

# CL

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LEADER

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For the love  
of Mumford

Join us  
at home  
in Omaha

## from the editor



“  
*Beginning  
in 2012, the  
goal is to  
plant six  
churches in  
each of the  
next 10  
years.*

”



**Connie Faber**  
*Editor*

It was a lovely fall day when photographer Stephen Humber, who is also a pastor at Stony Brook Church in Millard, Neb., scouted sites in downtown Omaha, Neb., for the cover photo for this issue of the CL. A month later when Humber and his pastoral colleagues gathered for the photo shoot, it was again a beautiful day—this time thanks to a winter snowfall that increased noticeably during the afternoon.

In this issue CL readers are introduced to the ministries of USMB congregations in Omaha Neb., led by the men pictured on the cover because we want you to catch their vision. Omaha is one of several cities that are growing Mennonite Brethren hubs. Omaha is a place where churches plant churches that plant churches. You can read about Omaha's 50 years of church planting in our cover story, "Getting ready for an eternal party" that begins on page 17. This summer *Conection* 2012, the USMB biennial convention, will be held in Omaha's Old Market area. Come to *Conection* 2012 and become part of the Omaha story. The convention schedule includes opportunities to learn about and serve USMB churches in Omaha, a city in which USMB is actively engaged in church planting.

You will likely hear a lot about planting churches at *Conection* 2012. USMB leaders are calling us to make church planting a priority for the next decade. Beginning in 2012, the goal is to plant six churches in each of the next 10 years.

Which means that if we achieve this objective, we will have identified and prepared 60-plus church planters by 2022.

Church planters, I've decided, are gutsy people. Consider the story told by Chris Eidse, beginning on page 10 of this issue, of church planting more than 100 years ago in North Carolina. The courage and boldness of these men and women in the face of racism is inspiring. Spend time with the more than one-dozen couples currently leading USMB church plants and you will quickly conclude that they share the same passion and resolve of their cohorts a generation ago. USMB church planters are not a uniform bunch but they are unified in their commitment to seeing individuals, families and communities transformed by God's saving grace.

Think about church planters the next time you are at church. Look around. Who in your congregation could be a church planter? Who does God bring to mind? And don't forget yourself. Maybe that potential church planter is you. Pray for this individual and if God continues to nudge you, pass the nudge along. If USMB is going to succeed in planting dozens of new churches in the next decade, we need all the church planters we can find.

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## Center insert — *USMB*

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

[www.usmb.org](http://www.usmb.org)





Edmund Janzen

I was settling into my seat, flying from San Francisco to Chicago. Next to me sat a youngish-looking man very casually dressed in a polo shirt, scruffy blue jeans and even scruffier sneakers—a worn pair of Nikes. He asked where I was headed. To a Mennonite Central Committee board meeting in Akron, Penn., I said. He responded that he too was headed for a board meeting of his corporation. When I asked him what business he was in, he smiled and said that he was the CEO of Nike Corporation.

When I expressed surprise, he laughed and said that he would put on a suit and tie later. He liked to travel as comfortably as possible. Truthfully, I had to admit that I had judged the man all wrong, based on his outward appearance.

My guess is that I am not the only one who has jumped to conclusions that later proved to be unwarranted. In this case, it was really quite harmless and even humorous. But sometimes, many times, it's not at all funny.

And so our Lord warns us about making judgments about others, especially when we don't have all the facts or when we can't discern their motives. Seeing "the heart" is the Lord's business, not ours. Judging people based only on their actions is risky and incomplete. Risky, because, as Jesus warns us, "with the judgment you make, you will be judged."

The consequences for judging wrongly or harshly are serious, for God holds us accountable. Moreover, to highlight the danger of being a hypocrite, Jesus provides his listeners with a ludicrous illustration of a "log-in-the-eye" judge, one who pretends to see clearly another's problems but is somehow blind to his own failures.

It is especially sad when we in the church and/or its institutions make judgments based on externals, without knowing a person's motives or his/her experiences. Are we better known within the church, or even by the larger culture, for extending grace or for pronouncing judgment?

But what can or should we do about that? Clearly we must discern when people are flawed in character and conduct, as Jesus points out when he warns against following false prophets or recognizing the kind of fruit that a good (or bad) tree produces (Matt. 7:15-16).

There is a fine line between judging and discerning. Jesus does not merely call for tolerance, where "anything goes." He expects his followers to exercise wise discernment but without a spirit of moral superiority and faultfinding that leads to being judgmental. And that is a tall order for most of us. The wisdom to exercise discernment is only accessed through persistent prayer: asking, seeking and knocking (Matt. 7:7-8). Added to prayer is the call to live out the Golden Rule: "Do to others, as you would have them do to you."

Lord, as you have extended your grace to me so generously, help me to extend grace to others; and help me not to be judgmental, but to discern wisely. Amen

Edmund Janzen is a worship leader at Butler MB Church, Fresno, Calif. He is a former Fresno Pacific University president and Biblical Studies professor and has served as chair of the International Community of Mennonite Brethren. Janzen's lessons on the Sermon on the Mount are posted on the ICOMB Web site (<http://icomb.org>).

# CL

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## You matter

**T**he word on the street is that you are pretty much just like anyone else. Apparently, the fact that you are 80 percent like everyone else trumps the fact that you are 20 percent different and beyond that, unique.

One obvious fact omitted in this reasoning is that from a personal point of view about half of the population is of the other gender. That changes the stats more than just a little. What does hold up, though, is that even though all people have eyes, noses and hair, none of these “samenesses” are exact. On some counts—irises, fingerprints and DNA—the truth is that there is no other person on the planet that is an exact match for you.

While I do not affirm all of the lyrics of Lady Gaga’s “I Was Born This Way,” the popularity and power of this anthem rest in the everyday human struggle to view and accept oneself with contentment and even joy as uniquely created. Although there is a great deal of pressure on us from all sides to be other than who we are, the Bible clearly affirms that from our first breath of air we are uniquely formed under God’s supervision. “For you created my inmost being, you knit me together in my mother’s womb.... I am fearfully and wonderfully made” (Ps. 139: 13-14).

Not long ago our decentralized USMB staff gathered to pursue increased clarity in our national mission and vision and to strengthen cohesion in our team. As part of our “get to know one another better” time, we shared with each other the results of both a Spiritual Gifts Inventory and a Personal Behavior Patterns

Inventory. It was immediately clear that despite sometimes falling into similar patterns in our gifting, preferences and relational and partnership styles, we are far from the same. And it was abundantly clear to me that our USMB family would not be as well served if any one of us were serving alone. Some stuff that makes me crazy is high-octane fuel for others on the team. We are different, and that is by divine design.

One of the ongoing challenges I face is being content with who I am, with how God made me, with who I have become. Do you ever deal with that? This is not to say it is inappropriate to pursue growth through learning and adjustment. But aside from that, my human nature has an unending carnal desire to know better than others, to be best at everything and to be all things to everyone. Nasty right? It behooves me to chill out, right? And to check my pride, right? That’s what you were thinking, right? You’re absolutely right and entitled to that opinion, assuming, as I see it, that you don’t have a twig or something worse in your eye.

You really cannot be replaced. There is no one like you. You matter, because no matter what someone else might think, the team is not complete without each player in position. When you are invited into a discerned place on the team and your response is that someone else can cover that in your place, you are most certainly wrong. While none of us is indispensable, all of us matter. No matter what anyone else says or no matter what you might think.

By the way, please plan to join us in Omaha at *Conexion 2012* in July. It really matters that you are there. No one else can take your place.

**Although there is a great deal of pressure on us from all sides to be other than who we are, the Bible clearly affirms that from our first breath of air we are uniquely formed under God’s supervision.**



Julie Wiens

## Listening—how hard can it be?

**L**istening is just plain difficult. I'm not referring to hearing or the process of perceiving sound. I can hear just fine, but can I listen? It's hard work. Listening well means letting go of what's on your mind, being still and focusing on someone else.

This year I am part of the Elijah Project, a 10-month internship at Mountain View Community Church in Fresno, Calif. The goal of the program is to call out, train, equip and release spiritual leaders. We're exposed to many areas of ministry, from evangelism and discipleship to teaching and serving. Each intern also has specific areas of focus, depending on their strengths and interests. My areas of concentration are graphic design, junior high youth and prayer.

A couple of months ago, I was asked to help with prayer training at the church. The focus of the session was on spiritual dryness and listening to God through prayer. We spent time learning how to enter into God's presence, how to work with God in breaking down the walls that have kept us from intimacy with him and how to deal with broken relationships and worries that steal our joy. We spent time allowing the Holy Spirit and others to minister the love of God to us.

I was asked to teach the section on listening in prayer, which is when I started to really wrestle with the difficulty in listening. Listening prayer is simply asking God to speak and actively listening to his response. Why is that so hard? What can I do to change that?

According to the International Listening Association we listen at 125 to 250 words

per minute but think at 1,000 to 3,000 words per minute. No wonder it's hard for me to turn off my mind and focus on what God is saying.

Listening involves becoming still before God. Psalm 46:10 says, "Be still and know that I am God." God speaks when we quiet ourselves and take time to be still before him. To listen is to wait for God to place something in my mind.

For part of the lesson we read Scripture related to God speaking to people. Someone read a verse and then several people responded with a short praise of God's character. As each verse was read and prayed over, I was amazed at how hearing God continually builds up my faith.

John 10:27 says, "My sheep recognize my voice; I know them, and they follow me." The more I practice listening prayer the more I'll be able to recognize God's voice and follow him. It is my passion that I would learn to be still before God and find great joy in his presence and that I would grow in my understanding of his character, his ways and his purposes. It is also my goal that as I quiet myself before God, I would continue to hear him in new ways, to know him, and to follow his voice.

My desire for this internship and for my life is that I would continue to listen to God and long to hear his voice. I want to set my pride and myself to the side so that I can hear him and know him more.

*Julie Wiens is completing the Elijah Project internship at Mountain View Community Church in Fresno, Calif. For more information about the internship, visit [mountainview.org](http://mountainview.org) or e-mail [elijah@mountainview.org](mailto:elijah@mountainview.org)*



## Haiti disaster response shifts to **LONG-TERM PROJECTS**

Nearly two years after a devastating earthquake struck Haiti, about \$9 million of Mennonite Central Committee's \$16 million disaster response funds have been spent and allocated on projects to revitalize Haitians' lives. MCC is a Mennonite agency for relief, development and peace.

The remaining \$7 million, including funding from the Canadian government, will be dispersed over the next three years. Funds from Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) will be used to develop an agri-



culture trade school in Desarmes and a village and livelihoods co-op for 100 displaced families in Caberet.

Susanne Brown, MCC Haiti disaster response team coordinator, says the initial country-wide response focused on material relief and stimulating the economy through cash transfers, cash-for-work programs and recapitalization of small businesses.

"In the very beginning, we spent about \$1.6 million on food, water and material aid, more than almost anything else, but now have shifted to projects that are more sustainable," she says.

About half of MCC's 50 initial disaster response projects are completed. **MCC's long-term disaster response includes business training, housing repairs and education.** For example, MCC, along with Haitian partner Ecumenical Foundation for Peace and Justice, trains professional masons. Pictured is Samuel Zami, a graduate of the masonry program, standing outside a three-story building in Port-au-Prince where he supervised masonry work. Zami also attended a hazard reduction engineering seminar sponsored by MCC as part of its ongoing earthquake relief.

After repairing more than 200 houses for people with disabilities living in tent camps, MCC is opening up the housing repairs to a broader group of participants and shifting to owner-driven housing. Education projects benefit street children, restavec (unpaid worker) children, university students and agricultural and construction trades participants. As the disaster response continues, MCC continues to work with Haitian partners, Haitian and international policymakers, and global constituents. For more, see [www.mcc.org](http://www.mcc.org). —*Sheldon C. Good for Meetinghouse*

## Francis Chan to speak in Fresno



Francis Chan, best-selling author of the books *Crazy Love* and

*Forgotten God* and host of the BASIC short film series, will speak this month at the 2012 Central Valley Ministry Forum, hosted by Fresno Pacific University, Fresno, Calif. FPU is the MB-owned school on the West Coast. Chan will speak on "Biblical Responsibility: What does it mean to be a 21st-century Christ follower?" Ticket information is available at [www.fresno.edu](http://www.fresno.edu) or by calling 559-453-7139.—FPU

## Tabor welcomes scholar-in-residence

Tabor College welcomed Steve Wilkens as the school's first scholar-in-residence in January. While on campus Wilkens conducted research and presented a series of lectures to faculty and staff on what it means to be a Christ-centered institution. Wilkens, who was honored as the 2010 Tabor College Alumni of Merit award winner, is Professor of Theology and Ethics at Azusa Pacific University, Azusa, Calif. Tabor College is the MB liberal arts institution headquartered in Hillsboro, Kan.—TC

## Pastor's conference focuses on prayer

"It seems every pastor desires an effective prayer life," says Ed Boschman, a pastor himself who serves as the U.S. Mennonite Brethren executive director. "But sometimes we struggle to find joy in our prayer life. Jim will help us get there."

Boschman is referring to James Nicodem, author of *Prayer Coach* and pastor of Christ Community Church in the greater Chicago area, who will serve as keynote speaker for the USMB National Pastors Conference July 25-26, 2012. Nicodem, an enthusiastic and compelling communicator, will speak three times and host a question and answer session. Pastoral staff members from all USMB churches will meet together for two days of fellowship and encouragement prior to *Conexion* 2012, the biennial USMB convention. Times of prayer will be interspersed throughout the conference. Optional workshops followed by free time for families to enjoy the sites of Omaha are being planned for Thursday afternoon.

The National Pastors Conference will be held at Embassy Suites Old Market in Omaha, Neb., which is also the site of *Conexion* 2012.



James Nicodem

byTheNumbers

## CHILDREN IN NEED

**424,000...** U.S. children live in the foster care system (as of Dec. 2010)

**23%...** in foster care for more than 3 years

**11%...** in system for more than 5 years

That means there are more than 13 times more children in the U.S. foster care system than people who are members of U.S. Mennonite Brethren churches.

Source: *World* magazine, May 21, 2011

5 minutes with...

## Mary Fast

According to her five-year-old grandson, Mary Fast is "Mayor Oma." A lifelong resident of Reedley, Calif., Fast is in her third year as mayor of this Central California city of 25,000. She is a member of Reedley MB Church, where she and husband Brad serve on the Fost Committee. Mary's "paying job" is in agricultural accounting.

### 1 How would you describe your community?

Reedley is a unique place where people really work together. I think it's the influence of the churches. Other mayors complain about how hard it is to get cooperation. But in Reedley the schools, college, hospital and community organizations make the most of our tax dollars by working together.

### 2 What are your priorities as mayor?

Crime is a big concern. We began a Victim Offender Reconciliation Program to help young people who have committed crimes come back into the community, and we just started a Boys and Girls Club to give kids a safe place where they can be doing good things.

### 3 As a self-described behind-the-scenes person, how do you like this public role?

That's been kind of hard for me. Sometimes when I'm working with people on a project I don't want to tell them I'm the mayor because they think I shouldn't be out there working with them. However, what I enjoy the most is serving and helping people.

### 4 What's the hardest thing you have had to face as mayor?

We had a police officer killed in the line of duty almost two years ago. Just coming to grips with that. You feel so responsible.

### 5 What role does the church have to play in city government?

If you think there's something that's not right, be bold enough to ask. Our Mennonite people tend to shy back and not want to ruffle any feathers, but when something is not right you need to speak out.

Interview by Kathy Heinrichs Wiest



# FPU awards December degrees

More than 350 graduates received degrees Dec. 17 during Fresno Pacific University's largest fall graduation since the event was added in 2004. In all, 273 bachelor's degree completion graduates received diplomas, along with 44 master's students and 35 from the traditional undergraduates. Fresno County Superior Court Judge Robert H. Oliver was the speaker. He charged the graduates to lead well, saying "Each of you has the ability by word or deed to affect someone else's life." FPU is the Mennonite Brethren school on the West Coast, with a main campus in Fresno, Calif.—*FPU*

## MB seminary studies in Canada expand

MBBS Canada, the denominational school for graduate-level theological education in Canada, has recently become a partner in The Journey, an Edmonton-based seminary affiliated with the ACTS consortium, Langley, B.C. The partnership will bring seminary education closer to Mennonite Brethren pastors and leaders in Alberta and Saskatchewan, says the Canadian Conference of MB Churches. Entry as a partner in The Journey came about, in part, through the encouragement and financial support of the Alberta and Saskatchewan MB Conferences. More information is available at [www.journeycentre.ca](http://www.journeycentre.ca). —*CCMBC*



## MCC supports flood recovery

As the worst flooding in a decade begins to recede in Cambodia, **Mennonite Central Committee (MCC)** is responding with \$30,000 for rice distribution, clean drinking water, school repairs and education. Villagers came by boat and by foot to get the water filters supplied by MCC and distributed by the Cambodian Red Cross (photo above). During September and October, heavy monsoon rains caused the deaths of more than 240 people and displaced as many as 32,000 in Cambodia and caused extensive damage in neighboring Thailand and Vietnam. MCC is a Mennonite peace, relief and development agency. To see images and photos of flooding in Cambodia, visit <http://cambodiamcc.wordpress.com/>—*MCC*

## Dutch Mennonites mark 200 years

More than 1,500 Mennonites gathered Sept. 18, 2011, in Elspeet, the Netherlands, for a final jubilee celebration that marked the 200th anniversary of the Algemene Doopsgezinde Sociëteit (ADS)—Dutch Mennonite General Conference. Festivities over the weekend took place at Mennoorde, a conference center with Mennonite roots, and featured about 30 workshops under the general theme, "New paths of believing." —*MWC*

## Radio program helps shape families

Shaping Families, the 15-minute weekly radio program of MennoMedia, has entered its third year of equipping families. The program, launched January 2010, is sponsored by businesses, churches, individuals and radio stations. It airs on 18 local radio stations and appears online at [www.ShapingFamilies.com](http://www.ShapingFamilies.com). Burton Buller and Melodie Davis host the program. MennoMedia is an agency of Mennonite Church USA and Mennonite Church Canada that creates faith-based print, video, radio and web resources.—*MennoMedia*



# We got it right.

**W**alk with me on this warm, sunny morning up a narrow road named Church Street. We can hear the street's namesake almost before we see it. The front door of the church is open and pouring out is the sound of clapping, exuberant vocals, wailing guitar solos and a driving bass guitar and drum beat.

You might picture this as a young church with a praise band playing Hillsong United or David Crowder. But no top 40 Christian contemporary songs are heard on Church Street. Instead, it's songs by Donnie McClurkin, Mahalia Jackson and Hezekiah Walker that fill the air.

If you are familiar with these artists then you might assume that this congregation belongs to one of the renowned African-American denominations—maybe an African Methodist Episcopal or an African-American Baptist church. Yet, here in the heart of Boone, NC, is a vibrant Mennonite Brethren church that is the only historically black church in the county.

This historic congregation—Boone MB Church—that has stood for almost 100 years is a symbol of missions that got it right. It is filled with the rich culture and music of its surrounding community and is also founded on the solid theolo-



gy of the Mennonites. How did something like this happen? How did two different cultures combine to form this unique church in the Appalachian Mountains?

This history has been documented in several publications but Black History Month gives us another opportunity to highlight this great story, shining a spotlight on this rare hybrid of culture and faith.

### The challenge

When I was in Bible school studying contemporary missiological issues, one of the hot topics was that of missionaries transferring their culture along with their theology. We studied examples of missionaries coercing tribal Africans to wear “Christian” clothing and forcing Native Americans to get “Christian” haircuts and speak the “godly” language of English. I left that course with a real understanding of how difficult it is to teach the way of Jesus without destroying the good and unique cultural expressions of the community.

I also realized that there are parts of cultures that may be unbiblical and unhealthy and need to be brought under the truth of the Bible. If we could only share Jesus, keep the good cultural traditions and guide people away from the bad ones. This difficult balancing act is at the heart of missions and is much more difficult than it sounds.

The Mennonite missionaries that came to North Carolina really seemed to get a lot of the balancing act right.

### Achieving balance

Henry and Elizabeth Wiebe served in North Carolina from 1900 to 1908; Joseph and Katherine Tschetter from 1903 to 1925; and Peter and Katherine Siemens from 1925 to 1956. They all responded to the call, moved to the South and did all that they could to teach and live the love of Jesus among the small African-American population deep in the mountains.

The missionaries began their work in Elk Park, a city that today has a “mixed race” population of just 1 percent. The city of Boone, home of the oldest Mennonite Brethren church, has an African-American population of 3.2 percent and Watauga County has an African-American population of only 1.7 percent. These statistics indicate how hard it must have been when this ministry to the African-American community was established.

The missionaries managed to run a school, build an orphanage and start churches in a very difficult time. They stood up to the KKK (Ku Klux Klan) and truly believed that all human beings are created in the image of God. When the missionaries left, the churches con-

tinued on with a rich cultural expression that was intact and vibrant. Local leadership took over and the congregation in Boone thrived in the years following the Mennonite missionaries.

How did these missionaries do it? How did they get right? In reading through the historical accounts, four things stand out.

**They enabled local leaders to lead.** Handing over the reins is a difficult job for a lot of leaders but a church’s days are numbered if this cannot be done successfully. These missionaries were able to hand over the ministry to great leaders like Rondo Horton and Rockford Hatton. Rev. Horton and Rev. Hatton are renowned in Boone and were an integral part of the African-American community. The Mennonite missionaries identified key leaders, let them do what they were gifted to do and then passed the leadership baton.

**They left cultural expression intact.** It is no secret that Mennonite churches are not historically known for their charismatic and energetic worship practices. Drums and electric guitars have become commonplace in recent decades, but there is rarely dancing in the aisles and regular shouts of spirited praise.

The sincerity and spirituality of the African-American population was an inspiration to the early missionaries. The missionaries spoke highly of the sincere worship and song. From reading their accounts, these missionaries didn’t bring God to the godless. Rather, they found where God was already at work and partnered with him in his work. This was an important factor with a lasting impact. This African-American cultural expression in worship is still alive and well in the North Carolina MB churches.

**They were bold and courageous in their mission.** The missionaries boldly went against the cultural grain of racism that plagued the South. They received death threats saying, “Your time is up today.” The Klan showed up at church with robes and weapons, and the missionaries stood their ground and urged the white-hooded members to come back to church to hear the truth of their preaching. One of the missionaries even knelt down to accept death at the hands of racist residents but was spared.

With all the hardships, not only did these missionaries endure, they even prospered, expanding their impact and their ministry. When no other teachers would come to teach the African-American children, the Mennonites responded. When needy children showed up at their doors, they built facilities to house them. When people had nowhere to worship, churches were constructed. When asked what they would do if the Klan ran them



out of town, Peter Siemens replied, "If they send us on the train we'll be back on the next train, but if you send us in coffins we cannot come back."

**They were centered on prayer.**

When the Klan showed up, the ministers prayed. When one of the ministers was on his knees facing death, he prayed for his

accusers only to look up from his prayer to see that they had gone. When the trials became larger, their prayers became more fervent. Their prayers were anything but passive. These prayers became peaceful and creative solutions to violent threats. On several occasions their prayers literally disarmed their accusers.

In a time where it's easy to point fingers at the many mistakes people have made under the umbrella of Christianity, it's good to point out the success stories. The story of the multiracial Mennonite Brethren churches of North Carolina is a testament to the harmony that grows when cultures come together.

Today six congregations comprise the North Carolina MB Conference: Boone MB Church in Boone, Darby MB Church in Ferguson, The Life



Center in Lenoir, Laytown MB Church in Laytown, West End MB Church in Lenoir and Beech Bottom MB Church in Newland. These strong churches stand

as a lasting legacy of people who were ahead of their time. People who desegregated before it was mandated because the love of Jesus compelled them to love their neighbor as themselves.

As we observed Martin Luther King, Jr. Day in January and Black History Month now in February, let us remember the many Christians that got things right.

*Chris Eidse is currently the pastor of the multi-ethnic Boone (NC) MB Church. For the previous six years, Eidse, his wife, Rebecca, and their two daughters have served the North Carolina District Conference as the district youth pastor and part-time as the associate pastor at Bushtown MB Church in Lenoir. The Boone congregation is currently partnering with Mission USA to enhance their community outreach. Visit them online at [www.boonechurch.com](http://www.boonechurch.com), [www.facebook.com/boonechurch](http://www.facebook.com/boonechurch).*

**Photos courtesy of Center for Mennonite Brethren Studies, Tabor College, Hillsboro, KS**

Top: North Carolina MB pastors Earl Yount, LeRoy Kirkpatrick, James Isbell, Clint Grimes and Ronda Horton. Middle: Henry V. and Elizabeth Wiebe, the first KMB missionaries to North Carolina. Below: Elk Park school circa 1906 with Jacob H. and Katherine Tschetter, Mary Klassen and guest Rev. J.J. Friesen.



# Praying on the move

**W**hat a world we live in. So small that we daily intersect with people and are afforded a glimpse into their lives. What we choose to do with these encounters bears witness to the God we serve.

"What I do is live. How I pray is breathe," writes Thomas Merton in his article "Day of a Stranger." As a Christian, prayer is the lifeblood of my relationships, work, play and ministry. Sometimes my life does not afford time for prayer in solitude, so I integrate prayer into my daily routines.

The word "prayer" brings attention to the reliance we have on God to live. The term "walking" highlights that we are not static but rather moving. Combining these two endeavors creates a spiritual discipline.

Prayer walking encourages people to pray as they meander through their neighborhoods on an evening stroll, as they walk down the corridors at work, as they pace the hallways in the hospital, as they run along the road or as they race down the terminal to make their impending flight. Prayer walking is essential to the Christian life and integral to our daily existence.

## ● Paying attention

A book I read encouraged me to combine the practice of "beholding" whenever I go on prayer walks. In the book, *Right Here Right Now: Everyday Mission For Everyday People*, Alan Hirsch and Lance Ford define beholding as: "sincere and undivided attention that encapsulates the object of attention into the mind and complete consideration of the viewer." In other words, being attentive to the people and environment around me.

by J. MATTHEW HILDEBRAND

I appreciate the emphasis that Hirsch and Ford give toward Jesus being our primary example. They model prayer walking after the pattern set forth by Jesus, as articulated in Mark 10:21a (KJV): "Then Jesus *beholding* him loved him" (emphasis mine).

## ● Driving and praying

I recently made a two-day trip from my home in Fresno, Calif., to San Jose that helped me to better understand prayer. The original purpose of the excursion was to purchase a vehicle; yet it seems God had other plans in mind.

Not wanting to go it alone, I invited a good friend along for the journey. We planned to stop off on a Saturday night to meet with the vendor in Santa Cruz. Barring any unforeseen problems from the vehicle inspection, the following morning I would walk away the proud owner of a "new" car.

My buddy for the trip was eager to talk about our Christian faith and pray together during our long drive



from Fresno to San Jose, as well as during our stay overnight in the Silicon Valley. We prayed together and separately, out loud and silently. We prayed for God's peace to come to the land. We prayed on behalf of many people, that they might come to know God. We prayed passionately for God's kingdom to come, and we prayed for God's good purposes to unveil themselves soon! We were constantly praying.

When we arrived late Saturday night in the 10th largest city in the U.S., San Jose was alive with the sound of music. The Sharks had just defeated the Phoenix Coyotes (formerly Winnipeg Jets) 1-0 during the NHL preseason at home. Naturally there were many people in their hockey jerseys roaming the streets.

The hustle and bustle from the hockey game contrasted starkly with the hopelessness that we encountered in the streets. We passed by many people sleeping on the concrete sidewalk or begging for money. Similar to Fresno, San Jose has its social justice concerns, some of which include poverty, drug addictions, unemployment and the like.

The next morning I awoke at sunrise and went for my customary short distance run, this time through the San Jose downtown district. I ran past the Cathedral Basilica St. Josephs and along the Guadalupe River Trail. Being a hockey fan myself, I made sure to include the HP Pavilion on my route. There was no noise this early in the morning, save for a few street workers and a couple other runners who politely acknowledged my presence as I ran by.

Along the trail at the underside of the freeways and interchange ramps, I came across many homeless people who were trying to stay warm in their makeshift homes built from cardboard and newspapers. The more I ran, the more sick I felt that the previous night I was enjoying my stay in luxury at the four-star Fairmont Hotel while others were wandering the streets looking for a morsel to eat or a safe place to lay their heads.

### Questions

The trip did not prove to be very beneficial as far as vehicle purchases go. The seller, Danny (not his real name), was not willing to negotiate his purchase price despite the fact that his vehi-

cle had some glaring mechanical issues (oil leaking from the engine), the least of which was a nonfunctioning radio antenna. He shared with me about his recent job loss and his need for cash. The vehicle Danny drove had many complications that could easily be fixed with the sale of his recently deceased sister's SUV that I was looking to acquire. As a result, I did not end up buying Danny's vehicle. I was out the money for a night's accommodations, the vehicle inspection, smog test, not to mention the food and gas it cost for the trip for two.

The weekend's intersections left me asking many questions. Do I practice prayerfully beholding others in my daily affairs? Did I seek to behold Danny's struggles, despite the fact that he was an eccentric individual? Did I pray for the "unseen" homeless people who did not have food, as I enjoyed calamari and listened to live music at the Gordon Biersch Restaurant Saturday night? Did I pray for my travel companion, his family and his life amidst all that was a busy weekend?

Yes, perhaps I did some of those things. As we walked the streets Saturday night my friend and I prayed. We prayed for the downtown community and the man who yelled curses at the corner of San Fernando and South 3rd Street. We prayed for the buskers, the musicians, the waiters and waitresses working late shifts. But certainly I was not as faithful as I might have been to assume in and through Christ a posture of beholding others in prayer.

Heavenly Father, please help us to behold those around us, just like Jesus did. Please encourage us to faithfully pray for the people we meet, the places we go and above all, the coming of your kingdom. Even so, Lord Jesus, come!

*J. Matthew Hildebrand anticipates graduating this spring with a Masters in Divinity from MB Biblical Seminary, now Fresno Pacific Biblical Seminary. He served in various ministry capacities at Bethany MB Church in Fresno while completing his graduate studies. Some of the inspiration for this article came from a seminary class taught by Professor Cory Seibel, Urban Ministry: Into the Neighborhood. Hildebrand has moved back home to Winnipeg, Man., where he eagerly looks to engage in ministry and spread a passion for Jesus.*





# Hearing the VOICELESS

by JAN JOHNSON

**T**he sleek businessman bolted across the street against the traffic signal. He barely made it, accidentally shoving my friend, Delsinore, and me as we stood at the curb. He looked at me and said, “I’m sorry—excuse me.” He said nothing to Delsinore, probably because she’s a bag lady.

After a minute, I tapped the man on the shoulder, smiled and said, “You bumped her too. Please apologize to her.”

Eyebrows went up around me as the man mumbled an apology. I was thrilled to have requested a small token of courtesy for Dels, but I also winced at the snickers of those around me and imagined their thoughts: What’s this white Lady Bountiful doing with a black woman pushing a shopping cart?

Knowing Delsinore is reinforcing what I already know. Every society has its hierarchy of worthiness, and people like Delsinore are

among the lowest on the ladder. Seeing how people treat her reminds me of how all of us tend to withhold respect, concern and even justice from those lower on the ladder than ourselves. When we do this, we render these people voiceless.

The silence of voiceless people grows out of their power-down positions in society: residents of lower class neighborhoods, the poorly paid, the handicapped, the aging, the less intelligent, unskilled laborers and even children when they’re routinely talked down to. We don’t take them seriously because they don’t have the status, money, age or know-how to command our respect. God regards them differently.

## **God: Guardian of the needy**

Many of those who are voiceless match the biblical categories of the needy: the widow, the fatherless and the alien (or “sojourner” or “stranger”). God

“

*Nobody talks  
to me.*

*People look  
right through  
me.*

”

doesn't speak of giving them "equality" and "fair treatment." Instead, he recognizes the human tendency to treat them unequally and unfairly and declares himself their guardian: "Because of the oppression of the weak and the groaning of the needy, I will now arise," says the Lord. "I will protect them from those who malign them" (Ps. 12:5).

God mounted attacks against those who cheated the needy and commissioned Israel to become modern-day public defenders, so to speak, defending the causes of the needy and pleading their cases (Prov. 23:10-11; Ps. 82:3; Isa. 1:17).

Some of us respond by sponsoring children overseas and donating clothes to downtown street missions. Participating in these worthwhile efforts satisfies our uneasiness—until we walk past a homeless family living in their car or get frustrated trying to buy gum from someone who can't speak our language or watch the house or car next door become shabby when a father walks out on a family.

We battle within ourselves: Sure we need more homeless shelters, but not on my street. Let people immigrate, but don't let their limited English slow me down as I run errands. It's a shame couples break up, but it makes the neighborhood look bad when weeds take over their yard.

Suddenly the faces of the voiceless look more familiar. We find that giving away money and old clothing is much easier than becoming a guardian, rescuer and defender of people who may cramp our style.

So we experiment. We may make phone calls to find shelters for families and direct that family in the car to a shelter. We may expect to have to work to understand the broken English of the woman selling us gum. We may offer to mow the lawn for the family whose father just left.

### Respect and solidarity

In the Gospels, Jesus treats the people his culture called "losers" with respect. Christ took women and children seriously in an age when they were unimportant. He singled out the sick, the demon-possessed and the poor in spirit and treated them with respect. He never talked down to such people.

My relationship with Delsinore is teaching me that kind of respect. When I first met her, I offered to take her to a shelter, but she told me she liked the

streets better. I gave her bags of oranges whenever I saw her, but then I found out she gave them away because her teeth were too loose to eat them.

In many conversations with God, I offered these frustrations to him: I want to be effective; I want her to appreciate my help; I question how deserving she is. I'm finally realizing that my "charity" isn't about her, but is about my need to feel like "a good Christian."

One day sitting on the bench at a bus stop together, I asked her, "What is the most helpful thing I could do for you?"

"Sit here and talk to me," Delsinore said. "Nobody talks to me. People look right through me."

Her words were like a whack on the head. Of course! Christ sat and dined and talked. He operated his own divine medical clinic and food pantry (feeding 5,000 at a time). He respected people and asked them questions. To look into someone's eyes and ask them what they need instead of foisting our own blessings on them places the voiceless in the power-up position for once. They talk and we listen.

Christ also stayed out of that pious power-up position by identifying closely with voiceless people: "Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine [the hungry, the thirsty, the sick and the imprisoned], you did for me" (Matt. 25:40). He lived in solidarity with the voiceless so that their hunger became his hunger and their imprisonment became his imprisonment.

Giving a voice to the voiceless isn't always a tidy, neat little command easily obeyed. More often, it's messy and open-ended. We may cry over injustice one day and gloss over it the next. God doesn't ask us to reform the world, but to show respect and concern to each person he's put in our path, going the extra mile with those our society overlooks. It's a struggle, but in the best moments we see Christ's face on the faces of voiceless people, and we offer him respect and concern. In moments when we don't, we express our regret to a Father who never renders us voiceless and we find comfort there.

*Jan Johnson is a speaker and the author of Growing Compassionate Kids and Living a Purpose-Full Life. For more information, see her Web site: [www.janjohnson.org](http://www.janjohnson.org).*



# Getting ready for an eternal party

## Omaha congregations: 50 years of ministry and counting

**T**he five USMB congregations in Omaha, Neb., are preparing for a celebration—a gathering much bigger than *Conexion 2012*, the USMB biennial convention to be held this summer in Nebraska's largest city.

"We happen to know there's a party coming," says Lance Burch, pastor of Shadow Lake Community Church, "where the food never runs out, the music never gets turned down and no one ever leaves. We're in it for that."

With an eye toward that eternal celebration, each of the Omaha area MB congregations goes into their community's highways and byways inviting their neighbors to accept God's invitation to join his family.

Faith Bible Church has been at it the longest—since the late 1960s. Their near-downtown community now has a distinctly urban composition. About half of the folks in the area are Hispanic, and many are just trying to

make ends meet. The urban feel of the community is reflected in the congregation, says church board member Stephen Stout; a visitor to Faith Bible would be welcomed among a mixed group of people that would likely include a few homeless individuals.

Since Faith Bible is centered in an area with ample physical needs, a primary way this congregation of about 60 people reaches out is by meeting physical needs. In 1996, Faith Bible established a separate nonprofit, Good Neighbor Ministries (GNM), to most effectively share God's love in a tangible way. Stout is the director of GNM.

GNM serves a 15-by-15-block area that is home to about 10,000 people. Through a pool of volunteers, GNM offers such services as yard care, snow shoveling, "Life Skills" classes, food assistance and Bible studies. But it's much more than meeting physical needs, says Stout. GNM

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A summer outreach day is one way Faith Bible Church and Good Neighbor Ministries work together to serve their community.

works to build relationships, to connect volunteers to those who need encouragement and to verbally share the gospel.

God seems to be answering Faith Bible's long-standing prayer for more workers for this neighborhood, says Stout, although in unexpected ways. The area around Faith Bible has recently drawn attention from other service groups and has even been targeted by the city as an area for restoration. "There seems to be a growing interest—with real things happening—in our neighborhood," says Stout.

Not satisfied with spreading the gospel in their own neighborhood, Faith Bible has "grandmothered" the rest of the Omaha MB churches by planting Iglesia Agua Viva and Millard Bible Church.

Although no longer an active congregation, Millard Bible had an excellent ministry in the Omaha area for 20 years, particularly among families

and youth. In 1997, Millard partnered with Mission USA, the USMB church planting arm, and the Central District Conference (CDC), to plant the congregation now known as Shadow Lake Community Church.

When Millard Bible closed its doors in 2008, they left an empty facility under the ownership of the CDC. Meanwhile, Shadow Lake was quickly outgrowing their facility. So in partnership with the CDC, Shadow Lake launched a satellite service in the Millard facility. In time, it became apparent that this satellite had potential as a stand-alone church, and it became Stony Brook Church, the youngest of the Omaha churches.

Shadow Lake and Stony Brook are both located in more suburban areas of Omaha, although the 20 minutes that separates them means unique communities and outreach. Papillion, the small town on the outskirts of Omaha where Shadow Lake is located, is a solidly middle-class area with lots of young families, including military families from nearby Offut Air Force Base. Pastor Lance Burch describes the community as "all-American," complete with a baseball field, friendly neighbors and great fireworks.

Seniors and ethnic mix are scarce in the community, and the congregation reflects that. But that doesn't mean there's not diversity. The congregation of nearly 800 includes a variety of spiritual maturity levels, says Burch. Accordingly, worship at Shadow Lake puts the focus squarely on God.

Beyond Sunday worship, the church encourages risking relationships through "life groups," with an eye toward impacting their community. Each semester Shadow Lake's life groups take on an "impact project," like serving with a local feeding ministry. "We're really serious about Papillion and Omaha knowing that we're here and that we don't exist for ourselves," Burch says.

Come to Omaha this summer for *Conexion 2012* and get a firsthand account of the story of USMB churches in this city from pastors (left to right) Chad Stoner, Stony Brook; Lance Burch, Shadow Lake; José Guerra, Iglesia Manatíal de Agua Viva; Daniel Rodriguez, Agua Viva; Stephen Stout of Good Neighbor Ministries and Rick Reck, chair of the Faith Bible Church board. For more about *Conexion 2012*, visit [www.usmb.org/conexion-2012](http://www.usmb.org/conexion-2012)



STEPHEN HUMBER

## 50 Years in Omaha

**1950:** Krimmer Mennonite Brethren establish Fontanelle Chapel in North Omaha



**1985:** Faith Bible plants Millard Bible Church



**1968:** Fontanelle Chapel relocates, begins meeting as Faith Bible Church



**1995:** Faith Bible plants Iglesia Agua Viva



Shadow Lake's daughter church, Stony Brook, is in what pastor Chad Stoner describes as "an old suburb" with a broad mix of young and old, middle and lower-middle class—reflected, of course, in the congregation. "We have the whole gamut here," Stoner says.

Stony Brook invites people to "belong, believe, become." First-time visitors, no matter their background or spiritual journey, find an atmosphere of love and acceptance. Very quickly, they recognize Stony Brook as a safe place to work out their relationship with God.

Once someone belongs, they are free to ask the questions that lead them to deeper belief in Christ, says Stoner, and that allows them to become who God intends. Life groups play a key role in all stages of this journey. Each group is an expression of the church, encouraging those involved to belong, believe and become.

Partly because the Stony Brook facility is small with limited expansion possibilities, growth will mean church planting. Stoner dreams of Stony Brook becoming a "greenhouse" for growing young leaders and church planters for the national USMB family and planting a new church in the next few years. "We are bent on that," he says.

Stony Brook's pastor of discipleship Stephen Humber adds that a big church planting vision requires support across the larger church family, especially in terms of finances. Stony Brook has already felt that kind of USMB support through Mission USA, the CDC, partner congregations and individuals.

"God is at work in the lives of people in Omaha, and we love partnering with the USMB to help get that done," says Humber.

Meanwhile, as Millard, Shadow Lake and Stony Brook were spreading the gospel in Omaha's suburbs, Faith Bible saw a growing Hispanic population in the city, noted a lack of churches serving this population and decided to do some-



Stony Brook invites people to "belong, believe, become."

thing about it. About 16 years ago, with help from the CDC and Hispanic church planter Walter Preza, they established what may have been Omaha's first Hispanic evangelical church, Iglesia Agua Viva.

Agua Viva meets in the heart of South Omaha—a perfect location for them, according to pastor Daniel Rodriguez, just a block from the center of Hispanic shopping and restaurants. Services, naturally, are in

\*Thanks to Peggy Goertzen, director of the Center for MB Studies, Hillsboro, Kan., for her help in gathering some of this data.

**1996:** Faith Bible begins Good Neighbor Ministries



**2005:** Rolling Hills relaunches as Shadow Lake Community Church



**2009:** Shadow Lake starts a satellite campus in the Millard Bible facility



**2010:** Stony Brook Church planted in Millard facility



**1997:** Millard Bible plants Rolling Hills Church



**2008:** Millard Bible closes



**2009:** Iglesia Agua Viva plants Iglesia Manatíal De Agua Viva



**2011:** Iglesia Manatíal De Agua Viva meets in Faith Bible facility



Spanish, but Spanish and English-speaking visitors alike find a warm welcome.

"When people come, we want them to feel the unity, feel the love for each other that comes from Christ,"

Rodriguez says, "not just hear the words."

A couple of times each year, Agua Viva closes the street in front of the church and holds their service outside. They pass out invitations door-to-door. But even if the neighbors don't come, the outdoor services help Agua Viva break the ice and connect to their community.

Agua Viva also serves Hispanics in Omaha through a weekly radio program on a Spanish, Christian station. The program includes music and a brief devotional by Rodriguez, followed by prayer requests from listeners. Often, calls come from immigrants in prison, awaiting deportation and concerned about their families. The congregation follows up, visiting the families and helping with physical needs. Sometimes, those families then become part of Agua Viva. "It makes you really excited when you see that," Rodriguez says.

In the last couple of years, Agua Viva has multiplied their ministry to Hispanics through Iglesia Manatíal de

Agua Viva, a church plant led by José Guerra. The new congregation is currently meeting in the gym of Faith Bible Church, their grandmother church. It's not only a good way for the two congregations to partner but also an ideal location, near apartment complexes filled with Hispanics.

The group is currently about 50 people, but Rodriguez says the church has tremendous potential to grow. They are currently knocking on doors to let neighbors know they're near and have plans to hold an outdoor service in summer similar to those held by Agua Viva.

Rodriguez says that Mennonite Brethren offer something unique to Omaha's Hispanic culture. Many come from Catholic or Pentecostal backgrounds and associate church with demands for money. But in the MB congregations "they feel safe." They are not welcomed because of what they can give but so that they can know Jesus; the MBs simply love them. "We're showing them something different," Rodriguez says.

And for each of these five MB congregations, showing their communities that knowing Jesus makes all the difference is what it's all about. They want the Lord's great banquet tables to be filled.—Myra Holmes



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# The Bridge abroad

## Adios 11-11-11 takes entire church to Mexico

**W**hat if an entire congregation could experience short-term mission together?

How might that experience not only impact the culture they served but also transform the congregation and their community back home?

And what if the church taking on such a mission was not 50 people or 100 but 1,000?

"Sure it's a crazy idea," says Jeff Gowling, pastor of The Bridge Bible Church, Bakersfield, Calif. "It's a radical idea. But it was God's idea."

It was on a short-term mission to Mexico over a year ago that The Bridge leaders began to feel God nudging them toward such a bold move. Gowling describes how he stood on a small amphitheater stage in Mexico, imagining the congregation worshipping and serving together there. That dream came to fruition Nov. 10-13, 2011, when about 700 people from The Bridge served in Ensenada, Mexico, with what they called Adios 11-11-11.

Of course, the logistics of taking so many people into a different culture to serve were formidable. So teams tackled each aspect of the project to make sure it all stayed organized and on track.

Kelly Geisler, who served as the administrative assistant for the Adios planning committee, was impressed by the massive organizational effort over about nine months, but she was even more impressed that these leaders began each meeting on their knees in prayer. It was a blessing, says Geisler, to work with men and women who were so "God-driven."

Scott Fults, who oversaw one of 10 ministry "zones" with several project teams in each zone, says he was pleasantly surprised by how well every-

thing came together—so well, in fact, that God's hand was clearly evident.

For example, Fults says, organizers hoped to have medical personnel near each project team serving in Mexico, but when the team assignments were finalized, they realized they had overlooked that detail. As they went back through the team assignments, they discovered that every team already included a doctor or a nurse.

Logistic teams could not have prepared for unusually heavy rains that provided a significant challenge on the final day, drowning tents, turning roads into mudslides and forcing participants into a large auditorium to sleep.

Geisler tells how her team intended to return to Bakersfield that evening, but when roads became impassable, she was forced to stay with others in "The Barn." "God had no plans for us to leave that night," she says. But worship and communion that final evening was the highlight of the trip for her—"one of the most amazing things I've ever been part of."

God's hand was likewise evident as the teams worked. Adios participants were divided into 41 teams that served in various ways in Ensenada. Most of the projects involved elbow grease and the simple willingness to serve: building, fixing, repairing, framing, roofing, painting.

One team doing cement work ran out of cement as they neared the end of their project. As they were praying for wisdom on how to proceed, a cement truck pulled up, and the driver offered some cement that was left over from his project at no cost.

**Getting more than 700 Adios volunteers out of the campsite every morning required an organized parking plan. Volunteers oversaw arrivals and departures every day.**



BRIDGE BIBLE CHURCH

Another team worked on a kitchen floor for a Mexican prison. When the floor was complete, the warden held a small dedication ceremony. With unprecedented openness, the warden acknowledged his own belief in God, invited the team to share the gospel and welcomed them to return for future ministry. "You are now partners with us," the warden told the team.

While the impact of 700 workers serving in Ensenada was significant, the bigger impact was the relationships that were built. Fults says that early on, organizers made a significant shift from thinking in terms of swooping in to do something for the local pastors and ministries, to asking what they needed. And when The Bridge asked, Mexican believers told them clearly that relationships were as important as any project they could do.

As Bridge missionaries worked alongside Mexican believers, genuine connections were forged in spite of language barriers—"something that only God can do," Gowling says.

Eric Nielsen's team built a small home for and with a partially-disabled single father, Roberto. When those torrential rains came, the team refused to stop their work—roofing, at that particular time. Roberto was visibly touched when he saw the soaked workers on his roof. "He could really see God's love for him in all of it," Nielsen says.

He adds, "We've created relationships there that will last a lifetime."

Each night, Adios participants gathered for corporate

worship to encourage them to surrender, to see Jesus in those they served and to use Adios 11-11-11 as a catalyst for change. "Our biggest prayer for this trip was that it wouldn't be just a weekend mission trip in Mexico, but that it would be a life transformation and a church transformation," Gowling says.

While it's too early to evaluate what kind of long-term transformation this trip began, Gowling hopes they'll see increased involvement in service in their community, families united and loving in new ways, even people making so-called "radical" decisions that become the norm.

Here's one small example of such a decision: Nielsen says that after building a home and a relationship in Mexico, his family chose to go without a Christmas tree this year, donating that money to Roberto and his family instead.

"We're on the right track," Gowling says, "but the success of this trip will continue to be lived out." —Myra Holmes



Adios participants had the rare opportunity to share the gospel at a Mexican prison, where they passed out blankets.

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## The right stuff

I earned my living as an agricultural crop consultant in the early 1980s. I walked a lot of fields and made a lot of recommendations to growers. One crucial aspect of my work was identifying beneficial insects among the nasty insects in a field. Since most insects live on the underside of crop leaves, I would turn over the leaves to see what was actually happening. The beneficial bugs had the capacity to destroy the nasty bugs—if they were indeed the right ones and were appropriately mature.

It saved the grower a great deal of money if beneficial insects controlled the pest problem rather than resorting to chemical warfare. But this was risky business. If we waited too long on these good guys to develop and they didn't have the capacity to get the job done, the bad guys were able to overrun them and create a lot of damage. So I spent hours studying the qualities of beneficial insects, looking through a magnifying glass to make sure I had it right.

I then instructed the grower about what I was seeing so that he could decide either to wait on these good bugs to do their job or wipe everything out (including the good insects) with powerful, expensive spray. Get it wrong, and a grower could lose his profit. Get it right, and the grower would win.

Okay, now this may seem like a strange analogy, but these days part of my work still involves turning over leaves, so to speak, looking for leaders who have the necessary qualities to plant

churches and to get the job done right. They must have the capacity to multiply and to overcome the opposition. In fact, the entire USMB staff has embarked on a collective mission to uncover more gifted church planters.

To be able to fulfill the God-given vision of being integrally involved in planting six new Mennonite Brethren churches by the end of 2012, it's imperative that we find the right leaders for these projects. So, our staff is using all kinds of methods within their spheres of influence to help identify those who have a passion for reaching lost people. We're looking for leaders who can make something out of nothing, can effectively cast vision and develop teams through relationship. We're looking for couples who support one another and who have strong marriages. We're turning over leaves.

We know that no new church will succeed apart from a leader with a message who effectively leads a church on a mission. It's risky business. The conditions have to be right. If not, then the good guys can end up being overrun by the enemy. It happens every day in the world of church planting.

Help us turn over the leaves in your fields of influence to see if there is someone who you believe has what it takes to be a successful church planter. To learn more about what qualities are needed in a church planter go to: [www.usmb.org/mission-usa](http://www.usmb.org/mission-usa) and click the tab labeled "Church Planters Needed."

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—Lifeway Research 2007

# New church plant in Phoenix

**R**eaching young adults in the West Valley of Phoenix, Ariz., is the aim of the newest Mennonite Brethren church plant led by Gavin and Kendall Linderman. For the past year Linderman, who with his wife completed church planter assessment in November 2010, has served as a staff intern at Copper Hills Church, a late 1990s Mission USA church plant in Peoria, Ariz.

Linderman has focused his ministry among 18 to 29-year-olds, and this has become a vibrant outreach. This group, made up of mostly young couples with children, will form the nucleus of the new church. The core team is gifted, energetic and very passionate about helping launch this new church in order to reach more people with the gospel.

“(This will be) a church plant in the West Valley of Phoenix that is committed to seeing our culture transformed by the gospel through individuals, families and communities living on mission,” says Linderman.

Copper Hills Church will take the lead in this project with strong support from the Pacific District Conference and Mission USA, the USMB church planting and renewal ministry.

“We have sensed for over a year that Gavin is the right person to establish this future church,” says Brad Klassen, Copper Hills pastor.

“This is another church plant project that is being accomplished through partnership,” says Mission USA director Don Morris. “It’s exciting to see Copper Hills Church ‘daughter’ another church. I know they have had an intense desire to do this for a long time.”

The Phoenix area was a major focus of church planting activity for Mission USA when the ministry was established in the mid-1990s.



**Gavin Linderman, baptizing a new member of Copper Hills Church, anticipates baptizing many new believers as the newest Phoenix church grows.**

Ed Boschman, USMB executive director, says, “When Carol and I moved to Phoenix in 1996, I had just accepted the invitation to serve as the first executive director for Mission USA, which was at that time the new domestic mission initiative of our national family.

“We envisioned that in the next 15 years USMB would establish a cluster of new churches in that metroplex of more than 3 million people,” says Boschman. “The fact that we are now partnering with Copper Hills Church (the first church plant in Phoenix) and the Pacific District Conference to birth a new church is nothing less than a prayer answered. We are very grateful to God for his affirmation of those prayers of faith offered 15 years ago. A vision has been revived. And for the sake of the mission of God, Phoenix is rising.”

Linderman will complete a degree in Christian studies from Grand Canyon University in May, and at that time the project team will begin meeting on a regular basis. The core team will be developed over the summer, and the church launch is expected sometime in the fall of 2012.—*Mission USA news release*



## Connecting with teens

I graduated from high school early so that I could pursue my fledgling dream of touring in a band, crisscrossing the United States without parental guidance. I was broke most of the time, went without food often, made some bad choices and got caught up in a crowd that wasn't exactly a positive influence. Yet this "conditioning" time prepared me for ministry. It was through my mistakes that I discovered who I was in Christ, not just who someone else wanted me to be.

Why did my parents let me do it? Because their top priority was trusting me to the hands of Jesus, just the way I was, even when that meant letting me fall. Mom and Dad were not hung up on personal likes or style, even when mine seemed a bit unorthodox. My parents believed that personal preference falls far behind the heart.

Working in ministry with young adults and their families, I am finding that what I experienced isn't the norm. While my parents and I had a connection in spite of our differences, in many families there is a real relational gap. This gap is wrapped in confusion, anger, hurt, distrust and perhaps parental zeal.

Many parents ask me to please connect with their son or daughter for them. It usually sounds like this: "Gavin, our son/daughter is lost and we can't get through to them. We just don't understand each other. Can you please connect with him/her?" It breaks my heart to see the brokenness and sadness of a mom and a dad trying to reclaim what to them is lost.

So what do we do? For starters, we stop trying to just relate to one another and instead celebrate our differences as parents and kids. That means being relentless in combating the expectations of our kids to conform and to eagerly seize opportunities to transform. To help us get started here's a few ideas that my church family has taught me.

Be each other's biggest fans. We have to teach our kids to cheer us on just as we cheer them on.

Stop seeing the next generation as "next," and see them as "now." Like it or not, our teens and young adults are the ones influencing the world

today. It's not only our privilege but also our responsibility to invest in their lives.

Oneness is not sameness. Many people think that being unified as a family means being the same, but it doesn't. You don't treat your spouse the same way you treat your children. So celebrate the differences and refrain from expecting your kids to do the same things you did at their age.

Relating does not mean just tolerating. If you have the urge to dress like your kids or talk like they do in order to relate with them—fight it. You will relate best just the way you are. Instead, try to appreciate. There is a wonderful freedom that comes when we let go of the impulse to "get" it.

Finally, hear this from your child: "Stop trying to find the you in me and see the He in me." If Jesus is their Lord, let him be.

I know, because I live it, that parents and young people can work together and can do great things. When this happens, parents' connections with their kids become joy-filled and liberating as they watch God at work.

*Gavin Linderman and his wife, Kendall, will be planting a new Mennonite Brethren church in the greater Phoenix area. Linderman is currently an intern with Copper Hills Church in Peoria, Ariz., working with young adults and couples.*







Jessica Mast

## For the love of Mumford

**B**uying the 2009 Mumford and Sons album *Sigh No More* was an incredibly foolish decision. It was an impulse buy in the intoxicating halls of Amoeba Music, a purchase based on small snippets of British folk rock songs I had just vaguely heard. But this album bought on blind faith was exactly what I needed to remind me of forgiveness. It was a fantastic decision.

My experience of romantic love has not been altogether perfect. It seems this is a common burden, hoping for people to love us perfectly and then coming to the harsh realization that they are merely people. (Go figure.) Turning on the radio, one finds romance everywhere—infatuation and praise, frustration and sorrow, bitterness and blame. But from Mumford, I heard something entirely different that took me by surprise: an apology.

*But it was not your fault but mine  
And it was your heart on the line  
I really f\*ed it up this time  
Didn't I, my dear?*

This raw confession comes from *Little Lion Man*, with the popular edited version never quite capturing the intensity of what it means to blunder so badly. These men singing are passionately apologetic, recognizing the damage caused and begging for forgiveness. In the album's title song, there is an equally passionate and mournful cry of the simple, "I'm sorry."

I wish I could hear the people who have hurt my heart sing out these lyrics, cursing and all. God knows the times I need to sing them out as well, cursing and all. These voices choose to own the pain, crying out in repentance, and hoping for reconciliation that restores my faith in redemption. These voices remind me of forgiveness, even when nobody may come serenading me with the words of Mumford.

Mumford has pushed me to forgive those I thought I might never forgive. And Mumford has given me hope that others can forgive me, when I do not deserve it in the least. This is redemption in action.

What sustains my hope for redemption is this vision of love that Mumford offers, a vision of love that is nothing short of the beautiful kingdom of God.

*Love, it will not betray you  
Dismay or enslave you, it will set you free  
Be more like the man you were made to be  
There is a design, an alignment  
A cry of my heart to see  
The beauty of love as it was made to be*

In the same breath in which men of Mumford take ownership of humanity's shortcomings, they proclaim a love boundless, fulfilling and unreserved—the love we were meant to encounter in relationship with God.

What motivates me to forgive is not assurance that humanity will drastically change, that the love I receive from people will somehow become unconditional, that romance will suddenly turn easy. What motivates me to forgive is the hope for a perfect love that far surpasses any imperfect human affection.

In the album's closing track *After the Storm*, the music of Mumford articulates a hope for this love that I cannot resist, a hope that echoes this kingdom we seek. Where "love will not break your heart, but dismiss your fears"—this is a love worth hoping for.

*Jessica Mast, Fresno, Calif., attends Fresno Pacific Biblical Seminary, works with the youth at Mennonite Community Church, loves her inner-city neighborhood and is always excited about good music. More thoughts on the journey of spirituality at [jessicaleigh-mast.wordpress.com](http://jessicaleigh-mast.wordpress.com).*

Parents of teens looking for online resources on dating, love and sex have overwhelming options. Start with these two sites that Kyle Goings, youth pastor at Bible Fellowship Church in Rapid City, SD, recommends to parents: [www.thesource4parents.com](http://www.thesource4parents.com), specifically articles found by searching the Youth Culture Window, and the Parent Resource Center at [christianteens.about.com](http://christianteens.about.com).

re: teens & dating

## m i l e s t o n e s

## BAPTISM/MEMBERSHIP

Brandon and Mindy Evetts and Martha Willis were received as members of **Corn (Okla.) MB Church** Nov. 13.

Aron and Annie Fast, Nate Hiebert and Matt Stucky were received Dec. 11 as members of **Hesston (Kan.) MB Church**.

Tawny Blevins, Michael Garcia, John and Rosetta Mayorga and Sharmaine Whitten were baptized and received as members Nov. 20 at **North Fresno (Calif.) MB Church**.

Alex and Kassi Drewitz, Kyrtis Scott, Mikaela Frank, Dana Young, Ross Tanner, Natasha Witt and Daniel Schmagel were baptized Dec. 18 at **Bible Fellowship Church, Rapid City, SD**.

Peyton Loewen and Dave and Madi Sheppard were baptized Dec. 18 at **Parkview MB Church, Hillsboro, Kan.** Caleb Halsted was baptized Dec. 25.

Chuck Callahan, Donna Callahan and Matt Weber were baptized Nov. 13 at **South Mountain Community Church@Daybreak, South Jordan, Utah**.

Makenna Cummings, Molly Enns, Emilie Garcia and John Grant were baptized and received as members of **Shafter (Calif.) MB Church** Nov. 6. William and Helena Born, Mark and Jeani Kendig and Roger and Naomi Poppen were also received as members.

Carl and Barbara Dieterle, Johnny Streck, Lindsay Toews and Vickie Watson were received Oct. 16 as members of **Enid (Okla.) MB Church**. John and Mary Ann Voth were also recognized as members.

Aaron Krahn was baptized and received as a member Nov. 6 at **First MB Church, Wichita, Kan.** Marie Stegeman was also received as a member.

Ron Howard and Maverick Howard were baptized Nov. 13 at **Reedley (Calif.) MB Church**.

Norma Hohm, Jared Knock, David and Michelle Stahl and Jeffrey Waldner were baptized and received as members of **Bethel MB Church, Yale, SD**, Nov. 20. Kati Knock and Coalt Robinson were also received as members.

Carlos Ortiz, Margo Bencoma, Maria Arceo and Alejandro Galvan were baptized Nov. 20 and received as members of **Butler MB Church, Fresno, Calif.**

Christie Baker, Raphael Geddert and Isaac Dunn were baptized and received as mem-

bers of **College Community Church MB, Clovis, Calif.**, Nov. 6.

## WORKERS

Kyle Stringer began serving Jan. 1 as youth pastor at **Hesston (Kan.) MB Church**.

Jonathan Grubbs is serving as interim pastor at **Enid (Okla.) MB Church**.

Luke LeViere is the interim youth pastor at **Good News Fellowship, Ferndale, Wash.**

Anthony Castleman is no longer on staff at **Martin Box MB Church, Marshall, Ark.**

Jim and JoAnn Hossler began serving as interim pastoral couple at **Garden Valley Church, Garden City, Kan.**, in November.

## DEATHS

**Block, John D.**, 98, former pastor of several MB churches, died Nov. 28, 2011. Spouse: Kathryn Harms, deceased; Betty Anderson, deceased. Children: James, Paul; seven grandchildren; 15 great-grandchildren.

**Dick, Eva Gladys Siebert**, 93, Buhler, Kan., of Buhler MB Church, died Oct. 23, 2011. Parents: Henry and Agnes (Wall) Siebert. Spouse: Arthur K. Dick.

**Gloeckler, Betty**, 85, Shafter, Calif., of Shafter MB Church, died Nov. 13, 2011. Parents: Sherman and Elsie Long. Spouse: Jim Gloeckler. Children: Barbara Higgins, Beverly Lewis, Susan; four grandchildren; three great-grandchildren.

**Graumann, Roger J.**, 75, Surprise, Ariz., died Dec. 14. Spouse: Elaine. Children: Tami Jackson, Toni Ditzler; five grandchildren.

**Hein, Emice H.**, 84, Hillsboro, Kan., of Hillsboro MB Church, died Oct. 3, 2011. Parents: Henry W. and Tina (Duerksen) Hein. Spouse: Lydia J. Adrian. Children: Michael, Kenneth, Eugene; seven grandchildren; 11 great-grandchildren.

**Karber, Eugene**, 76, Enid, Okla., member of Enid MB Church, died Nov. 28, 2011. Parents: Harry and Luella Karber. Spouse: Ramona Friesen. Children: Keith, Cheryl Wolfe; eight grandchildren; 11 great-grandchildren.

**Patzkowsky, Arlo**, 95, Okeene, Okla., member of Okeene MB Church, died Sept. 22, 2011. Parents: Sam & Amelia (Weber) Patzkowsky. Spouse: Marlyss Neufeld. Children: Jana Schultz, Rudy; five grandchildren; four great-grandchildren.

**Rosfeld, Stella**, 98, Hillsboro, Kan., member of Hillsboro MB Church, died Nov. 16, 2011. Parents: Henry and Pauline (Winter) Hanneman. Spouse: Dan Rosfeld, deceased.

## Baked goods for good

Five young people from Pine Acres Church (PAC), Weatherford, Okla., used their initiative and a tried-and-true format to make Christmas a bit brighter for children in need this winter. Last year, Mercedes Martin, Carol Ochoa, Chantz Gathers, Jordan Fite and Joe Noble raised \$750 with a bake sale for Christmas gifts for children in foster care. This year, they expanded their efforts and their goal, raising \$1,800 for gifts for children both in their area and in low-income apartments in Denver, Colo. The project was inspired by a 2009 summer mission trip to Denver, where the PAC youth group cooperated with youth from three other MB churches to serve children living in poverty. The PAC youth returned last summer to work in the same low-income apartments. "Before we even left Denver they were talking about what they could do to continue to help the kids they met," says youth pastor Hal Penner. The five spread the word about their project through local radio and newspaper, solicited donations for supplies from area businesses, stayed up late to bake and strategically sold their homemade goods at busy community events, including homecoming at nearby Southwestern Oklahoma State University.

—PAC newsletter

## Washington church moves in

Birch Bay Bible Community Church, Blaine, Wash., celebrated their first Sunday in a long-awaited facility Jan. 22. The new facility includes a 250-plus seat sanctuary, kitchen, fellowship hall, youth room, offices and classrooms. It also includes a gymnasium and soccer field to be shared with community youth organizations. BBBCC is branching into their community by opening up the facility for community meetings and functions. This building and soccer field is phase one of a master site plan that also includes a larger sanctuary and additional classrooms to be built in future years.

## Church blesses builders

During the building of their new worship center, Community Bible Church, Olathe, Kan., blessed the workers by regularly providing snacks, drinks and lunches. As the building neared completion, the congregation painted "graffiti" verses and prayers on the concrete walls and floor, including messages of encouragement for the general contractor. "We did this as a way of being missional with the workers during the building process," says pastor Tom Cartney. A dedication service for the new facility was scheduled Jan. 8, with invited guests representing the Southern District Conference, Mission USA, MB Foundation, area churches and ministries and the builders.

Children: Melvin, Don, Dolores Stone; seven grandchildren; 20 great-grandchildren; one great-great grandchild.

**Suderman, Paul H.**, 85, Hillsboro, Kan., member of Ebenfeld MB Church, Hillsboro, died Nov. 30, 2011. Parents: J.F. and Agatha (Hiebert) Suderman. Spouse: Elda Ens, deceased. Children: Greg, Dena Braun, Barry, Ronda King; eight grandchildren and four great grandchildren.

**Thiessen, Stella A.**, 87, Inman, Kan., member of Zoar MB Church, Inman, died Sept. 11, 2011. Parents: John H. and Sara (Neufeldt) Martens. Spouse: Ben L. Thiessen. Children: Lyle, Lois Wiens; and four grandchildren.

**Voth, Stella J.**, 86, Enid, Okla., member of Enid MB Church, died Oct. 15, 2011. Parents: George W. and Della Mae Drumm. Spouse: Clayton Voth. Children: Dennis, Mike, Peggy Templin; seven grandchildren; nine great-grandchildren.

**Wegermann, Roganne**, 61, Fresno, Calif., member of North Fresno (Calif.) MB Church, died Dec. 18, 2011. Parents: William Roger and Joanne Wendland. Spouse: Henry Wegermann. Children: Jennifer Conley; two grandchildren.

**Willems, Lydia**, 84, Hillsboro, Kan., member of Hillsboro MB Church, died Oct. 18, 2011. Parents: Peter D. and Maria (Ens) Willems.

## reaching in

### DISCIPLESHIP

Men from **Salem MB Church, Freeman, SD**, began a video series, "Dare to Be Uncommon," with Coach Tony Dungy, at their breakfast Jan. 7.

**Bible Fellowship Church, Rapid City, SD**, kicked off the new year with a one-day prayer summit Jan. 7.

In November **Mountain View Community Church, Fresno, Calif.**, began offering a Sunday school class called "Truth for Teens That Teachers Can't Tell," to address questions about science and the Bible.

### FELLOWSHIP

Women from **Buhler (Kan.) MB Church** were invited to a Christmas "tour of homes" and progressive dinner Dec. 5. Tour ticket proceeds were donated to a community food pantry and clothes closet.

Women from **North Fresno (Calif.) MB Church** toured a historic home Dec. 8 as

part of their Christmas celebration. Cookies, cider and coffee followed the tour.

Singles from **Mountain View Community Church, Fresno, Calif.**, started the new year with dinner, worship and a message on missions Jan. 14.

High school youth from **Bethany MB Church, Fresno, Calif.**, offered free babysitting Dec. 21 so that parents could finish shopping and holiday preparation.

Women from **Valleyview Community Church, Cimarron, Kan.**, went caroling Dec. 18. Soup and desserts were served afterward.

**North Park Community Church, Eugene, Ore.**, organized a holiday progressive dinner Dec. 10.

Women from **Butler MB Church, Fresno, Calif.**, gathered Dec. 10 for a holiday baking party.

### WORSHIP

Volunteers completed enough work on the facility of **Bible Fellowship Church, Minot, ND**, so the congregation was able to hold a Christmas service in the building.

**North Fresno (Calif.) MB Church** presented Bibles to all babies born in the church during the past year during their service Dec. 11.

The afternoon of Dec. 18 **College Community Church, Clovis, Calif.**, held its annual Christmas Mourning Service for those experiencing loss. The congregation was invited to fold origami stars during Advent as symbols of their sorrow and the light Christ brings. A demonstration was provided, and the finished stars were used to decorate the sanctuary.

**Lincoln Glen Church, San Jose, Calif.**, held a Christmas Memorial Service Dec. 4.

## reaching out

### LOCALLY

Junior and senior high youth from **Koerner Heights Church, Newton, Kan.**, served their community Nov. 9 with a leaf-raking service project called "Rake and Run."

Attendees of **Shorelife Community Church, Capitola, Calif.**, began the new year with a morning prayer walk around their neighborhood Jan. 1.

Attendees of **Trailhead Church, Centennial, Colo.**, sang Christmas carols at a nursing home on Christmas Eve.



**First MB Church, Wichita, Kan.**, donated their Thanksgiving offering to **Lighthouse Community Church, Wichita**, to help this small MB congregation purchase the building in which they meet. Lighthouse works in a highly disadvantaged part of town.

**Corn (Okla.) MB Church** collected items at Christmas to be shared with nursing home residents throughout the year. Items included soft tissues, lotions, body wash and other toiletries.

**Salem MB Church, Freeman, SD**, invited their community to a showing of the movie

"Courageous" and a chili supper Jan. 29.

About 400 people attended a Christmas concert presented by members of the worship team at **SMCC@Daybreak, South Jordan, Utah**. There were also activities for children including pictures with Santa, crafts and cookies.

As part of their participation in Advent Conspiracy, **Kingsburg (Calif.) MB Church** gave a donation to **Bible Fellowship Church, Minot, ND**, to help with their post-flood rebuilding.

**North Park Community Church, Eugene, Ore.**, organized community food donations in early

December, to be given to families of needy children at a local elementary school during Christmas break.

## GLOBALLY

A team of 20 from **Corn (Okla.) MB Church** served Jan. 17-Feb. 1 alongside MB missionaries in Thailand.

A team from **North Fresno (Calif.) MB Church** built a home for a pastor in Mexico Dec. 26-Jan. 1.

Women and teen girls from **Shafter (Calif.) MB Church** made scarves for children in India Dec. 4.

## CLEARINGHOUSE

### Events

**Agency Anniversary:** Kings View Corporation's 60th Anniversary Dinner Celebration will be held in Fresno, Calif., Saturday, March 31, 2012. Please call Marilyn Janzen at 559-256-0100, ext 3004 or e-mail [mjanzen@kingsview.org](mailto:mjanzen@kingsview.org) to reserve your ticket.

**'Bicycle the San Juans':** Celebrate the beauty of God's creation and benefit MCC! Cycle five days through outstanding scenery and diversity of terrain on the "paradise islets" of the Evergreen State. August 5-10, 2012. For registration information, contact Trish Hershberger-Handrich, 503-201-7605 or [trish.handrich@gmail.com](mailto:trish.handrich@gmail.com).

**Concert:** West Coast Mennonite Men's Chorus Concert Schedule:

April 1, 2012	Bakersfield, Calif.	The Bridge Church	6 pm
April 14, 2012	Reedley, Calif.	Reedley MB Church	7 pm
April 15, 2012	Fresno, Calif.	Riverpark Bible Church	6 pm
April 29, 2012	Arroyo Grande, Calif.	Grace Bible Church	4 pm

### 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](mailto:jwiebe@mbfoundation.com)) (2/2)

Tabor College is seeking an **Assistant or Associate Professor of Visual Art (Graphic Design)**. Primary teaching duties include introductory, intermediate and advanced graphic design courses. The ability to teach both print and digital media is strongly preferred. Proficiency using the Macintosh platform and Adobe Creative Suite applications is expected. Additional duties include supervision of a graphic design computer lab. Start date is Aug. 2012. For information about qualifications and application process contact Mandi Broillette at [mandib@tabor.edu](mailto:mandib@tabor.edu). Additional information online at [usmb.org/cl-classifieds](http://usmb.org/cl-classifieds)

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