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THE MAGAZINE OF U.S. MENNONITE BRETHREN

FEBRUARY / MARCH 2014

from the editor



“

Each of us likely can think of a situation—and maybe more than one—in which seeing with God’s eyes and responding with God’s generous grace is easier said than done.

”



Connie Faber
Editor

Jill was driving the speed limit—75 mph—as she traveled Interstate 35 between Wichita and Salina, Kan., and yet cars, trucks and semis were consistently passing her. It did feel like she was just crawling along, and so she began driving faster. When the speedometer registered 100 mph and most other drivers were still passing her, Jill knew something was wrong. The car was running just fine, she concluded, so what was the problem? When she arrived home and told her husband the story, he quickly solved the mystery. Earlier in the day when she had filled the gas tank and reset the trip odometer, Jill had inadvertently changed the speedometer from miles to kilometers. Which meant that in order to reach the speed limit, Jill should have been driving at what appeared to be 140 mph.

Jill’s experience reminds me that appearances can be deceiving, and that’s the message that threads its way through the three articles in this issue’s feature section. It doesn’t matter if I have a genetic condition that results in cognitive delays or problems with attention, impulsivity and overactivity—I am made in God’s image and in his eyes I am priceless. I may own a very nice car, have a high-paying job and plenty of money, but what I have in the bank or parked in the garage won’t alter the way God sees me. Whether rich or poor or somewhere in between, I am God’s chosen, holy and beloved child.

Given God’s amazing love for us, our dealings with others, whether they are children or adults, should be guided by two things: seeing others with God’s eyes and consequently treating everyone—regardless of appearance, disability, faith, gender or race—with kindness and respect. Each of us likely can think of a situation—and maybe more than one—in which seeing with God’s eyes and responding with God’s generous grace is easier said than done.

I teach grade school kids Wednesday nights at my church. My co-teacher and I lead three groups of kids in a 15-minute, sometimes noisy, activity that reinforces our Bible story. During one recent Wednesday night a student took a flying leap and threw himself spread-eagle onto the classroom table. I was frustrated, and he knew it. I talked to him—graciously, I hope—about his behavior, but could I have done more to reinforce the fact that God loves us all even when we mess up?

I pray that we will be sensitive to God’s nudges—to see with God’s eyes—as we work with our congregation’s children, interact with our families, friends and colleagues and encounter strangers whose appearance tempts us to see them as less than God’s chosen, holy and beloved children.

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Hungry for hope

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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

Michelle Hamilton



Several years ago when someone said, “Single people are more selfish than married people,” I was offended. As an “older” single, I did not consider myself any more selfish than the next person. Years later I think I understand the comment better, although I would word it differently. Living by yourself can make being selfish more likely because you don’t have someone living with you 24/7 that helps refine your personality and smooth the jagged edges.

Before getting married, I lived on my own with no roommates for 12 years. When you live by yourself you don’t always see the rough edges that need to be evened out. Or you know about them, but working on those rough edges isn’t a priority since they don’t bother anyone. I’ve been married for three months now, and I am reminded of the need to smooth these rough edges whether or not anyone even says anything about them. I have learned more about myself over these past months than I probably have for several years. Unfortunately, I am not proud of everything I have learned.

It isn’t a new concept, but it is one that I now face: When you are married you don’t always get your way. Deep, isn’t it! It doesn’t mean the “other” ways are wrong—they just aren’t yours. I have learned that I like control and my way more than I thought. Psalm 51:10 says, “Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.” When one is married, thinking of the other person and what pleases him or her is a good and necessary trait. Coming up with an “our way” instead of “my way” makes for less frustration on both sides of the relationship.

I pray God will continue to purify my heart so it’s less about me and how I’ve always done things and more about my God and my husband and how we can do things better together. If I am willing for God to purify me and make me into the person he needs me to be, the rough edges will be smoothed and the selfishness will vanish. God’s traits will be left and his qualities will be consistent throughout all areas and aspects of my life.

To some degree I was probably offended years ago by this person’s comment about selfishness because deep down I knew I should work on my own selfishness, whether other people saw it or not. Whatever stage of life you are in, I challenge you to surround yourself with people who will help refine you into the person God wants you to be. He wishes for you to be a person with a pure heart and steadfast spirit. I am willing; are you?

Michelle Hamilton has been the youth pastor at Bible MB Church, Cordell, Okla., for 12 years and was married to Matthew Hamilton on Sept. 28, 2013.

“Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.” Psalm 51:10

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Ulysses, Kan., USMB churches
See story on page 17

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(from the executive director)



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Why fund USMB ministries?

Have you ever wondered: “Why are we budgeting all this money for our USMB relationships?” Given that fewer than half of USMB member churches are financial partners in our national ministry initiatives, one can assume that the question has been raised.

The request that churches support USMB with 2.5 percent of general offerings still leaves 97.5 percent of the offerings for other ministry investment. When the district conference request for support is added in and the support for MB Mission, the local Mennonite Brethren college or university, the seminary and some other cousin ministry partners, it may well add up to a tithe of offerings. Does that seem good and right for a local church budget? Still, a key question could be, “But what does that investment get us?”

In the summer of 2009, we asked USMB pastors to advise us of how we might best serve them and their local churches. Seventy-six of our pastors weighed in to say we should prioritize church planting partnerships (85 percent), leadership and coordination of national ministries (72 percent), theological oversight (57 percent), communication/CL magazine (53 percent), leadership development (47 percent) and church renewal and refocusing (46 percent).

From a national Leadership Board and staff point of view, it is important to us to make sure that we are adding value, beyond the assumed legal status and spiritual covering, to our five districts and all of our local churches. So what are we doing?

Through MUSA, we lean in hard to participate in church planting partnerships that provide an effective context for the spirit of Christ to transform lives. We make available various ministries under the LEAD (Leadership Education And Development) banner to resource church pastors and lay leaders for increased health and kingdom effectiveness. We team with Ministry Quest and district internship initiatives to develop leaders through mentoring and discipleship.

We invite pastors new to USMB to experience a National Pastors Orientation for initiation and networking connection.

We ramped up our communication by effectively redesigning the *Christian Leader* and making it available online in concert with our social media initiatives through a significant and active website. We provide theological oversight for our constituency through the service of our national Board of Faith and Life. And we serve in leading our family on our life transformation kingdom mission through the coordination of our various USMB agencies and institutions.

Over the years, I have heard several descriptions of this ministry partnership opportunity. Sometimes it's been described as an “annoying tax.” Other times a “member obligation.” Or graciously, “a family responsibility” or even more graciously, “a family privilege.” On a few occasions, “a partnership privilege.”

In my earlier years as a church pastor, it always seemed good and right to demonstrate loyalty to and support for USMB and its ministries. After all, this same USMB family had given us birth and was still providing us status and covering. It always seemed right to me and to our lead teams to do our part to ensure that we appropriately supported our spiritual parents and partner ministry agencies.

Another thing that I noticed was that there were times when it was clear to me that I was the gate keeper in those considerations. I really hadn't envisioned I was signing up for that role, but it was clear that it was a reality, and quite honestly, it was a privilege.

The National Ministries Fund (NMF) needs and deserves support from all USMB churches. We are deeply grateful for all our faithful support partners. If your church is not in on that privilege, please prayerfully reconsider that position, asking God for his direction. Your investment will help move us along in our mission to see lives transformed.

From a national Leadership Board and staff point of view, it is important to us to make sure that we are adding value, beyond the assumed legal status and spiritual covering, to our five districts and all of our local churches.



Joe L. Brown

My pile of rocks

Every year the Pacific District Conference Board of Youth Ministry sponsors a retreat at Lake Mead in Nevada. It's a great opportunity to grow in friendships, relax and recharge. Every year I go into the hills and stack rocks as an altar to God, sometimes working on an altar still standing from a previous year, other times building a new one. Recently I asked God why. His reply: "You're building a youth ministry."

Why would God compare youth ministry to an altar—a pile of rocks?

An altar requires a location that is a fairly flat and open space with plenty of rocks nearby. It's really nice if it's a shady, comfortable spot with a gentle breeze. But that's not always where God leads. Sometimes he leads to a place where I'll have to hunt for rocks, even digging some out of the dirt. Other times I find myself in a desolate spot with flies or mosquitos all around tempting me to find a better place. I have to constantly remind myself that this place is exactly where God wants me.

Youth ministry also needs a proper location. While God sometimes leads us into comfortable settings with plenty of encouragement, he more often leads us into difficult situations where kids are dirty and hard to attract and where no one seems to understand what we're doing. Again, the best thing to do is to persevere and trust in him.

When building an altar, rocks need to be placed strategically and intentionally. I first lay a circle of larger, square rocks as a base. Then I look for other shapes and sizes, stacking one upon another, higher and higher. Sometimes even small rocks are perfect for certain places. I find that it's good to take time to observe and know what is needed and then to take time to find the rocks that will fit.

In order to build a youth ministry you need to take time to identify specific needs, then determine which students and volunteers will best fit those needs. One student might be just right for leading worship while

another might be just right for setting up chairs. Strategically placing the right people in the right places will build a great ministry.

Finally, the altar ought to stand on its own and last a long time. Altars made by saints of old stood for ages, testifying of God's power and guidance from generation to generation. However, sometimes as I place the final rocks, the whole thing tumbles to the ground. Many times I dismantle and start over. It might end up looking very different than the first or second attempt. Those who are willing to persevere build the best altars.

Youth ministries should also outlast tough times and stormy weather. We must be willing to remain, rebuild and reinforce. And multiple generations should remember how God met them at this youth group. Only those who persevere will build a ministry for the ages.



After 30-plus years I frequently see former students, and they often tell me that youth group made the single most significant impact in their lives. Ministries are monuments to the glory of God. They are significant markers in the story of God and his plan, highlighting where we've been and providing direction for where we're going.

And it seems like just a pile of rocks.

Joe L. Brown is the youth pastor at Heritage Bible Church in Bakersfield, Calif.

Leadership Board approves conservative budget

The USMB Leadership Board has approved a 2014 budget of \$751,380, a 19.29 percent reduction over the 2012-13 fiscal year. Leadership Board chair Steve Schroeder describes the budget, approved in mid-December, as conservative. "This budget represents a strong commitment to maintaining current staff and ministries, to fulfilling our obligations and to doing so in a fiscally sound way so that we don't end the year in the red," says Schroeder.

While the budget reductions impact all USMB ministries, new projects—specifically new church plants—are on hold. Funding was also reduced to three USMB partner ministries—National Youth Committee, Ministry Quest and Kindred Productions—that have income sources in addition to the national conference. The 2014 budget does include ongoing funding for the nine church plant initiatives begun in 2012 and 2013 and for helping district-initiated church plants by funding assessment and training for new church planters and for USMB staff to lend their expertise to project teams.

The 2014 income budget reduces staff fundraising. Current executive director Ed Boschman, who is retiring in July 2014, has been responsible for fundraising as much as \$125,000 annually and has been successful in doing so. However, Schroeder says the Leadership Board is reviewing the executive director's job description to determine if this is an expectation that will continue. The Board will consult with MB ministry leaders and district and local church leaders as it develops a new job description for the executive director. —Connie Faber

PDC delegates celebrate 100th anniversary

The Pacific District Conference (PDC) celebrated its 100th anniversary when it met Nov. 8-9, at Reedley (Calif.) MB Church, the site of the first PDC gathering in 1912. Some 122 delegates represented 43 of the

district's 121 churches, including six new church plants begun since the last convention in 2012. In a significant restructuring, delegates approved a proposal to combine the Youth Ministries and Leadership boards into a single new Board of Next Generation Leadership. In other business, delegates affirmed new leaders and approved a fairly flat budget for the coming year. Read the full story at www.usmb.org/pdc-100th-anniversary. —Kathy Heinrichs Wiest



STEVE WIEST

Don Enns was recognized at the PDC convention for his contributions to church planting.

CDC delegates encouraged to be light

A streamlined Central District Conference (CDC) convention was held Nov. 15-16 at Lincoln Hills Bible Church, Sioux Falls, SD. Jules Glanzer, president of Tabor College, and Terry Brensinger, vice president of Fresno Pacific University and dean of Fresno Pacific Biblical Seminary, were the keynote speakers. In convention business, delegates approved financial assistance for Ethiopian Christian Fellowship, Sioux Falls, approved the proposed budget, agreed to a ratification of Tabor College by-laws and elected new leaders. Full report available at www.usmb.org/cdc-convention. —Ron Wuertz



RON WUERTZ

New CDC leaders are commissioned for service.

Conexion 2014 attractions abound

Santa Clara, Calif., the site of Conexion 2014, this summer's USMB gatherings, was chosen for great amenities and area attractions. All events will be held at the Santa Clara Marriott. Hotel amenities include Starbucks coffee, a heated outdoor pool, whirlpool



and sauna, fitness center, complimentary bicycles and on-site tennis and basketball courts. Great America Theme Park is located adjacent to the hotel. Other area attractions include Tech Museum of Innovation, Pier 39, Aquarium of the Bay, Golden Gate Bridge, Alcatraz and Roaring Camp Railroad as well as beaches and redwood forests in Santa Cruz County's 14 state parks. Organizers encourage families to arrive early or stay after Conexion 2014 to take advantage of the many activities in the area. The National Convention will be held July 25-26; the National Pastors Conference will precede the convention July 24-25. Watch www.usmb.org for more. —USMB

byTheNumbers

Americans spend quite a bit of money to show their love on Valentine's Day!

\$18.6 billion total spending

- \$1.6 billion on candy
- \$1.9 billion on flowers
- \$4.4 billion on diamonds, gold and silver
- \$130.97 per person average estimated amount

Source: CNN

5 minutes with...

PASTOR AARON BOX

Under the enthusiastic leadership of Pastor Aaron Box, North Park Community Church in Eugene, Ore. mobilized their Harlow Neighborhood in 2012 to collect and package 4,500 meals for community children who went hungry during school breaks. Box represented the neighborhood last May when Neighborhoods USA awarded them 2013 National Neighborhood of the Year.



1 How did the church work with the neighborhood?

North Park was the catalyst to initiate Harlow Serves to serve the community. The neighborhood jumped on board. We partnered with two other churches, the parent group at the elementary school, a couple of local supermarkets, a pizza restaurant and a few hundred volunteers.

2 Why did Neighborhoods USA choose Harlow for their top award?

They were excited because it was truly something that happened within the neighborhood. We just invited the neighborhood to supply all the resources and now it's an ongoing sustaining food drive with a budget of zero dollars.

3 Why do you put your own energy into work in the community?

Evangelism in our context happens through service together. You get relationships with people you work alongside. What's fun is seeing people say yes to the mission of Jesus without knowing it; then it's a natural step to say yes to Jesus.

4 What has been the impact on your congregation?

Our church attendance has grown from 27 to often the 70s in three years with no focus on church growth. We had to put in a bike rack for people from the community. Almost all the new people have come because they interfaced with us through our service projects.

5 What do other churches need to know to serve their communities?

Don't simply duplicate our program. Exegete the community you live in. See the needs around you and invite people outside to walk with you in meeting those needs. It means that the neighborhood gets the national award, rather than the church, but it's worth it.

Box welcomes contact from churches interested in learning more about serving their communities. His e-mail is aaron@northpark.cc.

Interview by Kathy Heinrichs Wiest

NYC sneak peek

All USMB youth pastors and leaders are invited to a Youth Workers' Summit March 28-30 in Denver, Colo. The gathering, hosted by the National Youth Committee, is intended to give opportunity for youth workers to connect and to provide firsthand information concerning the site and philosophy of the upcoming National Youth Conference, Named 2015. Registration is free for the first person from each church. Registration closes Feb. 21; more information is available at www.named2015.com. —NYC

SDC, CDC hold youth events

More than 650 USMB high school students and sponsors attended two annual district youth conventions during November. Fairview (Okla.) MB Church hosted the Southern District Youth Conference (SDYC) Nov. 15-17, and the following weekend the Central District Conference (CDC) youth event was held at Cedar Canyon Camp in Rapid City, SD. Both district youth conferences featured speakers from USMB partner ministries that called on students to commit—and recommit—their lives to Jesus Christ. Read the full story at www.usmb.org/sdc-cdc-hold-district-youth-events. —Connie Faber



Seminary offers scholarships

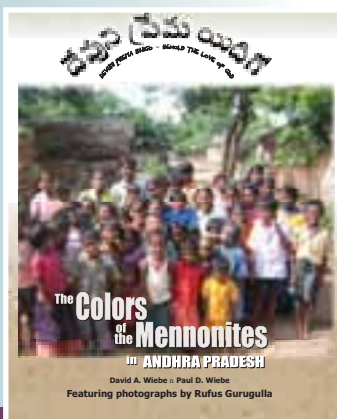
The Dr. Roland and Lois Reimer Endowed Scholarship, recently established at Fresno Pacific Biblical Seminary, honors the couple and encourages servant leadership in students attending the Mennonite Brethren seminary in Fresno, Calif. Reimer pastored congregations in Kansas and Colorado and served as the Southern District Conference minister for 13 years. Roland and Lois retired in 2004 after 44 years of ministry and currently live in Wichita, Kan. —FPBS

FPU graduates 250

About 250 new graduates received diplomas from Fresno Pacific University (FPU) at fall commencement ceremonies held Dec. 14. FPU is the MB-owned university on the West Coast, with a main campus in Fresno, Calif. The class included 131 graduates of the bachelor's degree completion program, 74 graduate students, 45 from the traditional undergraduate program and one from Fresno Pacific Biblical Seminary. —FPU

Tabor offers online courses

Tabor College Wichita (TCW) is now offering three online courses that are part of the eight core courses being developed for online delivery thanks in part to funds from the 2010 divestiture of MB Biblical Seminary. Evangelical Anabaptist Story is offered Jan. 16-March 20. Evangelical Anabaptist Confessions will be offered March 23-May 18, and Discipleship and Ethics will be offered June 2-Aug. 3. Tabor College is the MB-owned college with campuses in Hillsboro and Wichita, Kan. For more information, contact Karen Bartlett at 316-729-6333 or karenb@tabor.edu. —TC



Book explores MBs in India

The Colors of the Mennonites in Andhra Pradesh, by Paul Wiebe and David Wiebe, explores the Mennonite Brethren Church in India today. The book, released in December, is the third in a set that also includes *Heirs and Joint Heirs* and *In Another Day of the Lord*. More information is available from Kindred Productions, www.kindredproductions.com. —KP

YOU ARE NOT YOUR CLOTHES

By Mike Spinelli

You might be surprised at how Paul identifies followers of Christ

I don't often remember words spoken at a graduation, even my own. In order for me to remember, the words have to be special. Like those of the valedictorian at a friend's high school graduation who began and ended her speech with a revised quote from a popular movie: "You are not your job; you're not how much money you have in the bank. You are not the car you drive. You're not the contents of your wallet. You are so not your khakis."

What makes these words extraordinary after all these years is that they remind me that what I have does not define or classify me. How often do we define ourselves by what we have in the bank or the garage? Even if we eschew possessions, our hard work or even just the title of our job becomes a major identifier. And how many of us accept the notion that the clothes do make the man or the woman?

Okay, maybe you don't need these things to define you. But do other things identify you—family, service to God or even striving for Christ-like character?

The apostle Paul devoted many words to how we should live as imitators of Christ. In Colossians 3:12-14 we find a list of characteristics that Paul imagines as clothing, something we should put on and wear. They are wonderful character values that reflect Christ's nature—compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience and forgiveness.

Yet it is not these attributes that caught my attention during a men's retreat a couple of years back. I could have read the whole passage, soaking in the "to do" list Paul is presenting. But it was the words with which Paul launches his list that made me stop: "Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved" (Col. 3:12).

In that moment, I focused on how Paul identifies the believers. They are not identified by compassion or forgiveness. Rather, Paul characterizes them with words that distinguish the people of God before the time of Christ—chosen, holy and dearly loved.

Identified by a relationship

Although it is easy to blow by these three words in order to get to the things we are supposed to be doing, these words are not trivial. Paul's message is not that the "to do" list is what makes us believers. What makes us believers is our faith in God through Christ. We are not self-made Christians who are identified by what we do.

As followers of Jesus, we are identified by our relationship to the Father. He has made us who we are. To be "chosen" means we are wanted by God. It is his desire that we be called by his name. "Holy" means set apart for a special purpose. Holy can also mean something that evokes awe in others. This goes with Paul's description in Ephesians 1 that we are exhibit A of God's glorious

achievements in Christ. “Beloved” means we are considered fondly and are pleasing in the eyes of the one who loves us.

What a picture the Lord draws for us through Paul. We are not what we do or how we act. We are the people he has made us to be—the chosen, holy and beloved ones of God!

I look at it this way. I am married to my wife, Cheryl. Together we have two daughters, Ashley and Lindsey. We are a family. Our family unit is defined by the first choice that Cheryl and I made to love one another and share the life journey together. We are chosen and dearly loved by one another. Our children are a representation of that continuing love and they, too, are chosen and loved.

Can you imagine what happens if we are identified by what we do for the family? What happens when we stop doing what everyone thinks we should do? “Sorry, honey, you forgot to take out the trash and mow the lawn. You are not in the family. And sweetie, your room is a mess. Clean it up if you want to sleep here tonight.”

Invited by God

Why is this important? Because we are not created to be human doings but human beings. We are created to be God’s chosen, holy and beloved people. We are created to accept and join in the love the Father, Son and Holy Spirit share in their unity. We are invited to be part of their communion.

Yes, this is what God thinks of us and how he asks us to think of ourselves and each other. When we accept the good news of God’s salvation in Christ, we became part of God’s chosen, holy and loved people. John underscores this when he writes, “See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!” (1 John 3:1, emphasis added). We

may not feel worthy of such designations, but our worthiness has never been the starting point of God’s good gifts. God gives them to us freely, and we live in them.

We could go about treating others with patience, humility or forgiveness and never consider our identities in Christ. We could do these things to try to show that we are good people. However it negates God’s good gift of identification, a gift we do not earn and cannot buy.

This does not mean we toss away the rest of the list in Colossians 3. Paul is making the larger point that those whom God calls to be chosen, holy and beloved then live to show the family likeness. As his beloved, we reach out in love. As forgiven ones, we offer forgiveness. As those who received compassion, we show compassion.

The rubber meets the road here. Do we truly see ourselves as the recipients of God’s good grace, or are we doing good things and being good people out of obligation? When we clothe ourselves in compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience, are we doing it out of compulsion or from a true sense of who we are in Christ?

We are not lists of dos and don’ts. We are not checklists of righteous activity. We are so not the clothing of good intentions. We are the children of God, chosen, holy and loved. This is who we are, and it leads us to live the good character the Lord has described for us in his Word. We are so his children. And as his children we are recipients of compassion so we can show compassion; we are forgiven so we can forgive; we are loved so we can love.

Mike Spinelli describes himself as “just one of God’s chosen and loved people” who attends Bethany MB Church in Fresno, Calif., where he is the choir director. He is also an adjunct professor for Fresno Pacific University and an operations director for a local business.

How God saw his people

When God brought the Israelites out of Egypt and made them a people, he wanted them to identify themselves as he saw them. Here are some verses from the Old Testament that show what God saw in his people. These are the verses that Paul would have been familiar with in creating his picture in Colossians 3.—MS

“For I am the Lord your God. Consecrate yourselves therefore, and be holy, for I am holy. You shall not defile yourselves with any swarming thing that crawls on the ground. For I am the Lord who brought you up out of the land of Egypt to be your God. You shall therefore be holy, for I am holy” (Lev. 11:44-45).

“For you are a people holy to the Lord your God. The Lord your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on the face of the earth to be his people, his treasured possession. The Lord did not set his affection on you and choose you because you were more numerous than other peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples. But it was because the Lord loved you and kept the oath he swore to your ancestors that he brought you out with a mighty hand

and redeemed you from the land of slavery, from the power of Pharaoh king of Egypt” (Deut. 7:6-8).

“Know that the Lord is God. It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, the sheep of his pasture” (Ps. 100:3).

“In that day I will respond,” declares the Lord—“I will respond to the skies, and they will respond to the earth; and the earth will respond to the grain, the new wine and the olive oil, and they will respond to Jezreel. I will plant her for myself in the land; I will show my love to the one I called ‘Not my loved one.’ I will say to those called ‘Not my people,’ ‘You are my people’; and they will say, ‘You are my God’” (Hos. 2:21-23).

Everyone matters

Lessons from a high school championship swim meet

Not long ago, a good friend was telling me the story of his daughter's local high school league championship swim meet. As he was framing the scene, it was easy to see the pride in his face and voice. His daughter is special, and what she did that day made a huge difference for her team. Here's what happened.

The story begins when Emily saw some members of the swim team practicing. She was impressed by what she saw and wanted to be a part of the swim team. However, Emily had never really swam more than a few yards at a time. She spoke with the coach and he agreed that if she could learn to swim a full 25 yards, she could be on the team.

Now I need to tell you—Emily has Down syndrome. Her father is one of the most successful coaches at his level in all of California. His son, Emily's brother, recently graduated from the Air Force Academy and was a four-year letterman on the Air Force water polo team. Achievement, drive, commitment and discipline define the entire family.

Well, Emily worked incredibly hard and learned to swim the 25 yards. She made the junior varsity team! But the story doesn't end there. Emily continued to improve and after a few weeks was able to actually swim 50 yards without stopping. She was always at practice and enjoyed encouraging her junior varsity and varsity teammates. Everyone came to appreciate this happy, young, Down syndrome girl very much.

"Trust me."

Late in the season it came time for the league championship meet. Now remember, Emily was on the junior varsity team. The league championship meet was only for varsity team members.

Her father attended the league championship meet because he wanted to support many of the varsity swim athletes whom he had previously coached and taught when they were younger.

As Emily's dad walked into the swim complex he was met by the varsity swim coach who told him that he had entered Emily into the 400-yard freestyle.

"Are you crazy!" the stunned father said. "No way—I will not have my daughter humiliated that way."

The swim coach just said, "Trust me. It will be OK."

The reluctant father sat and watched. Soon it was time for Emily's race to begin. Emily climbed onto the blocks and when the horn sounded, she jumped into the water and began to swim. Swimming hard, she passed the 25-yard mark, then the 50-yard mark—100—200—300.

By now, virtually everyone—all teams, parents and friends in the swim complex—was at poolside cheering on Emily. She was exhausted and flailing but wouldn't stop, especially with the kind of encouragement she was hearing and feeling. You guessed it. Emily finished the race, all 400 yards. Applause and cheering erupted throughout the swim complex. What a moment. "Proud" hardly describes what the father was feeling.

After hearing this story, I wrote the name "Emily" on a small piece of paper and put it in a special place. There are more lessons in this true story than there is space to write them. Here are five things I am reminded of whenever I've looked at the name Emily written on that small piece of paper.

Everyone has worth. In God's eyes every person matters. We all have worth. Yet the world so often tells us differently. We are all priceless, regardless of our perceived limitations or preconceived notions or prejudices.

Too often we base our own personal sense of worth on what other people tell us about ourselves. The same happens towards others, and it's not right. Jesus Christ, the one true authority on everyone's self-worth, gave his own life for each of us by dying on a cross, which clearly tells us just how valuable we are.

Opportunities for positive impact can occur for everyone, at any time and anywhere.

I should never pass judgment on others in a way that hinders their opportunities for making an impact on those around them. No one more positively impacted the people at that swim meet that day than Emily. Teams, rivals and spectators all came together because of the extraordinary effort of one remarkably determined yet "challenged" young girl. In some way, we are all "challenged."

I've thought of what Emily did that day so many times. How many times have I allowed my own thinking to hinder others or myself. God provides us with countless opportunities, each for the glory of his kingdom. How in tune am I to the many opportunities that God brings before me?

God's ways are limitless. God does not limit us nor does he seek to thwart us. It is easy to think of plenty of good reasons why Emily should never have been placed into that 400-yard race. Yet, if Emily had not been in that race, her remarkable impact on others would have never happened.

How often, in our humanness, have we allowed our doubts and fears to actually limit God's incredible plan. We have a choice in what we allow Christ to do through us. We serve a God who somewhere does the impossible every second of the day. Do my desires and sense of what's "possible" reflect a trust and obedience in a limitless God?

Our abilities are greater than we realize. We are capable of far more than we ever believe possible,

especially when encouraged by others. Until the day of Emily's race, she had never swam a full 400 yards. Yet on that day, she came to believe that she could. Why? Because her coach told her she could. The result was an unshakable belief and a commitment to swim as far as she possibly could—for her teammates and her coach.

One of the most rewarding things I've experienced over a lifetime in competitive athletics is seeing the expression on athletes' faces when they first realize they've just done something they hadn't believed possible. At Fresno Pacific University, our championship volleyball teams are encouraged to play to a simple principle: "Make the people around you better." We believe that with strong encouragement from teammates, we have a better chance to win championships.

The power of faith. It's amazing what God can do even when our faith is no larger than a mustard seed. We are limited only by our own attitudes and unbelief. Over the years, I have been privileged to see some extraordinary accomplishments by student-athletes, sometimes against seemingly impossible odds. Reflecting on these accomplishments, the one thing that each has in common is an extraordinary vision formed from an immovable belief and faith in ability and effort.

Expressing an exciting vision is easy. Talking about a strong faith is also easy. Neither means much unless they're actively pursued. An accomplished vision occurs only from a committed, sustained faith. Martin Luther King once said, "Faith is taking the first step even when you don't see the whole staircase." When I think of what Emily did in that race, I am reminded of how powerful a simple faith in action can be—especially when encouraged.

Indeed, what Emily did that day really mattered. Her presence, even with the challenges of Down syndrome, greatly influenced everyone around her. I believe that God, through Emily, was at work that day delivering powerful life lessons.

God has created each of us for his own unique purpose. God's work is accomplished in so many wonderful ways—ways we often can never foresee. It is exciting to know that God values and loves each of us so much that he is willing—in fact he desires—to work through each of us to accomplish his plan.

God truly holds each of us in the palm of his hand. Knowing that we are uniquely blessed for God's perfect purpose, may we never limit the powerful blessings of giftedness we've each abundantly received.

One last detail about Emily—by finishing the race she earned her team one point. And they won the league championship that day—by one point.

Dennis Janzen is the former director of athletics and head women's volleyball coach at Fresno Pacific University, Fresno, Calif.

If they can

By Mark Willems

How understanding children's mental health issues improves our ministry

When I was in grade school, I sat in the second row from the front every Sunday at church. My parents sang in the choir, and I was expected to sit quietly and listen to the music, prayers and sermon. My friend, Steven, sat next to me, and together we endured that dreadfully long hour. When the service ended, Steven and I were more than ready to dash out of the building using a door up front. As children will do, we fought over the aisle seat so one of us could be the actual first person to leave.

One morning the choir ended the service with a beautiful choral benediction and soft "Amen." Steven hit the door one second after the song was over. The door banged loudly enough for all to hear, and I, the second one out, was in the doorway when the whole congregation looked over to see from whence the loud, irreverent noise had come. Steven ran down the sidewalk yelling "Charge!" as if leading soldiers up Bunker Hill (not cool in our pacifist church). Again, all eyes in the church building found me, including those of my parents in the choir loft. I hated being in trouble, but I was—again.

What does this story have to do with mental health? Understanding mental health in the church enables us to minister to children and their parents in the kingdom of God. We see many behaviors from children in the church body and in our communities. Ministry is more effective when we understand the children with these behaviors.

Children do well if they can

I was fortunate that I did not have a mental illness as a child and easily formed skills to prevent me from getting into serious trouble. That morning my parents talked to me sternly about my behavior and that of my friend, and I don't remember having that problem again. Steven and I knew to wait a few more seconds before leaving, doing so in orderly fashion rather than fighting to be first.



“

Children really do want to succeed. They want to be competent. They want to feel a sense of healthy contribution to those around them.

”

Unfortunately, children with mental illness struggle with developing the necessary skills to effectively learn, socialize and accomplish tasks to contribute in a positive way to their communities of faith and networks of influence.

“Children do well if they can,” write Ross Greene and J. Stuart Ablon in their book, *Treating Explosive Kids* (Guilford Press, 2006). They ask: What is it we really believe about children? The usual philosophy is: “Children do well if they want to and adults need to make them want to with rewards and punishment.”

Greene’s and Ablon’s challenge is that although consequences can aid the learning process, it is better to assume the child wants to do well but lacks the skills to do so. They would agree with the philosophy that children do well if they can; if they can’t, we adults need to figure out why so we can help.

Welcoming kids to God’s family

Children really do want to succeed. They want to be competent. They want to feel a sense of healthy contribution to those around them. But this does not mean children can excuse their negative behaviors with “I have depression” or “I don’t know how to clean my room” or “I didn’t mean to interrupt the end of the worship service.”

A lack of skill or a mental health diagnosis helps to explain some behaviors of children, but it does not excuse them. While I might blame my friend for all the noise after the service ended, I too was part of the hurry to get out.

Understanding mental health issues in children helps us minister to “the least of these” (Matt. 25:40). When we give children who have a lack of skills extra time and space, then we are working at welcoming them into the family of God.

The gift of grace

Several years ago, I attended a school meeting in which the discussion surrounded the hyperactivity and inattention of “Derrick” (not his real name), a boy in grade school. The school had developed a special plan in coordination with parents and

school staff that included the provision that recess not be taken away from Derrick. Not allowing Derrick to work off extra energy during recess would make his classroom behavior worse, so alternative consequences for not completing assignments would be implemented.

Unfortunately, his teacher decided that this intervention was not valid; she felt Derrick was just not complying with instructions and that it was “not fair to the other children.” The principal attended the meeting also and told the teacher directly that the recess accommodation needed to be followed. The teacher left the room and slammed the door.

This teacher missed an opportunity to show grace to Derrick who was diagnosed with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). Working hard to stay in his seat, Derrick needed more time to complete his assignments. Derrick was trying to comply but did not have the attention skills to keep up with the other students, despite his obvious intellectual ability. True, it was not fair that the other children would lose their recess, but it was also not fair that the boy had ADHD. Some grace on the part of the teacher would have demonstrated a needed ministry moment.

Ministering to children who struggle

ADHD is one of the most common childhood disorders and can continue through adolescence and into adulthood. The average age of onset is seven years old. The disorder affects 9 percent of American youth ages 13 to 18. According to the National Institute of Mental Health, boys are four times more at risk than girls.

Studies from South America, Europe and Asia also demonstrate these figures so as to rule out popular myths that factors like excessive sugar intake, food additives, excessive viewing of television and poor child management by parents are causes. Simply giving you these facts about ADHD fails to communicate the hopelessness and despair that a young child experiences when he struggles with this debilitating mental illness.

Mark 9:33 records Jesus arriving at Capernaum with his disciples. His followers have been arguing

about who is the greatest. Jesus illustrates his understanding of greatness by taking a child in his arms, saying, “Whoever welcomes a child in my name, welcomes me.” Jesus encourages his disciples to accept last place instead of pushing to be first, to choose to be servants and, in humility, to accept the lordship of God in their lives.

“Compliance with external pressure means a child has been squeezed into a mold; it is being conformed from the outside/in. Obedience is about learning to live consistent on the outside with what God is doing on the inside,” writes Jeff VanVonderen in his book, *Families Where Grace Is in Place* (Bethany House, 2010).

Perhaps the difficult work of parenting and teaching children means *fewer* demands and threats to get compliance quickly and *more* patience and understanding so the child obeys from the heart.

As you meet children, be graceful. Practice humility by being open to new ways to consider the bad behaviors of the child, and quiet your criticisms of the parents. We can all blame and judge less while working at being more graceful with those most vulnerable in the kingdom of God.

Mark Willems is the clinical director of Turning Point, a psychiatric treatment center for adolescents at Prairie View in Newton, Kan. Willems grew up in California, attended MB Biblical Seminary in Fresno, Calif., and later was on the pastoral staff at First MB Church in Wichita, Kan.

FAQ

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: I teach children in church. What can I do when I have a child with ADHD (attention deficit hyperactivity disorder) in my class?

MW: Just as ADHD children struggle in school, they also have difficulty with traditional learning activities in church. As with many situations in life, it is not so much the particular intervention but how one intervenes. It is more helpful to be graceful with the child than precise with the intervention.

Here are a few ways to help children who struggle with hyperactivity, inattention and impulsivity:

1. When providing instructions, be clear and brief. The child will not be able to tolerate long lectures. Encourage him to look at you or ask him to repeat what he heard you say. Give instructions one step at a time.

2. Use positive statements. Tell children what you want them to do rather than what you don't want them to do. Instead of saying, “Don't run down the halls,” tell the children, “Walk beside me to the next activity.”

3. Most children will do better with consistent structure. This may mean sitting in the same seat near the teacher each week or taking short breaks at the same time.

4. Emphasize quality rather than quantity. If you have children look up verses on God's love, for example, be okay if the ADHD child finds two verses instead of the five you gave for everyone to find. She will understand about God's love from those verses and will also see it modeled because you cared enough to adjust your expectation for what she could do.

5. Give frequent feedback regarding behavior. Offer redirections and notice positive behaviors often. If the feedback is done with grace, this models kindness and patience to the other children, and they will be more apt to demonstrate this toward the child who struggles. This provides opportunities for inclusion rather than exclusion.

Q: How can my church better serve families whose children have lower IQs or autistic symptoms?

MW: Consider starting a special needs Sunday school class, like the one at the church I attend. Members who were child special needs professionals set up the class and trained others who were interested. Parents appreciate those teachers who provide them the opportunity to attend worship services and adult learning groups.

Q: Where can I get help for my child with mental/behavioral issues?

MW: Many pastors are trained to find local mental health providers and can counsel church members. Some states have community mental health centers with competent clinicians; these centers can help those with financial need to pay for services. It is important to seek assistance from those who are trained to provide help and who are accountable to others for their therapeutic decisions.

ADHD Resources

Books: Russell A. Barkley, *Taking Charge of ADHD: The Complete, Authoritative Guide for Parents* (Guilford Press, 1997, 2013)

Edward M. Hallowell and John J. Ratey, *Driven to Distraction: Recognizing and Coping with Attention Deficit Disorder* (Anchor Books, 1994, 2011)

Websites: Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder. See www.chadd.org.

American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry. See www.aacap.org.

Churches team up to reach community

10-year partnership began with sharing facilities

Bilingual flyers in hand, members of two congregations—New Life Church and Templo Betania Hermanos Mennonitas—canvass their Ulysses, Kan., neighborhood with an invitation to their annual block party. Working in bilingual teams, they are able to communicate with every household, 40 percent of which speak a language other than English at home, according to the 2010 U.S. Census.

Kansas isn't the first state that comes to mind as having a high percentage of Spanish-speaking households. But over the years, the cattle country, familiar rural agriculture-based communities and more recently work in the oil and natural gas fields have drawn many Mexican and Mexican-American families to the southwest region of the state. In Ulysses, more than half the population of 6,000 is Hispanic.

Two years ago, the *New York Times* featured Ulysses in a story highlighting the changing demographics in rural Kansas ("Hispanics Reviving Faded Towns on the Plains" Nov. 13, 2011). While the descendants of long-time Anglo residents were leaving their small communities, the article explained, Hispanic families had flooded in to fill the gap, reviving the economy with an entrepreneurial spirit.

New Life Church, Ulysses' Mennonite Brethren English-speaking congregation, is finding a similar spiritual revival in a partnership with Pastor Angel Martinez and

his Spanish-speaking congregation, Templo Betania, which is also affiliated with USMB.

"Before they came to be with us, we were somewhat status quo," says New Life elder Ted Goertzen. "But their passion for nonbelievers has awakened our awareness to the lost around us."

The partnership began about 10 years ago as an agreement between the two congregations to share facilities. Pastor Martinez was meeting with his congregation in a cold, substandard building. "The only warm thing about it was their hearts," recalls Goertzen.

Martinez heard that New Life was a place that would "lend a hand." He found that to be true as New Life began to share their campus with Templo Betania and then pastor Nathan Gift partnered with them in ministry trips to establish a church in Martinez's home region in Mexico.

"Those trips were really a blessing to me and my family," says Martinez. "When we came back it was like we had charged the battery in our spirits."

With the Hispanic church established under local pastoral leadership, the Ulysses churches have turned their focus to strengthening the fellowship between their two congregations and together reaching out to the community.

On a typical Sunday morning, the campus of New Life Church reflects the makeup of the town's demographics.



Meeting the needs of a variety of age groups and cultures is the goal each month when the two USMB Ulysses, Kan., congregations meet together for a joint worship service. A worship team comprised of members from both New Life Church and Templo Betania Hermanos Mennonitas leads the singing.

Some 60 members of the English-speaking congregation gather in the sanctuary for a service that just a few years ago switched from traditional style to praise team-led music.

Meanwhile, Martinez and his wife, Concepcion, who are both ordained ministers in the Pentecostal church, lead a younger and very lively congregation of 30 in the church's fellowship hall. The sounds of their adoration and praise sometimes spill over into the more sedate atmosphere in the sanctuary.

"We're pretty much a rowdier crowd, clapping and saying amen," says worship leader Marcos Martinez, Martinez's son. The children get involved, too, waving flags and dancing during the worship music.

On the first Sunday of every month the two congregations take their partnership a step further with a joint worship service and fellowship meal.

The congregations' praise teams lead worship together for the joint service, tapping into Templo Betania's talented drummers and musicians who play by ear alongside the more musically trained New Life praise team members. Templo Betania brings their flags and all the children join in the dynamic worship, tempered slightly for the mixed congregation.

"When we combine, we bring it down a little notch," says Marcos Martinez. "New Life has a few more elderly members than we do, and we understand that at the combined service we need to meet the needs of a variety of ages. But we also want to let the Holy Spirit do what he is going to do."

"It's a rockin' good time," says Goertzen. "There's a lot more hand waving and hallelujahs than we usually experience (at New Life). It's a taste of what heaven is going to be like."

The congregation sings in both English and Spanish. Sometimes Pastor Angel Martinez will lead in an emotional time of prayer as he feels the Spirit lead.

New Life is part of a network of Kansas churches called Crosspoint, who receive a weekly video-fed sermon and other teaching resources. Pastor Martinez, who has no formal education, and other leaders at Templo Betania appreciate the resources New Life can provide them through Crosspoint.

"I translate the teachings that are given during our fellowship Sunday and give them to the pastor," says Marcos Martinez. "We learn a lot of things through the classes, and on Sunday mornings we work out of the resource packet and the music we get from them."

Together the two congregations are finding creative ways to reach their diverse community. The annual block party brings the neighborhood together for a Saturday of food and games. A church float filled with children and decorated with both English and Spanish highlights their joint ministry as part of the community's parade.

As in the community, the cultural lines sometimes blur between the two congregations. Second-generation children of immigrants may not speak their parents' language or identify with their culture. Templo Betania has been able to reach young people who are in that place between cultures. And some Hispanic families from the community have begun to attend New Life.

"We would like our congregation to reflect the community," says Goertzen. "It's because we work together that they feel comfortable on either side."

"Every tongue, every nation will bow down," Marcos Martinez adds. "It's sometimes challenging when you have two different races seeking the Lord with their own understanding, but we're both seeking out those who don't have Jesus in their hearts."

Kathy Heinrichs Wiest



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MAY 4 :: Calvary Chapel, Visalia CA :: 6 pm

Seminary dean seeks to build bridges

Brensinger aims to connect heart and mind, church and seminary

Terry Brensinger talks a lot about “wedding the heart and the mind.” It’s especially important to him in his new role as dean and vice president of Fresno Pacific Biblical Seminary (FPBS), as he thinks about training pastoral leaders and connecting the seminary to the church.

FPBS, a school of Fresno Pacific University (FPU) in Fresno, Calif., is the Mennonite Brethren seminary for graduate-level theological education. Brensinger began teaching there in 2011 as professor of pastoral ministries and transitioned Aug. 1, 2013, to the dual position of dean of the seminary and vice president of FPU.

The role brings together Brensinger’s own education, experience and passion. He has a doctorate in Old Testament, a master of philosophy in biblical studies and a master’s degree in ancient near Eastern archaeology, all from Drew University, Madison, NJ. He holds a master of divinity degree from Asbury Theological Seminary, Wilmore, Ky., and a bachelor’s degree in history and religion from Messiah College, Mechanicsburg, Pa. Brensinger has completed several additional doctoral seminars and graduate courses and a two-year program in spiritual formation. In addition, he has written or edited four books, with a fifth in process, and has authored dozens of articles, reviews and scholarly papers.

He also has a heart for pastoral training. “Pastors and the church are certainly at the heart of my calling,” he says. Brensinger has pastored three very different congregations, so he has a firsthand understanding of the joys and challenges of ministry leadership.

He has traveled around the world training pastors and teaching with the Brethren in Christ, a sister denomination to the Mennonite



Terry Brensinger’s work as an international pastor and teacher has taken him and his wife, Debra, into a wide variety of places across North America and the world, including Israel.

Brethren. He and his wife of 36 years, Debra, have served in a variety of cultures, including Toronto, Canada; Bogota, Colombia; Chomba, Zambia; Delhi, India; and Bethlehem, Palestine, just to name a few.

Brensinger points to the Great Commandment, which charges God’s people to love the Lord with heart, soul and strength (Deut. 6: 5), and argues that both heart and mind are essential—especially when it comes to training leaders for the church.

“This world is complex,” he says. “To promote a gospel and a God who is trivial and trite and unable to make heads or tails of this fast-growing world of ours is inexcusable. So we need to train people who are thoughtful and biblically trained.... We need pastors who can think like Christians.”

At the same time, “we need pastors and people who are madly in love with Jesus, deeply committed to the church, longing to live under the teaching of Scripture, who have a faith that’s real and profound and heartfelt,” he says.

He finds that on an institutional level, heart and mind—academy and church—have often been in tension. But, he says, “I think we need each other.”

Brensinger sees his role and his strength as that of bridge builder. “There’s a lot of significant ministry for all of us to do if we can work together, and the seminary could be really helpful to the church in that way.”

One of the ways he hopes to increase connection is through personal presence at national, district and local events. Even before he took the helm at the seminary, he presented a paper at the study conference on peacemaking and citizenship, led by the USMB Board of Faith and Life and held in January 2013. He was present at both the Pa-

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Pastors and the church are certainly at the heart of my calling.

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cific District and Central District conventions last fall, and he has been invited to lead a workshop at the national denominational gathering, *Connection 2014*, to be held in July.

He also enjoys visiting local churches. He has recently preached in USMB congregations not only in California, but also Oregon, Kansas, Oklahoma and South Dakota. “Those are huge connections,” he says.

He recognizes that because Mennonite Brethren are diverse, the seminary can't appeal equally to all. But he says, “I would like to see the seminary be a strong presence at the core of the church and to work with the denominational leaders and congregations to prepare pastors for this pretty complex world of ours.”

For FPBS, as for other seminaries, it's a challenging time. Many seminaries are closing, and those that remain struggle to clearly identify goals and vision, adjust to a drastically changing world and think strategically about new delivery models—all with limited resources. FPBS faces the additional challenges of broadening horizons while strengthening Mennonite Brethren connections and of continuing to clarify the seminary's relationship with FPU. The seminary, formerly MB Biblical Seminary, merged its Fresno operations with FPU in 2010.

Despite such challenges—some quite daunting—Brensinger says the seminary intends not merely to survive but to move forward and make significant impact. “I'm not interested in maintaining the place,” he says.

“There is a lot of energy and excitement here. So it's a matter of harnessing that in the right time sequence and finding the resources to make that happen. The seminary here is not lacking in imagination.”

He dreams about exploring new delivery options—perhaps a hybrid resi-

dential/online model or a variation on medical residency, which would cooperate with strategic local congregations to give students both education and experience with little or no debt. Perhaps these “hubs” could even extend to overseas locations to help train leaders globally.

He looks forward to developing FPBS's urban presence and to training leaders to serve in urban areas. Statistics say the world's population is moving toward the cities, he points out. “It would seem shortsighted if not foolish for us here at the seminary not to take the call to prepare people for urban contexts seriously as well.”

He says, “We have a lot of wonderful challenges ahead of us.”

Brensinger says God continues to work in his heart as he faces the challenges of his new role at the seminary. He talks about a “dismantling” and “rebuilding” process in recent years as God prepared him for this transition. He talks about learning new dependency, like Peter walking on the water and reaching out for Jesus' hand.

“It feels like he's inviting me to ‘fall recklessly into his hands’ in ways that I've not before,” Brensinger says, quoting a favorite line.

And with that glimpse into his heart, Brensinger shows that faith is more than an academic exercise or intellectual pursuit for him personally as well as institutionally. —Myra Holmes

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Dirt track is road to ministry

Raceway chaplain focuses on drivers, crews

The revving engines of their racecars push the decibel level in the staging area so high only God can hear Brent Austin's voice, but every driver knows exactly why the Dodge City Raceway chaplain pauses a moment by his car. The chaplain is offering a prayer for the driver's safety on the dirt racetrack.

"I like the loud cars—and they are loud! I like the way they look and, even though it sounds funny, I love the way 110 octane fuel smells when it burns," Austin says.

Austin sums it up this way: "I love the Lord foremost in my life. The second thing I love the most is racing,"—quickly adding that his love for his wife and kids is actually right in there after his love for the Lord.

These two loves—of serving the Lord and of racing sports—were lodged in separate compartments of Austin's life until two years ago.

For Austin, a longtime lay leader and teacher at Valleyview Bible Church in Cimarron, Kan., ministry had meant involvements such as serving on the elder board and teaching Sunday school. Then his small group engaged in a series of studies from the book *Radical: Taking Back Your Faith from the American Dream*.

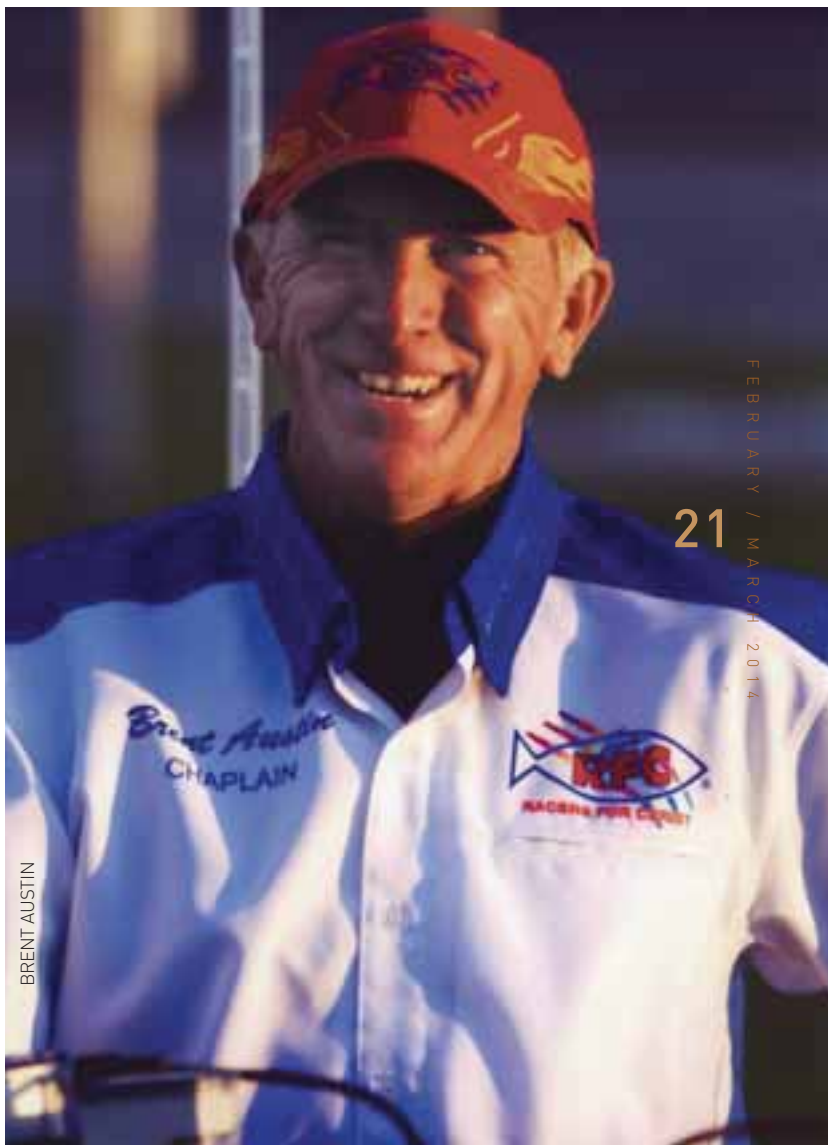
"After a couple of weeks I was just struggling with what the author was telling me. It was really the Holy Spirit," he recalls. By the end of the six-week study Austin was ready to take on the author's challenge of a "radical experiment" and explore a ministry opportunity outside the church.

Austin remembered meeting track chaplains under the organization Racers for Christ and figured that with his interest in racing, Racers for Christ would be a good place to start. Within a few months he had completed their extensive application process and was approved for the chaplain program.

It took several calls and an unannounced visit to the track promoter's office to secure a placement as chaplain for Dodge City Raceway. Located in the city where his swimming pool contracting business is based and just 20 miles from his home in Cimarron, it is the perfect opportunity for a local ministry reaching beyond the church walls.

Through two racing seasons, Austin has become a regular fixture at the track. On Friday nights he arrives early to chat with drivers and their crews, asking them important questions like how their car is running and what kind of tires they'll be using.

At 6 p.m. everyone gathers for the drivers' meeting. "They will form a semicircle around me and I ask the Lord to bless them and their crew and keep them safe when they're competing," he explains, noting that he always prays in the name of Jesus Christ.



Brent Austin was challenged in a small group Bible study to explore ministry opportunities outside his church. He responded by volunteering to work as a raceway chaplain.

He also prays the invocation at the start of the race, again praying in the name of Jesus. "Some nights there might be 800 people in the stands, but in the premier sprint series I get to pray with 3,500 to 4,000 people," he says.

Austin's main focus, however, is to care for the drivers and crew. He always stands ready to accompany the safety

BRENT AUSTIN

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Brent Austin, Dodge City Raceway chaplain, prays for the drivers at the start of every night's racing action.

crew in an emergency on the track, although there have been no serious accidents during his tenure.

A member of the fire and safety crew attributes the safety record to Austin's prayers. "One guy says, 'You're here tonight so that means I won't have to do anything.'"

Listening is an important part of the job of chaplain. Sometimes that means patiently listening to drivers talk endlessly about their cars and racing strategy or their litany of excuses when they don't win. On occasion a driver or family member will need a listening ear on more personal issues, but those times are rare.

"With drivers it takes time," Austin says. "You're building that relationship with them. You carry Scripture with you and pray that someone will ask you to share it with them."

Few of the drivers he has worked with are Christians, and with their weekends spent away from home at various racetracks, Austin is the closest thing they have to a pastor. One woman asked Austin if he could officiate at her daughter's wedding; since he is not ordained, he could only assist. Another time a crew chief called on him for an impromptu devotional for his driver and crew.

Having people look to him as their pastor keeps Austin encouraged in the ministry. "Sometimes I wonder if I'm doing any good at all and someone will put their arm around me and say how they appreciate my being there," he says.

Austin finds himself transformed by the experience of ministry at the track. "This is a dirty ministry. I'm going to hear things I don't hear at the church and see things I don't see at church," he says. "Sometimes the language hurts your ears. But it has made me more aware of the need that people have—the need for Christ in their lives."

"Before my entire focus was inside the church," he says, "but the Lord has told us to go, and so that's what I have done. It's really not an option."—Kathy Heinrichs Wiest

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Don Morris
Mission USA director

Speed bumps and planting churches

I was driving through our granddaughter's school parking lot a few days ago, not paying very good attention, when—bam! I hit a speed bump so high that I think the tires slammed into the wheel wells and my head almost hit the roof of the car. I was looking back in my rearview mirror to make sure I hadn't hit a small mountain when—bam! I hit the next one.

At this point I realized that I should probably slow down dramatically and pay more attention. Otherwise I was risking not only the car's suspension system but my wife's wrath as well. In fact, it was probably her fault that I hit the second one because she had failed to say anything to me at that point; am I right? When the next speed bump materialized ahead of me I went over it nice and slowly and there was nary a jolt to be felt. I only felt the kindest glare—I mean gaze—from my dear wife.

This experience prompted me to think about church planting. You see, our USMB church planters encounter all kinds of unexpected speed bumps, landmines and barriers as they engage in the rigors of church planting.

Too frequently immense “speed bumps” emerge before our planters, sometimes with great intensity. If church planters are not prepared for them, these bumps can cause a lot of emotional damage or loss of momentum.

We've had planters deal with health issues, dog bites, financial setbacks, expensive car maintenance,

loss of spouses' jobs, volatile and angry church attendees, painful concerns with children, allergies they've never dealt with before, chronic insomnia, warts (okay, they can live with those) and on and on. These are all things that can affect anyone, but they can be severely discouraging for planters who are completely pouring themselves out in order to get a new church off the ground.

I believe Satan uses some of these things in his attempts to bring the process of planting to a halt or to at least cause disruption. And yes, some of these things are just a part of life. But regardless of the source, they are dramatic concerns as they impact the already risky venture of church planting.

So what can we do to help ease church planters through these “speed bumps” more effectively? We teach our planters to be on guard for unexpected things to come their way. We often encourage them to be “prayed up.” But we also need others to pray constantly for our church planters.

We seek prayer warriors to intercede for protection, guidance and awareness. Paul says in 2 Cor. 1:10b-11, “On him we have set our hope that he will continue to deliver us, as you help us by your prayers. Then many will give thanks on our behalf for the gracious favor granted us in answer to the prayers of many.” Your prayers are vital. Thank you for praying.

Did YOU know?

7 out of 10 respondents (68%) say that they feel “part of a group of people who are united in their beliefs and who take care of each other in practical ways” when they attend church.

Source: Barna Group 2013

Sellwood core team building community relationships

Christ Church Sellwood (CCS), our USMB church plant in Portland, Ore., is experiencing a healthy beginning. Following the September 2013 launch, the young church's core team, consisting largely of families with young children, has melded solidly together. As a whole, they are very service-minded.

Pastor Jared Pulliam and his team would like to see more new attendees. They have been hard at work developing relationships in the area and anticipate people will soon begin responding to their invitations to join them.

Meeting at the Sellwood Community Center allows easy access for local people at a readily known location.

"The Community Center has been fantastic for us," says Josh Skarphol, a member of the Transition Team, the CCS leadership group. "Not only have they been great to work with and the lease is very reasonable, but everyone in Sellwood knows where it is. It makes it feel as though we're already a part of the neighborhood," he says.

Sunday morning worship is lively, with excellent worship leadership, spirited group participation and solid, deeply biblical teaching from Pulliam. Pulliam was an elder on staff at CCS's mother church, Trinity Church in Portland, and received a great deal of positive experience over the two years prior to Sellwood's launch. People are responding to his gifted preaching.

In addition, the church holds Home Group meetings on Tuesday evenings that include a fellowship meal, group discussion pertaining to the sermon text from the previous Sunday and much prayer.

"We love what's happening here," says Tim Dykstra, another Transition Team leader who lives outside the church plant neighborhood. "We looked long and hard before choosing to attend Trinity Church and now are really thankful to be a part of the Christ Church Sellwood team. It's been good for us even though it takes us 25 minutes to get here."

With the focus on young families comes the realization that there are many overworked and frazzled mothers in the congregation. To help provide a fun break for moms, the church holds a monthly "Ladies Night Out" at one of the local restaurants. The men and children have dinner together at the Pulliam home at the same time.

"This has provided enthusiastic participation and wonderful fellowship for the ladies, as well as a great opportunity to integrate the church family into the Sellwood community," says Pulliam.

Christ Church Sellwood is a church planting partnership between mother-church Trinity Church, the Pacific District Conference and Mission USA, the USMB church planting and church renewal ministry. Representatives from each of these three entities along with three members of the new church's Transition Team and the Pulliams comprise the Task Force Team and are responsible for decisions typically made by a congregation's elder board and oversight during the church plant's initial development.

"It's rewarding to see a church plant with all the right ingredients in place begin to develop significant relationships with people in the community," says Don Morris, Mission USA director.—*Mission USA*



Left: Christ Church Sellwood's focus on young families has led them to sponsor a monthly night out for mothers. While the women gather at a local restaurant, their husbands and children meet at the home of church plant pastor Jared Pulliam.



Right: Christ Church Sellwood home groups meet Tuesday nights to enjoy a meal, discuss the previous Sunday's sermon and pray.



Robert Partington

Sporting fathers

I have a son who plays competitive tennis. That makes me a “tennis dad.” Statistics tell us that most problems associated with junior sports are the result of parental behavior. One of my son’s coaches told me, “Your job, Robert, is simple: support him financially, logistically and emotionally. That’s it.” Sounds easy enough. I can shop; I can drive. But that third one might need some tweaking.

Here’s what happens: If Andrew’s play slips during competition, I start to fidget. As points and games slip by, fidgeting leads to pacing. If Melissa, my wife, is nearby, I externalize my discomfort by muttering about what he’s doing wrong. Often, unable to put up with my incessant chatter, she’ll gently move away to cheer him on from a more peaceful vantage point. I love my wife!

I have a friend who is a “lacrosse dad,” and he seems to suffer from many of the same challenges I do. He thinks there are quite a number of us out there. Neither one of us wants to hurt our relationships with our sons. As a counselor, I’ve heard from men and women who reached a pinnacle in their sports, but made it at the cost of a damaged relationship with a parent. More often than not, it was with Dad.

“Fathers, do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged” (Col. 3:21). Some athletes grew up with fathers who doled out love on the basis of performance. When they won, dads praised and embraced, but emotional distance set in when they failed to perform up to their dads’ expectations. Working through the pain of having to earn a father’s affection can take years of counseling in adulthood.

I have a solid relationship with my son on every level except one: When he plays poorly,

losing a highly winnable match, something changes inside of me. I feel emotionally unsettled for a number of hours. It feels biochemical. It feels weird.

While talking with my friend, the lacrosse dad, he quoted Dean Smith: “Don’t treat every game as life or death. For one thing, you’ll find yourself dead a lot.”

So, what does it take for me to be a more “sporting” father? First, I need to acknowledge that my son has a coach. I have the higher privilege of being his father.

I need to be more supportive of my son when he needs it the most. Andrew is developing into a talented athlete, but he’s also a sensitive young man and a precious gift from God.

I need to deliver genuine love that looks the same to him, win or lose. Regaining his trust in those few key moments is going to take some time.

Far more profound than all of this, however, is the fact that a child’s early concept of God is shaped by his relationship with his earthly father. God’s unconditional, sacrificial love isn’t going to make a lot of sense if Andrew interprets my love as somehow tied to his performance.

So as a father I have a responsibility to point my son to God by how I live by faith during the good times but more importantly during my most difficult and challenging moments. Pray for me. It’s not easy being a tennis dad, but with the Lord’s help, I’m going to get there.

Robert Partington, M.Div., MACO, is a speaker and writer on the family and the former executive director and founder of Peace in the Home, Inc. Partington and his wife, Melissa, live with their three children in Midlothian, Virginia.



Matt Ehresman

Hungry for hope

When I first heard about the best-selling book series, *The Hunger Games*, I thought the title sounded like something a bunch of junior high boys would play at the lunch table. Then I was told it was a new fiction series that revolved around young people literally hunting and killing each other. Strange.

The series revolves around teenager Katniss Everdeen, who is very skilled with a bow and arrow, and her fight to stand up against a corrupt government. She lives in a dark era where the government has complete control, and most families are destined to a life of poverty. Early on, Katniss offers herself as a sacrifice in an attempt to save her sister, Prim, from the Hunger Games, a nationally televised event during which contestants are forced to fight each other to the death.

After Katniss volunteers, her bravery and willingness to stand for justice become powerful symbols across her society that rally support to stand for what is right. In a world where people are told they will never amount to anything, suddenly they have hope, a very strong force that gives them the strength to move forward.

It's no surprise that hope is a common theme and foundation to the Christian faith. Our own weak and tiresome wills can only last so long. When we face struggles, eventually we look for something or someone bigger than ourselves to give us inspiration to keep fighting. This is why Jeremiah 29:11 is one of the most often quoted passages of Scripture. In the midst of hardship, we find comfort in a God who promises that he

has a plan for us—a plan to give us hope.

Another thought-provoking and often quoted Bible verse is Hebrews 11:1: "Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see." Hope is interesting because usually our desired outcome isn't guaranteed. We can *hope* to get a new job or *hope* our children are healthy, or we can *hope* the Chiefs win the Super Bowl, but none of these is guaranteed. Even in *The Hunger Games*, we *hope* Katniss survives and is able to help her district, but there are several points throughout the story where we begin to wonder if she has what it takes.

I don't know what happens to Katniss. I haven't read *The Hunger Games* books; I've only seen the first two movies. But I do know that our hope in Christ is different from Prim's hope in Katniss. Our faith is unique and powerful because if we have faith in Jesus, we have *assurance* of what we cannot see. Our faith gives us confidence that everything will work out. We *know* how the story ends. Jesus himself tells us we will face troubles in this life, but our hope is in the ultimate conqueror that has already sealed our fates.

It can be inspiring to read stories like *The Hunger Games*, but next time you find yourself weary and looking for hope, put down your bow and arrow and look to the one who has already overcome the world.

Matt Ehresman lives with his wife, Tillie, in Wichita, Kan., where he works as the creative media director at First MB Church.

Because Suzanne Collins explores the effects of war and violence on youth in *The Hunger Games* trilogy, the books and movies provide parents and youth workers with opportunities to talk with kids about a variety of issues. A number of study guides are available electronically and should be evaluated in light of your discussion goals. Scholastic Inc., the trilogy's publisher, offers a free guide (http://mediaroom.scholastic.com/files/HungerGames_TriologyDiscussionGuide.pdf). *The Gospel According to "The Hunger Games" Trilogy* is a study guide written by Methodist pastors Andy Langdon and Ann Duncan to guide teens in thinking about the trilogy's theological themes. The e-book, available on Amazon Kindle, has mixed reviews.

re: Discussion guides

milestones

BAPTISM/MEMBERSHIP

Jason and Rachelle Egli were received Jan. 5 as members of **Kingsburg (Calif.) MB Church**.

Karen Jones and Cristy Teply were baptized at **Enid (Okla.) MB Church** Nov. 10. Dustin and Lindsay Ash, Garry and Briana Bull, Joseph and Jennifer Fletcher, Brian and Karen Jones, Will and Elisa Maher, Jared Penner, Brad and Kristen Siemens and Becky Whiting were received as members.

Emily Friesen and Ryan Friesen were baptized and received as members of **Reedley (Calif.) MB Church** Nov. 17. Karl and Thelma Hostetter, Mark and Deborah Johnson, Malcolm and Cyndi Light, Karen Reimer and Rebecca Cooper were received as members.

Joe Brewster was baptized and received as a member of **College Community Church MB, Clovis, Calif.**, Dec. 1. Marvin and Lily Kroeker were received as members Dec. 8. Jim Gates and Stephanie Voth were received as members Dec. 15. Dominick Geddert was baptized and received as a member Dec. 22; Maia Spight, Joe Iapichino and Meredith Stone were received as members.

Victor and Meghann Rogers were received as members Nov. 24 of **Garden Valley Church, Garden City, Kan.**

Jeremy Howsley was baptized Oct. 13 at **Laurelglen Bible Church, Bakersfield, Calif.** Daniel Whitten was baptized Nov. 24.

Morgan Goodman, Madison Souter, Stephanie Dobbs, Jeff Dobbs, Ethan Nance, Grant Nightengale and Willis Mallory were baptized Nov. 10 and received as members of **Fairview (Okla.) MB Church**. Don Klinger, Jason Ewing, Chelsey Ewing, Kelly Shoemaker and Lea Ann Shoemaker were received as members.

Jamie and Chris Davidson, Rob Haude and Camilea Davidson were baptized Nov. 10 at **Parkview MB Church, Hillsboro, Kan.**

WORKERS

Laurelglen Bible Church, Bakersfield, Calif., commissioned Cecil and Tracy Ramos for service in Thailand Dec. 1.

Daryle Baltzer is the new part-time care pastor at **First MB Church, Wichita, Kan.**

Luke Haidle was installed Nov. 10 as pastor of **Henderson (Neb.) MB Church**.

Chris Eidse resigned as pastor of **Boone (NC) MB Church**, effective Jan. 1. He is now serving on the pastoral staff at Waterlife Church, Lenoir, NC.

DEATHS

Greer, Virgil Worth, Boone, NC, member of Boone MB Church, April 14, 1950—Nov. 7, 2013. Parents: Winston and Ruth Greer. Children: Miles.

Kroeker, Pauline, Bakersfield, Calif., of Rosedale Bible Church, Bakersfield, June 21, 1931—Jan. 7, 2014. Parents: Jacob T. and Manila Kroeker. Spouse: Richard. Children: Daryl, Sheri Sardo, Ted Elrich; seven grandchildren and five great-grandchildren.

Merz, Donna Lynch, Shafter, Calif., member of Shafter MB Church, Aug. 3, 1931—Nov. 27, 2013. Parents: William and Verona Dalke. Spouse: Earl Lynch, deceased; Robert Merz. Children: Gary Lynch, Erin Brock, Laurie Robinson; five grandchildren.

Prieb, Jona W., Hillsboro, Kan., member of Hillsboro MB Church, April 12, 1922—Nov. 24, 2013. Parents: William and Sara (Block) Prieb. Spouse: Esther Eitzen, deceased. Children: Richard, Joyce Ashley, Steven, Keith; eight grandchildren; nine great-grandchildren.

Toews, Helen, Hillsboro, Kan., of Hillsboro MB Church, Nov. 20, 1922—Oct. 26, 2013. Parents: Jacob and Eva (Sawatzky) Rempel. Spouse: Ray Toews, deceased. Children: Lynette, Steve, Carol Harrison; four grandchildren; one great-grandchild.

Unrau, Rufus D., Hillsboro, Kan., of Hillsboro MB Church, Dec. 19, 1933—Nov. 22, 2013. Parents: Rufus and Mathilda Unrau. Spouse: Leola Wedel. Children: Brian, DeVonne Abrahams, Kendall; four grandchildren; one great-grandchild.

reaching in

DISCIPLESHIP

A winter study on "Becoming a Matthew" at **Bible Fellowship Church, Minot, ND**, encouraged people to invite others into their home to share the gospel.

North Oak Community Church, Hays, Kan., will offer parents of graduating high school seniors a class intended to prepare them to launch the students into the next stage of life. "College Ready" will meet during the Sunday school hour beginning March 23.

South Mountain Community Church, Draper, Utah, is offering a study on "Homosexuality and the Christian" every other Saturday morning.

Butler MB Church, Fresno, Calif., offered an informational meeting Nov. 12 on options available under the Affordable Care Act.

EECD expands ministry

Ethiopian Evangelical Church (EECD), Aurora, Colo., dedicated a new, larger facility Nov. 30-Dec. 1. The building, a former YMCA, provides needed space for this growing congregation of immigrants from Ethiopia and Eritrea and will serve as a community center for the Ethiopian community in the area. The 27,000 square-foot facility is nearly three times the size of EECD's former building. Even so, the church holds two Sunday morning services to accommodate the roughly 800 that attend. The Ethiopian/Eritrean community in the Denver metro area is roughly 40,000 strong and growing, and EECD's new location is right in the heart of that close-knit community. New immigrants turn to EECD for help with language, job applications or transportation. "This church is not only a church," says Ermias "Jeremiah" Amanuel, associate pastor. "It's a social service office; it's a community center." EECD hopes that the new facility will enhance ministry to their community. Dreams for the future include a regular radio or television broadcast, a Christian school for elementary-aged children and a fully English service for both younger Ethiopians and Americans, led by youth pastor David Yirdaw.



Eagles Harbor closes

Eagles Harbor Community Church (EHCC), Clovis, Calif., closed its doors Jan. 1. The congregation was planted five years ago as a partnership between the Pacific District Conference (PDC), Mountain View Community Church, Fresno, Calif., and Mission USA, the USMB church planting arm. In an email announcing the closure, Pastor Gary Mejia notes that the congregation has seen over 100 decisions to follow Christ and more than 60 people baptized in those five years. The church's final service Dec. 29 included a potluck and celebration of the church's ministry.

Stony Brook collects coats

Stony Brook Church (SBC), Millard, Neb., collected coats to be given to underserved children at a local elementary school in December. The coat drive built upon a connection between the school and church that began in fall when one SBC Life Group collected and distributed school supplies to needy children. During a cold snap, school administrators noticed children walking to school in single-digit temperatures without coats. Stony Brook attendees immediately responded with 26 coats, 55 hats, 57 pairs of gloves, one scarf and one pair of boots. SBC discipleship pastor Stephen Humber says, "Our intention is to watch and listen for needs that (the school) has that we could meet."

FELLOWSHIP

Men from **Community Bible Church, Olathe, Kan.**, held an "advance" Jan. 10-11, featuring a program on accountability, a chili cook-off, shooting sports and a service project. Instead of a traditional Christmas program, the church hosted an all-church variety/talent event Dec. 8, followed by a birthday cake for Jesus.

Women from **Dinuba (Calif.) MB Church** attended a Christmas dessert and ornament exchange Dec. 3.

Youth from **North Oak Community Church, Hays, Kan.**, are planning a ski trip in Colorado March 16-19. While in the area, they will also spend a day serving **Ethiopian Evangelical Church**, a USMB congregation in Aurora, Colo.

Corn (Okla.) MB Church held a father/daughter "Winter Wonderland Banquet" Feb. 22. The women held a Christmas-themed progressive dinner Dec. 7.

Attendees of **Valleyview Bible Church, Cimarron, Kan.**, went caroling Dec. 22, followed by soup and dessert.

Madera Avenue Bible Church, Madera, Calif., organized an "all-church" skydiving outing Dec. 1. The seven participants landed safely.

Women from **Zoar MB Church, Inman, Kan.**, gathered Dec. 9 for a Pinterest party featuring crafts and snacks found on Pinterest, as well as a tutorial on using the popular social networking site.

WORSHIP

At **North Fresno (Calif.) MB Church**, Advent celebrations included a "Jesse Tree" at the front of the sanctuary. Each Sunday of Advent, children from a different age group presented an item to place on the tree as a reminder of God's faithfulness through the generations.

A "cry room" at the back of the worship center at **Ethiopian Evangelical Church, Aurora, Colo.**, not only serves those with small children but also allows those who work as caregivers for the ill or aging (a common job for new immigrants) to bring their charges to church and attend the service.

Andy Shewey and Garvie Schmidt, planned giving advisors with MB Foundation, spoke at **New Hopedale Mennonite Church, Meno, Okla.**, Nov. 24 for their Harvest Missions Event. During Sunday school, Shewey spoke on the topic of "Ways to Give." Schmidt preached on "Road Blocks to Openhanded Living."

Jon Wiebe, president and CEO of MB Foundation, preached an Advent message at **Parkview MB Church, Hillsboro, Kan.**, Dec. 1. The church's Advent series was entitled "The Generosity Staircase."

Shadow Lake Community Church, Papillion, Neb., has changed their name to **Reality Church**. They moved into a new, leased facility in January.

reaching out

LOCALLY

Women from **Memorial Road MB Church, Edmond, Okla.**, learn to know women from the neighborhood as they walk together in the church gym on Saturday mornings.

Youth from **Heritage Bible Church, Bakersfield, Calif.**, served their community with a "Rake and Run" day Dec. 15.

Volunteers from **Christ Community Church, Sioux Falls, SD**, packed food boxes for low-income seniors Jan. 4.

Volunteers from **Dinuba (Calif.) MB Church** collected blankets and socks this winter, then distributed them each week to those in need.

Community children gave a simple Christmas program at **Enid (Okla.) MB Church** and another area church Dec. 8. The area churches had connected with the children during a regular outreach held earlier.

The Amor y Fe congregation of **Butler MB Church, Fresno, Calif.**, hosted a Kings Day Festival for children from the church and community Jan. 5. Each child received a new toy, a gift provided for by donations from the congregation.

In November, the women of **Shafter (Calif.) MB Church** coordinated a grocery shower for students at Fresno Pacific Biblical Seminary, the denominational seminary.

Volunteers from **Laurelglen Bible Church, Bakersfield, Calif.**, visited senior centers on Christmas morning to deliver gifts of stuffed animals.

Attendees of **Trailhead Church, Centennial, Colo.**, went caroling at a local nursing home Dec. 24.

The praise choir from **Lincoln Glen Church, San Jose, Calif.**, offered a free "Christmas in the Park" concert Dec. 15 at a downtown park.

Garden Valley Church, Garden City, Kan., continued their annual tradition of making a float for the community Christmas parade. This

year's float, "Tis so sweet to Trust in Jesus," featured giant sweets and a gumball machine.

Valleyview Bible Church, Cimarron, Kan., invited members of the community to a free Thanksgiving dinner Nov. 28.

Attendees of **The Bridge Bible Church, Bakersfield, Calif.,** "adopted" 140 fixed or low-income seniors in December, providing Christmas gifts and visits.

The Springs@SMCC, St. George, Utah, collected business clothing in December and donated them

to local career college students to wear for interviews.

Ebenfeld MB Church, Hillsboro, Kan., collected 116 food baskets weighing over 600 pounds during their "Great Turkey Challenge." The baskets were donated to a local ministry that distributed them to needy families in the community.

In December, **College Community Church MB, Clovis, Calif.,** collected gloves for children from the Head Start preschool that meets in their building.

GLOBALLY

Shadow Mountain Church, West Jordan, Utah, plans to send a team to Guadalajara, Mexico, with MB Mission's SOAR Mexico program April 11-19.

Volunteers from **First MB Church, Wichita, Kan.,** packed over 100,000 meals to benefit communities in Rwanda. They worked with Numana, a hunger relief organization, for the Dec. 7 project.

CLEARINGHOUSE

LOCAL CHURCH JOB OPENINGS

Lead Pastor: Ebenfeld MB Church in rural Hillsboro, Kan., is seeking a full-time lead pastor for our congregation of approximately 300. Inquiries or resumes should be sent to Ebenfeld MB Church, 107 N. Main, Hillsboro, KS 67063 or emailed to ebenfeldpastorsearch@gmail.com

Transitional Pastor: College Community Church Mennonite Brethren, Clovis, Calif., seeks a full-time transitional pastor to begin summer 2014. Primary duties include preaching, administrative leadership and helping the congregation move through transitions in leadership and new facilities. Contact Kevin Enns-Rempel at kevin.enns.rempel@gmail.com for more information or to express interest. (2/3)

Senior Pastor: Grace Bible Church, Gettysburg, SD, is searching for a full-time pastor with leadership qualities, who can relate well with young married/single adults. Our evangelical church is very social and outgoing with approximately 110 members. Send resumes and inquiries to Ray VanBockel c/o Grace Bible Church, 310 South Broadway, Gettysburg, SD 57442.

Youth Pastor "Plus:" Cariboo Bethel Church, Williams Lake, BC, is now taking applications for Youth Pastor 'Plus'. Our city of about 11,000 serves an additional 30,000 in the central interior region of the province. Bethel, a Christ-centered, Spirit-led faith family of more than 250 people, has a multi-church youth group of 40-60 youth age 13-18 and a volunteer core of 15-20 youth and adults. This will be a full-time, custom designed position serving alongside the lead pastor as a key partner on our church leadership team. This person will primarily develop discipleship and ministry among young people and contribute to the greater mission of our church by serving in another area of ministry according to gifts, experience and passion. Contact us via an e-mail to alison_brown22@yahoo.ca. We can send you a full job description as well as a summary of who we are as a church family.

AGENCY JOB OPENINGS

Administrative Positions: Fresno Pacific University is seeking a qualified candidate for the administrative position of registrar. All job descriptions and applications may be viewed online at www.fresno.edu/careers

Planned Giving Advisor: MB Foundation is accepting applications for planned giving advisor. This person, based out of the Fresno, Calif., office, will represent MBF programs and services to individuals and ministries throughout the West Coast. MBF is a service agency of the U.S. Conference of MB Churches. Salary commensurate with training and experience. If interested, send a letter and resume to: Jon C. Wiebe, President/CEO, MB Foundation, PO Box 220, Hillsboro KS 67063 (jwiebe@mbfoundation.com)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Grants Available: The Historical Commission of the U.S. and Canadian MB Churches will again offer two funded initiatives for 2014. The first is an Open Research Grant in support of research and publication relating to the history and contribution of Mennonite Brethren women. The grant is made possible by generous support from the Katie Funk Wiebe Fund. The second is a Summer Archival Internship, designed to give a college/seminary student practical archival experience at each of the four Mennonite Brethren archival institutions in North America. Criteria and application details for both of these initiatives are available at www.mbhistory.org.

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