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from the editor



“

Engaging and mobilizing this next generation is one of the greatest challenges for the church in the 21st century.

”



Connie Faber
Editor

Many of our churches will be missing something the Sunday after Easter. Our high school students and their sponsors will be in Denver, Colo., attending Named 2015, the quadrennial National Youth Conference (NYC). In this issue's Conference Call, Joanna Chapa, a member of the Named 2015 planning team, says her experience at Estes 2003 as a high school student was a "monumental marker." Like Joanna, many of us can testify to the ways NYC has impacted and changed our lives, whether we attended as teenagers, sponsors or program participants. Join me in praying that many young people will leave Named 2015 with a deeper understanding of what it means to be called a child of God and to serve him by serving others.

I also challenge us to pray for our youth beyond Named 2015; to ask that over the next 10 years the Mennonite Brethren Church will find favor with these young people and that they will choose to be actively involved in USMB congregations. It is one thing to have our teens absent from church because they are attending a youth group event and quite another to discover that they are among those who drop out of church when they leave high school.

Engaging and mobilizing this next generation is one of the greatest challenges for the church in the 21st century, says Ed Stetzer, president of LifeWay Research and the *Connection 2014* keynote speaker. LifeWay Research data show that 70 percent of young adults who attended church regularly for at least one year while in high school drop out. Stetzer's research also indicates that, "our teenagers aren't primarily leaving because they have significant disagreements with their theological upbringing or out of some sense of rebellion. For the most part, they simply lose track of the church and stop seeing it as important to their life."

Many of us are praying for young adults who have drifted from church. We are proud of their professional accomplishments and the ways in which they care for the hurting. But we wish they'd see the value of the local church and life in a community of faith. As we wonder how best to influence our young adults, Stetzer's research offers insights into the role of parents and local congregations.

Parents: Stetzer's research offers additional confirmation that strong marriages benefit children. He found that young adults are more likely to attend church and return to church if they grew up in a home with two parents who remain married to one another and who both attend church and actively practice their faith.

Churches: Churches can turn dropouts into disciples, says Stetzer, when adults in a congregation are willing to connect with teens and young adults, when the pastor offers relevant, biblical teaching and when teens and young adults are encouraged to let their faith guide decisions in everyday life. Because of their concern for the marginalized, the hurting and the outcasts, young adults will be drawn to churches in which they can help reach those in need.

Stetzer's suggestions sound simple, but we know they are not. Putting them into practice is the real challenge. May God help us be churches that nurture our teens, connecting their faith with ordinary life and mobilizing them to serve.

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Partnering as one family to serve one Lord on one mission, for the transformation of individuals, families and communities.

www.usmb.org



James Epp

I've been thinking about death lately. Not in a morbid way, but rather about the inevitability of it for everyone—as well as the reality of my own inevitable demise. Part of this thinking was brought about by the death of my father. He was 84 when he died. I was 40. A couple of years later I realized that I was half the age of my father at his death. So theoretically, if I live as many years as my father, I was already half done.

The implications are sobering. Is it possible that I've been alive for more days than I have left, as though a clock that had been ticking up has begun ticking down? Is there a clock somewhere in eternity that is ticking down the years, the months, the weeks, the days, the hours, the minutes and the seconds to my last breath? I wonder.

I would despair if death were the end. But death is not the end. My father is very much alive today. God is not God of the dead but of the living. My dad is more alive than at any time during his earthly journey. I am profoundly thankful for the heritage that my earthly father left me. He loved the Lord. He served the Lord. Generations of my forefathers knew Jesus and followed him. I am at the receiving end of the promise of love "to a thousand generations."

Psalms 90 gives me great confidence. God has been our dwelling place in all generations. He has always existed, and in the beginning he created the world by the power of his might, speaking the world into existence. He then breathed life into man, a living soul.

We are dust...wonderfully animated and living image bearers of our Creator. When we die, we return to dust. Eighty-four years or a thousand years makes no difference to God; they are but a watch in the night. In a moment we are swept away and our place remembers us no more...like a dream...like the grass...like a flower...like the evening that fades into darkness...and then the end.

But death is not the end. When we lay down this temporary dwelling, this broken and sinful body, life will have just begun. How can we be sure? How can we be certain? Jesus! Jesus is alive. Jesus died for my sins on the cross. Jesus conquered death by rising from the dead. Jesus satisfied God's justice and righteousness. And now I know that I will live forever, even as Jesus is alive forevermore.

We have a limited number of days. Live well and make your days count for eternity.

James Epp is the pastor at Crossroads Bible Fellowship, the USMB church in Balko, Okla.

"So teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom." (Psalm 90:12, ESV)



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COVER PHOTO (See story page 19)

Pictured l-r: Dominic Brumfield, Interns Justin Mata and Estela Magana, Sallie Brumfield

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Joanna Chapa

Monumental markers

Who knows what the Lord will do through USMB young people

“If you’re willing to respond to ‘The Call,’ stand up,” said Tom Tufts, the 2003 National Youth Conference speaker. So I stood up. I stood up with hundreds of other high school students at Estes 2003 as we responded to Jesus’ invitation in Luke 9:23: “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me.” It was a monumental marker in my life to once again be invited to consider the cost of following Jesus Christ.

In my current role as mobilizer for short-term mission with MB Mission, I come alongside people, mostly high school and college age students, that are willing to join God on mission around the world. And while on the journey, they experience God transforming their hearts as they desire to see God use their lives to point others to him. As the body of Christ, it is a joy to serve as a team. I have that privilege as our short-term mission programs come together, and we mobilize short-term mission teams to serve alongside our long-term missionaries around the world.

While serving in Peru for two years with MB Mission’s Jornada program, Heidi Schmidt felt that God was placing a “God-sized dream” in her heart. So in August of 2013, she approached me with this dream: to see the Peruvian Mennonite Brethren high school young people have an opportunity to have their own national youth conference. Heidi felt that God had placed in her this desire to see these young people have something similar to what she knew had been a vital part of her own faith journey: many monumental markers. And since I serve as a part of the USMB National Youth Convention planning team, she approached me for some ideas

of the various components she may have to brainstorm and pray through.

The following month, Heidi informed me that the Peruvian MB national leaders wanted this national youth conference to happen in January 2014, and she asked if I would mobilize and lead a worship team to serve at the first Peruvian MB National Youth Conference. As I excitedly stepped into this opportunity, I witnessed how the Spirit had led Heidi and other leaders to base the youth conference on the theme of “Identified in Christ.” As she shared the vision and theme, I was in awe of how God speaks through his Spirit for unity: The theme for Named 2015, our upcoming USMB National Youth Conference in April, is about being named by Jesus Christ. In other words, how our identity is not being rooted in who he says we are.

Heidi was one of those that stood up with me at Estes 2003! God gave us both the opportunity to have a monumental marker then, and 11 years later he has used us both to give an opportunity for young people in Peru to have their own monumental marker with Jesus. What a privilege it is to deny ourselves, take up our crosses and follow Jesus!

It’s been in those moments of standing that the posture of our hearts is shown as we surrender our lives to the Lord, and the enemy knows whose authority we then walk under. The hope of the NYC planning team for Named 2015 is that this event will be a monumental marker in the lives of our high school students. Who knows what the Lord can do through our young people when they are called to know Jesus and make him known no matter what the cost!

The hope of the NYC planning team for Named 2015 is that this event will be a monumental marker in the lives of high school students.

Recognizing veterans

I have been a long-time member of the Mennonite Brethren Church. I read the article in the September/October edition of *Christian Leader* concerning Article 13 of the Statement of Faith. I appreciated the new vision regarding the broader application of the concept of “peacekeeping” to include our family and individual lives.

Having said that, I have to express my concern regarding a segment of our congregations that is overlooked and ignored because it seems to run against the historic “nonresistance” stand of the Mennonite Brethren. I am referring to those in our churches that are military veterans. In particular, when I think of the commemoration of Veterans Day, very little, if anything, is done by our churches to publicly acknowledge those men and women that have served our nation, both past and present.

We need to recognize that as our denomination grows, the new influx of people joining our churches is coming from backgrounds very different from our historic traditions. Not to acknowledge their service and sacrifice, in my opinion, is very disheartening. Having served in the military for 28 years, I would ask for the national MB leadership to begin a dialogue concerning their stand on Veterans Day and to encourage our congregations to take time in their Sunday morning services prior to Veterans Day to publicly recognize the efforts and sacrifices made by our veterans.

Taking a few minutes to recognize the “military” service of some of our church members and attendees will not take away from our historic beliefs regarding peacemaking and nonresistance but rather create a positive attitude of thanksgiving by all.

*Herbert G. Porter
Ferndale, Wash.*

Thankful for Ed

I was very glad to see the good coverage the magazine did for my brother and friend Ed Boschman (September/October issue of *Christian Leader*).

I remember very well when I first meet Ed. That was in November 2008, Hyderabad, India, when our International Community of Mennonite Brethren (ICOMB) summit was held there. Ed was coming for the first time to ICOMB but right away we saw his great personality and his love and friendship with the rest of the representatives coming from around the world.

Ed always took time to listen, always took time to know about different conferences and always took time to go anywhere in the world to see the reality of different churches and communities around the world. Ed would also say, clearly, when he was not happy with some things, but he would always say it with a loving way and sometimes with his unique smile.

I’m glad that Ed will stay around for a few more years with us, and his acknowledgement will always be valid to see how our global family is growing more and more. May God keep Ed Boschman together with us—he really colors our time together!

*José Arrais
AIMP - Portugal MB Conference*



Boschman & Arrais at Iguaca Falls on the border of Argentina and Brazil.

The *Christian Leader* welcomes letters to the editor. Letters should be 300 words or less and on one subject. Letters must be signed and include writer’s city and state. Letters will be edited for clarity, appropriateness and length. Letters will be published, as space allows, unless marked “not for publication.” Readers wishing to respond to articles published electronically can post comments on our website (www.usmb.org/christian-leader) and can also leave comments on the CL Facebook page. Comments posted on the website and Facebook will not be published in the *CL* Magazine. Readers who would like their online comments to be printed should forward those remarks to the editor at editor@usmb.org

(God at work in the mennonite brethren world)

National seniors gathering slated for October

The first national gathering for U.S. Mennonite Brethren senior adults hosted by MB Foundation is scheduled for Oct. 2-4, 2015, in Overland Park, Kan. MB Foundation is the stewardship ministry of U.S. Mennonite Brethren.

Celebrate 2015! will be held at the Sheraton Hotel and will feature music, inspiration and fellowship. Don Argue, former chancellor and president of Northwest University and past president of National Association of Evangelicals, will be the guest speaker. Recognized as a Christian statesman, Argue is a visionary leader and communicator and has served on numerous national boards and committees, including the President's Advisory Committee on International Religious Freedom. He currently serves as ambassador-at-large for Convoy of Hope.

MBF has recruited a national advisory planning team for the event consisting of Erwin and Winnie Bartel, Dale and Eleanor Boese, Jack and Laverna Braun, Bob and Lynette Ewert, Dean and Loretta Jost, Marvin and Tips Just and Russ and Kathy Isaac.

The Celebrate 2015! theme is "This is My Story." Organizers say attendees will be encouraged to understand the power of the gospel story in their own lives and the power of their story to influence others. "We believe there is a yearning for a gathering like this which caters to a certain segment of our national family," says Jon C. Wiebe, president and CEO of MBF. "We are privileged to lend a hand to make it happen."



MB Foundation shares record earnings

MB Foundation (MBF), the U.S. Mennonite Brethren stewardship ministry, is sharing a portion of their record earnings from 2014 with the USMB denominational family. "We want to put into practice our corporate passage (1 Tim. 6:17-19) by being generous and willing to share," says Jon C. Wiebe, president and CEO. Three actions were taken by MBF's board of directors in order to share the blessing: The annual firstfruits gift to USMB was increased from 10 percent to 11 percent; one-time gifts to the five USMB districts in the amount of \$17,000 each were made in December 2014; and a ministry rebate was issued to all MB ministry borrowers of record in 2014, resulting in \$200,000 being distributed back to borrowers.—MBF

Tabor College receives \$1 million gift

Tabor College, the Mennonite Brethren-owned college headquartered in Hillsboro, Kan., received a major boost to its fundraising efforts with confirmation that the J.E. and L.E. Mabee Foundation in Tulsa, Okla., will donate \$1 million for the Center for the Arts. This \$1 million gift will allow the project to move forward much more quickly than originally expected. Tabor is tentatively planning to break ground on the Shari Flaming Center for the Arts in May 2015 with expected completion in August 2016. —TC



Don Ratzlaff

Historical Commission awards grants

Nina Schroeder, Gil Dueck and Andrew Dyck are the 2014 recipients of the Mennonite Brethren Historical Commission's first MB studies project grants. Each award comes with a grant of \$2,500. The selection committee chose the three from a strong field of applicants all working on projects of historical and theological interest to Mennonite Brethren around the world. Schroeder is a member of the River East MB Church in Winnipeg, Man., and a doctoral candidate at Queen's University in Kingston, Ont. Dueck teaches at Bethany College in Hepburn, Sask., and is a doctoral candidate at Vrije Universiteit in Amsterdam, Netherlands. Dyck teaches at Canadian Mennonite University in Winnipeg, Man., and is also a doctoral candidate at Vrije Universiteit in Amsterdam, Netherlands. The MB studies project grants are made possible with support from U.S. and Canadian Mennonite Brethren churches. See www.mbhhistory.org for more.—*Historical Commission*

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byTheNumbers

When biting into a **chocolate bunny...**

76% of us prefer to bite off the ears first

5% eat the feet first

4% eat the tail

When checking out their Easter baskets, kids...

FIRST GRAB FOR CHOCOLATE BUNNIES (76%)

then MARSHMALLOW TREATS (18%)



5 minutes with...

JOUNGMIN SUR

The musical compositions of Jounghmin Sur, congregational pianist for College Community Church, Mennonite Brethren, Clovis, Calif., have been commissioned and performed by several California State University, Fresno, performing groups and other Central California choirs. She grew up in South Korea and in 2001 won Korea's Sungham International Composition Competition.



Jounghmin Sur

1 How did you come to be a musician?

Music seemed like somebody else's dream that I could not even hope for. But in high school I took composition lessons and always loved to compose. One of the top professional choirs in Korea would sometimes hire young composers like me who were not famous or accomplished yet. I auditioned a piece and they liked it and performed it.

2 What, for you, makes a composition effective?

Music is communication. If I am honest with my feelings it will transfer the feelings to the audience. It never works for me to just decorate my work with musical technique. It has to be true to how I feel. Then my music will speak.

3 How did the hymns you wrote for College Community Church come about?

My church was celebrating its anniversary with arts—poems, paintings and music. But I had to return to Korea at that time and wasn't certain I could come back. It was a dark time for me. When my church asked me to compose hymns for the celebration it showed me that even though we were far apart, my church and I were still together. I brought the pieces back with me when I returned to Fresno.

4 Your composition about the April 2014 Korean ferry accident tapped into some deep feelings.

At first I couldn't put down any notes because of my deep anger and rage about the accident, but God gave me this message that peace and reconciliation is the only answer for those kinds of accidents. It was a healing experience for me and I titled the composition "Prayer."

Listen to Jounghmin's composition, "Prayer," at www.usmb.org/Fast-Chat-Jounghmin-Sur

Interview by Kathy Heinrichs Wiest

Learning Ops highlight identity in Christ

Students attending Named 2015 will choose from at least 11 “Learning Ops” on topics designed to encourage them to dig deeper into their identity in Christ, the theme for the event. Joanna Chapa, planning team member, says that through the workshops students will “connect through the story of how Jesus renames us and calls us to greater things than we can dream or imagine.” Learning Ops will be offered during two time slots Saturday morning, April 11. A current list is available at www.named.com/learningops. Named 2015 is the USMB National Youth Conference, to be held April 9-12 in Denver, Colo.

FPU launches new master's program

Fresno Pacific University, the Mennonite Brethren-owned school headquartered in Fresno, Calif., has launched a new master's program. A Master of Arts in STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) Education “prepares teachers in grades kindergarten through eight to become STEM specialists in their schools and districts,” says Chris Brownell, program director. Classes will begin in the fall of 2015. For more information, visit grad.fresno.edu/programs.—FPU

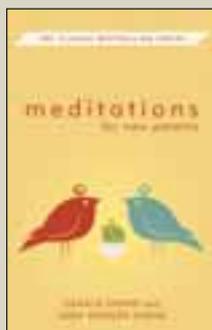
BIBLE COLLEGE ANNOUNCES CLOSURE

The board of Bethany College, Hepburn, Sask., announced in December that the 2014-2015 school year will be the 87-year-old rural institution's final year. The college is co-sponsored by the Mennonite Brethren churches of Saskatchewan and Alberta and the Saskatchewan Evangelical Mennonite Mission Conference. A trend of declining enrollment hit a critical point in spring 2014; this year there are 64 on-campus students and eight fourth-year interns.—MB Herald

Meditations encourage new parents

A series of meditations for new and expecting parents first published in the 1950s, *Meditations for the Expectant Mother*, *Meditations for the New Mother* and *Meditations for New Parents*, was re-released by Herald Press in mid-January 2015. Each book walks its reader through 30 days of readings and devotions selected to guide new families toward stronger relationships with God.

The books are available at www.MennoMedia.org.—MennoMedia



Tabor appoints Spinelli

Tabor College has named Michael Spinelli as the new director of development for the West Coast, effective Jan. 5. Spinelli will network with Tabor alumni and donors on the West Coast, while nurturing and developing donor relationships. Spinelli holds degrees from Fresno Pacific College, Fresno, Calif., MB Biblical Seminary, Fresno, and Western Seminary, Portland, Ore. He has 15 years' pastoral experience. Tabor is the Mennonite Brethren-owned liberal arts college in Hillsboro, Kan.—TC

Incredibly awkward. service

By Del Gray

Jesus' act of washing his disciples' feet characterizes his entire life

My first foot washing service was incredibly awkward. I was 41 years old and had been in church all my life, but this was all new to me, having joined a Mennonite Brethren congregation a few months before. I had no idea what to expect, and I kept looking around at other people to see what I should be doing. I didn't know the person I was paired up with, and when we began the actual foot washing I was self-conscious and uncomfortable. Everything went fine, but throughout the event I had to continually suppress the thought that this was not a normal, socially acceptable thing to do in polite company.

On further reflection it occurred to me that the embarrassment that I felt was also a significant part of the disciples' experience when Jesus washed their feet at the Last Supper in John 13. I identified strongly with Peter who was ashamed when he saw Jesus acting as his servant and cried out, "No, you shall never wash my feet" (John 13:8).

In Peter's world this task was demeaning, even insulting to the social status of his Lord. It would have been extremely awkward for the disciples to be treated this way by a social superior. Some ancient sources suggest that the job of foot washing was too undignified for even most servants and was assigned to their children instead.

Typically feet were physically dirty and needed to be washed when entering a home. More significantly, feet were symbolically unclean in a way that went beyond hygiene. Cultural norms in that day regarded feet as offensive and profane, the lowest part of a person. Even the seraphs in Isaiah 6:2 covered their feet in shame in the presence of God's holiness. Culturally speaking, Peter's protest was warranted—it was inappropriate for Jesus to wash his feet.

An act of service

When Jesus voluntarily took the posture of a servant and touched his disciples' feet, they were astonished because it turned the social order upside down. But this was precisely the point of Jesus' actions. By humbling himself, he contin-

ued to reject a model of ministry that would use power and honor in this world to accomplish God's goals. He refused to adopt the ways of politicians and religious leaders of the day who used their power over people to achieve what they wanted.

Jesus had fought this battle at the temptations in the wilderness, and throughout his ministry he chose to work through humility, service, weakness and self-sacrifice instead. In this sense Jesus' act of service at this meal was not a one-time event; it characterized his entire life. The act of foot washing at the Last Supper was practically Jesus' philosophy of ministry contained in one symbolic action.

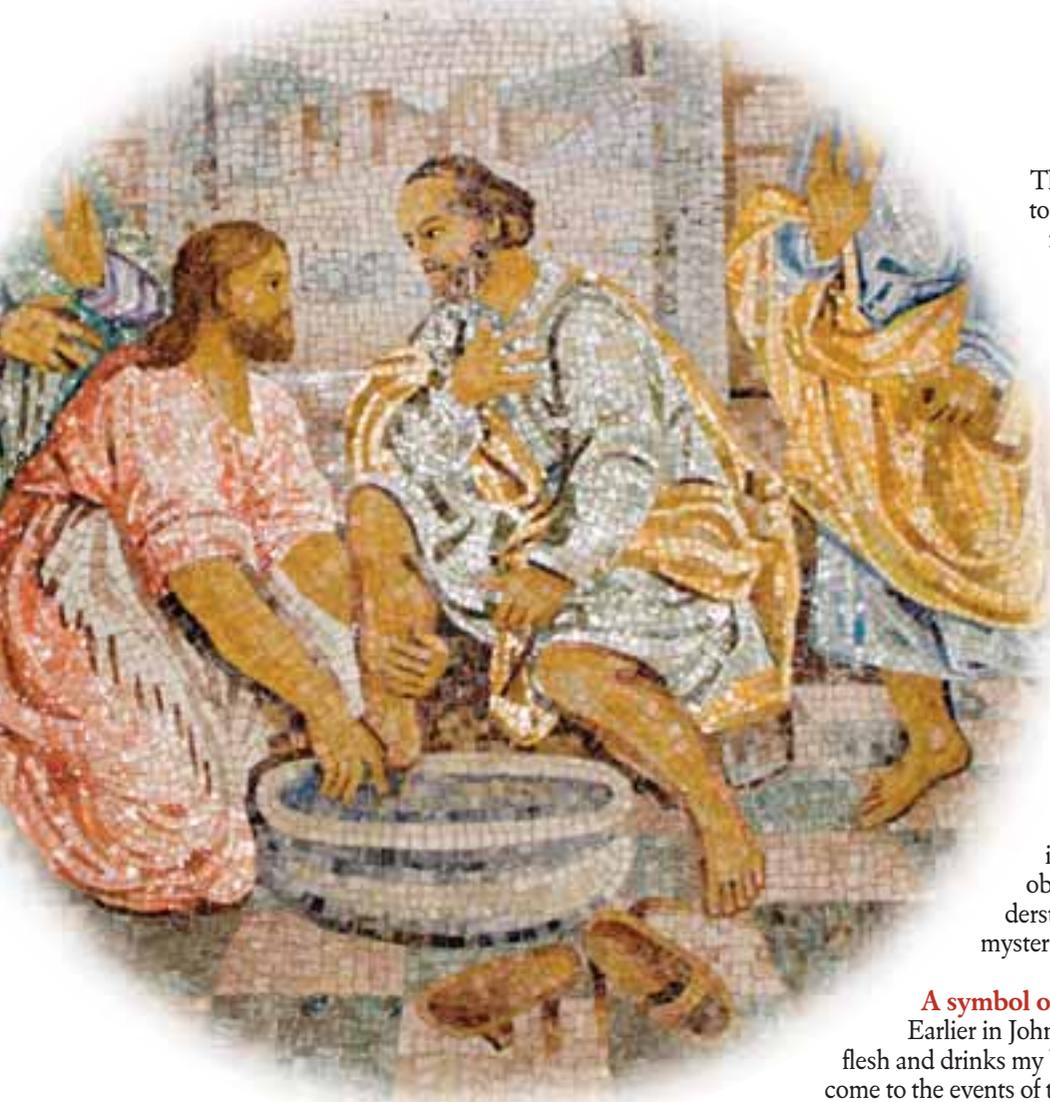
After washing their feet, Jesus tells his disciples, "Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you" (John 13:14-15). What Jesus did at that meal for his disciples was clearly meant to be repeated as an important part of following the model that Jesus set for discipleship.

A life of service

Many church traditions see the importance of the lesson that Jesus teaches here but do not repeat the act of foot washing itself. I am grateful that my church carries on this Anabaptist tradition of a ceremony that provides a concrete symbol illustrating how Jesus lived. Even as I have become more accustomed to the yearly event on Maundy Thursday, the slight sense of awkwardness that lingers reminds me that a life of service is counter-cultural and has a social cost in our world. Like Jesus, his disciples are called to a life of deep humility that does not seek personal gain in status or social standing. As members of the kingdom of God our values are often upside down.

The theme of humble service is powerful and relevant for us today, but there are hints in the passage that something else is going on in this scene as well. When Jesus washed his disciples' feet he was not only teaching them





about serving other people, he was also acting out a symbol that foreshadowed his upcoming death. The two ideas are closely related in the text.

The beginning of chapter 13 is a conscious transition by John where he introduces a new section of the narrative that focuses on Jesus' death. John tells us that "Jesus knew that the time had come for him to leave this world" (John 13:1) and that he "was returning to God" (13:3). The second half of the Gospel of John becomes a close look at Jesus' final days where he "showed them the full extent of his love" (13:1) by going to the cross. The mention of Judas' plan to betray Jesus (13:2) further confirms that the narrator has turned his eye to the story of Jesus' passion.

Jesus makes two comments to Peter that also suggest the act of foot washing looks forward to the cross. In verse 7 Jesus says, "You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand." At the time Peter understood that Jesus was acting as a servant while washing his feet, but he did not yet comprehend the full extent to which Jesus would humble himself. This would only come after Jesus allows himself to go to the cross.

By washing their feet Jesus was looking forward to his ultimate act of humble service that would "clean" his disciples completely. This also explains why Jesus tells Peter that, "Unless I wash you, you have no part with me" (John 13:8). Following Jesus requires us to humbly receive what he has done for us on the cross.

The idea that washing their feet points to the cross becomes all the more remarkable when we remember how the disciples fail Jesus in the coming chapters. Immediately after this scene Jesus predicts that Judas will betray him (13:18) and that Peter will deny him (13:38). These two are specifically pointed out, but all of the disciples will likewise abandon him when the cost of discipleship becomes too great. Knowing this, Jesus still stooped down to serve all of them at this Last Supper. The "full extent of his love" included even dying for those who were not faithful to him.

Foot washing in John's gospel, then, takes on a comprehensive scope where it acts as an illustration of Jesus' willingness to humble himself as a servant, not just in ministry during his life but ultimately in his obedience to death on a cross. This understanding helps us to solve one of the mysteries of the Gospel of John.

A symbol on many levels

Earlier in John 6:54 Jesus taught "whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life," but when we come to the events of the Last Supper there is no mention of Jesus actually establishing the ceremony of communion. On the surface it seems strange that John would omit such an important event. In his Gospel, though, foot washing functions in the narrative as the symbolic prediction of the crucifixion, serving as a parallel to the Lord's Supper that we find in the other three Gospels.

When Jesus washed his disciples' feet he provided a symbol with multiple levels that continually reward our ongoing reflection. It is especially significant as we prepare for Good Friday and Easter, identifying with Jesus' suffering, death and resurrection. His faithfulness to a path of humility and self-sacrifice throughout the events of his last week is astonishing. While we know this intellectually, it is made all the more real when we physically act out the symbol ourselves, sharing a small taste of the shock of that first experience.

We remember that like the disciples we also are unworthy of our Lord and have abandoned him in various ways, yet he remains committed to serving us. We remember that this kind of love for others is what we are also called to. Foot washing helps us better understand what the Son of God submitted himself to from beginning to end when he walked the road to the cross. It reminds us that we too are walking in that same road of humble, sacrificial service, following in Jesus' footsteps.

Del Gray is associate professor of biblical and religious studies at Tabor College, the Mennonite Brethren college headquartered in Hillsboro, Kan. He is a member of Parkview MB Church, Hillsboro.

The resurrection earthquake

Once again God announces that he has a message of hope we need to hear

When it happened the first time, only Matthew records it: “There was a violent earthquake” (Matt. 28:2). Have you ever seen someone pick up a present and shake it? On this day it was as though God took the earth and shook it good. And then he opened his gift to the world. It was an amazing gift. The Savior lives! The power of death is swallowed up in the victory of life. Dark despair is trumped by the light of hope. God’s power is truly made perfect in situations of human impossibility. This is Easter!

The power of the resurrection has been evident throughout history, and we continue to experience it today. It was 2014. There was the stench of death. The hopes and dreams of a loved-filled marriage were dead and were being buried through a process called divorce. It was over.

And again it happened. The house where we gathered Easter Sunday, April 20, 2014, was shaken. Again, the earthquake signalled a resurrection. Once again God announced that he has a message of hope we needed to hear.

God continues to turn the frustrated cries of the wounded into songs of joy, to restore shattered hopes and to bring new life and love out of that which was dead. This is one family’s resurrection story.

Kyle and Kate met during their college years at a Kansas university. Their attraction became a friendship, friendship a romance and romance a marriage. They exchanged their vows March 14, 1998, and began life together. The flame of hope burned bright, and their future appeared promising. The handsome prince had met and married the beautiful princess. They liked and loved each other. Both were well educated. Kate worked as an elementary school teacher. Kyle initially worked in the computer industry and then embarked on what would become a prestigious law enforcement career. Two sons were born into this family.

From all outward appearances this appeared to be Exhibit 1 of a dream marriage—love between two beautiful, healthy and talented people who were highly intelligent, professionally successful and financially prosperous.



KG

By Paul W. Klassen

Their sons were wanted and well cared for. What more could one want?

Much! Behind the all-American marriage façade, all was not well. From the beginning Kyle and Kate were on a collision course of expectations. Both entered marriage with the assumption that the other was responsible for their happiness. Based on his father's example, Kyle saw himself as controller and provider while Kate longed for a companion who, like her father, would do anything for her. Kyle expected Kate to be a housekeeper while Kate thrived on interaction with people. Their memories of unmet expectations grew. Both felt justified as their frustration and resentment mounted.

Neither Kyle nor Kate had family histories that prepared them to address conflict in a positive way. For Kyle, the decisive and practical organizer, the approach to conflict was simple and direct. You seize control. You logically analyze and address the problem. You make up and say, "I'm sorry." You move on, problem over.

Kate, the supportive and outgoing caregiver, longed for significance. She wanted to be respected as an equal rather than manipulated and controlled by an "it's my way or nothing" kind of husband. Conflicts grew in frequency and in intensity. Kyle's repeated apologies actually fueled Kate's growing resentment. His words were not accompanied by appropriate action. The casualty was Kate's respect and trust for Kyle.

The toll of unresolved conflict came to a head when their oldest son was diagnosed with a serious health issue in 2011. Just as building pressure below the ground precedes earthquakes, the repeated hospitalizations and uncertainty of their son's health put enormous pressure on an already fragile relationship. In March 2012 the built-up pressure erupted in the emergency room of the hospital where their son had just been admitted. On the marriage Richter scale, the quake was devastating. Kate remembers waking up the next morning thinking, "I don't love him anymore."

In one last-ditch effort to rescue their critically ill marriage, Kyle and Kate reached out to a counselor. As life support systems in a hospital ER can prolong life in a dying person, the counseling managed to postpone the final death.

Within a few months Kate informed Kyle that she didn't want to live with him anymore. She didn't want to try anymore. She wanted out. Could things get any worse?

Yes! Kyle's old pattern of problem solving kicked into high gear. He tried all the harder to seize control without realizing how this demanding behavior deepened the alienation. In his frustration, Kyle didn't care how Kate felt; he wanted her to submit to his plans. She didn't. Their home became a tomb. The stench of death deepened.

It is said that God presents us with opportunities that are brilliantly disguised as unsolvable problems. God presented such an opportunity in January 2013 when Kyle suffered a serious injury. It was in the hospital that I first met Kate and Kyle. The physical needs were apparent; the relational needs were carefully concealed.

Several months later over coffee, Kyle shared the desperate needs of their marriage. More significantly, he also admitted his need to address issues in his life, especially in relationship to God. I read to Kyle the account from Ezekiel 37 of God breathing new life into a valley filled with dried bones. "Does God have the power to bring new life into what is dead?" I asked Kyle.

In March 2013 Kyle began a journey filled with unexpected discoveries. Instead of focusing on Kate's faults, he increasingly and painfully saw how his attitudes and actions contributed to the erosion of Kate's love and trust. On June 23 he wrote in his journal, "This has been our history: When I don't think things are going the right way, I try to change it, not giving respect to her feelings. This is why Kate feels like she is being manipulated and controlled." He wrote of his love for Kate but acknowledged, "My selfishness or stress or impatience have ruled my ac-



This has not been a fairy tale where the handsome prince and beautiful princess ride off into the sunset to live happily ever after. Rebuilding trust involves setbacks and successes, failures and forgiveness.



tions and behavior and shown Kate just the opposite.”

For Kate the options seemed clear. She could stay bound in a miserable marriage, or she could strike out on her own and build a new life for herself. Feeling no hope for their future and having no will to work for a different future, Kate moved out of their home and filed for divorce that summer.

Kyle’s journey of discovery continued. He realized he could not control Kate’s feelings for him, but he could assume responsibility for the direction of his life. He adopted Paul’s challenge to Timothy as his own: “But you, man of God, flee from all this, and pursue righteous, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness” (1Tim. 6:11). He discovered and experienced more and more of God’s cleansing grace and life-transforming power. In October Kyle wrote, “In an odd way, I am thankful for this situation and trial. These circumstances have brought me to a whole new level of love, faith and understanding of myself.”

Due largely to their children, Kyle and Kate had ongoing contact. Kate knew that Kyle continued to meet regularly with a counselor. She was also aware of the spiritual steps he was making through our weekly meetings and of his renewed commitment to a local church. She, however, remained skeptical. There were just too many broken promises.

Authentic transformation is neither quick nor easy. Progress involves pain. A painful and powerful moment for Kyle came in January 2014 when his counselor confronted Kyle’s failure to love Kate in the unconditional way God loves us. That night Kyle made this entry

in his journal: “God is impressive and incredible in the way he works.... I left the counselor understanding how I have been failing myself, Kate and God. I am so thankful for his work in my life....Thank you, Lord. I love you.”

Several months later Kyle received an unexpected text from Kate. “Hi, my name is Kate...I am recently separated from a creepy man. I am wondering if you might want to go out on a date sometime.” Guess what? He did. It must have gone well because they decided one date wasn’t enough. Many more followed.

Shortly before Easter, Kate and Kyle re-chose each other as husband and wife. So we joined their family and friends on Easter Sunday to celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ as well as the ongoing resurrection power of God in the marriage of Kyle and Kate. As we celebrated, the earth again was shaken.

This has not been a fairy tale where the still handsome prince and beautiful princess ride off into the sunset to live happily ever after. Rebuilding trust involves setbacks and successes, failures and forgiveness. Kyle, once the controlling husband, is learning to surrender control to the Lord. Kate, his hurt and distrusting wife, is learning to forgive and trust. Easy? No! Possible? Yes! With God all things are possible.

Paul W. Klassen is a USMB pastor who retired from pastoral ministry after serving in two churches for 38 years. Paul lives with his wife, Gladys, in Edmond, Okla., where Paul is a chaplain and does wood inlay art as The Carpenter’s Apprentice.



We are God's witnesses

Why is it that when some Christians share the gospel, a carpet of verdant growth emerges in their trail? Yet nothing seems to happen when others, who are just as devoted to Jesus, speak about the gospel. Why can some longstanding believers easily talk about Jesus with their children and congregation but struggle to do so with unbelieving neighbors and relatives?

What makes the difference? What's really happening? More importantly: What does God expect Jesus' followers to do with the good news of Jesus Christ?

What the Bible says

Jesus instructs his disciples to make apprentices of every ethnicity, baptizing them in the name of the Trinity and teaching them to keep all of Jesus' commands (Matt. 28:18-20). Once the apostles are empowered by the Holy Spirit, they are to be Jesus' witnesses everywhere (Acts 1:8).

But what does God expect of all believers? Those who aren't gifted to be apostles, evangelists, apologists or teachers? What does God expect of people who are tongue-tied or shy?

Very few passages in the epistles explicitly teach believers how to speak about the good news of Jesus—how to witness. Peter writes, "Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander" (1 Pet. 3:15-16).

Paul offers similar words: "Conduct yourselves wisely toward outsiders, making the most of the time. Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer everyone" (Col. 4:5-6, NRSV).

John introduces Jesus with just such respect and graciousness: "We're announcing what we heard, saw with our eyes, looked at, and touched with our hands, so that we will all have fellowship with each other and with God, and so that we can have complete joy" (1 John 1:1-4, paraphrased).

Biblical witnessing

From these Scriptures, there are several things we can say about witnessing.

Witnessing is letting others know how we experience Jesus. Like John, we tell our own experiences and those of our faith community, rather than the experiences of others.

Why ordinary
believers can
open doors and
proclaim Jesus

By Andrew Dyck

Both Peter and Paul emphasize responding to what other people are actually asking. In other words, witnessing is a genuine conversation, not a one-sided sales pitch that pushes for a deal.

We salt every conversation with gentleness, kindness and wisdom without a hint of anxiety or stridency. We respect the other person's convictions, customs, and community—even religion—by listening carefully and seeking to understand him or her. We can be this patient because God is (2 Pet. 3:9).

We always couple our conversations about Jesus with living as Jesus teaches. And we witness with the expectation of discovering joy.

We don't need to know everything about the gospel—in fact, we can't. Even if we could know the entire Bible, we would never finish searching and tracing out God's wise and wonderful ways (Rom. 11:33). We need other believers, churches and denominations to communicate the gospel's fullness, so that every household on earth can truly grasp how broad and high and long and deep is Christ's love (Eph. 3:18-19).

By sharing our own experiences of the risen Jesus, we renounce two temptations. We avoid the temptation to distill what God has revealed about the gospel into a pre-packaged or lowest-common-denominator summary. That's like offering people a dry, empty nutshell instead of a living seed. Rather, we are to be as lively as God's birthing Spirit, who comes and goes like the wind (John 3:8).

Also, we refuse the temptation to feel that “it’s all up to me.” God stitches each individual’s witness—however incomplete—with the witness of the church in every place, creating a multicolored tapestry that reveals Jesus with ever-increasing beauty to our neighbors and our enemies, to the world and even the cosmos (Eph. 3:10).

Bearing witness

Journalists speak about a moral obligation to “bear witness” to the extreme poverty, atrocities of war or devastating effects of human trafficking they have seen firsthand. Having discovered people and events hidden from their viewers, these communicators feel compelled to respond to the world’s pain by letting their audiences know “the rest of the story.”

As Jesus’ apprentices, we are to be spiritual journalists, bearing witness to what we have experienced. We’re not spiritual detectives who sniff out evil, spiritual police who collar sinners, prosecuting attorneys, parole officers who ensure consequences or judges who assign eternal punishment. We’re also not God’s sheriffs, bailiffs or prison guards. Instead, we are his witnesses.

Like the first believers, we aren’t content to tell only the facts of the gospel. We want others to know our experiences of Jesus so that their joy—and ours—may be complete. This is bearing witness.

Bearing witness is something all of us can do: children and grownups, introverts and extroverts, beginners and veterans. Everyone who knows Christ and who relies on the Holy Spirit to call, convict and convert can bear witness.

Four ways to bear witness

Here are four practices that can help us learn to bear witness as people born of the Spirit.

1. Be attentive to our own conversions. A witness’s testimony is only valid if it speaks to the witness’s own experience. What has Jesus changed in your life? How are you becoming more alive because of Jesus? How is your relationship with Jesus reshaping your values, self-image, other relationships, hobbies, finances, desires and more? Who makes the gospel real or believable for you?

2. Let our own experiences shape what we promise on Jesus’ behalf. Jesus doesn’t change all the circumstances of our lives. Can we promise he will heal a friend’s depression, crippled arm or even his marriage? We can’t know. But Jesus offers eternally abundant life that begins here and now (John 10:10). Reconciliation, healing, recovery from addictions and other changes—both quiet and dramatic—are signs of this life.

3. Be attentive to what people are already discussing. Before we speak of Jesus, we first need to be attentive to what people around us are asking. Paul listened before he preached (Acts 17:23). Where do people talk about Jesus, God, Christians, religion or faith? Consider carefully what they say.

Consider what hides beneath their comments—shame, guilt, fear or greed. Jesus and the gospel address all human possibilities, conditions and cultures. Notice and draw attention to the ways people are unknowingly experiencing the Holy Spirit’s witness to God’s goodness: this incredible planet, productive work, happy mealtimes and more (Acts 14:17).

4. Live hospitably with our neighbors. A lifestyle that offers and receives hospitality prepares the soil for sowing the seeds of the gospel (Luke 10:7). Paul clearly expects Christians to associate with people who do not believe in Jesus—even people considered immoral, greedy, robbers and idolaters (1 Cor. 5:9-10). Jesus not only served but also asked to be served (John 4:7).

In the same way, we need to show hospitality to our neighbors and associates. We can share garden tools, parenting woes and joys, vacations and even food. When my neighbor knows me well enough to see my fear of heights and my outburst at a broken lawnmower, he will hopefully be close enough to also see Jesus shining out of the cracked vessel that I am.

Opening doors

Nearly 10 years ago, Denise* suffered a broken hip. She was elderly and due to her weak and stiff leg was unable to manage her household or her little dog. Her neighbors, Henry and Liz, visited Denise in the hospital; they loved Jesus and had experienced hardships themselves. When Denise came home, she asked Liz and Henry to assist her for a while. They came to her house twice a day to prepare her meals, help her get out of bed and to care for her dog.

One year into her recovery, Denise realized that her neighbors weren’t showing any signs of stopping their helpful visits. Finally, she asked, “If you had known how long it would take, would you still have agreed to help me?” Liz answered, “We’ll help you no matter how long it takes.” Noticing that Denise had books about various religions on her shelves, they readily gave her a large-print Bible when she asked for one. Quite naturally, Liz and Henry also spoke about Jesus and his love.

One day, Denise said, “I want what you have.” Several months later—sitting in her wheelchair—Denise was baptized upon confessing her faith in Jesus, whom she served by expressing care for the members of her home fellowship group. The seed of the gospel sprouted in part because Denise’s neighbors—ordinary disciples of Jesus—bore witness to their experiences with Christ. May his Spirit help us to go and sow likewise.

*Not her real name.

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AMY FAST

The beauty of the Montana prairie is captured in this panoramic photo of a cut-across road crossing Little Porcupine Creek.

Ministry on the frontier

Pioneer attitudes characterize life, ministry in Montana

When asked how far a person would have to drive from Lustre, Mont., to shop at a Wal-Mart, Daryl Toews, moderator of the Lustre MB Church, actually laughs. The nearest Wal-Mart is anywhere from 150 to 300 miles away, depending on the direction. Wolf Point, home to the other USMB congregation in Montana, has the advantage of being a bit nearer to city comforts; Wal-Mart is only about 100 miles away.

"We're not rural; we're remote," Toews says.

Mennonite Brethren were drawn to Montana's wide open spaces early in the 20th century. Lustre MB was founded in 1917, and Gospel Fellowship Church (GFC) in Wolf Point, about 40 miles away, was established in 1956.

Lustre is "more of a feeling than a place," Toews says. "Lustre community," as he calls it, is little more than a school system, two churches and the homesteads that fall within a 25-mile radius. There isn't even a post office. If everyone in the community attended a town meeting, 300 people might be there.

Wolf Point comes closer to being a typical small town, with about 3,000 people, several restaurants, stores, two banks, a grocery store and even three car dealerships. The town is one of four located on the Fort Peck Indian Reservation, home to the Assiniboine and Sioux tribes. In an unusual move, the U.S. government opened the reservation to homesteading in the early 1900s, which gives Wolf Point a unique cultural mix.

Not surprisingly, remote location and ministry are interwoven for the two USMB congregations in north-eastern Montana.

"We need each other"

Perhaps because they are so far-flung, residents both depend on each other and lend a hand when another has a

need. If the power goes out or a car breaks down, neighbors are there to help. If someone needs financial help because of a tragedy or medical crisis, folks dig deep into their pockets.

Frank Lenihan, pastor of Lustre MB, says, "What I appreciate about Lustre is the fact that everyone who lives here sees themselves as a member of a community. We look after each other and take care of each other."

For those in the Mennonite Brethren congregations, Christian community takes on new meaning. In worship, it means cooperating on the small things. Worship at Lustre MB includes a mix of hymns and choruses; everyone compromises a little on their music preferences in order to focus on the more important matters. "We need each other," Toews says.

For the Wolf Point congregation, working together has taken on new meaning since their building was severely damaged in a fire Nov. 18, 2014. GFC is currently meeting with Community Bible Church (CBC), a church that belongs to the Fellowship of Evangelical Bible Churches. CBC is a small congregation of only about 15 people and no pastor, so they welcome the chance to have a pastor and full pews. For GFC, the partnership provides space they need to gather for the time being. Whether the arrangement will be long term remains to be seen. Bruce Bogar, GFC pastor, says GFC plans to rebuild but will likely be displaced for at least a year. He says both congregations voted to continue meeting together after a 30-day trial period, and they will reevaluate again after another 90 days.

A daily witness

Both Lustre and Wolf Point are highly churching communities. So much so that in Lustre, Toews says, "there's a



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no one in my community who hasn't heard the plan of salvation many times."

Wolf Point has a surprising number of churches of nearly all stripes: Lutheran, Catholic, Baptist, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and Presbyterian, to name a few. Even in such a "churched" town, Bogar says that many people in town are unchurched, attending church as a matter of tradition but having no faith of their own.

The cultural mix of Wolf Point's reservation community presents an added challenge. Like most communities on reservations, alcoholism, abuse and promiscuity are issues. But the biggest issue, Bogar says, is that "everybody needs the Lord."

GFC is a congregation of about 85 people, and pretty much all of them are Anglo, so there's a definite cultural gap—one that's proven hard to bridge.

For both Lustre MB and GFC, reaching out to their community looks less like an evangelistic program or outreach event and more like daily faithfulness. Attendees of both congregations are deeply involved in the community as business owners, community leaders and school board members. There's no place to hide in the crowd in a small community, so daily witness becomes especially important.

Duane Nasner, elder at GFC, says, "We want to emphasize the Bible and the truth, and we do talk about living our lives in a way that would be pleasing in the community. We hope that's the best ministry we have out there."

To augment that quiet witness and reach their Native neighbors, GFC supports a local ministry, The Lord's Table, which aims to meet the needs of the Native community in culturally appropriate ways. Ministry leader Danny Lindsay serves as pastor to that community.

Reaching overseas

Far from being closed off from the world, Lustre MB and GFC have a heart for the world, which shows in generosity toward local ministries and overseas missionaries.

Lustre MB has an additional opportunity for global impact—which Toews describes as nothing short of a miracle—through Lustre Christian High School, an interdenominational school of about 40 students. Although the school isn't specifically Mennonite Brethren, Lustre MB has played a key role in establishing, supporting and leading the school. While the school began in 1928 for church and community children, it soon began to draw boarding students from other communities. And then it began to draw students from other countries—like Korea, China, Thailand, Russia and Mexico.

"Any time they come from China to this little part of Montana, it's a God thing," Toews says.

Often, the students have minimal English skills and no biblical literacy. Not surprisingly, the remote location and the total immersion in a faith-based school can be a shock. So church members make an extra effort to welcome and love those students. They invite them into their homes for meals or school breaks and allow conversation about faith to happen naturally.

Between that kind of loving support from the church and the Bible-infused curriculum, students leave with a working knowledge of Christianity. Several each year make a profession of faith. And when they go back home, they take their faith with them.

"It's quite an opportunity," Toews says. "We're trying to make the most of it."

Frontier ministry

While these two USMB congregations might feel like they're out on the edge of the world, ministry on the frontier is alive and well. They hold tenaciously to Scripture. Faith is woven through their work and interactions in their community, even in the face of something as devastating as a fire. They don't wait around for others to pick up the ball, but step forward to meet needs, whether that means helping a neighbor or welcoming a homesick international student.

"It's a different kind of ministry because of where we are," Toews says. "We still carry quite a bit of that pioneer spirit." —Myra Holmes

Micah Project links interns, needs

Interns expand church's ministry throughout neighborhood

“I’ve experienced a lot of things that have been painful in my life, but God makes them beautiful,” says intern Justin Mata, looking back on the first half of his 10-month internship with Micah Project at North Fresno Church (NFC), a Mennonite Brethren congregation in Fresno, Calif.

Mata, originally from Hanford, Calif., grew up with a father whose drug addiction cycled him in and out of jail. Mata himself struggled through a decade of rebellion against God. The boys he mentors in the neighborhood around church are living similar stories. “My life helps me understand these youth,” he says.

Each of Micah Project’s interns brings a unique story and passion to his or her assignment. While all six are from the Central Valley, some have lived through poverty and homelessness; others come from a middle class background. One grew up as a missionary kid in Guatemala. Several are college students. All of them have made a commitment to living in community together for 10 months of learning about and practicing urban ministry.

Now in its second year, Micah Project’s interns live in three two-bedroom units of a small low-income apartment complex just three blocks from NFC. Their learning and ministry start right inside those apartments where they have to work through the household conflicts that naturally come from their diverse histories.

“For most of them, reconciling relationships isn’t something they’ve had much experience with,” says Micah Project director Rhonda Dueck. She helps them process the conflicts, reminding them, “You’re all going to fail each other because you’re human.”

Investing in the community

Beyond the walls of their apartments, the interns are extending North Fresno’s reach throughout the Robinson neighborhood, an area surrounding Robinson Elementary school that the church has identified for ministry. “North Fresno has always been very intentional about being invested in our incredibly diverse neighborhood,” says Dueck.

Thirty-one-year-old Mata came to Micah Project to put into practice a calling that he had already begun to pursue soon after he “went full-force for God” two years ago. A Christian brother who had been praying for him told Mata that he should work with young men to help steer them toward God. “It was prophetic,” says Mata, “and I’ve done everything since that day to work toward that.”

Mata’s volunteer assignment with North Fresno’s youth ministry focuses on what he calls “the youth in the hallways”—neighborhood youth for whom the church world is unfamiliar and who may not even feel welcome enough to stay in the room during youth group meetings.

“In our youth group there are lots of students who came up through the ranks of Sunday school and youth group,” says Mata, “but I have a heart for those who are marginalized, at different stages of their understanding of God.”

Helping the boys fix their bicycles or driving them to a Christian boxing gym gives Mata a chance for meaningful conversations about the real issues the neighborhood boys



JAMES BERGEN

Justin Mata, Shelby King, Cathryn Araujo, Director Rhonda Dueck, David Kadera, Estela Magaña and Roxanne Sanchez pose with Mata’s old pickup that hauls the fix-up projects and the high school boys he mentors as part of internship ministry with Micah Project.

face. "It's interesting how things come up when people are working together," Mata explains. "Having a common task is better than just sitting over coffee."

Volunteering strengthens connections

Each intern is required to volunteer at least five hours a week. Several of them help with the church's twice-weekly tutoring club where neighborhood children can get homework help as well as a dose of loving attention. Often on Wednesdays children come after school for tutoring club, stay for a dinner served by church volunteers and then attend the church's Wednesday evening programs.

For intern Shelby King, of Fresno, volunteering at the tutoring club and with the children's program on Wednesday nights dovetails with her day job as a teacher's aide at Robinson Elementary School, also located in the neighborhood.

One of her Robinson school students, Vester, comes to the tutoring club. "He has a rough family situation," says King, "but he knows he has a safe person in me and there are people at tutoring club who give him that attention."

King points out that living in the neighborhood makes the relationship with Vester and other students even stronger. She meets them at the neighborhood Target store and the grocery store and gets to know their families. "We don't come from the same background and upbringing, but I can say that I live in the neighborhood too," she says.

Taking off blinders

The internship program's mentoring and educational components ensure that Micah Project participants are much more than just a guaranteed labor force for North Fresno's outreach efforts. Dueck meets individually with each intern once a month. Required readings and a weekly class together with other urban ministry interns in Fresno enrich their hands-on experience.

The curriculum acquaints the interns with the principles of Christian community development as well as a broader picture of urban life in Fresno. "They come in only knowing about their part of the city," Dueck points out. The readings, teaching sessions and group discussions help them "take off the blinders and embrace the city that is incredibly rich in diversity but also full of pain and struggle."

"There are so many injustices in the world," Mata reflects. "The amount of time we take to focus on all the things that are wrong has given me more of an idea of what God means when he tells us to love justice."

The class also includes a module about the church and God's mission. "We want them to see that evangelism isn't just passing out tracts or inviting people to church," says

Dueck. "The gospel means walking with people and sharing the pain of their life," things they are putting into practice in the neighborhood.

Connecting congregation, interns

Dueck connects the interns with other mentors from the church as well. Each one meets monthly with a "ministry coach" from North Fresno's pastoral staff and twice monthly with a lay person from the congregation.

King, whose passion is working with children, was matched with a lay mentor who is a therapist working with children in the Fresno Unified School District. "It has been incredible to have older people in the church investing in us," she says. "I thought (the internship) was about what I was going to give and do, but there's also this constant outpouring into us that gets pushed forward through us to the younger generation."

The "outpouring" from the congregation includes another substantial gift: the three apartments that house the interns belong to a member of the congregation who lets them live there free of charge. This allows the church to keep the cost of participating very low. Participants pay a program fee of just \$3,000 payable in monthly installments over the 10 months of internship.

North Fresno Church's tutoring program and youth ministries see some immediate results of the investment in Micah Project interns, but Dueck is quick to point out that the real investment is in the impact these interns will make in the coming years as they live out what the internship has taught them.

Remembering the bigger picture

She uses a metaphor to remind the congregation of the bigger picture. "We're not planting a tomato garden, we are planting oak trees. In a decade we will see the results."

King agrees: "Once you learn these things, you can't go back."

Dueck says, "We are a sending church. We hope some fall in love with Fresno and stay, but we pray that others go home and work in the community where they came from."

Dueck and several interns will sow seed for future Micah Project participants at Named 2015, the National Mennonite Brethren Youth Conference this April. They hope to expand and draw a diverse team of interns, spreading the impact to other cities across the country.

Guidelines and the application process for participants are on the Micah Project website: themicahproject.wordpress.com. Read Shelby King's testimony about her placement at Robinson Elementary online at www.usmb.org/micah-project—*Kathy Heinrichs Wiest*

Moving in the right direction

Richard Kriegbaum returns to FPU presidency

When Richard Kriegbaum got a certain call from the Board of Trustees of Fresno Pacific University (FPU) last fall, he expected the call to be about consulting work. After all, he has extensive experience as a leadership consultant and had already been working with FPU's seminary in that capacity.

But the call was to ask him to serve—again—as president of the MB-owned school on the West Coast. Kriegbaum served as president from 1985-1997.

By the next morning, he had agreed, and he was installed Oct. 24, 2014, as the 12th president of FPU.

An inauspicious start

Kriegbaum's second term as president got off to a messy start. The FPU board announced the resignation of outgoing president Pete Menjares Sept. 11, 2014, followed just days later by Kriegbaum's appointment. The abrupt nature of the transition left many scratching their heads and some with significant pain.

"That's a very disorderly process," Kriegbaum says. "There's no getting around it."

But in many ways Kriegbaum has been preparing all his life to step into the role now, even on such short notice.

A passion for Christian education began around the family dinner table when he was growing up, where conversations often turned to the questions and issues surrounding the Christian college where his father served as dean.

From there, the thread of Christian education ran through his education and experience. He earned a bachelor's degree in Spanish from Wheaton (Ill.) College and a master's degree from Ball State University, then served at Wheaton as a

teacher and administrator, which he calls "enormously great preparation."

Similarly, a passion for leadership began early, when he was shoulder-tapped in high school as a potential leader in his denomination, the Grace Brethren. "That was an early affirmation that I was supposed to think in those terms," he says.

Because of that early nudge, he not only pursued leadership opportunities but also began to think about what it means to lead well. His doctoral dissertation was on "A Typology of Boards of Trustees of Private Colleges." He authored a book for Christian leaders, *Leadership Prayers*, in 1998 and has consulted or presented on leadership, planning and governance with more than 170 organizations.

Coming to FPU

He was first introduced to FPU through one of those consulting assignments, then served as administrative vice president before becoming president in 1985. He says that good "followership" on the part of the FPU board and faculty helped him succeed as president and taught him the value of followership. After all, he points out, if no one is following, no one can lead. "Leaders do not make followers; followers make leaders," he says.

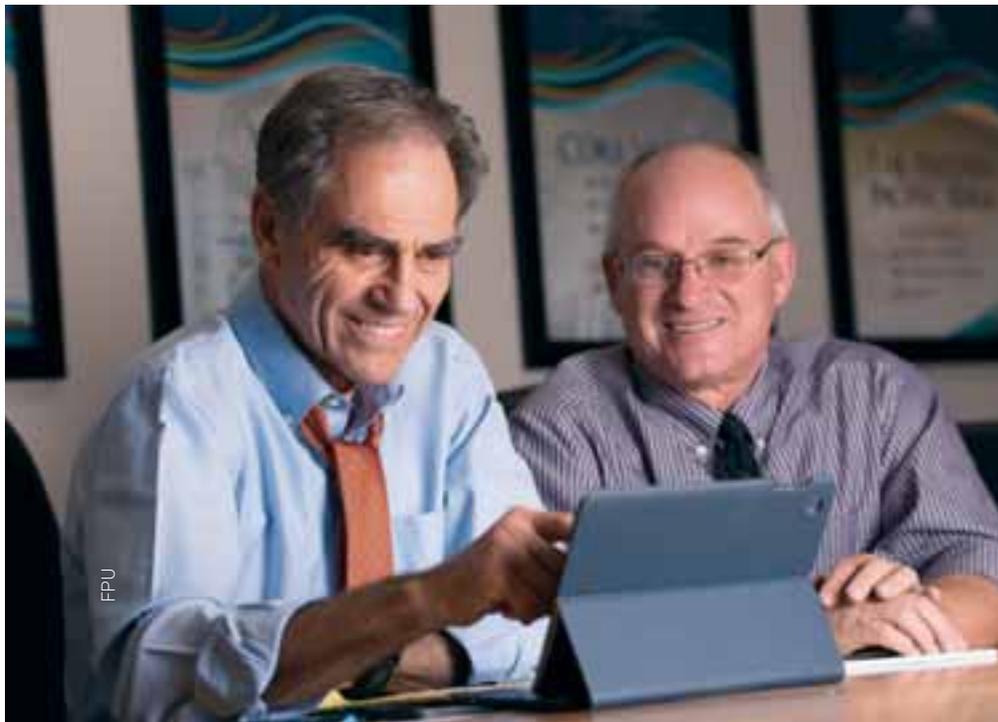
At FPU, he says, he has always felt the needed support of the board and faculty. That helped him feel optimistic about stepping into the presidency now. "I don't walk into the office saying 'I've got to figure this out,'" he says. "I walk into the office saying, 'We've got to figure this out.'"

Other lessons learned during that first presidency also helped prepare him to step into the role now, such as the importance of distinguishing between "my role and my identity." He says such separation helps in light of the pressures and painful decisions that go along with leadership.

Another lesson he learned from his predecessor, Edmund Janzen: "The direction is more important than the present location."

When applied to an institution, that philosophy helps focus on a healthy future rather than getting bogged down in current circumstances. "You're able to get a lot more kingdom work done," Kriegbaum says.

Richard Kriegbaum, left, and Stephen Varvis share the leadership of Fresno Pacific University under a new administrative model. Kriegbaum calls his path to the presidency "interesting." He says, "Whatever we're doing today is God's preparation for what he wants us to do next."



FPU's current "location" is a challenging one. Kriegbaum leads a different school now than he did the first time around. Then, enrollment hovered around 600; now it tops 3,700. What started as a small Bible college is now a multi-campus university, with centers in Bakersfield, Visalia, North Fresno and Merced, Calif., in addition to the main campus in Fresno, Calif.

Then, most of the students and faculty were Mennonite Brethren; now less than half the faculty and a very small percentage of students claim Mennonite Brethren background. Kriegbaum says FPU is now a university for, rather than of, Mennonite Brethren.

External pressures from government, accreditors and financial requirements have increased, and American culture has shifted dramatically. "Like most evangelical colleges, we have to deal with moral and ethical behavior policies in light of the context of changing social and legal environments," Kriegbaum says.

The school's relationship with the church is changing. Once, the question was whether the school was a drain on the denomination. Now, he says, the question is, "How does a very small denomination properly serve and give its college to the church worldwide without restraining it unnecessarily?"

Given the realities of FPU's current location, the challenge before Kriegbaum is to continue to move the university in the direction of long-term, sustainable health. Top priorities include a new leadership model and financial stability.

Leadership model

When the board appointed Kriegbaum, they also initiated a new dual-leadership administrative model that he is responsible for fleshing out. Under the new model, the president is responsible for the overall spiritual life of

the university, community relations and external contacts. "My job is to provide the context and the resources that FPU needs to succeed," says Kriegbaum.

Meanwhile, the provost, now senior vice president, is responsible for all internal university programs. Stephen Varvis holds this position.

The new model recognizes that external and internal leadership are complex jobs that don't necessarily require the same skill set. Kriegbaum says that decision-making under the new model will be more efficient and that, so far, the new model is working very well. "We're making very rapid progress."

Finances

A second major priority at the start of Kriegbaum's presidency is financial stability. Kriegbaum says the university faced a "very urgent situation" with finances: The school had operated in the red for the past two fiscal years and was rapidly heading toward deep debt.

Kriegbaum says that a revised, "very severe" budget, combined with generous giving from many, has set a new trajectory. He expects that by the end of FPU's current fiscal year, April 30, he will be able to call the turnaround a success.

"We are moving in a direction that will ensure financial stability," he says, "and that reverses the previous direction."

Direction for future

It's all part of moving deeper into FPU's mission and vision. While Kriegbaum says that FPU leaders will be evaluating and discussing the FPU mission and vision statements, as is healthy for an organization, he doesn't talk in terms of major changes, but in terms of "unpacking the next level" and fleshing it out further for the long haul.

Once again, it's about direction: "Everything we do is trying to move toward the incoming and the expression of the kingdom in us individually and in the world around us," he says. "That has to be directional." —Myra Holmes

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Don Morris
Mission USA director

Transforming news

Jesus changes the lives of his followers

The truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ is indeed transforming news. Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 5:17, “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!”

Over the years, I have had the wonderful privilege of witnessing many people become new creations as they become followers of Jesus.

There was Sean, who at age 17 had been involved in gangs and criminal activity. He told me he wanted to become a follower of Jesus, even though he knew that meant his gang leaders would physically beat him. But as he prayed to his new Savior, the tears flowed and his confidence in being able to withstand the anticipated gang abuse soared.

There was Carole, who witnessed numerous satanic rituals as a young teen. Why? Because her dad took her to them. She remembers terrifying activities. She became a new creation in Jesus, and now she, her husband and six children help run a Christian camp in Alaska.

There are many more whom God transformed by his amazing power. But the most exceptional transformation I have yet to see was a woman in her late 60s; I’ll call her “Lucy.” She had just retired from being a truck driver and was very hard around the edges. Swear words peppered each spoken sentence.

A friend brought Lucy to our church. Even though this friend had explained to her that it was a Bible

study, somehow Lucy thought she was attending a weight loss class. Lucy hated the church with a passion because her physically abusive father had forced her to attend church when she was growing up. Even though Lucy wanted absolutely nothing to do with the church, she was hesitantly willing to come to this weight loss class because of her friend. It was the first time she had stepped into a church in over 50 years.

The Bible study began with singing, and in a miraculous way, God began to speak to her heart as Lucy listened to these songs. Then came Easter Sunday, and Lucy made her way to church. As the story of Jesus’ resurrection was told, this hard, cold woman, with tears streaming down her face, gave her life to Jesus. Lucy’s countenance was immediately transformed. Her facial features softened so much that her grown children almost didn’t recognize her. Her swearing ceased in that instant.

Lucy became the Lord’s ambassador to women in prison, at times spending days on end witnessing to these women, watching as God transformed lives. Today Lucy enjoys a happy life with her new husband, and together they continue to serve the Lord.

This is why Mission USA strives to help create more churches in more places—so that more people have the opportunity to meet the One who radically transforms lives!

Did YOU know?

“The most recent studies available suggest that **ONE out of every TWO people**—that’s

50 percent of the people sitting in our pews—are looking at and/or could be addicted to Internet pornography.... Truth be told, that statistic could be even higher....”

LAMB positive about LEAD ONE

Training event focuses on personal finances, church vision

The most recent LEAD ONE, held Jan. 16-17 for churches in the Latin American MB (LAMB) District Conference, had a dual focus: clarifying church mission and vision and personal financial integrity. LEAD (Leadership Education And Development) ONE events are regional church leadership training events hosted by USMB.

The response of the 30 attendees from five of 11 LAMB congregations was positive, says Don Morris, USMB interim executive director and Mission USA director. "During break times we enjoyed really, really good tamales, but what I noticed is that people were talking during the break about the content of the seminars and what was presented," says Morris.

LEAD ONE presenters were Morris and Jon Wiebe, president and CEO of MB Foundation, the stewardship ministry of U.S. Mennonite Brethren. Aaron Hernandez, pastor of Grace Point @ Grulla/Grace Point @ McAllen, translated the presentations into Spanish.

While some LEAD ONE programs have featured four or five presenters, having just two speakers at the LAMB event allowed for more small group interaction. "Fewer speakers just naturally lends itself to more interaction," says Morris.

Morris's presentation Friday evening focused on the importance of church pastors and leaders taking time to clarify their congregation's mission and vision. Morris divided the participants into church groups to discuss six key questions that can help congregations successfully prepare for the future.

The groups identified a variety of six-month goals, including enhancing congregational small group ministry, emphasizing the importance of love for God and the community and developing a better understanding of worship.

Aaron Hernandez, left, translates Jon Wiebe's presentation on personal stewardship.

"The segment on mission and vision has resonated well in other districts," says Morris. "And it was a good topic for the LAMB Conference. Several (participants) said it was good for them to think about this since they don't always think about it (mission and vision)."

Wiebe's Saturday morning session focused on personal financial integrity. He also reports that attendees were appreciative and engaged in the topic. "(They) commented that this is a topic which is not discussed, and the silence needs to be broken," says Wiebe.

Wiebe based his workshop on Matt Bell's book, *Money, Purpose, Joy*. Wiebe divided his presentation of Bell's material into seven parts and ended each section with three points of application and reflection: Where do you stand? What action steps will you take? What sermon/ministry ideas come to mind?

"As part of the reflection and application, couples were encouraged and prompted to visit together about how God was moving in their hearts and points of conviction that needed to be shared," says Wiebe. He reports that many couples indicated these conversations were a first.

The LAMB leadership team and Tiemplo Nueva Vida Community Church, the USMB congregation in Palm View, Texas, hosted the January LEAD ONE event. "The church did a great job of hosting," says Morris. —*Connie Faber*



MISSION USA



J.L. Martins

Finding God's rest

Helping kids understand who we are in Christ

Remember the Kit Kat candy bar theme song? “Gimme a break, Gimme a break...” This time of year, many of us are thinking about or are planning spring break trips. Schools and colleges provide students with a break from the routine to help them finish the year strong.

As I think about why we have spring break, I am reminded that parents need a break too. Your children are ready for a brain break. Mom, do you need a day away? Dad, is it time to take some days off from work?

Jesus talks about another kind of “break” when he says, “Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light” (Matt. 11:29-30. ESV)

Mom, dad, child, are you experiencing rest for your souls and a light burden? Often we Christians are so busy trying to be good because we don't want to disappoint God. This can cause exhaustion or burnout. We need to give ourselves a break, and one way is through experiencing God's rest.

How can we experience God's rest? By trusting in the finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross. Because of Jesus, we are fully loved, accepted, redeemed and righteous. This is not based on what we do but on what Christ has done. Since we are loved, accepted and righteous, we do not need to spend time trying to make God love, accept or be proud of us. He already does because of Jesus.

One of the ways we parents can help reinforce this idea of rest with our kids is to remind them of

who they are in Christ. We need to teach them who God says they are from His Word. The apostle Paul tells the church in Ephesus who they are before he tells them what to do. Every night at bedtime with all four of my kids, I remind them who they are in Christ from Ephesians 1 and other passages. I offer a daily bedtime blessing over my kids, saying, “Mitchell (Mackenzie, Megan, Molly), you are blessed, chosen, holy, blameless, loved, adopted, redeemed, forgiven, an inheritance, sealed by the Holy Spirit, fearfully and wonderfully made, gifted. Use your gifts to glorify God. May you grow in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and men. Amen.”

When John of Kronstadt, a 19th century Russian Orthodox priest, found people living in sin, he said, “This is beneath your dignity. You were meant to house the fullness of God.” So when my children make a bad decision or disobey, I remind them that this is not who they are and encourage them instead to live out their identity in Christ.

I encourage all of us to remember what Jesus accomplished for us on the cross. And remember to take a break because we understand who we are in Christ. Stop striving to make God love you. He already does! As we understand who God is and who we are in Christ, we can experience the rest Jesus describes and the freedom to love God and others.

J.L. Martins is pastor of children and families at Hesston (Kan.) MB Church. Visit Martins' blog, daddy4ms.blogspot.com, for more about our identity in Christ.



Myra Holmes

What Facebook can't do

How online friendships help build offline relationships

I'm a fan of Facebook. You might say I "like" Facebook. Because I serve part-time as social media coordinator for USMB, I'm on Facebook a lot—more even than my Millennial daughters, believe it or not. I like connecting with people I don't see regularly. I enjoy meeting folks at a conference, then maintaining that acquaintance long after we've scattered. I have fun seeing photos from far away friends and reading updates from the daily lives of those in my church community.

I have somewhere around 160 Facebook friends, far fewer than the 338 that the average adult Facebook user has, according to Pew Research. Even then, I wouldn't claim all of those as true friends.

Maybe it should go without saying, but Facebook, like other social media, can supplement but never replace face-to-face relationships.

As Mennonite Brethren, we believe that God created us for relationships, and we value community. Our Confession of Faith says, "Humans, the crowning act of creation, were designed to live in fellowship with God and in mutually helpful relationships with each other" (Article 3).

This is never truer than with others in the family of God. Again, from our Confession of Faith: "The church is a covenant community in which members are mutually accountable in matters of faith and life. They love, care and pray for each other, share each other's joys and burdens, admonish and correct one another."

This kind of community takes real, offline work. We must spend time with each other, laugh together and share joys. We must learn to be vulnerable beyond our online personas. Sometimes, we need to ask for and extend forgiveness.

How might we better use Facebook and our online friendships to build our offline relationships? Here are some ideas; comment on this article at CL Online to add your thoughts.

- Browse your Facebook friends list: How many of these people will you see face-to-face this week? This month? How could you connect with them in a more meaningful way?
- Pick one Facebook friend to connect with offline this week. Extend an invitation for coffee or make a phone call to catch up.
- Pray for your Facebook friends. Use posts as prayer prompts. Celebrate with your friends when you see God working in or through them. Intercede for them when they hurt. If they are not followers of Christ, pray for their salvation.
- When one of your Facebook friends posts a need, ask God how you could be a part of meeting that need. Could you babysit for the frazzled young mom? Offer a ride to the friend whose car broke down?
- Pause before you post. What would you say if you were face-to-face with this person? If our relationships are to be marked by love and care, does this fit?
- Share your spiritual journey through your posts. Talk about how God is working in your life through Facebook. It can be an encouragement to fellow believers and a conversation starter with those who are not.
- Evaluate how you spend your time. Does your online and offline time reflect a healthy balance? Investing in friendships might require turning the newsfeed off more often.
- Consider purging your friends list. If you truly never connect with this person outside of Facebook, is it time to unfriend? Would it free up more time for real relationships?

Myra Holmes serves as social media coordinator for USMB as well as assistant editor for CL. She works out of her home office in Littleton, Colo. She and her husband attend Trailhead Church, a USMB congregation in Littleton.

Interested in using a smartphone app for your church directory? Bethel MB Church, Yale, SD, uses instantchurchdirectory.com. Pastor Coalt Robinson says inputting the information is simple and updating is easy. Photos can be easily added; church members can even submit their photos directly to the website. The website is "full of tutorials and directions for every step," says Robinson. Smartphone apps are available for android, iOS and Kindle Fire devices. There is also the option to create PDF documents for people who prefer a paper version. Questions? Contact Robinson at coaltr@gmail.com.

re: Apps for churches

milestones

BAPTISM/MEMBERSHIP

Correction: Robert Bender and Lauren Webb were baptized and Myrna Kliewer was received as a member of **Bethany Church, Fresno, Calif.**, rather than Butler MB Church, Fresno, Calif., as was reported in the Jan/Feb issue.

Norman and Patty Morrison were received Jan. 25 as members of **Bethany Church, Fresno, Calif.** One person from the church's Chinese fellowship was baptized Dec. 21. Lauren Nichols was baptized Nov. 2.

Grace Community Church, Sanger, Calif., welcomed new members Jan. 25: Steve Stoehr, Dee Holiday, Isaiah and Austin Salazar, Noemi Ruelas, Juan Alonso and Rosario Avalos.

Darren, Sherry, Kaitlyn and Kylie Rempel were received as members of **Fairview (Okla.) MB Church** Jan. 4.

Jessica, Jay and Jordan Penner, Joe Dube, Alli Lee and Elisa Rogers were received Dec. 7 as members of **Pine Acres Church, Weatherford, Okla.**

Alfonso Diaz was baptized Nov. 23 and received as a member of **North Fresno (Calif.) Church**. Warren and Julie Bean, Kyle Buller, James and Irma Conder, Monica Guzman and JT and Louisa Tantraphol were also received as members.

Summer Lane and Gloria Unruh were baptized Nov. 30 and received as members of **Reedley (Calif.) MB Church**. Ray Unruh was received as a member.

Elizabeth Griffith, Katie Lucero, Stephen Lucero and Matt Martin were baptized Dec. 21 at **Belleview Community Church, Littleton, Colo.**

WORKERS

Matthew and Michelle Hamilton began serving Feb. 15 as the new pastoral couple at **Valleyview Bible Church, Cimarron, Kan.**

John Goodell was installed Jan. 4 as the new pastor at **New Life Fellowship, Grant, Neb.**

Peter Thomas has resigned as pastor of **Bible Fellowship Church, Rapid City, SD.**

Henock and Salome Tsegaye were installed Jan. 11 as the new pastoral couple at **Ethiopian Christian Fellowship, Olathe, Kan.**

Aaron Halvorsen has been called as the new lead pastor at **Community Bible Church, Olathe, Kan.**

DEATHS

Correction: Neva Hanke's children were incorrectly listed in her obituary in the Jan/Feb 2015 issue. Her children are: Roger, Steven, Marlene, Janice.

Adrian, Helen Ann, Buhler, Kan., of Buhler MB Church, Feb. 10, 1919—Nov. 29, 2014. Parents: Pete and Agatha Reimer. Spouse: Ervin Adrian, deceased. Children: Lowell, Marlin; three grandchildren; two great-grandchildren.

Belton, Genevieve, Hillsboro, Kan., member of Hillsboro MB Church, March 6, 1919—Nov. 8, 2014. Parents: Emanuel and Lena Becker. Spouse: Richard Belton, deceased. Children: Richard, Mark; two grandchildren; three great-grandchildren.

Funk, John, Corn, Okla., member of Corn MB Church, Dec. 12, 1926—Dec. 16, 2014. Parents: Cornelius and Lydia (Schmidt) Funk. Spouse: Viola Fast. Children: Calvin, Charles, Martha Archuleta, Lillian Martens; seven grandchildren; one great-grandchild.

Harder, Lois Ruth, Kingsburg, Calif., of Reedley (Calif.) MB Church, Nov. 4, 1949—Jan. 12, 2015. Parents: Stanley and Ruby Ahlstrand. Spouse: Dallas Harder. Children: Matthew, Jared; four grandchildren.

Hoskinson, Eileene M., Buhler, Kan., member of Buhler MB Church, Dec. 4, 1921—Dec. 1, 2014. Parents: Oliver and Laura Hoffman. Spouse: Alvin Hoskinson, deceased. Children: Ken, Marta Wagner; five grandchildren; 11 great-grandchildren.

Lachenmaier, Thelma Rae, Shafter, Calif., member of Shafter MB Church, Jan. 23, 1920—Dec. 31, 2014. Parents: Forrest and Lalla Eproson. Spouse: William R. Lachenmaier, deceased. Children: Jan.

Pauls, Luella, Reedley, Calif., of Bethany MB Church, Fresno, Calif., Sept. 3, 1926—Oct. 27, 2014.

Schmidt, James Lloyd, Goessel, Kan., of Hillsboro (Kan.) MB Church, Feb. 7, 1926—Nov. 14, 2014. Parents: Louis and Lodie (Wadel) Schmidt. Spouse: Gladys Philpott. Children: Phyllis Van Horn, Lois Darlene Bartel; three grandchildren; five great-grandchildren.

Schroeder, Elma Duerksen, Buhler, Kan., member of Buhler MB Church, Jan. 15, 1917—Dec. 2, 2014. Parents: Jacob C. and Anna (Adrian) Duerksen. Spouse: Ernest Schroeder, deceased. Children: Roy, Judy Michels, Gilbert; one grandchild; two great-grandchildren.

Schroeder, Kenneth, Hillsboro, Kan., member of Hillsboro (Kan.) MB Church, March 16, 1922—Nov. 20, 2014. Parents: John P. and Marie (Goertz) Schroeder. Spouse: Ruby Priebe, deceased. Children: Vincent, Russell, Kathy Schmidt; seven grandchildren; 17 great-grandchildren.

Suderman, Wilma, Reedley, Calif., member of Reedley MB Church, June 7, 1928—Jan. 10, 2015. Parents: David and Agnes (Friesen) Nikkel. Spouse: Bob Suderman. Children: Karyn, Doug, Laurie, Kristie; eight grandchildren; six great-grandchildren.

Bergdahl remembered

Timothy Allen Bergdahl, pastor of Madera Avenue Bible Church, Madera, Calif., died Jan. 8 after a 3 1/2-year battle with cancer. Bergdahl served the Mennonite Brethren church as a mission leader, writer, pastor and teacher.

He loved learning and held two master's degrees, a doctorate in intercultural studies and certificates in the Urdu and Persian languages. Most recently, he served on the Board of Trustees of Fresno Pacific University (FPU), the MB school in Fresno, Calif., and taught at times as an adjunct professor.

Bergdahl and his wife, Janine, worked in Karachi, Pakistan from 1991 to 1996 with MBMS International, now MB Mission. Following their return to the U.S., Bergdahl worked as the mission agency's program director. He became pastor of the Madera congregation in 2007. Many followed his blog, Like a Shepherd, where Bergdahl reflected on faith through his cancer diagnosis and treatment.

Bergdahl was born Feb. 9, 1959. He married Janine Kroeker, who survives, in 1987. He is also survived by his parents, Robert and Beverley Bergdahl; his sister, Deborah, and her husband John Teats, all of Gilbert Arizona; and daughters, Kayleigh and Pradnya, all of Madera.



Clovis dedicates new facility

College Community Church MB (CCCMB), Clovis, Calif., dedicated a new facility the weekend of Jan. 3-4. The campus addition includes a new sanctuary and an office and administration wing. The former fellowship hall and some classrooms were removed, and some areas of the old building have been renovated and repurposed. The dedication weekend included a special Sunday morning worship service and two concerts. Saturday's concert featured world-renowned cellist Eugene Friesen. Sunday evening included an original composition for choir and orchestra, with music composed by Friesen and lyrics by poet and CCCMB member Jean Janzen.

Church blesses neighbors for Easter

Each year before Easter, volunteers from Mountain View Community Church, Fresno, Calif., knock on doors to invite neighbors to Easter services, give small gifts and offer to pray for those in that home. Volunteers gather to pray, then go out in pairs or small groups. Each team is equipped with a map of one or two blocks around the church, fliers about the church and Easter services and \$5 Starbucks gift cards. The church reports that neighbors respond positively and respectfully. This year's Neighborhood Easter Blessing is planned for March 29.

Voth, Ronald, Newton, Kan., member of Kerner Heights Church, Newton, Kan., Nov. 21, 1952—Sept. 22, 2014. Parents: Charley and Lillian Voth. Spouse: LouAnn. Children: Derek, Trenton.

Wichert, Betty LaVonne, Fairview, Okla., of Fairview MB Church, April 4, 1939—Jan. 5, 2015. Parents: A.W. and Eva (Just) Epp. Spouse: Arlie Wichert. Children: Greg, John, Jerome, Charles; nine grandchildren; three great-grandchildren.

reaching in

DISCIPLESHIP

First MB Church, Wichita, Kan., hosted a marriage conference, "Madly in Love," Feb. 13-14.

Buhler (Kan.) MB Church hosted a "Caring for the Heart" seminar Feb. 15-19, with guest speaker John Regier. Caring for the Heart was dedicated to giving couples and individuals the resources needed to resolve their personal and marital problems. Opportunities for counseling were available.

Corn (Okla.) MB Church hosts a "Grandparents at Prayer" group twice a month to encourage prayer for future generations.

Twenty young people from **Grace Community Church, Sanger, Calif.**, attended winter camp at Sugar Pine Christian Camp Jan. 17-19. Nineteen of them rededicated their lives to Christ or asked Christ to come into their lives.

The Life Center, Lenoir, NC, hosted a stewardship workshop, "Money, Purpose, Joy" Feb. 7. Jon Wiebe, president and CEO of MB Foundation, was the speaker.

Hesston (Kan.) MB Church hosted a conference Feb. 28 for middle school girls. "Daughters of the King: Flawless" focused on self-confidence, self-image and inner beauty. Other central Kansas churches were also invited to participate.

FELLOWSHIP

Youth from **Shadow Mountain Church, West Jordan, Utah**, went sledding together Feb. 8.

Stony Brook Church hosted "Love Starts with Laughter," an event for couples held Feb. 14.

Youth at **North Oak Community Church, Hays, Kan.**, delivered candygrams and lollipops as a fundraiser during the morning of Feb. 8.

Axiom Church, Peoria, Ariz., offered free childcare Feb. 13 so parents could enjoy a date night.

Bethany Church, Fresno, Calif., will host a father/son night March 13, including food, guest speaker and a "secret project."

Women ate soup and exchanged gently-used items at a Soup and Swap Jan. 26 at **Reedley (Calif.) MB Church**.

College Community Church MB, Clovis, Calif., is hosting game nights every first and third Tuesday evening.

Attendees of **North Park Community Church, Eugene, Ore.**, held a progressive party Jan. 24. Kids were invited to a pajama party at the same time.

Bethel MB Church, Yale, SD, invited other area churches to a "Winter Warm-up" mass choir event Jan. 25.

North Fresno (Calif.) Church sent their pastoral staff on a bowling and lunch outing in fall to show appreciation.... A Christmas event for seniors Dec. 7 featured carols by Fresno Pacific University's Pacific Bronze bell choir.

Children at **The Greenhouse, Saratoga Springs, Utah**, held a "birthday party for Jesus" in December, complete with birthday cake and fun at a trampoline place. Attendees were invited to bring a gift of hats or gloves for children in need.

reaching out

LOCALLY

The Amor y Fe congregation of **Butler MB Church, Fresno, Calif.**, hosted "Three Nights of Glory" Jan. 30-Feb. 1. The event, presented in Spanish with English translation, emphasized salvation and healing in Christ. Seven people came forward to receive Christ.

Some 700 people visited a drive-through nativity at **Bethany Church, Fresno, Calif.**, over the course of three days in December. Visitors enjoyed cocoa and carolers at the end of the journey.

In December, **North Park Community Church, Eugene, Ore.**, collected food to provide lunch and breakfast over winter break for elementary school students who usually eat at school.

Grace Community Church, Sanger, Calif., gave out jackets, pajamas and diapers to over 200 families as part of their participation in a "First 5" outreach Dec. 7. The outreach targets families who have children up to five years old. Community resources were also on hand to reach out to families in need of further assistance.

GLOBALLY

Russian Evangelical Church, Shakopee, Minn., sent a team of 19 on a short-term mission to Mexico in December.

First MB Church, Wichita, Kan., plans to send a team to Mexico March 22-28.

CLEARINGHOUSE

LOCAL CHURCH JOB OPENINGS

Lead Pastor: Bible Fellowship Church in Rapid City, SD, is seeking a full-time lead pastor for our congregation of approximately 180. Inquiries or resumes should be emailed to: PastorSearch@BFCRC.com

Campus Pastor: New Life Church of Ulysses, Kan., is seeking a campus pastor. This would be ideal for an individual who would be seeking a part-time ministry position in a unique ministry model. Contact Ted Goertzen at tedgoer@pld.com or 620-353-7245

Youth Pastor: Vinewood Church, Lodi, Calif., is prayerfully seeking a full-time youth pastor. Vinewood students are eager to be "fed, led and related to." An ideal candidate would also have worship leading skills. Interested persons may send inquiries or resumes to: vinewoodyouthsearch@gmail.com

Lead Pastor: Ebenfeld MB Church in rural Hillsboro, Kan., is seeking a full-time lead pastor. Inquiries or resumes should be sent to Ebenfeld MB Church, 107 N. Main, Hillsboro, KS 67063 or emailed to ebenfeldpastorsearch@gmail.com

Associate Pastor: Kingsburg (Calif.) MB Church is seeking a full time associate pastor for worship and youth for a congregation of approximately 150. Inquiries or resumes should be sent to Kingsburg MB Church, 1301 Stroud Ave, Kingsburg, CA 93631 or emailed to kmbcsearch@gmail.com

AGENCY JOB OPENINGS

Planned Giving Advisor: MB Foundation is accepting applications for planned giving advisor. This person, based out of the Fresno, Calif., office, will represent MBF programs and services to individuals and ministries throughout the West

Coast. MBF is a service agency of the U.S. Conference of MB Churches. Salary commensurate with training and experience. If interested, send a letter and resume to: Jon C. Wiebe, President/CEO, MB Foundation, PO Box 220, Hillsboro KS 67063 (jwiebe@mbfoundation.com)

UNIVERSITY JOB OPENING

Biology: Fresno Pacific University invites applications for a biology faculty position in its programs serving traditional undergraduate students. Complete job description, requirements and application are available at www.fresno.edu/careers. (requested 11/21)

TRAVEL

Visit Europe the Mennonite way: Multiple hotel tours focusing on Mennonite-Anabaptist history in Holland, Belgium, Germany, Switzerland, Poland and Ukraine. Organized by Mennonite Heritage Tours, www.mennoniteheritage-tours.eu

EVENT

Save the date: Celebrate 2015!, a national gathering for senior adults hosted by MB Foundation, will be held Oct. 2-4, 2015 at the Sheraton Hotel in Overland Park, Kan. Don Argue, Christian statesman and visionary leader, will speak on the theme, "This is my story." Participants will be encouraged to understand the power of the gospel story in their own lives and how their story can influence others.

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