their adventures.

"I thoroughly enjoy meeting and offering hospitality to people, and I expect to be doing a lot of that in this cross-cultural setting," she says.

The Stutzmans will post regular journal entries on a special Web site at: www.emu.edu/sailin-gacts.—*Jim Bishop for EMU News Service*

... travel with a purpose ...

Mennonite
Your
Way

PEAKS, PARKS & CANYONS TOUR
Sept. 22 - Oct. 9, 2004

The peaks, parks and canyons will astound you in Southern Utah, Northern Arizona and SW Colorado—in the gold brilliance of the aspens.



- + Arches National Park
- + balanced rocks
- + Bryce Nat. Park hoodoos
- + hikes - for those interested
- + the sunset/sunrises
- + Mesa Verde National Park
- + so many vistas
- + Pikes Peak Cog RR
- + Grand Canyon North Rim
- + Monument Valley Jeep Ride
- + Durango -Silverton RR
- + Kent Kautzman, our guide

(Pick ups along route in Ohio, Indiana/Michigan, Illinois & Denver, CO flying)

MYW Tours +Box 425 +Landisville, PA, 17538 +717/653-9288 +800/296-1991
Email: myw1525@aol.com +web: www.mywtours.com

CALENDAR

Bethany Christian School's 50th Anniversary Celebration June 11-13. Registration and history book order forms are available at www.bethanycs.net or by calling 574-534-2567.

BIRTHS & ADOPTIONS

Allen, Joshua Brant, April 22, to Joe and Anastasia Stucky Allen, Hutchinson, Kan.

Bachman, Jordan Marie, April 11, to Derek and Stephanie Crawford Bachman, Washington, Iowa.

Barrett, Elijah Gabriel, March 17, to Rick and Kim Souder Barrett, Goshen, Ind.

Brunk, Bransten McGrath, March 1, to Duane and Michelle Bartel Brunk, Buhler, Kan.

Cassel, Sophia Rose, April 29, to Michael and Laurie Derstine Cassel, Green Lane, Pa.

Dooley, Addison Paige, April 16, to Cris and Lisa Franz Dooley, Wichita, Kan.

Eichelberger, Kate Lauren, April 26, to Lynn and Lorie Schmidt Eichelberger, Moundridge, Kan.

Estes, Katherine Lilyan, Feb. 3, to Tim and Pam Estes, Woodbridge, Va.

Eubanks, Sarah Eden, March 12, to Jason and Becky Loeffelholz Eubanks, Ottumwa, Iowa.

Garber, Fiona Coleen, March 24, to Jeremy and Buffy Cummins Garber, Goshen, Ind.

Grittmann, Abigail Elise, April 7, to Brad and Nancy Bertsche Grittmann, Lenexa, Kan.

Hartford, Cadence Lynn, March 27, to Tyler and Genessa Brenneman Hartford, Toledo, Ohio.

Hostetter, Mary Lois, May 3, to Clark and Jenny Spory Hostetter, Boswell, Pa.

Landis, Elias James, April 28, to Matthew and Tana Landis, East Greenville, Pa.

Lantz, Nevin David, April 28, to Cathy Lantz, Broadway, Va.

Lundgren, Nathaniel Erik, April 19, to Erik and Tami Wiens Lundgren, Kansas City, Mo.

Lyndaker, Nicholas Jeffrey, April 27, to Jeffrey and Deborah Danehy Lyndaker, Canton, N.Y.

McDowell, Liam Jonathan, April 22, to Scott and Becci Zook McDowell, Elkhart, Ind.

Miller, Austin Patrick, April 30, to Rick and Dawn Witmer Miller, Goshen, Ind.

Omlor, Gabriel Marcus, March 11, to Kyle and Holly Omlor, Toledo, Ohio.

Rempel, Sara Moser, April 13, to Phil and Teresa Moser Rempel, Albany, Ore.

Roth, Carter Wayne, April 27, to Jackson and Jasmin Mateer Roth, Lincoln, Neb.

Schlabach, Davis Haywood, April 29, to Brad and Amy Wiseman Schlabach, Sarasota, Fla.

Sharp, Matthew Gregory, April 28, to Greg and Susan Fagley Sharp, Elizabethtown, Pa.

Siegrist, Anneka Elizabeth, May 5, to Brent and Katrina Mullet Siegrist, Nairobi, Kenya.

Sommers, Sophia Mae, May 3, to Gary and Charla Steiner Sommers, North Canton, Ohio.

Stjernholm, Nathan Richard, April 27, to Rick and Angie Steiner Stjernholm, Erie, Pa.

Stoltzfus, Jacob Rueben, April 12, to Rueben Stoltzfus and Rose Shenk, Iowa City, Iowa.

Stoner, Carter William and Nathan William (twins), Feb. 20, to Tim and Laura Hubbard Stoner, Kouts, Ind.

Umble, Joshua Douglas, May 1, to Doug and Karen Umble, Lititz, Pa.

Vallejo, Antonio, Feb. 28, to Fred and Sarah Trevino Vallejo, Toledo, Ohio.

Weldy, Nicholas Patrick, April 5, to Mark and Kelly McComish Weldy, Elkhart, Ind.

Yoder, Cora Darlene, May 4, to Jeff and Lisa Swartzendruber Yoder, Hesston, Kan.

Zimmerman, Adam Christopher, April 15, to Jeremy and Janelle Martin Zimmerman, Lititz, Pa.

To submit event information to *The Mennonite*, log on at www.TheMennonite.org and use the "For the Record" button to access our on-line forms. You can also submit by email, fax or mail:

•Editor@TheMennonite.org
 •fax 574-535-6050
 •1700 S. Main St., Goshen, IN 46526-4794

MARRIAGES

An/Ratzlaff: Sanghee An, Wichita, Kan., and Corey Ratzlaff, Wichita, May 8 at Aldersgate United Methodist Church, Wichita.

Bauman/Yoder: Heather Bauman, Mechanicsburg, Pa., and Justin Yoder, Harrisonburg, Va., May 1 at Harrisonburg Mennonite Church.

Michaels/Yohn: Andrew Michaels, Millersburg, Ohio, and Christy Yohn, Greencastle, Pa., Dec. 13, 2003 at Antrim Brethren in Christ Church, Greencastle.

Mummau/Peachey: Jewel Mummau, East Waterford, Pa., and Lavern Peachey, Barrville, Pa., April 24 at Lost Creek Mennonite Church, Mifflintown, Pa.

Riley/Stutzman: Joel Riley, Milford, Neb., and Benita Stutzman, Milford, April 10 at Beth-El Mennonite Church, Milford.

DEATHS

Barr, Ethel Wain, 71, Denver, Colo., died April 20. Spouse: Kenneth Barr (deceased). Parents: Urho and Ruth Wain. Funeral: April 30 at Glennon Heights Mennonite Church, Lakewood, Colo.

Baughman, Mary Martin, 92, Kouts, Ind., died March 27. Spouse: Paul Baughman. Parents: William and Amelia Birky Martin. Funeral: March 30 at Hopewell Mennonite Church, Kouts.

Join the *adventure*

Tent of Meeting: A 25-Day Adventure with God invites youth to a deeper friendship with God. They will learn spiritual disciplines that have enriched the lives of Christians for centuries.

Youth journal: \$7.99 US / \$11.29 CAN
 Expanded leader edition: \$9.99 US / \$13.99 CAN

Faith & Life Resources

1-800-245-7894 • www.mph.org

Birky, Wilbert, 84, Foolsland, Ill., died April 29. Spouse: Viola Zehr Birky. Parents: John S. and Fannie L. Naffziger Birky. Children: Roger, Dennis, Mervin, W. Don, Sandra Miller, Lindra Ramirez, Tamra Keim; 23 grandchildren; 25 great-grandchildren. Funeral: May 3 at East Bend Mennonite Church, Fisher, Ill.

Brenneman, Calvin M., 90, Portland, Ore., died April 30. Spouse: Velma Whitaker Brenneman (deceased). Parents: Moses and Orpha Brenneman. Children: Cal, Del; four grandchildren. Funeral: May 6 at Albany (Ore.) Mennonite Church.

Chittick, John K., 88, Doylestown, Pa., died March 19. Spouse: Sarah Godshalk Chittick. Parents: Edward and Bertha Myers Chittick. Children: Robert, Suzanne Phillips, Alyce Curtis, Donald; 12 grandchildren; five great-grandchildren. Funeral: March 25 at Doylestown Mennonite Church.

Cummings, Erma, 75, Elkhart, Ind., died April 13. Spouse: Andrew Cummings (deceased). Parents: Ernest and Lula Van Horn Ewers. Funeral: April 15 at Belmont Mennonite Church, Elkhart.

Goering, Opal Flickner, 82, McPherson, Kan., died April 25 of cancer. Spouse: David Goering (deceased). Parents: John and Emma Flickner. Children: Diane Houchen, Duane; two grandchildren. Funeral: April 28 at First Mennonite Church, McPherson.

Hershberger, Paul, 94, Glendale, Ariz., died May 6. Spouse: Lola Hershberger. Parents: Joseph and Lucretia Miller Hershberger. Children: Marlin, Arlen, Connie Stoltzfus; eight grandchildren; seven great-grandchildren. Funeral: May 8 at Trinity Mennonite Church, Glendale.

Isaak, Jacob Lyle, 76, Eagle, Idaho, died April 23. Spouse: Margaret Nugent Isaak. Parents: Jacob and Rose Bud Isaak. Children: Teresa Anderson, Jeff, Marilyn Talbot; 11 grandchildren; nine great-grandchildren. Funeral: April 27 at First Mennonite Church, Aberdeen, Idaho.

King, Harold, 82, Valparaiso, Ind., died March 10. Spouse: Uarda King. Parents: Joe and Katie Roggy King. Children: Byron, Judy Bachert, Jan Trulley, Rodney, Keith, Marvin. Funeral: March 15 at Hopewell Mennonite Church, Kouts, Ind.

Miller, Carl S., 86, Elkhart, Ind., died April 15. Spouse: Carol Beller Miller. Parents: Paul and Maude Fisher Miller. Children: Peter W., Evan J.; six grandchildren; five great-grandchildren. Funeral: April 18 at College Mennonite Church, Goshen, Ind.

Stoltzfus, Mary Ellen Moyer, 62, Honey Brook, Pa., died May 4 of a brain tumor. Spouse: Leroy J. Stoltzfus. Parents: Ellis and Edna Springer Moyer. Children: Dawn Dennis, Gayle Richardson; one grandchild. Funeral: May 8 at Conestoga Mennonite Church, Morgantown, Pa.

Stucky, Wilhelmena Claassen, 91, Newton, Kan., died May 2. Spouse: Irvin Stucky (deceased). Parents: Rudolph and Allie Johnson Claassen. Children: Gordon, Norman, Mary Enz; 12 grandchildren; six great-grandchildren. Funeral: May 5 at First Mennonite Church, Newton.

Sutter, Mick (Forrest Clayton), 85, Kouts, Ind., died March 19. Parents: Lee and Iva Reinhardt Sutter. Children: Diane Martin, Gary; four grandchildren; three great-grandchildren. Funeral: March 22 at Hopewell Mennonite Church, Kouts.

Yoder, Marie, 90, Bloomington, Ill., died April 19. Spouse: Judge Walter Yoder (deceased). Parents: Tann and Lulu Van Sickle Marquis. Children: James W., Kay M. Thompson; seven grandchildren; 10 great-grandchildren. Funeral: April 22 at Mennonite Church of Normal (Ill.).

Help send *The Mennonite* to overseas mission workers! Send donations to *The Mennonite*, OMWL fund, 1700 S. Main St., Goshen, IN 46526.

Wanted: Experienced writers for Sunday school curriculum

The Mennonite Church USA, Mennonite Church Canada, and Church of the Brethren are cooperating to produce a new Sunday school curriculum. Units will be designed for children who are aged 2-4, kindergarten to grade 2, grades 3-5, and grades 6-8. Two additional units will be a multi-age unit for children of a variety of ages or for intergenerational use, and a unit for parents and other adult caregivers of children. First use of the curriculum will be Fall 2006.

For more information, please contact:

Anna Speicher, Project Director
Church of the Brethren General Offices
1451 Dundee Avenue
Elgin, Illinois 60123

Telephone: 847-742-5100 ext. 209.

Email: aspeicher_gb@brethren.org.

Application deadline is June 15, 2004.



Academic excellence

Faith-based values

Opportunities for participation

Intentional caring community

Faculty and students at Bethel make academic excellence integral to their broader life and activity. Faculty have a deep sense of vocation—we find great joy in students' learning. Most importantly, students thrive in such a community, recognizing that the life of the mind is integral to a mindful life and meaningful career beyond college.

—Brad Born, Ph.D.
Associate Professor, English

 **Bethel College**

300 East 27th Street
North Newton, Kansas
67117-0531
admission@bethelks.edu
1-800-522-1887
www.bethelks.edu

St. John Mennonite Church in Pandora, Ohio, a 600+ evangelical Mennonite church, is seeking an **associate pastor of outreach, discipleship and assimilation**. Applicants should have a degree in biblical studies, strong relational skills, plus administrative ability. Gifts in discipling new believers, shepherding the congregation, overseeing small group ministries and community outreach a must. Experience with young adults and college ministries a plus. Contact Dan Amstutz for more information at dan.amstutz@cnh.com or call him at 419-384-3366.

Germantown Mennonite Church in Philadelphia seeks candidate for **interim pastoral role** to begin September. Candidate should have strong commitment to Anabaptist beliefs, concern for issues of peace and justice, and have appropriate academic and experience credentials. GMC is an urban, diverse congregation of 100+ members, and welcomes nontraditional applicants. Reply to Search Committee, Germantown Mennonite Church, 21 W. Washington Lane, Philadelphia, PA 19144, or GermantownMennonite@juno.com.

Applications are being received for the position of **executive director** at **Cove Valley Youth Camp** near Mercersburg, Pa. This position will be available in July. This person is responsible for the overall operation of the camp, including rentals, promotion, hiring and supervising staff. The executive director works with the program director in managing the summer youth camps and with the caretaker in overseeing the camp facilities. Please send resumé to Del Martin, 1910 Spring View Drive, Chambersburg, PA 17201, or email del@delprint.com.

Kalona Mennonite Church in Kalona, Iowa, seeks a one-quarter-time **music coordinator** and a one-quarter-time **coordinator of discipleship and fellowship programs**. If an applicant is qualified for both positions, these could be combined into one half-time position. For job descriptions and more information call 319-656-2736 or email kmcbonnie@kctc.net. Applications are due by June 30.

Living Water Community Christian Fellowship is a dynamic 23-year-old congregation in New Hamburg, Ont. New Hamburg is a growing community 20 minutes from Kitchener-Waterloo. We are looking for a full-time **pastor** sensitive to the Holy Spirit's leading, seeking to build relationships in our community. We have a contemporary style of worship, a vibrant small group program, an active outreach into our community. Starting date is January 2005. Living Water is part of Mennonite Church Eastern Canada. Closing date is June 30.

For further information contact Muriel Bechtel, MCEC, Kitchener, Ont.; phone 519-650-3806; fax 519-650-3947; or Living Water Fellowship, 519-662-3300.

Light of Life Mennonite Church seeks part-time **pastor** to lead growing 10-year-old multicultural church at Farmington, N.M. Located in the northwest corner of the state, Farmington lies at the edge of the Navajo reservation, near the Four Corners, an hour from the nearest ski resort and near many world famous cultural and geographical wonders. Applicant should have calling to serve in preaching and teaching, encouraging and discipling new believers.

Contact Dan Spare, chair, Search Committee, 3808 Country Club Drive, Farmington, NM 87402; phone 505-324-8288; email mdspar@asae.org.

Freeport Mennonite Church, a rural church with close proximity to Madison, Wis., and Rockford, Ill., and Chicago is seeking a full-time lead **pastor**. Position available immediately. Average attendance approximately 90-110. Desire individual with strong preaching, teaching ministry; someone with a vision for growth.

If you feel God's leading to discuss this position with us or can recommend someone else, contact Mike Murray, Search Committee chair, 815-449-2354; jeanettemurray@juno.com.

Adriel, Inc., a TFA-certified sponsored agency providing foster care and residential treatment services in West Liberty, Ohio, seeks visionary **CEO** with strong financial acumen/operational experience. Minimum candidate requirements are: Christian actively involved in congregation, appreciation of Mennonite-Anabaptist heritage, master's level education, eight years of senior management experience and strong interpersonal skills.

Send inquiries to Kirk Stiffney, Mennonite Health Services, 234 S. Main St., Suite A, Goshen, IN 46526; fax 574-534-3254; or email kirkstiffney@msn.com.

Hinkletown Mennonite School seeks applicants for elementary teaching position. Come be part of supportive and professional Christian school staff in 2004-05 school year. Contact Thomas Burnett, Principal, 272 Wanner Road, Ephrata, PA 17522; 717-354-6705; email tburnett@hms.pvt.k12.pa.us; Web page www.hms.pvt.k12.pa.us.

Christopher Dock Mennonite High School seeks applicants for the following full-time positions:

Director of advancement: This person will provide overall staff leadership in the areas of fund-raising, alumni relations, marketing and communication. A bachelor's degree in education, business or related field is required, with a minimum of five year's experience in one of the above fields, including at least one year's experience in a supervisory capacity.

Physical education instructor.

Send resumé to Elaine A. Moyer, Principal, Christopher Dock Mennonite High School, 1000 Forty Foot Road, Lansdale, PA 19446; fax 215-362-2943; email eamoyer@christopherdock.org.

Eastern Mennonite University is seeking applicants for the position of **director of admissions** for undergraduate programs. This full-time position requires an individual who can work in a highly visible, goal-oriented environment. The primary responsibility is to lead the admissions team to achieve university enrollment targets through promotional strategies, staff training and motivation, and interaction with campus-wide committees and initiatives. The position reports to the vice president for enrollment and marketing. A bachelor's degree and prior experience in admissions is required. Master's degree preferred. Position is available July 1, and the search committee will begin to review applications immediately. Position will remain open until filled.

For more information visit our Web site at www.emu.edu. Send letter of application, resumé and three references to Human Resources Office, Eastern Mennonite University, 1200 Park Road, Harrisonburg, VA 22802; 540-432-4108 or hr@emu.edu. People who bring gender, ethnic and cultural diversity are encouraged to apply.

A scholarship, the **Dwight Moody Wiebe Endowment Fund**, is available to **former Mennonite Central Committee volunteers** who are enrolled in graduate programs. The scholarship was established by Margot Wiebe of Dallas, Texas, in memory of her husband, Dwight Moody Wiebe, who died in January 2000. Dwight Wiebe served with MCC during the 1950s, including four years as Europe director of MCC's Pax program for alternative military service.

A minimum of \$390 Cdn./\$250 U.S. is available to candidates who fulfill each of the following requirements: (1) applicant has completed an assignment with MCC of at least two years; (2) applicant is actively enrolled in an accredited graduate school; (3) applicant completed his/her term with MCC no more than three years before enrolling in graduate school.

Contact Carol Eby-Good by Sept. 30 for 2004-2005 academic year. MCC Akron-Human Resources, P.O. Box 500, Akron, PA 17501-0500; fax 717-859-2171; email ceg@mcc.org.

Advertising space in *The Mennonite* is available to congregations, conferences, businesses, and churchwide boards and agencies. Cost for one-time classified placement is \$1.15 per word, minimum of \$30. Display space is also available.

To place an ad in *The Mennonite*, call 800-790-2498 and ask for Marla Cole, or email TheMennonite@TheMennonite.org.

Missional Centers of Mennonite Church USA

—Check us out at www.mennoniteschools.org



Mennonite
Church
USA

Mennonite Secondary Education Council

RESOURCES

Ancient-Future Evangelism: Making Your Church a Faith-Forming Community by Robert E. Webber (Baker Books, 2003, \$14.99) presents a model of evangelism and discipleship rooted in Scripture, attested to in the history of the church and authentic to the postmodern world in which we live.

Meditation by Richard W. Chilson (Sorin Books, 2004, \$13.95) and **Journal Keeping** by Carl J. Koch (Sorin Books, 2004, \$12.95) are part of a series, *Exploring a Great Spiritual Practice*, which combines easily understood practice tools with comprehensive, credible information about the origin, theory and contemporary relevance of the practice.

Hearing Our Teacher's Voice: Pursuit of Faithfulness at Bethany Christian Schools, 1954-2004 (\$14.95 plus shipping and handling) includes alumni vignettes and many photographs. To order call 574-534-2567 or visit www.bethanycs.net.

Islam at the Crossroads: Understanding Its Beliefs, History and Conflicts by Paul Marshall, Roberta Green and Lela Gilbert (Baker Book House, 2002, \$11.95) traces the history of Islam, explores the differences between the militant groups and the peaceful majority of Muslim people and considers

which form of Islam will prevail. It's available at www.worldvisionresources.com.

The Ecumenical Future, edited by Carl E. Braaten and Robert W. Jenson (Eerdmans, 2004, \$24), presents the scholarly studies by 16 theologians who developed last year's book **In One Body Through the Cross**, a statement on the present state and future possibilities of modern ecumenism.

Life Is Changed, Not Ended by Virginia Smith (Ave Maria Press, 2004, \$11.95) explores the foundations of our attitudes about life, death and resurrection and provides practical advice on advance planning.

Who Are the Anabaptists? Amish, Brethren, Hutterites and Mennonites by Donald B. Kraybill (Herald Press, 2004, \$7.99) provides a sweeping overview of these groups' beliefs and practices as well as their similarities and differences.

Beyond the Ordinary: Ten Strengths of U.S. Congregations by Cynthia Woolever and Deborah Bruce (Westminster John Knox Press, 2004, \$14.95) takes results from the U.S. Congregational Life Survey and describes the qualities evident in strong congregations and develops congregational applications from those findings.

Praying the Movies II: More Daily Meditations from Classic Films by Edward McNulty (Westminster John Knox Press, 2004, \$15.95) presents 31 devotionals that connect movies with the spiritual life of moviegoers.

The full content of **Hymnal: A Worship Book** (\$24.99) is available in a lay-flat design, with spiral binding. Pages are oversized for easy reading. Order from Faith & Life Resources, 800-245-7894.

Vocation: Discerning Our Callings in Life by Douglas J. Schuurman (Eerdmans, 2004, \$20) argues that in order to combat the bureaucratic, individualistic tenor of American cultural and institutional life, Christians must recover the language, meaning and reality of life as vocation.

When There's No Burning Bush by Eddy Hall and Gary Morsch (Baker Book House, 2004, \$12.99) explores six common myths of ministry and helps people identify God's unique call in their life.

Finding Our Way Home: Addictions and Divine Love by K. Killian Noe (Herald Press, 2004, \$10.99) draws from Noe's experience as co-founder of Samaritan Inns, which serves addicted, homeless men and women.

Fresh, lively, free discussion

Spread the faith and embrace yours.

Read *The Mennonite*.

- Is your Christian education class or small group looking for fresh curriculum?
- Do you want lively discussion about a variety of topics?
- Would you like a discussion guide that's free?

If you answered yes to one or more of the questions above, then *The Mennonite's* discussion guides can help your group.

The Mennonite's discussion guides are a free resource and can be downloaded from www.TheMennonite.org. Click on "Discussion Resources". Two discussion guides are provided for each issue, one for each Sunday before the next edition is published.

If you don't currently receive the magazine but would like to consider it for small group discussions, call us for a trial issue or request one through our Web site.

The Mennonite

www.TheMennonite.org

800-790-2498

DISCOVERING THE WORLD FOR 35 YEARS

2004 TOURS

EUROPEAN ANABAPTIST HERITAGE (June 9-23)
ENGLAND and SCOTLAND for GRANDPARENTS and GRANDCHILDREN (June 23 - July 5)
EUROPEAN HERITAGE (July 6-22) • From PRAGUE to GDANSK (July 22 - August 1)
SMALL TOWN THEATRE and COUNTRY GARDENS (July 27 - August 2)
CANADIAN MARITIME PROVINCES (August 7-16) • SWISS GLACIER EXPRESS (August 9-24)
ALASKA CRUISE TOUR (September 1-13) • IRELAND (September 3-14)
SWISS-POLISH ANABAPTIST HERITAGE (September 15-29)
LANDS of the BIBLE (September 17-30) • CHINA (October 3-19)
FALL FOLIAGE TOUR of NEW ENGLAND (October 4-10)
CHRISTMAS MARKETS in AUSTRIA and GERMANY (December 1-8)

2005 TOURS

SERVICE TOUR in SUNNY JAMAICA (January 21-30)

CHURCHES and SAFARIS in KENYA and TANZANIA (February 13-24)
PARAGUAY SERVICE TOUR (March 31 - April 14) • TULIP TIME in HOLLAND (April 25 - May 4)
In THE FOOTSTEPS of the APOSTLE PAUL (May 27 - June 12)
SPECTACULAR SCANDINAVIA and its FJORDS (June 17 - July 1)
RUSSIA and UKRAINE (July 29 - August 12)



"Building bridges among Anabaptists and other Christians around the world through action designed to help."

CALL 1-800-565-0451

FOR MORE INFORMATION AND TO BOOK YOUR TOUR

EMAIL: office@tourmigrations.com • WEB: www.tourmigrations.com

9400 Wood Street, Westlake, OH 44116 • Canada
Reg #1527621

1011 Cliff Road
Solersville, PA 19986-01315 USA

On dreaming big...

"Current and future students of EMU, I am interested in you as unique individuals, each endowed with special gifts and abilities. It is our privilege to help you uncover those talents, to fan the fires of your intellectual and spiritual capacities, to walk with you in dreaming big."



Loren E. Swartzendruber
was inaugurated as
EMU's eighth president
March 27, 2004



www.emu.edu • 1-800-368-2665 • 1200 Park Road • Harrisonburg, VA 22802

receive
The Mennonite early
(or at least parts of it)

Spread the faith and
embrace yours.

Read *The Mennonite*.

800-790-2498
www.TheMennonite.org

By signing up for TM TopicMail on *The Mennonite's* Web site, you can receive complete articles from each issue up to five days before the publication date.

If an article falls under one of the following five topics—Christian living/giving; peace/justice; mission, outreach and evangelism; original news reporting from *The Mennonite* staff; Christian holidays and seasons—it will be emailed to you in plain-text format.

Go to www.TheMennonite.org and click on **TM TopicMail** to sign up.



Everett J.
Thomas

Tipping points

Tipping point: *n.* In epidemiology, the concept that small changes will have little or no effect on a system until a critical mass is reached. Then a further small change “tips” the system and a large effect is observed.

According to Susan Mark Landis and Daryl Byler, the situation in Iraq appears to be at a tipping point. They believe our prayers and actions should be included in the precarious balance, and they are producing an advisory for Mennonite Church USA congregations. (Landis serves as peace advocate for Mennonite Church USA; Byler directs Mennonite Central Committee’s Washington Office.)

We agree. Furthermore, the situation in Iraq has also created a possible tipping point for our identity as U.S. Mennonites. One small change can lead to a great effect. It’s time for a change.

The first way we can effect change is through prayer: regular, persistent prayer that God’s will be done “on earth as it is in heaven.” Prayer is, after all, our main weapon (Ephesians 6:10-18) in the swirl of principalities and powers that leave us dazed and confused about the diabolic spiral of events in the Middle East.

But our church can also take action. We can be God’s stewards of the influence we have as citizens

religious leaders whose view of Christianity has been stained by our country’s sins and violent excesses.

What will it take for us all to speak with one voice on this matter—especially in the run-up to a presidential election?

One step will be for many of us to unhook ourselves from political party loyalties. Any attempt to use the ugliness and tragedies in Iraq for gain by the Democratic party is unconscionable. At the same time, any of us who give uncritical support to President Bush and his administration must search our souls to discover if that support is driven by inappropriate loyalty to the Republican party.

We are first of all citizens of God’s kingdom, and second, citizens of the United States. Once again we find ourselves caught between our loyalty to the country in which we live and the kingdom in which we will live forever.

However, there are responsibilities that come with our secondary citizenship. With a denominational name that identifies us with the country in which we live, we also have an opportunity to speak as a U.S. church. But Mennonite Church USA has made no formal statement about the war in Iraq during 2004. Now is the time for our denomination to take a position about the current situation and to call every member and congregation to prayer and action.

The Executive Board meets June 24-26 in Harrisonburg, Va. The timing of this meeting is perfect for a call to action: The meeting occurs shortly before the June 30 deadline for power in Iraq to be transferred from the United States and its allies to a new Iraqi government. Further, a statement by the Executive Board in late June would be available (electronically) to all congregations in time for the July 4 “special Sunday” now called Christian Citizenship Sunday.

July 4 is Independence Day in our country. Our denomination observes the first Sunday in July as Christian Citizenship Sunday. This year, the confluence of these two days is either ironic or providential. Regardless, the moment is right for us all to speak together about the situation in Iraq. Perhaps such an action will tip our world toward greater peace. Perhaps such action will also tip us toward a new identity as a U.S. peace church.—*ejt with gh*

The situation in Iraq has created a possible tipping point for our identity as Mennonites in the United States.

of the United States. Mennonite Church USA members and congregations can use this power to call for genuine transfer of power to the Iraqis.

Rebuilding this tortured country needs to be guided by the international community—through the United Nations—with broad representation from neighboring Arab countries and from the Islamic community. In addition, the United States should continue to pay for much of the rebuilding, with few strings attached.

Finally, the Christian church in the West—perhaps led by the historic peace churches—should open a broad initiative to build new and rebuild damaged relationships with Middle Eastern reli-

