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New USMB
funding plan

*Soaring
in Utah*

from the editor



A 2011 study by the Barna Group shows that despite strong levels of spiritual activity during the teen years, six out of 10 20-somethings disengage from active participation in the Christian faith during their young adult years—and often beyond that. Statistically, that means two of my three children will disconnect from the local church as they transition from the teen years through their 20s. That’s a disheartening thought.

A grassroots movement is seeking to address this disengagement by targeting the individuals that have the most influence in the spiritual lives of children and teens: Mom and Dad. Research shows that children rank their parents as the top influencers in their faith development (Search Institute). Unfortunately only 12 percent of church youth have ever talked with their mom about faith and only 5 percent have talked with their dad. So while we parents are the primary influencers in the spiritual lives of our children, most of us are not actively involved in passing on the faith.

So this crusade—involving a variety of Christian authors, seminars, conferences and publishing houses—aims to equip churches to train parents to intentionally transform their children’s faith. This new approach is in contrast to the “destructive codependent relationship” that many parents and churches currently experience, says Jack Eggar, president and CEO of Awana. “Parents, with little inclination and few high-quality resources to devote to the spiritual nurture of their children, have largely abdicated the job to the church,” writes Eggar in his forward for *Rock Solid Kids* by Larry Fowler. “And the church has readily taken on a task that was originally mandated in Scripture to the parents of children.”

USMB congregations recognize this as an important issue. Three congregations in the Southern District Conference (SDC) have implemented programs to prepare parents and pastors from those congregations have written an article in this issue that we hope will spark an interest in CL readers to learn more about this movement. These pastors from First MB Church of Wichita, Kan., Hesston (Kan.) MB Church and North Oak Community Church of Hays, Kan., presented a workshop on the topic at the SDC convention last summer and are repeating it at the USMB delegate convention next month in Omaha, Neb.

USMB congregations must address this issue. We must equip parents in our congregation to nurture the spiritual lives of their children. We must not lose our children as they transition to being young adults.

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Connie Faber
Editor

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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



Ron Penner

My wife, Fran, and I recently spent two weeks on a treasure hunt in Spain. We were looking for that “delightful inheritance” that we read about in Psalm 16. Fran and I served under MB Mission for 12 years in Spain. When it was determined in 1993 that MB Mission needed to leave Spain, we left a small group of 25-30, including children, in Tres Cantos, just outside of Madrid. The group’s viability was not good. Some were new in their faith, and we saw very little leadership in the group. We wondered if our small fledging church would make it.

To our surprise, today there is a strong, vibrant, evangelical Christian church in Tres Cantos. Since we were gone, they sought help from another evangelical church body, and it happened to be the Southern Baptists who resourced this small group. During our visit we were introduced to the congregation as the “founding pastors” of the church. Lynn and Mary Kauffman, who were traveling with us and had served with us as missionaries in Spain, were welcomed as the “transitional pastors,” since they filled in for one year while we were on sabbatical.

This congregation was granted land by the city of Tres Cantos, a miraculous event in itself, and built a fairly large facility that has grown to presently house some 150 attendees. They have a strong leadership team that includes four of those we helped to begin their walk with the Lord and/or disciple. They also have initiated several ministries to reach into the community. They started a food distribution ministry that really meets a need as the unemployment in Spain has reached 23 percent; among those 30 and under, unemployment is 49 percent. A new law in Spain enables the evangelical Christian church to provide chaplains in hospitals and so they go regularly to a large hospital in Madrid and provide a significant ministry to those who are ill.

The most delightful treasure we discovered was that quite a number of those who made commitments to the Lord while we were there are continuing faithfully. Of course, there are those who have fallen away, but more than a few shared that they are living for Jesus and that he is their guide. This church has not only survived—it is thriving.

Our treasure hunt revealed that God’s church has increased and grown from the small investment made years ago. We returned from our trip with much gratitude in our hearts for the “delightful inheritance” we have in Spain! I invite you to go on your own treasure hunt. Where do you see evidence of how your investment—large or small—in God’s kingdom has grown?

Ron Penner is senior pastor at Kingsburg (Calif.) MB Church.

*“The boundary lines have fallen in pleasant places;
surely I have a delightful inheritance”
Psalm 16:6.*



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(from the executive director)



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Pastors weigh in on added values

Three years ago we sent an electronic survey to our USMB pastors. We invited them to communicate to us what they believed were the most important added values the national staff could deliver to our conference of churches. Their message was clear.

1. Plant churches. There was strong agreement that nothing is more important than birthing new churches. Even though local church pastors are often over-consumed by the weight and breadth of shepherding a church family, they are keenly aware that an absence of church multiplication would not be a good thing.

That is why we are giving priority focus and energy to Mission USA, our USMB church planting and renewal and leadership development initiatives. In fact, we are asking the Lord of the church to bless our national family with six new churches this year and 60 in the next 10 years. Imagine the impact that would have on us. And more importantly, imagine the hundreds of new believers that would be part of God's family as a result.

2. Coordinate. While it may seem self-evident, those same pastors also know that efficient and kingdom-effective church planting requires more than concerted prayer and significant resources. There is a critical need for coordination and collaboration. The pastor's world is multilayered. The home front is like the bull's-eye of several concentric circles. The next circle might include a community of churches, a city collegium and a regional affiliation. Beyond that there are the realities of district and national conferences.

These layers may often be further complicated by various local and global mission initiatives and

other affiliations such as leadership or evangelism networks and partnerships. Without intentional inter-conference connection and coordination, a mission initiative as clear as starting a new church would not work well. Maybe it would not be accomplished at all.

3. Encourage theological faithfulness. Being on the same page theologically is also a critical success factor. While there is among us a reasonable flexibility for theological nuancing, we are bounded by our Confession of Faith. In spite of that, the diverse theological histories of our pastors can take us to discussions in which we have a variety of convictions.

Our USMB Board of Faith and Life is committed to exhorting us to faithfulness to our confession and is inviting discussion about our differences, with the goal of authenticity in our faith. It is imperative that we pursue the unity that Jesus prayed we would experience as his followers. The power of that oneness is nothing less than life-changing, both among us and for the watching world.

When Jesus prayed that we would be one, his prayer was driven by the fact that he was on mission and that he would be handing us the assignment and privilege of partnering with him on that mission. That prayer and mandate motivate the oneness that we, USMB, are praying for and working toward.

When we gather in Omaha this summer, it is our prayer that we will be inspired once again to keep working together as one family, with one Lord on one mission, for the transformation of lives. There is no greater reason to be...or to be one.

Most important USMB added values...

Results of a July 2009 survey to USMB pastors; includes 80 responses

- Church planting initiatives and partnerships (Mission USA) 85.3%
- Coordination of ministries/organizations 72.1%
- Theological oversight through Board of Faith and Life 57.4%

The power of nonviolence

I must defend myself as any nonviolent resistor should. James Penrose (Chat Room, April/May 2012) has argued against the straw man of do-nothing pacifism. I am a nonviolent resistor because Jesus has been given all authority on heaven and earth (Matt. 28:18). Penrose asks if a nonviolent philosophy fits with Scripture's view of love for God and our fellow man as the highest priority. Nonviolence is the literal obedience of Jesus' teaching, not a philosophy and yes, it fits.

In the light of Jesus' teaching it is a gross exaggeration to interpret the laying down of one's life for another as compatible with being killed in the process of trying to kill someone else. As Christians, is our first priority our countrymen and families or is it the gospel and the kingdom of God (Matt. 6:33)? If you think as Brother Penrose, is your citizenship really in heaven, or does the temptation of patriotism and defending worldly possessions hold your heart (Phil. 3:20)?

Penrose suggests that nonviolence should not have equal importance with the meatier aspects of the faith such as love, salvation, sanctification, etc. These meaty aspects are best communicated with the open hand of assistance rather than the passivity of indifference, or the fist of condemnation he describes.

Violence is the world's natural language and born of hate and selfishness. The gospel is Christ's language of sacrificial love and death for an unbelieving world. To be Christian is to communicate the gospel's compassion and suffering for others. Does literally obeying Christ's explicit command to overcome evil with good really deserve Penrose's unkind characterization of having no virtue from a biblical perspective (Rom. 12:21)? I believe that when I am nonviolent then I am powerful. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds (2 Cor. 10:4).

*Clint Bergen
Orland, Calif.*

Looking in another's window

I am writing in response to the article "Little black dress or blue jeans?" (On My Mind, April/May 2012). While I have great respect for Dr. Rempel and her leadership role at our seminary, I was very disappointed in her treatment of Rhoda Janzen's book, *Mennonite in a Little Black Dress*.

Dr. Rempel characterizes the book as being "humor-laced." What she does not mention is the fact that the book is filled with profanity and extreme vulgarity, not to mention the constant denigration of evangelical Christian faith. I actually read the book a second time after almost a year to make sure I was not overreacting. I found it even more disgusting the second time around.

At the end of her article, Dr. Rempel states that, "reading a memoir is a little like peeking in someone's window." Looking at Rhoda Janzen's life, it is sadly obvious that the Lord Jesus Christ is nowhere to be found.

*Stephen Vincent
Hillsboro, Kan.*

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 Web site (www.usmb.org/christian-leader) and can also leave comments on the CL Facebook page.

Correction:

In the death notice for Gus Janzen published in the Dec 2011/Jan. 2012 *Christian Leader*, his wife was incorrectly listed as Annie Janzen instead of Amie Janzen.

In the article about Aleks Borisov published in the April/May issue, MB Foundation should have been listed as one of the USMB ministries financially supporting the new Slavic ministries director.

(God at work in the mennonite brethren world)

USMB boards hold spring meetings

U.S. Mennonite Brethren (USMB) leaders gathered March 21-24 in Bakersfield, Calif., in a three-part "triathlon" of meetings.

The national Board of Faith and Life (BFL), charged with USMB spiritual oversight, met first. They worked on certain memorandums of understanding and planned for a study conference coming in January 2013, which will focus on a review of two articles of the Confession of Faith.

The second leg was the National Leadership Summit, an annual gathering of leaders of "all things USMB" hosted by the USMB Leadership Board and staff. Attendees included lead staff and board chairs from the five districts, three schools, BFL, MB Foundation and MB Mission.

"We focused on three things at the Summit this year," says Ed Boschman, USMB executive director. "One was to re-evaluate our understanding of what it means to be a leader and what it means to be a follower. The second was to envision and 'float' ideal future conditions for our various ministries, agencies and institutions. The third was to ask ourselves whether some things need to change, and if so, what they might be, in order for us to maximize our kingdom impact." Consultant Rich Kriegbaum facilitated the discussion, which raised questions rather than provided clear answers.

Finally, the USMB Leadership Board met to hear reports from the USMB staff and provide input on staff initiatives. The nine-member board also accepted an aggressive budget for the 2012-13 fiscal year, approved two revisions to the USMB bylaws and affirmed a slate of nominees and appointees to various USMB and partner ministries offices. Delegates at *Conexion 2012* will have final approval. The next LB meeting will be Oct. 12-14 in Denver, Colo. —USMB



Leadership Board member David Hardt, center, listens as Sue Kliewer, left, addresses the Board in its March meeting.

Relief kits in short supply

Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) is requesting donations of relief kits to restock supplies that enable MCC to act quickly in a crisis or disaster. Recent shipments of relief kits to Syrian refugees who fled to Jordan to escape violence have depleted the reserve. Relief kits supply basic necessities of daily living, such as towels, soap, toothpaste and toothbrushes and laundry soap. To see a complete list of supplies and drop-off locations, visit mcc.org/kits/relief. MCC provides relief, development and peace in the name of Christ. —MCC

Madden concludes USMB ministry

USMB Executive Director Ed Boschman and Derk Madden, USMB director of development, have amicably agreed to end Madden's service with USMB, effective immediately. Boschman made the announcement May 3.

Madden was responsible for coordinating public relations, designing and implementing fund development programs and strengthening connections with churches and partner agencies. Madden was the first individual to hold the position, created by the USMB Leadership Board a year ago.

"Derk is a gifted and passionate and faithful follower of Jesus and servant of the church," says Boschman. "He made a helpful contribution to our team and ministry in several ways."

Madden will continue serving Discovery Bible Fellowship, the Mennonite Brethren congregation in Collinsville, Okla., as senior pastor, a position he held while also working as the USMB director of development for the past seven months. —USMB

Register now for Connection 12



Planning to attend Connection 2012? Don't forget to register, says Donna Sullivan, USMB event coordinator.

"People really need to reserve their hotel room by June

26 or there may not be any available, especially at our special rate," says Sullivan. "If we do run out of hotel rooms, we will work with another nearby hotel."

Connection 2012 will be held at Embassy Suites Old Market in Omaha, Neb. Hotel reservations are due June 26 and should be made directly with Embassy Suites Old Market; a link to the hotel registration site is posted at www.usmb.org/connection-2012. Early convention registrations are due July 1 and can also be completed online.

Connection 2012 will be a family-friendly event, with special activities planned by volunteers from Omaha USMB congregations for infants, children and teens. Children through sixth grade will participate in the Red Sea Kids Conference, organized by Melissa Hanna of Stony Brook Church. Ben Thorson, of Faith Bible Church, has planned a variety of activities for youth (7th-12th graders), from serving at a homeless shelter to visiting the world-famous Omaha zoo.

byTheNumbers

Is Church Good for you?

53% of Americans believe the presence of a church has a *very positive impact* on the community.

Source: Christianity Today

56% of people who attend worship services regularly are *more likely to have an optimistic outlook* toward life.

Source: CNN.com

5 minutes with...

Lauren Banik

Lauren Banik of Lincoln Hills Church in Sioux Falls, SD, was a stay-at-home homeschooling mom who looked at the floor and couldn't speak in complete sentences when she made an announcement in church. She credits God with the transformation that equipped her to become part of the six to nine a.m. announcer team for Christian radio station Life96.5.

1 What got you started down this path?

I did Operation Prom Dress in our church and had to get out there in front of church and also make a lot of contacts with businesses. It's still sometimes hard to pick up the phone and call people.

2 If it was hard, why did you do it?

In the third year of Operation Prom Dress I was standing in front of 70 volunteers. All of a sudden it hit me: I'm a leader!

3 How did that transition to radio?

My co-host's wife heard me at a ladies event and said I was a great storyteller. I thought they might have mixed me up with someone else, but Dave asked if I could fill in for his current partner from time to time.

4 What was it like when you started on-air work?

It was a little rough. I asked the Lord, "Are you sure you want me here? Can I just go home now?"

5 What story inspires you in your radio ministry?

There's a guy who listens to us on his daily three-hour drive transporting inmates into Sioux Falls. He says it opens doors to conversations with his passengers.

6 What have you learned that the church needs to know?

Christians need to get outside the church walls. God wants to shape you and grow you and scare you, but in the end it's awesome.

Interview by Kathy Heinrichs Wiest



Youth leaders gather

Ministry Quest, a leadership development program for high school students, will hold a retreat June 24-29 at Bellevue Community Church, Littleton, Colo. MQ is a program of Tabor College in partnership with USMB. The retreat will gather participants from across the country to explore God's call on their lives and to grow in their faith. It will include a variety of learning activities, from teaching sessions to active learning experiences, from personal quiet time to small group discussion. Participants will also hear from MQ staff and mentors and process with their peers. For more, see www.tabor.edu/ministryquest.—MQ



FPU graduates 500-plus

Fresno Pacific University, the Mennonite Brethren-owned school on the West Coast, held commencement May 5 at the Fresno, Calif., main campus for more than 500 new alumni.

Of the estimated 527 graduates, 280 were from bachelor's degree completion programs, 158 from traditional undergraduate programs, 69 from graduate programs and 20 from Fresno Pacific Biblical Seminary. Degree completion graduates studied at FPU regional centers in Bakersfield, Visalia, North Fresno and Merced.

The scheduled commencement address was "Culture Warriors or Agents of Shalom?" from D. Merrill Ewert, who is retiring after 10 years as FPU president.

A new feature of the morning commencement was Golden Graduates. Alumni from 1960-1962 were honored by walking in the ceremony and enjoying a special lunch.—FPU

Wall speaks at *TABOR COMMENCEMENT*

Marlene Wall, Tabor alumna and newly appointed president of LCC International University, was the scheduled commencement speaker for Tabor College, the Midwest Mennonite Brethren-owned liberal arts college. The ceremony was held May 19 at the college's main campus in Hillsboro, Kan. **There were 127 degree candidates from the Hillsboro and Wichita campuses.**

Wall received her bachelor's in English and secondary education from Tabor in 1981. She also holds a master's from Southern Illinois University and a doctorate from Kansas State University. She is a member of five associations and attends First MB Church, Wichita, Kan. LCC is a Christian liberal arts college in Klaipda, Lithuania, with MB connections.

Tabor President Jules Glanzer says the school is committed to having distinguished alumni speak at commencement: "I want our graduates to experience Tabor alumni who have a record of significant accomplishments and are involved in a life of service."—TC

NEW ERA begins for MCC

Long-term workers, donors, volunteers, staff and board members and representatives from supporting congregations and the global church gathered March 30 in Akron, Pa., to observe the commissioning of Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Canada and MCC U.S. for a new era of ministry. The two organizations now jointly carry out MCC's mission, purpose and vision and administer MCC's international program, which previously was directed by the binational MCC organization. The commissioning service culminated a five-year restructuring process called **New Wine/New Wine-skins: Reshaping MCC for the 21st Century**. MCC provides peace, relief and service in the name of Christ.—MCC

Preparing for MWC assembly



U.S. Mennonite Brethren are among the four U.S. denominations that will be hosting the Mennonite World Conference Assembly to be held July 21-26, 2015, in Harrisburg, Pa. Both the anticipation and the challenge of hosting the next global gathering were evident in the National Advisory Council meeting, held March 22-23 in Lancaster, Pa. USMB representatives are Dennis Becker, Lynn Jost and Ed Boschman. Council members spoke of hosting the MWC global gathering as a "privilege," approved a unified **fundraising goal of \$850,000** and discussed ways to address visa challenges. MWC is a global fellowship of Anabaptists.—MWC

Searching for church planting

Artists

by DON MORRIS

Join our search for the
next generation of
USMB church planters

Effective church planters are like artists. When you gaze on a painting that explodes with color and detail, you know a gifted artist is the creator. While the truly great artists like Monet and Van Gogh are rare indeed, there are plenty of extraordinary artists whose works amaze and bring joy. In a sea of aspiring artists, only a few capture the eye with their startling compositions.

So what does a good artist have in common with a good church planter? They share quite a lot actually. Both are uniquely gifted. Both are skilled at creating something that didn't exist before—for the artist a painting, for the planter a church.

Both can envision what the final product will look like even before they start their work on the "canvas." Both spend hours thinking, dreaming and planning before they dare begin. Both are good at mixing things. The artist works with colors on a palette, and the planter looks for the right mix of team volunteers. Both feel a sense of calling to what they do and are drawn to it.



Searching for the hard to find

Artists and church planters—the really good ones, the ones who create great works—are not easy to find. Some artists are “discovered” at art fairs or in online galleries by patrons looking for outstanding artwork. Other artists display their work in shops that cater to local talent, often in communities that are popular vacation sites. There are a lot of venues available for locating a gifted artist. But that doesn’t make finding a talented artist all that easy. One still has to search intently.

As director of Mission USA, I enjoy my task of looking for great church planters. Our vision is to help plant, in partnership with our districts, six new USMB churches every year for the next 10 years. If that goal is to be realized, we need to find a lot of gifted church planters. And it’s going to take a united effort from many dedicated people all across the U.S. to help us discover those gifted by God for church planting.

I believe the main task God has set before us is introducing people to Jesus Christ. We know that church planting is the most effective means we have of acquainting others with the transformation that only Jesus Christ can bring. And so finding gifted church planters is imperative.

Some of these planters will be skilled at beginning a new church, perhaps as a daughter church of an existing Mennonite Brethren church. Some may work better as a campus pastor of a multisite church planting movement. God will help us determine a planter’s best fit.

Since we need a multitude of gifted planters, I’m asking for a collective effort from people from all USMB churches to be on the lookout for people who may have the necessary gifts to plant churches. And I’m asking the Lord to help us discern these gifted leaders. Jesus said, “Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete” (John 16:24).

The Lord can use all of us to be a part of this discernment process and to help fulfill the mission God has given us. All of us can pray. Many of us can take the next step and tap the shoulders of gifted people. Some of us may be among those tapped to be church planters.

Specifically, I invite you to join me in the search for skilled church planters. It is difficult to look at a leader and determine whether their God-given gift mix is conducive to being a church planter.

We don’t know what to look for. So think of what follows as a summary of Finding Church Planters 101.

Those of us involved in USMB church planting find Charles Ridley’s research to be very helpful in identifying people with the necessary skills to plant churches. Ridley, a professor at Texas A&M University, has developed a well-known list of 13 church planter requirements. The top six of his 13 requirements are known as the “knock-out list.” In other words, if a leader does not have these six characteristics, then they will likely fail as a church planter.

- Visioning capacity: believing in God for the impossible, a vision-caster
- Intrinsically motivated: a self-starter, high energy, persistent, can build from scratch
- Creates ownership of ministry: helps people buy in, creates commitment and teams
- Relates well with the unchurched: breaks through barriers, transparent, personable
- Spousal cooperation: spouse is fully committed to planting, family remains a priority
- Effectively builds relationships: displays compassion, burden for the lost, evangelist

For more of Ridley’s 13 characteristics, go to: www.usmb.org/mission-usa

Now you know what to look for: A gifted leader who has the ability to cast the vision God has given so that others can grasp it. Someone who has a lot of energy, isn’t afraid of hard work and can build something from scratch. One who helps others that are a part of the church plant to develop ownership for themselves. Someone who knows how to talk with the average person and isn’t afraid to talk openly about faith. It’s a leader who has the full commitment of his spouse, while remembering that his family remains his most important mission. And, a leader who doesn’t just talk a good game but builds relationships well, especially with those who don’t know Jesus yet.

So, will you help us discern gifted planters? Will you pray for this huge vision of planting 60 MB churches in the next 10 years? Can you imagine the impact we will have on 60 communities in the name of Jesus? Can you envision people standing before the throne of God in eternity, knowing that they are there because we dared to dream God-sized dreams? Thank you for searching.

Don Morris is the director of Mission USA, the USMB church planting and renewal ministry.



Faith @ Home

Restoring and reclaiming family discipleship

We have a problem: Young people are leaving the church after high school graduation—and many don't come back. Researcher George Barna reports that 61 percent of today's young adults had been churched at one point during their teen years, but now they are spiritually disengaged. Josh McDowell says that some denominational leaders report as many as 94 percent leave the church after high school. LifeWay Publications reports that more than two-thirds of young adults who attended church for at least a year in high school will stop attending church for at least a year between the ages of 18 and 22.

There is a desire among families and churches to change these outcomes. Parents and grandparents are rediscovering the great impact they can have spiritually on their families. The Significant Religious Influences Survey reveals the number one reason why kids have faith is Mom and the number two reason why kids have faith is Dad. Surprised? Mom and Dad are two to three times more influential than any church program.

The best method of transferring faith to the next generation is not a new method but a very old one prescribed in Scripture. It is parents or significant adults in

the lives of kids who are teaching and modeling what it means to be a faithful follower of Christ.

Laying the biblical foundation

The story of the Bible guides our understanding of how God intends a family to be the primary place of spiritual nurture.

Foundation #1 God's story of purpose: The story of the Bible is a story about God more than it is about people. Rather than isolated stories of how God loves people, the main point of the Bible is that God is to be loved with heart, soul, mind and strength (Mark 12:30). It is a single prolonged story of God transforming people into a vast community of worshipers who fully love him (Rev. 5, 7). God's purpose necessarily spans time and generations. Thus he is deeply committed to the continuation of his purpose generation after generation (Ps. 145:3-4).

Foundation #2: Incarnation: God communicates most fully through incarnation (Heb. 1:1-3). Incarnation literally means "enfleshment." God became a flesh and blood human being to reveal himself to us in a way written words cannot. The God of Christianity is someone

we “have seen with our eyes” and “whom our hands have handled” (1 John 1:1-2).

No matter how creatively the Word of God is proclaimed, people are more likely to believe an experience of faith lived out in front of them. Incarnation is more powerful than proclamation. And in the case of children, this is also true as they tend to do as parents do, not as they say. In order to grasp truth for themselves, children need to see, touch and experience faith lived out in front of them.

Foundation #3 Marriage: God created marriage so that we will reflect his image (Gen. 1:26-27), become more like Christ (Eph. 5:24-25), experience the blessing of two lives and hearts becoming one (Gen. 2:21-25) and take part in God’s plan to fill the earth with worshippers through having and raising faithful children (Gen. 1:28, Mal. 2:15). Marriage is a “discipleship relationship” designed to help each person grow in every area of life. A strong marriage helps children understand God and the gospel.

Foundation #4 Family: God created the institution of marriage and family as the foundation for human life, society and the faith community (Gen. 1). The family was created by God to be an active and powerful spiritual discipleship center (Gen. 18:18, Deut. 6:5-7, Eph. 6:4).

Understanding the plan

Two key Bible passages provide the picture of faith formation through family from generation to generation:

1) Deuteronomy 6:4-9 pictures the home and family as the primary context of spiritual formation. Set in the understanding of the tendency of spiritual vitality to decline from generation to generation, this passage emphasizes the nature of faith as a personal relationship with God.

At its core, faith is about “loving the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.” That same love for God is to be “impressed” (v. 7) on the hearts of children through the natural ebb and flow of life in the home, much like one learns to love another person by their constant welcomed presence.

2) Ephesians 6:1-4 outlines the divine pattern for parents, especially fathers, not to relinquish their role as the primary teachers and shapers of their children’s mind and heart—not even to the church. The biblical pattern is for parents to impart to their children a God-centered, Bible-saturated vision for all of life. Wired for relationship, God intends flesh and blood relationships of home and family to be the primary context for faith formation.

Being the parents God calls us to be

If parents are not sure where to start, start with your heart. Capture God’s vision for your family and turn your heart to your children. The final words of the Old Testament call parents to turn their hearts to their children, and the first words of revelation in the New Testament say the same thing (Mal. 4:4-6, Luke 1:17).

One way parents can do this is by having family worship or family devotions in the home. What is family worship? Rob Reinow, in the introduction to his *Family Worship Guides*, states that, “When a family gathers together at home for prayer, Bible reading and turning their hearts to the Lord—that is family worship.”

Reinow says, “God calls us to family worship for many reasons. Family worship deepens and strengthens family relationships. Family worship provides an opportunity for parents to take the lead in passing faith to their children. Families that worship at home bring that spirit of worship into the church.”

If you have never practiced family worship, it’s not too late to begin with teenagers, school-aged children or grandchildren. It’s OK to start slowly. Bible reading and prayer are the most important elements. Activities, singing and discussions can also be included.

Transitions are good times to impact your children as well. Use times such as riding in the car, at breakfast or when going to bed to play worship CDs, go over memory verses, ask questions about devotions or Bible lessons, read from the Bible or have family worship. Some resources to help you get started are listed at the end of this article.

Don’t get discouraged if you try family worship and things don’t go well at first. Based on Deuteronomy 6, the most powerful spiritual experience in the life of a child or teen is when a parent or grandparent leads outside of the four walls of the church. The enemy would love to keep it from happening. Let’s restore and reclaim the biblical culture of family discipleship.

J.L. Martin is pastor of children and family at Heston (Kan.) MB Church. Ken Ediger is senior pastor at North Oak MB Church, Hays, Kan. Jenny Wall is director of kids ministry at First MB Church, Wichita, Kan. The authors will be presenting a workshop at Connection 2012, the USMB delegate convention to be held in July, that will offer a theology of family ministry as well as practical steps that churches are taking to challenge parents to pass on their faith at home. →



The God of Christianity is someone we

“have seen with our eyes” and
“whom our hands have handled”

Faith at Home Resources . . .

B•O•O•K•S

***The Child's Story Bible* by Catherine Vos** (Eerdmans Books for Young Readers)

Originally published in 1935, this beloved Bible storybook is still a favorite with children, parents and teachers. More than 200 stories from the Old and New Testaments are retold in simple language appropriate for 4- to 12-year-olds, while remaining faithful to Scripture. Colorful illustrations enhance the text.

***The Big Picture Bible* by David R. Helm** (Crossway Books, 2004)

Rather than simply retelling portions of the Bible, this book presents the big picture—the unified story running through the Old and New Testaments. Twenty-six stories together form parts of this big picture. Simply written and beautifully illustrated, this book teaches children the Bible's whole story so they can begin to appreciate the fulfillment of God's promise to his people.

The Family Reading Bible NIV (Zondervan)

The NIV Family Reading Bible provides a roadmap through Scripture designed for Christian parents looking for a way to read and explore the Bible with their kids. With three easy-to-use reading tracks to accommodate children of any age and insightful questions and fun facts to keep kids engaged, The NIV Family Reading Bible will nurture a family's interest in God's Word.

***The Legacy Path* by Brian Haynes** (Randall House Publications, 2011)

Brian Haynes wants to take parents down the path of intentional spiritual parenting. This book is meant to change the culture by equipping parents to move their children and grandchildren toward life God's way instead of life portrayed as right in the eyes of the world. The reader will find many practical steps explained allowing the destination to be reached.

M•U•S•I•C

Seeds Family Worship Scripture song CD volumes 1-5

This CD series combines songs that use Scripture for lyrics with strongly produced music that is varied in style to create a sound the whole family will love. Each song helps a child (and any adults in the vicinity) memorize one or more Bible verses from the NIV.

W•E•B S•I•T•E•S

www.faithbeginsathome.org: This Web site from Mark Holmen, a national and international consultant and speaker for the “Faith At Home” movement, offers resources designed to equip congregations to make the home the primary place where faith is nurtured.

<http://visionaryfam.com>: The goal of Visionary Family Ministries is to build the church through global reformation of family discipleship. The Web site offers resources to parents, couples, empty nesters and church leaders.

www.famtime.com: Created by individuals experienced in ministry, marriage, parenting and youth and children's ministry, Family Time Training exists to equip and encourage parents to do spiritual training in the home with fun and effective Bible activities.

Following *Christ* in a *post-Christian* world

Stuart Murray talks about Anabaptism, post-Christendom and church planting

Stuart Murray Williams, author of The Naked Anabaptist, was an urban church planter in East London for more than 10 years and is well-versed in mission and evangelism in post-Christendom culture. Murray Williams, chair of the Anabaptist Network with a doctorate in Anabaptist hermeneutics, is also regarded as one of the world's leading advocates for and scholars on contemporary Anabaptism. So when the CL learned that Murray Williams was slated to teach a five-day course at Fresno Pacific Biblical Seminary, we asked Andy Johnson, director of seminary admissions and a freelance writer, to talk with the British strategist and consultant while he was in Fresno, Calif. When Murray Williams, who is from Bristol, England, was denied entry into the U.S. due to visa complications, the interview was conducted via video conferencing.—the editors

CL: What is your experience with North American Mennonite Brethren?

SMW: I have worked with MB people several times: previously teaching in Fresno at the seminary, seven years before in Canada and also through interacting with MB people at various events that have included people of different denominational backgrounds. My perception is that the people who invited me to do things with the Mennonite Brethren have wanted me, as a self-confessed Anabaptist, to highlight some of the reasons why reengaging the Anabaptist vision may be worthwhile.

CL: What are those reasons?

SMW: I think the response starts with an historical reminder of Anabaptism in the 16th century. Historically the tradition represents a strongly missional, evangelistic, radical position that was deeply rooted in Scripture, that was determined to get back to Christianity and that challenged reformers not to be less biblical but more biblical.

In terms of contemporary Anabaptism, there is a degree to which the Anabaptist tradition appeals to many different people across the theological spectrum. I personally appreciate the openness and willingness to question and critique that I find within the Anabaptist tradition rather than simply settling for traditional interpretations. I think that is actually authentic Christian discipleship.



CL: You have written extensively about the end of Christendom and the move into post-Christendom. How do you define that shift?

SMW: Post-Christendom is the culture that emerges as the Christian faith loses coherence within a society that has been definitively shaped by the Christian story. The institutions that have been developed to express Christian convictions decline in influence as well.

CL: How would you encourage Mennonite Brethren people—who might not see Christendom ending in their world—to understand these changes?

SMW: I'm not sure there is an easy way to communicate post-Christendom to people who don't see it in their world. It may be possible for them to see that things are changing elsewhere—in Europe, in Canada and in other parts of Western culture. People in the U.S. can say, "OK, that's what's happening over there," but I'm not sure it really makes sense yet. The difficulty is understanding and interpreting what that might mean for their future.

CL: How can we think of the move from Christendom to post-Christendom, using the Anabaptist perspective, as an opportunity?

SMW: I often talk about the opportunities in the post-Christendom world and of disconnecting from wealth, status, power and violence that have really characterized the Christendom period of Christianity. Yes, there were some good things in Christendom, and it is a sense of loss that it's going. But there was an awful lot of collusion and compromise. Do we really want to continue with that? Can we imagine and envisage a way of being Christian that is more authentic, is more radical, is more faithful and that doesn't involve the compromises over the centuries?

CL: What are the implications for evangelism in a post-Christendom culture?

SMW: It takes time; it's a process. If people are now to tell their own story of conversion, then they talk about process, they talk about journey, they talk about a number of encounters or occasions. That seems to be something we need to listen to carefully if we are to encourage people to have authentic experiences rather than the ones that fit nicely into our theology.

It's also important to recognize that in post-Christendom people start a lot further back than they used to in Christendom in terms of their knowledge base. That has implications for our evangelistic expectations and strategies. It has implications for our church planting, because it is just going to take people longer to work out what they believe. The issue for many of us is, "How do I find a way of telling the Jesus story that actually communicates it?"

I believe we need to find a different way to communicate theology. It's not about watering down the gospel. It is about finding the right communication points. It's contextualizing, which is what cross-cultural missions has always done. What we are doing is applying basic mission principles to a post-Christendom culture.

I think also that perhaps the concern that some of us from the Anabaptist perspective have is that there is too often a separation between conversion and discipleship. The emphasis is so strongly on the evangelistic moment, the conversion experience, rather than seeing that as set within the context of a journey of discipleship.

CL: What does discipleship look like in an Anabaptist, post-Christendom context?

SMW: I think there are two aspects to this. First, Anabaptists have emphasized discipleship strongly. So strongly that at times legalism results, and they are accused by their 16th century contemporaries of returning to "works-righteousness." However, at its best, the Anabaptist tradition understands discipleship as "following Jesus" (nachfolge), which is relational rather than legalistic and as something we do together rather than as isolated individuals—hence "the rule of Christ" (Matt. 18) is an important process for helping us live as disciples.

Second, in post-Christendom there are fewer cultural supports for faith, so we need to develop more resources for discipleship. We need to recognize that we live in a disciple-making culture, catechizing us into individualism, consumerism, etc., so our churches need to be communities of discernment and resistance. Congregational activities may be insufficient. We may need to introduce more intentional practices, such as mentoring, spiritual directors, accountability groups and practices drawn from monasticism.

CL: How do post-Christendom and an Anabaptist perspective intersect in church planting?

SMW: I think we need to look at a 10-year time frame rather than anything shorter. Which I think means we have to move to a different model where we are not talking about fully funding church planters at all; we are looking increasingly to bivocational ministry or church planting through volunteers. That is inevitably going to be slower, because there isn't as much time to put into church planting. But it gives us a chance to plant churches into the kinds of communities where the old model is never going to work.

CL: What are some ways that you would define success in a 10-year church-planting model where the church is planted in a post-Christendom context?

SMW: I think we need to redefine what we mean by "success." I don't think it means for church planters to become nonaccountable; it is important that church planters remain accountable to denomination leaders, funders, mission agencies and other invested people. Many pioneers indicate that they are being assessed by the wrong criteria, that they are being asked the wrong questions. It's less about number of people attending meetings and more about the kinds of relationships, the depth of relationships, with people in the community.

Perhaps better questions are: How are those relationships developing? What level of trust and friendship do you have in the community? What opportunities are there for sharing the gospel? It's much more relational than programmatic.

SOARing into Salt Lake City

MB Mission targets “least reached” in Utah

Participants in this summer's SOAR short-term mission trip will experience cross-cultural ministry to a “least-reached” people group alongside pioneering church planters—all a stone's throw from home in Salt Lake City, Utah.

If “least-reached” is defined by evangelical church attendance, Utah qualifies among the least-reached places in the United States, with Christian church attendance estimates ranging from 1-3 percent. And, of course, church attendance doesn't necessarily mean commitment to Christ.

“The mission field is huge,” says Cory Anderson, pastor of Shadow Mountain Community Church, West Jordan, Utah.

SOAR is a program of MB Mission, the global mission agency of U.S. and Canadian Mennonite Brethren. While the program particularly appeals to youth groups, the 10- to 14-day trips are set in North America or Mexico to provide an easily accessible mission experience for intergenerational teams comprised of church groups, families or individuals.

This will be the first time MB Mission has sent SOAR teams to work alongside the USMB churches in Utah. (The agency did send teams to Salt Lake City for evangelism and outreach during the 2002 Winter Olympics.) In many ways, Salt Lake City provides a perfect fit for MB Mission's vision: “holistic church planting that transforms communities among the least reached.”

The headquarters of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS) is in Salt Lake City, and 70 percent of the Utah population is active in the LDS church. LDS thinking extends beyond church walls to influence family life, politics, moral views, school teachings and more. This saturation of the culture makes ministry here “uniquely challenging,” Anderson says, and offers SOAR participants a cross-cultural setting.

Salt Lake City also offers unique opportunities for SOAR participants to work alongside missionary pioneers who are transforming their community. Paul Robie and his family moved to Salt Lake City in 1998 to plant a Mennonite Brethren church. With the support of the Pacific District Conference (PDC), Laurelglan Bible Church, Bakersfield, Calif., and Mission USA, the church planting arm of USMB, South

Mountain Community Church (SMCC) grew and multiplied.

The Utah MB family of churches now includes SMCC, daughter church Shadow Mountain, and two satellite campuses, Daybreak in South Jordan and The Springs in St. George. SMCC recently celebrated the grand opening of a new 40,000-square-foot facility to accommodate some 3,000 worshippers in two services each week.

At the same time, as if to testify to the difficulty of ministry in this area, the newest church plant, New Hope in West Valley, closed its doors in March.

Anderson says that, even eight years in for Shadow Mountain, “We don't have a sense that we've made it, we've arrived, but that we're constantly engaged in the battle.”

SOAR Utah, scheduled for July 13-23, will begin with an orientation at Big Canyon Christian Adventures and Retreats in the nearby Wasatch Range. There, participants will be equipped spiritually through times of Bible study and prayer. They'll spend time in worship and in team bonding.

Ed Boschman, USMB executive director, and Gary Wall, district minister for the PDC, which includes Utah, will share the church planting vision of the USMB and PDC. “It seems good and right to invite the SOAR participants to see mission as globalocal,” says Boschman.

Participants will also be equipped with a basic understanding of LDS doctrine and culture. Anderson says misunderstanding between Mormons and Christians is growing, with many thinking that Mormons are just a different kind of Christian. But, he says, a closer examination reveals incompatibility: “There are a number of official LDS doctrines that clearly make it a non-Christian church.”

Anderson says that just because someone attends a particular church—whether LDS or Mennonite Brethren—doesn't necessarily mean they know,



Cory Anderson

understand or buy into the church's teaching. He recommends starting with dialogue with individual LDS.

Once in Salt Lake City, SOAR participants will continue their exposure through a tour of the temple area, through testimonies of those who have come out of the LDS church and by attending an LDS service.

Anderson says, "I hope that through the combination of reading about LDS beliefs and the loss of LDS people and seeing the multitude of people here who are LDS, that they will be gripped with a greater sense of 'we need to do something about this.'"

SOAR teams will partner with local MB churches for on-site assignments. While exact details are still being worked out, assignments are designed to provide added visibility in the community for the local churches.

With Shadow Mountain, for example, SOAR participants will help advertise and then provide workers for the church's vacation Bible school and a community carnival. Both are the kind of family-oriented events that are well received in a kid-heavy, family-oriented culture.

Other SOAR participants will work with the Daybreak congregation in events such as vacation Bible school, a basketball clinic, an extreme skateboarding competition and an outdoor concert. Rod Jost, campus pastor at Daybreak, says these "entertainment" venues are aimed at gently increasing exposure in the community and "rubbing shoulders" with those who live in Daybreak's unique, planned community.

"Through entertainment, we've been able to build relationships," Jost says.

SOAR teams will return to Big Canyon for their debrief. Leaders

will guide participants in processing the experience, communicating it with their church and continuing the mission at home. "We want them to know a life of mission," says Mark Thompson, MB Mission's short-term mission coordinator.

Thompson fully expects the SOAR Utah experience to be transformational for the participants. When God is allowed to work through such an experience, he says, participants often have a newfound passion for God, prayer and mission and a new compassion for the lost. Sometimes, they discover a calling to long-term service.

As for transformation in Salt Lake City, Thompson says that participants must go with an attitude of prayer and openness to how God will use them, whether for planting, tilling or harvesting.

"We just want to be a part of God's plan that is leading toward a great harvest," Thompson says. "The results are up to God."

Ultimately, Anderson hopes some SOAR participants will come back to Utah for long-term mission. "We're not done yet," he says of the mission in Utah. Leaders are dreaming of and planning for more church plants in order to reach more people. "We're going to need more people," says Anderson.

Thompson asks for prayer for the host churches as they finalize preparations, for good relationships between participants and the local churches and for wisdom for SOAR program staff.

"And I don't think it's bad to ask for transformation of souls while we're there," he adds.

For more information on SOAR Utah, see www.mbmission.org/soar/utah/overview/. —Myra Holmes

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Blowing stuff up for God's glory

Man Day reclaims godly masculinity, points to mission

On the last Saturday of each March, a group of men gathers on 300 acres near Enid, Okla., to eat red meat and deep-fried Twinkies, blow stuff up and shoot things—all to reclaim godly masculinity and further God's kingdom.

"Man Day" is "a day where men can get together to do 'man stuff' without all the garbage that society tells us has to be there in order for us to have a great time, like beer and half-naked women," says Brent Kroeker, member of Enid (Okla.) MB Church.

Over the last six years, the event has grown to include about 180 men not only from Enid MB and other area churches but also from surrounding states. Many are alumni of Tabor College, the Mennonite Brethren liberal arts college in Hillsboro, Kan.

Through both the activities and the support for a mission in Africa, the day "defines us as men more accurately, as our Creator intended," says Kroeker.

Kroeker and other Man Day organizers—Kenyon Gerbrandt, Jason Klassen, Brian Banz, Mike Yutzy, Eric Flaming, Jeff Husted, Toby Kennedy and Brent Lang—take cues from John Eldredge's *Wild at Heart*. "Aggression is part of the masculine design; we are hardwired for it," writes Eldredge.

Accordingly, Man Day activities include a mechanical bull, an extensive paintball course, college basketball on the big screen and a shooting range that offers a "120-gun buffet." An annual highlight is the Great Pond Race in which salvaged cars are raced around a five-acre pond "until they smoke and die," then set on fire or blown up. Food served throughout the event includes such delicacies as grilled steak, deep-fried Twinkies and Oreos, a crawfish boil and an infamous "bacon bomb."

For some, the day becomes a worship experience. "When men get together and refocus their lives to Scripture and what that means for them as husbands and fathers, that is worship to us," Kroeker says.

While not explicitly evangelistic, Man Day provides low-key opportunities to share Christ and build relationships. Kroeker says, "We hear back every year from men who have no ties to a church family, but will come to Man Day." Copies of *Wild at Heart* are distributed to underscore the purpose of the day.

This year, Man Day included an opportunity to give to Hosanna Institute of the Sahel (HIS). Missionary Yacouba Seydou works with church planting, pastoral training and meeting physical needs—including drilling water wells—in Niger, West Africa. Kroeker serves on the HIS board of directors.

Less than 10 percent of the population in this predominantly-Muslim country has access to clean water, so wells are vital to health. As Yacouba talks with Muslim community leaders about a well, organizes the drilling and returns regularly to check on it, he shares Jesus, the Living Water. "Villages are changed in a matter of a year both physically and spiritually," Kroeker says.

Donations for HIS from this year's Man Day totaled over \$10,000. Those funds will be added to about \$17,000 given by Enid MB Church at Christmas as part of their Advent Conspiracy emphasis to drill new wells.

For more on Man Day, look for it on Facebook. For an example of the work of HIS, search "Molly Water Well" on YouTube. —Myra Holmes

Demolishing cars is a staple at Man Day.



When one plus one equals one

Kingsburg, Traver youth serve side-by-side

How many churches were represented when youth from Kingsburg (Calif.) MB Church and Templo de Oracion, Traver, Calif., joined efforts for a week of service?

Just one, says Traver Pastor Juan Pacheco: "The church of Christ."

About 30 junior and senior high students from the two congregations descended on Traver April 1-5 to give the town a spring cleaning makeover. For that week, they were one in service.

The teens picked up trash, cleaned yards, trimmed palm trees, did minor repairs to the Traver church building and tidied up a cemetery maintained and used by Mennonite Brethren.

It was hard work, to be sure, but laced with fun and motivated by mission, so that the teens worked willingly. "The work was hard and dirty, and I never heard a complaint," says Kingsburg volunteer Steve Wiest.

Youth stayed at the Traver church—girls sleeping inside and boys in tents on the church lawn. "Even those whose homes were just a few blocks away came with the understanding that they were missionaries for a week," says Kingsburg volunteer Melanie Weber.

The Traver congregation cooked breakfasts and dinners; Kingsburg MB provided lunches. Volunteers from both churches supervised.

Spiritual input for the week came from a "Life Journal," which provided Scriptures related to Holy Week and opportunities for the youth to reflect and pray. Some of the youth also worked together on a crucifixion drama that was presented at a community Good Friday service and during the Kingsburg MB Easter service.

By the end of the week, the group had 60 bags of trash and some tired muscles to measure their success. But the most important accomplishments were the relationships that formed. Pacheco says that churches even in the same community are often like family members who retreat to separate rooms in the same house, choosing not to interact or build relationships. "I hate that," he says.

In contrast, these two congregations—from cities only six miles apart—built the kind of unity that pleases God. "God has started the togetherness and he wants to finish with togetherness," Pacheco says. "He wants to reconcile people."

Although the Traver congregation is Hispanic and the Kingsburg congregation is primarily Anglo, cultural differences among the youth were minimal, says Pacheco. All spoke English and had grown up in American culture. "We're a little darker," he says. "That's about the only difference."

As the youth worked, played games, worshiped and interacted in the evenings, they built relationships that already show evidence of sticking. Weber says, "I saw God working on the hearts of the youth as they got to know each other better in a different setting away from phones, Internet, TV and their own busy schedules."

Pacheco is grateful that Kingsburg, the larger of the congregations, provided the funding for the mission week. He calls their input of funds, equipment and willing workers "a little push" for the smaller church's ministry efforts. Traver is a town so small that it doesn't show up on some maps and deliveries can't find Pacheco's address, but he says, "They found us here." —*Myra Holmes*



STEVE WIEST

Youth relax on the grass at Templo de Oracion after a day of yardwork at the Zion Cemetery. Clockwise from top center: Felip Lunas (Traver), Thannia Chavana (Traver), Sara Pacheco (Traver), Diandra Rivera (Kingsburg), William Harris (Kingsburg), Caleb Weber (Kingsburg)

Revamping “norms” tops agenda

Delegates to act on five recommendations

Delegates attending the two morning business sessions at next month’s *Conexion 2012* will take action on five recommendations from the USMB Leadership Board, the group of nine individuals who serve as the USMB decision-making body between biennial delegate conventions.

Topping the list of recommendations is one that revamps the current method of determining how much money each USMB congregation is expected to contribute to national USMB ministries.

“It is my prayer that our commitment to functioning as one family on a mission together will bring us to a place of seeing faithful financial partnership as a privilege,” says Ed Boschman, USMB executive director.

The current funding model bases congregational contributions to national ministries on church membership. If congregations followed this approach, church contributions to USMB would total at least \$1,217,685, based on the suggested minimum of \$35 per member; current USMB membership is 34,791. Currently, congregations contribute about \$420,000 each year to the national ministry budget.

“For 30 years these ‘norms’ worked well for most of our churches,” says Boschman. “But current statistics indicate that only about one-third of our churches support our district and national ministries and less than that are doing so by utilizing the norms system.”

According to Boschman, 95 percent of USMB income comes from only 20 percent of the churches. “Recommended church giving based on ‘membership’ no longer works well,” he says.

Boschman and Jon Wiebe, president and CEO of MB Foundation, developed a proportionate funding model that is based on biblical stewardship concepts and that offers a calculation process that has integrity and a methodology that uses common terminology.

Under the new plan, each USMB congregation will be asked to forward 2.5 percent of their annual income, defined as tithes and offerings received by the congregation to support its general budget.

“We are inviting inactive churches to come on board and partner in our church renewal, church planting and leadership development,” says Boschman. “If the 2.5 percent request is too big a bite, we encourage congregations to start at a smaller percentage.”

Boschman and Wiebe outlined the new model at *Conexion 2010* and presented it to the 2011 Leadership Summit, a two-day meeting of senior staff members and board chairs of USMB ministry partners. They also explained the model to district leaders and convention delegates during the past year.

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While Boschman and Wiebe report that response to the proposed model has been largely positive, there has been some hesitancy.

"Change is hard and comes with a risk," says Wiebe. "However, I believe implementing the new system, along with a renewed commitment among our churches, will lead to enhanced revenue at the national level."

Wiebe says, "My hope is that a common terminology and rationale along with a biblical funding system will create greater understanding and participation by churches."

The national USMB budget includes funding for

- Mission USA, the national church planting and renewal ministry;

- *Christian Leader* and other electronic and print communication efforts;

- the national Board of Faith and Life, charged with providing theological oversight;

- funding for a variety of national events including the quadrennial National Youth Convention and the National Pastor's Orientation and Connection delegate conventions, both held every 2 years;

- and executive costs that include Leadership Board meetings, staff salaries and administrative costs for eight part- and full-time individuals.

The USMB proportionate funding model does not change the suggested "norm" requested from each congregation by USMB partner ministries. These partners include MB Mission, Fresno Pacific Biblical Seminary, Fresno Pacific University, Tabor College and each of the five district conferences.

Revising a long-standing funding model isn't the only significant change *Connection*

2012 delegates will consider. They will also take action on a recommendation to nationalize the North American Confession of Faith.

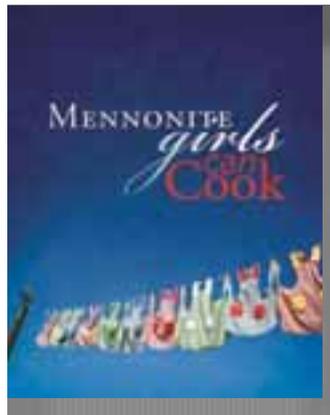
Currently the Canadian Conference of MB Churches and USMB have agreed to jointly own, manage and protect the Confession of Faith. Both Canadian and U.S. leaders have agreed that it is time for the two national conferences to establish independent COF statements, in keeping with the pattern of other national MB conferences around the world.

U.S. BFL chair Larry Nikkel and Brian Cooper, Canadian BFL chair, are working together to finalize a memorandum of understanding on which delegates to the U.S. and Canadian conventions will take action this summer.

The Leadership Board is asking delegates to approve changes to the USMB by-laws. The most significant changes relate to the description of a quorum and the process by which the Leadership Board affirms nominations to boards of USMB ministry partners and inter-Mennonite agencies. The third revision would grant the Leadership Board the authority to appoint two at-large members to its board.

Delegates will be asked to affirm a USMB budget of \$1,018,524, which is \$170,524 more than the current budget. The growth is due to the addition of two new part-time USMB staff members and increased program costs in development, social media and other electronic communication projects. Funds are also slated for a 2013 study conference sponsored by the Board of Faith and Life and church planting and church renewal programs.

Finally, delegates will elect new members to the Leadership Board, Board of Faith and Life, National Youth Committee, MB Mission and Historical Commission and affirm appointments to the MB Foundation board and boards of other partner ministries.—*Connie Faber*



MENNONITE *girls can Cook*

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...about cooking, faith, and German-Russian Mennonite heritage by Lovella Schellenberg of British Columbia. Before long, Lovella had recruited nine other women (mostly Mennonite Brethren) to help her, and the blog grew to over 3 million visits. Since then, this beautiful cookbook, published by Herald Press, has become a national best-seller in Canada.

All author royalties go to feed hungry children through Mennonite Central Committee.

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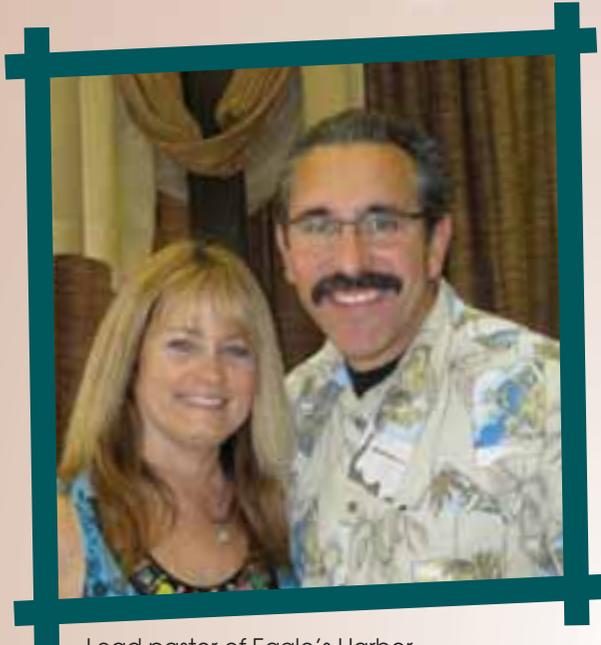


Herald Press

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Mission USA

Celebrating God's Faithfulness



Lead pastor of Eagle's Harbor Community Church in Clovis, Calif., Gary Mejia and wife Cindy.

We are grateful to God for the recent growth of Eagle's Harbor Community Church. Following a location shift to a new ministry venue in Clovis, several people have recently made the decision to become followers of Jesus, and several more have recommitted their lives. Mission USA is helping fund staff for this young church. We give God praise for changed lives!

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- Church Renewal • Transforming Lives

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*To see more...
come to
know Him.*

Mission USA The church planting and renewal arm of the U.S. Conference of MB Churches



Don Morris
Mission USA director

Building “home” churches

I grew up on a farm near Ulysses, Kan., where my family attended the United Methodist Church. We were the last ones to leave almost every Sunday. My mother loved visiting with the other women. She would tell my sometimes-not-so-patient dad, “This is the only time of the week I get to see other people, I have to talk with them!”

After returning to Ulysses in 1978 after four years of college, my wife, Janna, and I began attending Ulysses MB Church and have been firmly Mennonite Brethren since then. Yet I have many fond memories of my childhood church.

I remember eating soup crackers out of a baggie during the worship service when I was little. I’m sure the reason for the crackers was to keep me quiet.

I recall sneaking into some of the nooks and crannies of the church building, finding little hiding places and playing hide-and-seek with the other kids. I remember raiding the church’s refrigerator and sipping communion grape juice.

I remember the stale smell of our rather old “Reverend,” as we called him. This same minister patted my head with water along with about 20 other middle school kids when it was time for our baptism. Side note: When I was 20 years old, I was immersed by Ken Ediger, now pastor at North Oak Community Church in Hays, Kan.

I remember listening to Three Dog Night and Iron Butterfly (people my age will know exactly the rock groups I’m referring to) before heading into the church for handbell practice. Now that was a strange mix of music genres.

One prayer gathering when I was around nine years old became a monumental moment in my life. I was the only child present. As several people prayed, God gripped my heart in a powerful way and I prayed out loud, among the adults, for the first time in my life. I felt an overwhelming sense of God’s presence at that moment, one I will likely never forget.

I also remember rededicating my life to Jesus while in high school, going to the front to kneel and experiencing God’s powerful presence once again.

I remember my parents serving in so many capacities in this church, from hospitality to singing in the choir to teaching Sunday school. They had dozens of middle school-aged young people in their classes. They saw this church as a mission field.

I remember my dad’s funeral when this church was filled to overflowing and the place reverberated with Dad’s favorite hymn, “Blessed Assurance.” After the funeral, one long-time parishioner told me that he had never heard that hymn, or any other hymn, sung louder than at that service. It made me feel really good.

My mom continued to serve in the church until her health began to fail in 2009. For years she decorated (and I mean decorated) for every wedding and banquet held at the church.

Why am I telling you this? Because as we plant Mennonite Brethren churches, we are not only providing new pathways for more people to hear the gospel and become followers of Jesus; we’re also starting someone’s home church. And that’s something huge.

Of 267 teens personally interviewed, in connection with their faith...

12

mentioned “repentance”

Did YOU know?

7

mentioned “resurrection”

4

mentioned “discipleship”

Source: National Study of Youth and Religion (2010)

Omaha church thrives, grows

Stony Brook Church, a USMB church plant started in October 2010, continues its pattern of growth and making a difference in the lives of many people in Omaha, Neb.

Under the leadership of Lead Pastor Chad Stoner and his wife, Elaine, along with Associate Pastor Stephen Humber and his wife, Mary K, the church has tripled in size in 20 months. But the story of growth is so much more than numbers. It is about life-change as Jesus transforms people.

Attendees of the church were recently asked why they are thankful for Stony Brook Church. Their answers highlight that this young church family is learning and serving together:

“Stony Brook is a shelter in a time of storm.”

“It is a place to belong, accepting people for who they are and where they are in their faith journey.”

“I can learn more about Jesus and his love.”

“Stony Brook is unlike any other church (I’ve attended). I hear the truth every single week and am challenged to become more like God. I have learned more in this church community than ever before and my family and I are changed. We’re a part of something BIG....”

“I have seen lives changed and hearts moved toward Christ. I myself am serving and enjoy knowing that I have a part in God’s kingdom work. I have seen miracles happen, which reminds me of how good God is.”

Stephen Humber, previously associate pastor at Parkview MB Church in Hillsboro, Kan., joined the Stony Brook staff last summer. The Humberes have been

immersed in the work of ministering to people who are in various stages in their personal journeys with Jesus, and they love their ministry.

Humber says, “This is hard work, but it is amazing work. We see God working in people’s lives every week. We see young people and adults coming to know Jesus and others who have rediscovered him.”

The Stoners and Humberes met at a church planter assessment in Lakeside, Ohio in 2010. “It was amazing how God orchestrated that. We hit it off immediately and knew right off that God was up to something as he brought us together,” says Stoner.

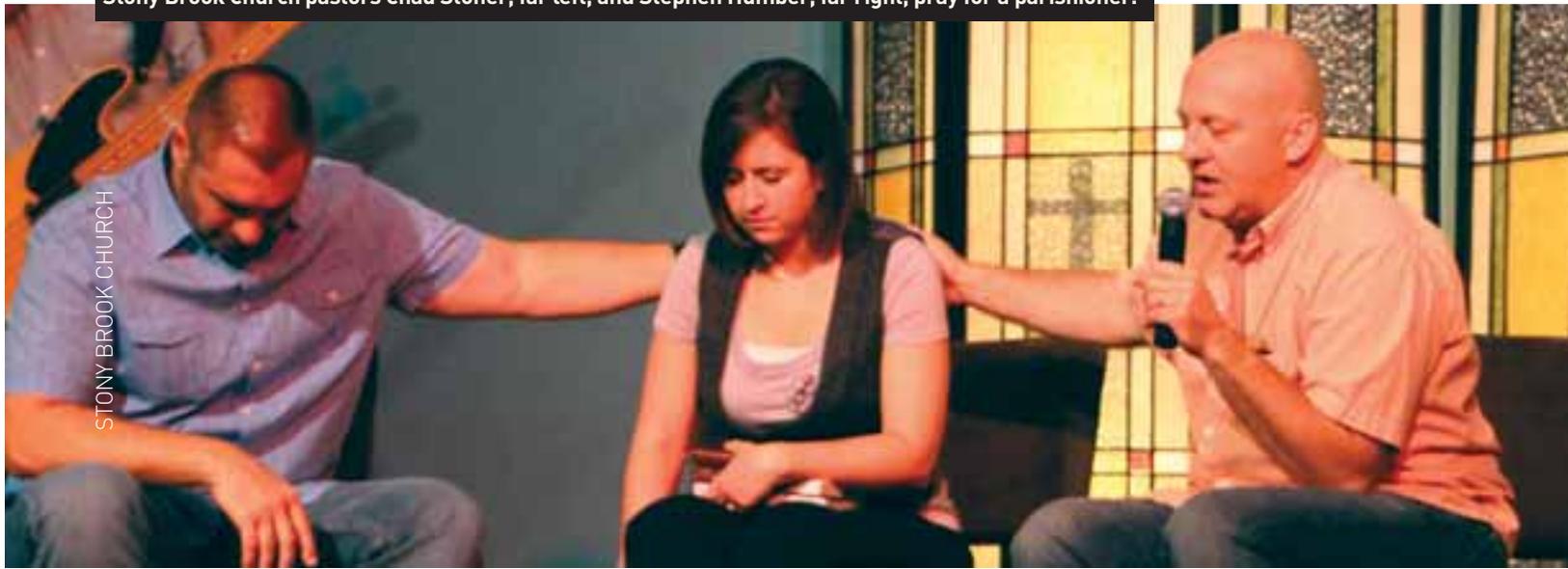
“We have a problem,” says Mission USA Director Don Morris. “Stony Brook is space-challenged. Plans are to begin a third worship service this summer. But even with that, they are quickly running out of space. What a terrific problem to have!”

Not only is the church growing numerically, but also in giving. The church is already 60 percent toward the goal of becoming a self-sustaining congregation.

“Our people have learned very quickly that part of living life with Jesus is being generous,” says Stoner. “We’ve made significant strides in becoming self-sufficient in just the past six months.”

Numerical growth, a generous spirit, individual and family transformations, baptisms, a wonderful atmosphere, intense worship, learning how to be true disciples of Jesus—these are all aspects of Stony Brook Church, a true MB church plant success story.

Stony Brook Church pastors Chad Stoner, far left, and Stephen Humber, far right, pray for a parishioner.





Jon C. Wiebe

Will your will be known?

Hesitate to even admit that this is an article about the need for a will. Knowing that, many of you may be tempted to quit reading right now. Please hang in there with me.

Two things I want you to know right off the top: 1. Having a will is a spiritual process before it is a legal process. 2. Every adult should have a will, and so much more so if you have children.

I will address these two concerns in more depth, but first, a few facts:

- Seventy percent of Americans do not have a written will or estate plan.

- In many families, there are resentment, hurt and wounded relationships that can last for years because of confusion or choices made by family members near, at or after someone's death because of unclear wishes, records or instructions.

- We will all die!

So, let's talk about these two concerns. Most of us think writing our will or trust is just a legal process. But when you consider that God is the owner of all and we are just his stewards, our perspective should change. We should recognize that the purpose of our will is to transfer stewardship of all the things God has entrusted to us. So, it's not only important to have a legal will. It's also important to have a will that is prayerfully designed from a scriptural perspective.

Through a written will, we have the opportunity and responsibility to transfer the stewardship of resources (money, assets, etc.) and responsibilities (business, children, etc.) to others that will, hopefully, continue to manage and use those resources in a God-honoring way. This is a weighty responsibility, and one that shouldn't be taken lightly, whatever your age. The Bible has much to say on this topic. Don't move too quickly to the

counsel of an attorney, without first seeking the wisdom of God.

Secondly, every adult needs a will or an estate plan. The need isn't based on your asset size or financial situation. Rather, it is founded on the fact that God's word instructs us to be wise stewards and planning for death is a necessary part of stewardship. For parents with minor children, choosing the right guardians is the most important decision you'll make as you develop an effective estate plan and transfer stewardship responsibilities. After all, your children are the greatest treasure over which God has given you stewardship.

Quickly, here are three key factors for consideration when choosing guardians: First, and most important, is to choose Christian guardians. You need to be sure that your children continue to be brought up in his Word and in his ways, so that prayerfully they will end up in heaven with you.

Secondly, you might want to choose a Christian couple that lives nearby. This is usually not a critical factor if your children are under age 10

or if you haven't lived in your community for a long time. However, if your children are in their teens and you've been in your community for a long time, it might be a good idea to keep them in the same community.

Lastly, consider choosing guardians who are also in the

"raising children" mode of life.

Take the time to prepare a will. Prayerfully seek God's direction, and let your will for transferring stewardship be known.

Jon C. Wiebe is president and chief executive officer of MB Foundation.





Carmen Andres

Retelling God's story right

When *The Hunger Games* hit theaters, John Granger posted “Gamesmakers Hijack Story: Capitol Wins Hunger Games Again” on his blog (www.hogwartsprofessor.com). Granger points out how director Gary Ross subtly tweaks the story to be sympathetic to filmmakers’ art and Hollywood—things of which the novel is critical. Essentially, Ross changes the story, retelling it through a lens affected by his own experience and perspective.

As I read the article, I wondered how conscious Ross was of why he made those changes. Then I started to consider it more personally: How do we retell our own stories? And how aware are we of why we retell it the way we do?

I encountered this issue when I started going through children’s Bibles and child-age theological material with my kids. I was bothered by how some of the individual stories are retold (or completely left out) and the way this affects the Bible, God’s Story, as a whole. I also was bothered by overt threads of doctrine. Often, the doctrines themselves weren’t wrong, but they were limiting.

Salvation was explained as a matter of forgiveness of sins but little if anything was included about God’s transforming love, the restoration of our relationships not only with God but each other, the power God gives us to live new lives as individuals and a community and how to work with God in our transformation. Granted, these are big ideas for little minds, but then so is the justification theory of atonement that played throughout the material.

I do this too. We all do. How we understand and retell God’s Story is affected by a wide range of things, from our own walk with God and those who mentored us to the theology and doctrine we pick up along the way. Most of the time, we aren’t

even aware of how our understanding of the Story is shaped until something causes us to examine it.

Which is why it is so important to constantly return to God’s Story itself.

It’s been said that modern generations have the most access to the Bible, yet we are the most biblically illiterate. We’re busy. It’s easier to read an article or listen to a sermon than go to God’s Word ourselves. When we actually do read the Bible, we tend to skip over aspects we find hard to understand or difficult to deal with.

God’s Story doesn’t fit into a neat box. It is wild and alive. It is always revealing, a sharp sword that cuts through the veils of the worldviews we’ve created. But we need to be constantly confronted with the *whole* Story because it will challenge our ideas of how the world works, who we are and, most importantly, who God is. In *A Grief Observed*, C.S. Lewis records how God strips away false beliefs and understandings to reveal himself: “Not my idea of God, but God.” God constantly confronts us with our limited beliefs and perspectives because he wants to be known for who he is.

Returning to the Bible, God’s Story, is one of the ways we can work with him to do that. And it’s important that we constantly examine our beliefs and perspectives, because what we understand our story to be and who we understand God to be is what we will retell to others. And as God’s people, it’s important that we work with him to get that right.

Carmen Andres, a former Christian Leader editor, is a freelance writer living in Alexandria, Va. In her blog, “In the Open Space: God and Culture,” Andres writes about God and faith as she encounters popular culture, movies, television, books and events.

The same weekend as *The Hunger Games* was released, *October Baby* (Provident Films) surprised the film industry with a No. 8 debut. The movie, from first-time feature directors Jon and Andrew Erwin, is a story of forgiveness that Christian moviegoers are embracing. The pro-life film, rated PG-13, follows 19-year-old Hannah as she learns of her adoption following a botched abortion and embarks on a road trip with her college friends to find answers and locate her birth mother.

re: movie



m i l e s t o n e s

BAPTISM/MEMBERSHIP

Jimmy Simonian, Jennifer Simonian, Adam Simonian, Allison Sugimoto, Ashley Sugimoto, Keila Collin, Preston Hajik, Melissa Reimer, Joey Graybill, Anna Nippoldt, Dwight and Verna Roberts, Chris and Sandy Long, Frances Unruh, Carla DeAlmeida and Rodrigo DeAlmeida were received as members of **Reedley (Calif.) MB Church** April 15.

Mark Huber was baptized and received as a member of **Pine Acres MB Church, Weatherford, Okla.**, March 18. James Dowell, Vinita Dowell and Christina Dowell were also received as members. Phillip Javorsky was baptized April 15.

Rodney and Pam Jessup, Dorothy Dahl, Ernest and Esther Wiens and Steve Dalton were recently received as members of **Hillsboro (Kan.) MB Church**.

Brittney Bell, Breanne Dubberke and Jessica Quinn were baptized and received as members April 8 at **North Fresno (Calif.) MB Church**. Dave Bertalotto, Kevin and Rhonda Dueck, Jeanne Heinrichs-Suhr, Tamara Fritschle-Olson, Fabian Ortiz and Ivanna Rouppet were also received as members. Mel and Dorothy Thiessen were received as members April 15.

Wyatt Dickinson, Robert Runge, Emily Runge, Brian Runge, Paul Britton, Gabby Taylor, Allison Brunk and Tobin Simkins were baptized Feb. 26 at **Koerner Heights Church, Newton, Kan.**

Lynley Anderson and John and Katie Oldenkamp were baptized March 25 at **Laurelglen Bible Church, Bakersfield, Calif.**

Ron and Mandy Hale, Jason Machado, Angelina Machado, Faith Kodur, Noah Kubar, Elijah Nichols, Monica Ramirez, Leo Ramirez Jr., Isaak Reimche, Jackie Reimche and Michael Smith were baptized and received as members of **Dinuba (Calif.) MB Church** March 25.

Renita Terrell, Steven Terrell, Bill Plucker, Cheryl Plucker, Dawn Kasselmann, Rynell Schrag, Christine Schrag, Diana Wolff, Joanne Lehr, Jana Schantz, Aaron Schantz, Rebecca McKanna, Joyce Fortner, Nathan Lind, Richard Oelze, Marilyn Oelze, Robert Ritter and Cindy Ritter were baptized and received as members of **First MB Church, Wichita, Kan.**, this spring.

Gwen Brown, Rebekah Dow, Jessica Fredericks, Byungeun Pak, Yu Eunah Pak, Kennedy Porter and Dan Manners were baptized at **Memorial Road MB Church, Edmond, Okla.**,

April 15. Gwen Brown, Rebekah Dow, Jessica Fredericks, Byungeun Pak, Yu Eunah Pak, Kennedy Porter, Rebecca Brown, Donna Grossman, Luke Jost, Chuck and Karen Merrick, Eulala Pegrum and Jerry Stokes were received as members.

Jon and Jessica Handy, Bev Moore, Loyd and Hope Hall, Jacob Khoutsavanh, Derek Khoutsavanh, Rassanie Channita-Myrassamy, Lizzie Arechiga and Evelyn Garcia were received as members of **Butler MB Church, Fresno, Calif.**, April 8.

Mike and Cheryl Spinelli, Isaac and Lynette Mayhew and Teddy Kidane were received as members April 15 of **Bethany MB Church, Fresno, Calif.**

Jeremiah Dunn and Hannah Weber were baptized and received as members of **Kingsburg (Calif.) MB Church** April 8. Steve and Amy Faris and Jeannie Wiest were also received as members.

Debbie Darrow was received as a member of **Garden Park Church, Denver, Colo.**, March 4.

Emma Lightner was baptized March 25 at **Garden Valley Church, Garden City, Kan.** Jonathan and Christine Lightner were received as members.

CELEBRATIONS

Christ Community Church, Sioux Falls, SD, dedicated their newly expanded meeting space April 15, followed by a meal. Before carpet was laid in the new worship center, attendees were invited to write Scripture verses and messages on the floor.

WORKERS

El Faro Community Church, Reedley, Calif., has called Joe Villalobos as their new pastor.

Tim Hardy resigned his position on the pastoral staff of **Laurelglen Bible Church, Bakersfield, Calif.**, at the end of March.

Al Magnuson is serving as interim pastor at **Henderson (Neb.) MB Church**.

Paul Klassen retired as pastor of **Memorial Road MB Church, Edmond, Okla.**, at the end of May.

Marlin Hielt has accepted the call as lead pastor at **Fairview (Okla.) MB Church**. He has been serving as pastor of discipleship and equipping at **Reedley (Calif.) MB Church** and will conclude his service there July 15.

Darrin and Staci Eddy were installed Feb. 26 as the associate pastoral couple at **Zoar MB Church, Inman, Kan.**

El Faro marks 50 years of ministry

El Faro Community Church, Reedley, Calif., marked 50 years of ministry with a weekend celebration April 28-29. Reaching children and youth has been at the core of El Faro's mission since 1962 when Anna Schlichting began gathering neighborhood children for Sunday school under her family's backyard walnut tree. Along with her husband, Arnold Schlichting, she laid the groundwork for this ministry to Reedley's Hispanic families.

The neighborhood around El Faro houses many Spanish-speaking migrant farm workers who often are in the area for only one or two harvest seasons. Former pastor and current El Faro moderator Horacio Renteria says that families in transit are under stress. Parents find comfort in seeing their children involved with the healthy activities like kids club and the church-sponsored soccer team. (See "Here Comes El Faro" in the *Christian Leader* August 2011.)

According to Renteria, the anniversary is an occasion for the congregation to look to the future as well as the past. "God has placed us in a migrant community and we may only have people for a couple of years, so what goals do we want to achieve with them in that time?"



Churches celebrate buildings

Two USMB congregations recently celebrated new facilities. South Mountain Community Church, Draper, Utah, has a new 40,000-square-foot, \$6.2 million building that will accommodate some 3,000 worshippers in two services each week. First services in the new facility were March 18. Ethiopian Christian Fellowship in Sacramento, Calif., dedicated their larger facility March 31. Their new campus includes 12 buildings, a 300-seat sanctuary, plentiful offices and teaching rooms, plus seven acres of land for a playground, parking and recreation. Representatives from MB Foundation, the Pacific District Conference (PDC) and other Ethiopian congregations were on hand for the dedication.

Making beautiful music

Harmony—both musical and relational—will be the goal when Neighborhood Church, Visalia, Calif., offers a music camp June 25-29. The camp is structured like a vacation Bible school, except that the children spend their time learning songs that will be incorporated into a musical to be performed July 1. Participants will include both church children and students from nearby Houston School, an elementary school in an underprivileged area. “We are continually trying to teach our NC kids about loving their neighbors, and we are continually trying to build relationships with Houston School students, so we felt this was a great way to accomplish both,” says Jen Fulks, children’s pastor.

Ebenfeld MB Church, Hillsboro, Kan., commissioned Heidi Schmidt and Stacy Kuhns for mission service in Peru during the service April 1.

Jesse McNaughton is the new associate pastor in charge of Impact Groups at **The Bridge Bible Church, Bakersfield, Calif.**

Jim Holm was installed May 6 as half-time pastor of the Faith Community congregation of **Butler MB Church, Fresno, Calif.**

Jeremiah Betron has announced his resignation as pastor of **Bethel MB Church, Yale, SD.** He and his wife, Amanda, will be taking a position in Texas this summer.

DEATHS

Bergman, Norma Jost Plett, 85, Shafter, Calif., member of Shafter MB Church, died April 15, 2012. Parents: Jacob R.M and Mary (Friesen) Jost. Spouses: Bennie Plett, deceased; Leland Bergman. Children: Dee Rob, Michael Plett, Lynn Plett; seven grandchildren; 11 great-grandchildren. Stepchildren: Kathy Handel, Joel Bergman; eight step-grandchildren; 14 step-great-grandchildren.

Brucks, Elsie, 89, Winnipeg, Man., member of MB churches in Kansas, British Columbia and Manitoba, died March 27, 2012. Spouse: Henry, deceased. Children: Florence Neufeld, Naomi Mitchell, Paul Brucks, Joanne Schmidt, 13 grandchildren and eight great-grandchildren.

Dodds, Del, 85, Fresno, Calif., member of North Fresno MB Church, died March 5, 2012. Parents: Homer and Henrietta Dodds. Spouse: Thea Menze. Children: Randy, Ron; five grandchildren.

Fast, Martha Kroeker, 86, Hillsboro, Kan., member of Parkview MB Church, Hillsboro, died Feb. 10, 2012. Parents: M.A. and Helen Kroeker. Spouse: David E. Fast. Children: Paul, Eddie Morales; eight grandchildren.

Franz, Alma, 93, Inman, Kan., member of Zoar MB Church, Inman, died March 12, 2012.

Frantz, Roger L., 85, Shafter, Calif., member of Shafter MB Church, died Feb. 24, 2012. Parents: Ferdinand A. and Anna Frantz. Spouse: Katherine Nikkel. Children: Tom, Melissa Braun, Sam; 11 grandchildren; seven great-grandchildren.

Hiebert, Bernice Buller, 89, Hillsboro, Kan., of Ebenfeld MB Church, Hillsboro, died March 24. Parents: Ben and Anna Buller. Spouse: Louis Hiebert, deceased. Children: Nancy Mansour, Lyn, Anita Luke; 11 grandchildren.

Just, Hulda, 101, Inman, Kan., member of Zoar MB Church, Inman, died March 23, 2012.

Martens, Franklin H., 89, Shafter, Calif., member of Shafter MB Church, died Feb. 15, 2012. Parents: Frank R. and Katherine (Penner) Martens. Spouse: Laura Schafer, deceased. Children: Franklin, Beth, Jane Collier; one granddaughter; one great-granddaughter.

Neufeld, Gladys Willems, 92, Reedley, Calif., member of Kingsburg (Calif.) MB Church, died April 4, 2012. Parents: George and Anna Willems. Spouse: Daniel A. Neufeld, deceased. Children: Paul, Phyllis Byers, Joyce Braun, Christine Wall; four grandchildren; 10 great-grandchildren.

Prieb, Esther, 89, Hillsboro, Kan., member of Hillsboro MB Church, died March 1, 2012. Parents: Ben B. and Martha (Dyck) Eitzen. Spouse: Jona Prieb. Children: Richard, Joyce, Steven, Keith; eight grandchildren; eight great-grandchildren.

reaching in DISCIPLESHIP

Dinuba (Calif.) MB Church hosted a “Training and Equipping Workshop on Prayer” March 23-24, led by Mike Evans, director of Wholeness Ministries.

Shorelife Community Church, Capitola, Calif., hosted an “Introduction to Crisis and Disaster Response” seminar April 28. Topics included: what constitutes a crisis, why preparation is necessary, what to expect, how to help those traumatized by disaster and how to build a crisis and disaster response team.

About 30 attendees of the deaf congregation of **Laurelglen Bible Church, Bakersfield, Calif.**, participated in a full-day workshop March 31 on evangelism presented by deaf Evangelism Explosion staff. The LBC deaf congregation is participating in a teaching video by Evangelism Explosion in American Sign Language for a global audience.

FELLOWSHIP

April 25 was “Kite Day” at **The Heart, Tulsa, Okla.** Children received free kites, and the congregation went to a local park after the service to fly kites and share a picnic.

Women at **Bethel MB Church, Yale, SD**, enjoyed tea and a style show May 6.

About 80 couples were honored March 18 when **First MB Church, Wichita, Kan.**, hosted

a celebration for couples connected to the church married 50 years or more.

Women from **North Fresno (Calif.) MB Church** held a seaside retreat March 2-4.

Singles at **Neighborhood Church, Visalia, Calif.**, were invited to an evening event called "Dinner for 51" May 6.

A women's spring tea April 22 at **Dinuba (Calif.) MB Church** featured bridal fashions from various decades.

Pine Acres Church, Weatherford, Okla., has begun a new ministry to those 50-plus, called "The 8-Tracks." Spring plans for the group include a movie night, a speaker on spring yard work, a day trip to Oklahoma City and hosting an ice-cream social for the whole congregation.

April 27 was a "Gift and Talent" night at **North Park Community Church, Eugene, Ore.**

A men's "Cruise In" April 22 at **Garden Valley Church, Garden City, Kan.**, included "men and boys and their toys," food and a headlight restoration demonstration.

Women from **Shadow Lake Community Church, Papillion, Neb.**, held a children's clothing swap April 6. Participants brought their gently-used and outgrown children's and maternity clothing

and exchanged it for what they needed. Leftover items were donated to charity.

April 13 was a night out at the local fairgrounds for men and boys from **Birch Bay Bible Community Church, Blaine, Wash.**, featuring motorcycles, cars, aviation, wood carving, fishing, hunting, air soft and more.

Women at **Stony Brook Church, Omaha, Neb.**, gather once a month for games, crafts, art, food and fellowship in a new ministry called Out With the Ladies (OWL). Men also gather monthly for "Fire Time," around an actual fire.

reaching out

LOCALLY

Senior high youth from **Heritage Bible Church, Bakersfield, Calif.**, spent the first week of April serving poor and transient farm workers through vacation Bible school, yard work, home repairs and street witnessing.

North Park Community Church, Eugene, Ore., is planning a June 16 block party, in cooperation with a Neighborhood Association and the local elementary school, to celebrate the end of the school year.

Volunteers from **Neighborhood Church, Visalia, Calif.**, joined those from several other area churches April 15 for "Serve Visalia," a day of community service.

North Oak Community Church, Hays, Kan., volunteers will serve international refugees in Oklahoma City, Okla., for a church family mission trip June 23-29.

Volunteers from **Mountain View Community Church, Fresno, Calif.**, visited neighbors March 31, offering a potted plant and prayer. Preparation for the event included a 24-hour prayer and fast.

Salem MB Church, Freeman, SD, invited children age three through sixth grade to an Easter egg hunt, gospel presentation and simple meal April 7.

The Amor y Fe congregation of **Butler MB Church, Fresno, Calif.**, held a three-night evangelistic outreach in March.

GLOBALLY

Ebenfeld MB Church, Hillsboro, Kan., collected new and used children's books this spring, to be donated to children in Ethiopia through the organization Ethiopia Reads.

CLEARINGHOUSE

Job Openings

Local Church: Senior Pastor: Garden Valley Church, a Mennonite Brethren church in the diverse community of Garden City in southwest Kansas, is seeking a senior pastor to lead a group of approximately 150 believers. Our church has a heart for the community in which God has placed us, and a heart for missions, the world in which God has placed others. Send resumes and inquires to: Search Committee, c/o Garden Valley Church, 1701 N. 3rd Street, Garden City, KS 67846.

Agency: Writer/copy editor: MB Mission is seeking a writer/copy editor for a part-time contract starting August 20, 2012 in Abbotsford, BC. The ideal candidate is a creative, organized thinker who thrives on a team, meets deadlines and can work on multiple projects. Please forward resume, a recent writing sample and a cover letter to Dianne Schroeder at diannes@mbmission.org.

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. The advisor will encourage charitable giving through current giving, estate planning and lifetime gift plans and provide customer service in all other areas of MBF work. 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) [2/2]

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Many of us would say that we wish we had the **power** to make a difference. Yet together, as a Mennonite Brethren family, we are making a difference. Lives are being changed in Sioux Falls, Salt Lake City, Phoenix, Fresno and yes, even in Hillsboro, Corn, Reedley and elsewhere. Together, we are making a difference.

You also have the **power** to make a tremendous difference through a significant act of generosity, expressed through your **will** or **trust**. At death, many of us have the opportunity to make our largest single gift ever to support Kingdom work. Leaving a gift to USMB would make a significant difference in the lives of future Mennonite Brethren.

You have the **power** to make a difference... **WILL POWER**. Would you consider leaving a legacy for the next generation of MBs? Now that's **WILL POWER!**

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