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CHRISTIAN LEADER

September / October 2017

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reaching everywhere



The magazine of U.S. Mennonite Brethren



**Church Multiplication
and Evangelism**



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Disciple-making**



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7348 W. 21st St., Suite 115
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Ears that hear

Listening can help us defeat racism

“Listen,” said Paul Klassen. “Not for agreement but to understand each other.” Klassen is a retired USMB pastor, and he made this appeal during an open-mic time at the Southern District Conference convention in July.

I write this editorial in the wake of the Aug. 12 “Unite the Right” rally in Charlottesville, Va., where we witnessed ugly racial hatred from white nationalists and neo-Nazis that resulted in violence that left three people dead and 35 injured. I am going to assume that we U.S. Mennonite Brethren agree that such attitudes and actions are morally wrong. USMB national director Don Morris spoke for all of us when he said, “It is difficult to understand how there can still be those who hold onto blatant white supremacist ideologies.”

While Christians need to name racism as sin and to confess and repent of our own sin, it is time for us white Mennonite Brethren to listen closely and carefully to the people of color around us who endure both the blatant and the mundane expressions of white supremacy each and every day.

For those of us living in central Oklahoma and central Kansas as well as the Bakersfield and Fresno, Calif. areas, we have the opportunity in October and December to listen to a USMB leader who may offer a perspective on this issue that few of us share. Terry Hunt, pastor of The Life Center in Lenoir, N.C., is the key resource person for a one-day LEAD One event that will be offered in these four locations as well as in Central District Conference communities in early 2018. Hunt brings an interesting combination of “identities” to our conversation about racism. He is African American. He is a pastor. He is a police chaplain who spends time ministering to police officers, a group of professionals that are often involved in the events that fuel the racial divide in our communities. Convinced that not enough people were speaking up about the racial divide in the country, last spring Hunt began taking advantage of opportunities to speak to the issue. In sharing his perspective, Hunt experienced the difficulty we have in really listening; he found himself ostracized to some degree by all three groups.

I encourage Mennonite Brethren pastors, church councils and lay leaders to seize the opportunity to participate in this LEAD One event when it comes to your area. As followers of the Prince of Shalom, let’s be the people who listen for understanding as a first step toward the defeat of the sin of racism. ▀



Connie Faber
has served as
editor of Christian
Leader since 2004.
She and her husband,
David, are members
of Ebenfeld
MB Church,
Hillsboro, Kan.

Connie Faber
EDITOR

Shelley Plett
GRAPHIC DESIGNER

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Rempel joins Christian Leader staff

Janae Rempel, Hillsboro, Kan., has been hired as the *Christian Leader* assistant editor. Rempel will begin her work with the U.S. Conference Sept. 1, 2017.

"I am excited to have a journalist with Janae's experience join our magazine staff," says Connie Faber, *Christian Leader*

editor. "Janae brings many gifts to this position. She has a passion for storytelling and is committed to the Mennonite Brethren church. I anticipate that she will bring fresh ideas and new perspectives, and I look forward to working with her."

Don Morris, USMB national director, says, "It's a pleasure to welcome Janae to the USMB staff. Janae is warm and personable, and it's obvious that she loves Jesus."

Rempel has more than six years of experience as a professional journalist. Most recently, she worked as the sports editor and photographer at the Hillsboro (Kansas) Free Press. Rempel, who joined the Free Press staff in 2013, is an award-winning journalist, having received three 2016 Kansas Press Association Awards of Excellence.

Rempel also worked from 2010 to 2012 at the *Prairie Sun Weekly* in Meade, Kansas, serving for one year as the newspaper's editor. She has been a freelance writer for *Christian Leader* and the Tabor College alumni magazine, *Connection*.

Rempel graduated from Tabor College in 2010 with a bachelor of arts in Communications/Journalism and Biblical/Religious Studies. She attends Hillsboro MB Church.

— USMB



MB Foundation dedicates new building

MB Foundation, the stewardship ministry for the Mennonite Brethren church family, hosted a dedication and open house July 14 to mark the completion of its new headquarters building in Hillsboro, Kan.



MB Foundation president Jon Wiebe greets the audience at the July 14 dedication of the stewardship ministry's headquarters in Hillsboro, Kan.

Approximately 250 guests attended the dedication event, with folks coming from California, Washington, Oklahoma, Arizona and North Carolina for the 9:30 a.m. program and come-and-go open house, held until 1:00 p.m. Special guests for the dedication program included Don Morris, national director of USMB, who gave the opening prayer. MB Foundation Board of Directors chair Dan Ray recognized and applauded the spiritually significant work that is done through the Foundation. Hillsboro mayor Delores Dalke spoke of the transformation that MB Foundation has brought to the Hillsboro community through the new building.

Randy Steinert, along with his wife, Delores, of Bakersfield, Calif., represented MB Foundation's constituency. "MB Foundation is instrumental in providing support and resources to the Mennonite Brethren family," said Steinert. "We are excited about the additional ministry that will be able to be done with this new building." Reg Boothe, director emeritus of the MB Foundation Board of Directors, closed the program with a few words and prayer.

Following the dedication program, the doors of the new building were opened, and everyone was invited inside for tours of the building, refreshments, giveaways and fellowship.

MB Foundation's theme for the past year has been to build resources for kingdom impact. In keeping with that theme, guests were entered in a draw-

ing for a chance to win \$1,000 to give away to their favorite ministry(ies). Coleen Ball, Hillsboro, was randomly selected for the prize. "I had been dreaming about what I would do with the money if I won," said Ball when she was notified about winning.

"We were overwhelmed with the love and support that was shown during our grand-opening celebration," says Jon C. Wiebe, president and CEO. "It was such a joy to celebrate this huge milestone with our constituency and the Hillsboro community. We couldn't have asked for a better day and we are so thankful to God for all he is doing through MB Foundation."

The night before the dedication, MB Foundation hosted 45 board members, former and current staff, USMB personnel, spouses and friends of the Foundation for a dinner and sneak peek of the facility to celebrate what God has done and this important milestone for the Foundation.

To view the building process, visit www.mbfoundation.com/building-project. —MBF

SDC convention focuses on discipleship

The Southern District Conference (SDC) held its biennial convention July 28-29 at First MB Church in Wichita, Kan. Speakers Ermias Amanuel, associate pastor of Ethiopian Evangelical Church, Denver, Colo.; Trevor Lee, pastor of Trailhead Church, Centennial, Colo.; and Jon Wiebe, president and CEO of MB Foundation, addressed the convention theme of discipleship. Saturday workshops were provided by representatives from Tabor College, MB Mission, MB Foundation, C2C Network, USMB and the SDC Youth Commission. The closing session, presented by the SDC Church Extension and Evangelism Commission (CEEC) and C2C, highlighted church planting.

Delegates elected new commission members, passed the recommended budget and approved bylaw changes shifting the responsibilities of the Nominating Committee to the Executive Committee. In other business, SDC chair Bruce Eitzen reported that the Executive Council is discussing a recommendation from the Youth Commission that the district youth minister become a full-time rather than part-time position. Because a decision will likely be made before the 2019 convention, delegates were asked for their feedback; no concerns were expressed.

2018 convention slated for Salt Lake City

Planning for the 2018 USMB Biennial National Gatherings is moving into high gear as organizers anticipate meeting July 24-28 in Salt Lake City, Utah. The Pastors' Conference will be held July 24-26, followed by the National Convention July 26-28.

In an effort to reduce lodging and meal expenses for delegates, the convention will be held at the University Guest House and Conference Center, a hotel-like facility with all the amenities located on the University of Utah campus which is next to the foothills of



The 2018 USMB Biennial National Gatherings will take place on the campus of the University of Utah in Salt Lake City July 24-28. Delegates will be housed at the University Guest House, built to house participants in the 2002 Winter Olympics.

Photo credit: University of Utah

east Salt Lake City and Salt Lake Valley. The campus hosted the Olympic Village and the opening and closing ceremonies for the 2002 Winter Olympics. The Olympic cauldron, which held the Olympic Flame throughout the games, is also on the campus and can be seen on the drive to the Guest House.

“Celebrating Our Unity and Diversity” is the theme of the event, and the theme verse is I Corinthians 12:27: “You are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.” Mennonite Brethren pastors and leaders from across the United States will serve as speakers for both the Pastors' Conference and National Convention, showcasing the diverse USMB family.

“We will celebrate our diverse national family, but also highlight our unity and what God is doing in our national family,” says Donna Sullivan, USMB event planner. —USMB

LEAD Cohorts begin in September

Five LEAD Cohorts, a Leadership Education and Development (LEAD) initiative begun in 2017, will be starting in September. LEAD Cohorts are online meeting places for small groups of Mennonite Brethren pastors and leaders who are interested in a specific subject or in gathering with like-minded people.

Cohorts are also one way USMB is encouraging pastors and church leaders to network, says Don Morris,

USMB national director. “Cohorts are huge for developing great new relationships among pastors and leaders—with people in the cohorts perhaps being hundreds of miles from others they interact with online every two weeks,” says Morris. “That’s part of the networking aspect of the new vision of USMB.”

Cohorts meet for three to four months via video conferencing and are free, except for books or other resources recommended by the leader. They are intended to provide an opportunity for pastors and leaders to learn from one another and to sharpen their skills.

Fall cohorts are “The Disciple-Making Power in Expository Preaching,” led by Jared Pulliam, pastor of Christ Church Sellwood, Portland, Ore.; “Introduction to Spiritual Formation,” with Chandelle Claassen, a trained spiritual director and certified life coach who lives in Newton, Kan.; “Refreshing Your Pastoral Counseling,” taught by John Oelze, executive pastor at First MB Church, Wichita, Kan.; “Youth Ministry Realities” led by Russ Claassen, Southern District Conference youth minister; and “Coffee Shop Talk,” a time for pastors to visit with ministry peers about common issues that will be facilitated by Pat Coyle, pastor of Shafter (Calif.) MB Church.

Morris anticipates that another session of LEAD Cohorts will be offered in early 2018. For more information, visit www.usmb.org. —USMB

5 minutes with...

Steve Schroeder

MB Mission hosts training weekend

Nearly 50 people attended an “Everywhere to Everywhere” (E2E) training July 14-16 in Wichita, Kan., hosted by MB Mission’s Midwest Regional Mobilization Team. The team hopes to repeat the practical training weekend in other communities.

E2E focuses on the least reached who are living in the United States, particularly Muslims, and is intended to give participants a clear understanding of God’s vision to reach the nations and to train participants to make disciples who make disciples among the least reached. Participants learn about other religious worldviews and how to share the gospel with followers of those worldviews. They enjoy meals together in ethnic restaurants and receive hands-on training.

“Our desire is that small groups from local congregations would take part in an E2E training weekend and then take what they have learned back to their congregation,” says Aaron Myers, the mission mobilizer that leads E2E. “In this way, we hope to help the local church understand her assignment in God’s global mission to see his name made famous among the nations—those people who live on the other side of the world and those people who have moved into our neighborhoods.”—*MB Mission*

Katie Funk Wiebe writing center to be dedicated

The Tabor College Katie Funk Wiebe Writing Center will be dedicated at 11:00 a.m. Oct. 21 during Homecoming weekend. Wiebe, Tabor College professor emeritus and a columnist for the *Christian Leader* for 30 years, died Oct. 23, 2016, at the age of 92. The writing center is located on the middle floor of the H.W. Lohrenz Building, which is where the dedication and reception will be held from 10:00 a.m. to noon. Award-winning Mennonite Brethren poet Jean Janzen will speak at the dedication. —*CL*



Steve Schroeder is up to his elbows in bread dough at his Great Harvest Bakery these days. After 34 years of pastoring Mennonite Brethren churches, including nine years as moderator of the U.S. Conference, Schroeder and his wife, Penni, have moved to Greenwood Village, Colo., to run a bakery.

Why did you move from pastor to baker?

Part of what prompted my thinking is that this is the year I turn 60. My dad died at 62, and I wondered how I would want to spend my life if I only lived as long as my dad. And what would I like to do going into retirement years? The Lord was nudging us to go from a season of leading to a season of learning.

Was there a lot to learn?

Every new owner goes through three solid weeks of nonstop training. But my staff knew what they were doing, too, so I’m learning how to make bread from people in their early 20s.

Do you bake the bread yourself?

Our main baker works five days a week so I get my hands in the dough on her day off. I get up at 2:30 a.m. to bake. By 7 a.m. we all get around the kneading table and talk while we knead the bread by hand. Every day we make around 150 loaves.

Where does your pastoring experience show up?

Shedding the title “pastor” has been freeing to me, but I haven’t lost my pastor’s heart. If my worker or a customer has a problem, I take time to love on them, pray with them, help them.

What have been the challenges?

It’s way harder than being a pastor. If anyone is sick or anything is broken, it’s up to me. Like right now the yogurt machine isn’t working right. Every day there’s something like that and it all lands on us because we are the owners.

What gives you delight?

I enjoy making sure my workers have all the tools and products they need. And I love the chance to be generous. When a homeless man comes in, I can make him the biggest sandwich and give it to him for free. When you own the store, you don’t have to ask anybody.

Interview by Kathy Heinrichs Wiest

Sending the next generation

Student mission trips train, empower teens

I've been the full-time youth pastor at the same church for 13 years, and I've never taken students to summer camp. Summer camp has long been a staple in youth ministry culture, but years ago we ditched the summer camp plan for something better: student mission trips.

I think camps are awesome, but when it comes to leveraging a summer ministry schedule for maximum spiritual impact while staying within a family's summer budget, nothing is more effective than sending students out of their comfort zones into mission. So, our "summer camp" is now serving churches from Guadalajara, Mexico to West Jordan, Utah, to Squamish, British Columbia.

Why mission trips? Why not just go with the flow and register for one of the great summer camps in our area? It's definitely easier than connecting with a church plant hundreds of miles away, navigating passport issues with minors and convincing self-absorbed students that two weeks of hard work and travel has more to offer than maintaining the summer status quo.

Summer mission trips infuse church plants with fresh energy, faith and ministry opportunities. When 45 people show up to work alongside a new church plant in making their church known throughout their community, great things happen. Pastors are encouraged, non-Christians are introduced to a church in their neighborhood that cares about them and churches are blessed.

Twenty-three years ago, Mountain View Community Church was a Pacific District Conference church plant. Since

then, resourcing and supporting church plants has been in our DNA. In the summer of 2016, 45 people left Fresno headed to Squamish for a week of sports camps and neighborhood block parties to bless the city of Squamish and make The Rock Church known in its community. As a result, non-Christians in Squamish had a positive experience with a church that loves them, and pastors and church members were encouraged.

Summer mission trips empower students for ministry. When I'm leading a team, students are doing the Bible teaching during sports camp. Students are leading the small groups. Students are praying with local kids to become Christians. Yes, that can, should and does happen back home, but these leadership opportunities are often first experienced on mission trips. Mission trips also expose students to God's heart for the world. I've seen this happen as countless students have graduated high school and stepped into longer seasons of ministry, often in foreign countries.

Summer mission trips immerses pre-Christian students into Christian community, even before they become Christians. We treat our summer mission trip as our summer camp and that means any student who wants to go, can go, regardless of where they stand with Jesus. Tell me a better place for a not-yet Christian to be than away from home, surrounded by Christians their age who are reading their Bibles daily and actively sharing their faith? These students come back impacted by the gospel and changed by Jesus. ▀



Ken Wilkerson serves as the campus pastor at Mountain View Sunnyside in Fresno, Calif. Anna is his amazing wife and they are blessed with three awesome kids: Eden, Elly and Micah.

The miracle I needed

An explosion was coming if things didn't change

When my college years ended, I decided to set a few goals, and they are as follows:

- I want to become manager of a grocery store by the time I am 25.
- I want to own a grocery store by the time I am 30.
- I want to own two businesses by the time I am 35.

I accomplished all of them by the time I was 23.

I was a success in the eyes of the world, but my life was falling apart. My marriage was strained by my long hours of work. My drinking was turning into a dependence on alcohol, and I had other bad habits taking over my life. I was approaching the end of my life as I knew it, and something was about to explode if I couldn't get things under control.

At 2:30 one morning as I lay in bed, I came to the end of my rope. I cried out to God, "Lord, I need you to be Lord of my life." I realized I had accepted Jesus as my Savior, but I had failed to give my life over to him.

As the tears streamed down my face, I decided life could not go on if things didn't change. I cried out to God, saying my life had no value to me, so "if you want it, God, I will give it to you to do with as you wish," and he responded to my prayer.

As I reached out to God that night, something special happened. I was sitting in bed in the corner of the room when suddenly the brightest light you could ever imagine appeared and lit up my room. The room was so illuminated that I could see my wife peacefully sleeping.

I pinched myself to make sure I was awake, and then the light went right through me and complete calmness came over me—a peaceful feeling that I describe as something only God could give. In that moment, I knew God took the burdens of alcohol and the other additions from my life. God was my deliverer!

A simple grocer with little to offer was given deliverance by the Creator of all things. It was so incredible that the next two years of my life were filled with nothing but Jesus. Every hour of every day was consumed with thoughts of him who saved me. I grew faster spiritually than at any time before or since those precious years.

I do not know why it took this miracle for me to believe, but it changed my life from that day on forever. I could not go back to my old self, for the new had come and the old had gone.

After that night, I never drank again and when temptation came years later, my favorite verse came to mind: "No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it" (I Cor. 10:13). God understands what we are going through. He will be there for us, and when we have a temptation come our way he will help us say no to it, help us run from it and help us stay away from it. He is our deliverer. ▀



John Langer lives in Gettysburg, S.D., where he owns a grocery store. His passion is sharing Jesus with others. This commitment has prompted Langer to have about 20 people live with his family and to mentor well over 100 men and women toward a new or deeper relationship with God. This essay is reprinted from his book, *Yes, God Does Speak: Remarkable Stories of God's Power*, published in 2017 by Evergreen Press.

The law of redemptive physics

By Art Azurdia

Big Thunder Mountain Railroad. Matterhorn Bobsleds. Indiana Jones Adventure: Temple of the Forbidden Eye. Mad Tea Party. And my personal favorite, Space Mountain.

Those of you who possess a palate uniquely trained to appreciate the most urbane features of American culture will identify the category into which each of these is to be placed. They are Disneyland attractions. More to the point, they are the attractions that most frequently leave riders feeling nauseated, especially after a big bowl of clam chowder. Most of you, I expect, are acquainted with this experience.

The forces at work

Are you aware, however, of the laws of physics that actually ensure it? All these attractions expose their riders to the pressures of centripetal force and centrifugal force. What are these? Centripetal force pulls a person toward the center of a rotating body, while centrifugal force pulls a person away from the center of a rotating body. In either case the result is the same: somebody on these attractions inevitably—wonderfully—gets squashed.

In many ways, this same dynamic illustrates the two volumes that comprise the Spirit-inspired writings of Luke. Not that anyone gets squashed or nauseated. But a careful reading of Luke's New Testament contributions makes it nearly impossible not to feel the pressure of movement in his writing—that is, the force of being *pulled in* or the force of being *thrust out*.

In his initial volume, referred to as the third gospel, the movement is centripetal. As if a law of physics was at work, Luke inexorably draws his reader to a geographical center: the city of Jerusalem (Luke 9:51; 13:22; 17:11; 19:11). Something significant is to occur there.

In Luke's second volume, the book of Acts, the direction of movement changes dramatically. While

Luke begins at this geographical center, his narrative quickly displays a decided movement away from it—almost as if there were centrifugal forces at work in defiance of anything seeking to resist them.

This raises the obvious question: If Jerusalem serves as the geographical pivot for this centripetal/centrifugal shift in Luke's writings, what is it that sets this shift in motion? The answer: A composite of salvation/historical events centered upon Jesus of Nazareth: his death and resurrection followed by his ascension and exaltation as the universal Lord, all of which climaxes in his outpouring of the Holy Spirit on those who belong to him.

This is the turning point for Luke, triggering an irresistible law of redemptive physics. The achievement of Jesus Christ is not to be confined to a geographical center. Rather, the entire world must realize that God's Son has brought salvation to humanity.

The church's glorious agenda

This brings us to our glorious agenda: the unique and irreplaceable mission that has been given to the church by her resurrected Lord. A mission that, at present, is threatened by conscious and unconscious efforts to dissuade the church from it. At a time in which nearly everything is being uncritically heralded as "the mission of the church," Christians need to discerningly evaluate these claims via the light of the explicit instruction of Jesus and the apostles.


Acts 1-2, specifically, provides a significant contribution to this necessary discussion. A careful exposition of these chapters provides objective and revelatory criteria for self-evaluation. Though the process may potentially prove uncomfortable, its importance is beyond calculation—especially given the susceptibilities to which many churches are quickly falling prey, as illustrated in the following parable.



“ *...a careful reading of Luke’s New Testament contributions makes it nearly impossible not to feel the pressure of movement in his writing—that is, the force of being pulled in or the force of being thrust out.* ”

A parable

On a dangerous seacoast where shipwrecks often occur, there was once a crude, little lifesaving station. The building was just a hut and there was only one boat, but the few devoted members kept a constant watch over the sea. With no thought of themselves they went out day and night, tirelessly searching for the lost. This wonderful little station saved many lives, and over time it became famous. Some of those who were saved, and various others in the surrounding area, sought to become associated with the station—to give of their time, money and effort for the support of its work. New boats were bought and new crews trained. The little lifesaving station grew.



Some of the members of the lifesaving station were unhappy that the building was so crude and poorly equipped. They felt that a more comfortable place should be provided as the first refuge for those saved from the sea. So, they replaced the emergency cots with beds and put better furniture in the enlarged building. Gradually, the lifesaving station became a popular gathering place for its members. Over time, they decorated it exquisitely, using it as a sort of club. Fewer members, however, were now interested in going to sea on lifesaving missions, so they hired lifeboat crews to do the work. The lifesaving motif still prevailed in the club's decoration, and there was a liturgical lifeboat in the room where the club's initiations were held.

About this time, a large ship was wrecked off the coast, and the hired crews brought in boatloads of cold, wet and half-drowned people. They were dirty and sick; some of them had black skin and some had yellow skin. The beautiful new club was in chaos. So, the property committee immediately had a showerhouse built outside the club where shipwrecked victims could be cleaned up before coming inside.

At the next meeting, there was a split in the club's membership. Most of the members wanted to stop the club's lifesaving activities altogether, having come to regard them as unpleasant and a hindrance to the normal social life of the club. Some members insisted upon lifesaving as their primary purpose and pointed out that they were still called a lifesaving station. But they were finally voted down and told that if they wanted to save the lives of all the various kinds of people who were shipwrecked in those waters, they could begin their own lifesaving station down the coast. They did.

As the years went by, the new station experienced the same changes that had occurred in the old. It too evolved into a club, while yet another lifesaving station was founded. History has continued to repeat itself, and if you visit that seacoast

today you will find several exclusive clubs along that shore. Shipwrecks are frequent in those waters, but most of the people drown. (This telling is modified slightly from Theodore O. Wedel's "Evangelism—The Mission of The Church to Those Outside Her Life," published in *The Ecumenical Review*.)

Challenging congregational narcissism

This is a parable and therefore fictional. The effectiveness of a parable, however, lies in its proximity to reality. Its success turns on the immediacy it shares with the person to whom it is being told. As a pastor, this parable grips me with a very real immediacy. It requires no explanation because, frankly, I live in dread of just such a possibility: the creation of a missional irrelevance as the result of a congregational narcissism. Or, stated differently, professing followers of Jesus who, while absorbed in the self-satisfying benefits of church life, are no longer preoccupied with getting themselves dirty searching for drowning people.

This parable highlights one of the perennial anxieties of every discerning pastor: that a congregation would become so self-absorbed—with doctrinal minutiae, musical styles, political agendas, nuances of family life, social issues—that she eventually loses her preoccupation with mission. In a real sense, the cause of this self-absorption is immaterial. The potential reality of it is what proves so disconcerting—a reality that has not only made itself repeatedly evident throughout church history, but one that continues to make itself evident in congregations within our own respective communities.

I invite you to carefully examine Acts 1-2. It is my prayer that doing so will stimulate in you a fresh consideration of the mission Jesus has assigned to the church. It is no exaggeration to claim that these two chapters have forever changed me. They have not only provided me with truth I had never before considered but have furnished me with conviction I had never before felt. This is a most wonderful gift that the Spirit of God can give to a preacher of the gospel. I have no doubt that he can effect this same kind phenomenon within you.

Art Azurdia is senior pastor of word and worship at Trinity Church, a USMB congregation in Portland, Ore. This article is adapted from his book, Spirit Empowered Mission: Aligning the Church's Mission with the Mission of Jesus, published in 2016 by Christian Focus Publications.

mission

noun | mis·sion | \ 'mi-shən \

Defining our mission as a global Mennonite Brethren family in the 21st century

I was excited and hopeful about what God wanted to say to the 240 Mennonite Brethren leaders from 36 countries who attended the March 2017 ICOMB consultation on mission and prayer. But I carried a burden about a few things related to our understanding of the church's mission. I was also eager to call us to experience together the vital connection between mission and prayer.

Do we understand who God is?

Our missionary identity is primarily found in the triune God (Eph. 1:11-14, 17). God in three persons exists in eternal communion. Our missionary task is grounded in the Father who sent Jesus to Earth and the Holy Spirit who empowered Jesus—and ultimately the church. Trinitarian theology points to the radical communal nature of God that overflows into the foundations of mission.

But God is not easily known and understood. The Trinity as a doctrine has been misunderstood and even denigrated in the past. Someone has said it's impossible to know God. But you have to know him in order to know that! God is not just a "greater god." He is "another other" kind of divine being (Isa. 46:9). This is critical to get right—and most Christians don't.

Let us be a little humble. We cannot assume that God is especially affirming of our cultural ways, our preferred idea of the gospel. Given a chance, indigenous people cultivate better ideas for contextualizing the gospel; it's been going on for two millennia.

Do we understand the church's mission?

The church is the divine community—the body of Christ (Eph. 1:22–23). The church is what salvation looks like. Salvation is not really an individual proposition. Our individualistic culture and doctrine of "personal salvation" undermines this truth. It took me years of meditating on these verses in Ephesians to begin to grasp the stunning place of the church. The church—and the Mennonite Brethren church as part of it—is, like God, "another other" kind of thing.

Mission is the function of the church, not a mission agency. We need the specialization of mission agencies, but we must not lose track of the church's centrality to mission. God is accomplishing his mission through the church, meaning mission work doesn't just "save (individual) souls" but plants local churches and establishes new church associations. I realize mission stories focus on individuals for a reason but it undermines the thought that mission work isn't done until a new MB association is started and reaching people in its context.

We have a confessional identity. It provides guiding principles for life and mission. We have hidden our identity recently. Sometimes we promote other statements of faith. Can we be proud of our Mennonite Brethren identity?

Let's take seriously that we are a 150-year-old church called "Mennonite Brethren." The U.S. Conference is the oldest, dating back to the 1870s. But Canadian and India Conferences date back to 1888 and 1889 respectively. Meanwhile, though MB Mission is the "mother" agency, MB mission agencies are developing in India, Brazil, Colombia, Europe and DR Congo.

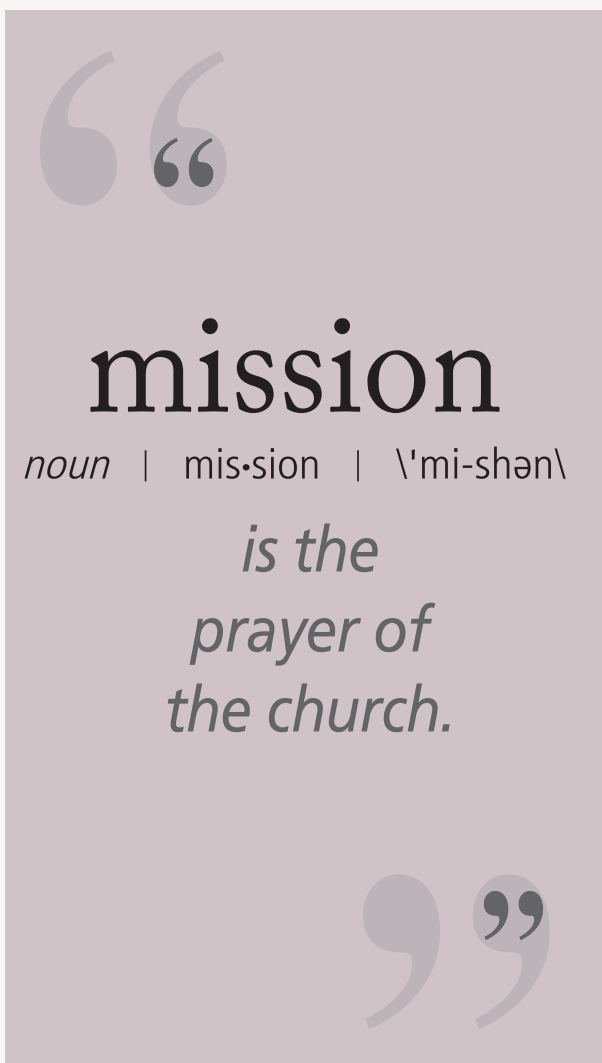


Let us be a little humble. We cannot assume that God is especially affirming of our cultural ways, our preferred idea of the gospel.



Today, we envision mission “from ” within our own MB family. We obviously partner with other agencies and denominations, but we do need to (re)capture our vision as a specific church family on mission. And we need to support that with prioritized prayer and giving.

Onesphor, a leader in Burundi, has started a series of churches that want to be Mennonite Brethren. He loves our Confession of Faith. Will we support him? Or might we starve one of our orphan babies through “identity neglect”? This is the real-time challenge of a denominational family.



Do we see mission as communal?

The communal character of God and the church tell us that mission is communal. Mission, like God and the church, is something of “another order” too.

A globally shaped gospel must be characterized in weakness (Phil. 2:5-11) to counter the previous centuries where the gospel spread on colonialist power. The Anabaptists began on the margins. Can we reorient to that as a global family of faith? Our heritage is a gift. But missionaries from a culture of wealth and power are too often blind to the

ways their culture affects their worldview, their gospel—in fact, everything. In his book poignantly titled *Rescuing the Gospel from the Cowboy*, Richard Twiss, North American Indigenous theologian, tells powerful stories illustrating such “self-myopia” coming from a position of power.

Further, receiving cultures have the capacity to theologize and work in mission as “church.” We need an everywhere-to-everywhere gospel. We, Mennonite Brethren in more than 36 nations, have potential to reach many parts of the world. And we are.

But there’s an elephant in the room: white power. Originally white race-based theology started with the assumption that indigenous people were children or worse. South African scholar Rothney Tsaka says African (Black) Theology began as a project to show whites that Africans were actually human. The issue of African Theology and white response wasn’t on the table for a long time, until African voices finally were heard. The white response was, “Don’t assert yourself; know your place.” When these “new” voices insisted, white patterns were to withdraw: “Keep the peace; this confrontation is unseemly.”

Our “daughter” conferences, often in colonized or marginalized cultures, are developing their voice. Global mission means we listen to them and learn together on a host of important theological and churchy issues.

Prayer and mission

I used to think, “I need to improve my prayer life.” Then a Christian leader said, “Your life is your prayer.” Similarly, mission is the prayer of the church.

The way we do mission reflects the indwelling Way, the Truth and the Life.

The Way showed us how the life of prayer prepares us for life, ministry and danger. The Way stood with perfect calm before Pilate, before Herod and before the Sanhedrin. The Way showed us how to cultivate the fruit of the Spirit to stay calm, grounded and well-resourced as a person. A spiritual warrior is tenderhearted and brave, self-aware and attuned to others.

Paul wrote repeatedly about Christ in us. “Christ in us” teaches that it takes time in prayer, fasting and waiting on God to develop our missional heart, a heart sensitive to the receiving culture. Christ in us longs to pray. Christ in us longs to fast. Christ in us longs to pursue the lost with the gospel. Christ in us seeks the lost from a position of vulnerability. This is how prayer and mission of another order come together.

Who in your sphere of life does “Christ in you” love? What does “Christ in you” want to do about that? This is the church on mission through prayer, through each one of us!

David Wiebe is executive director of the International Community of Mennonite Brethren (ICOMB) and lives in Winnipeg, Canada. While he is a member of Westwood Community Church, Wiebe sometimes feels more a part of the global MB church, which he loves with all his heart. This article is condensed from Wiebe’s plenary presentation at the opening of The Church on Mission, an ICOMB consultation on mission and prayer.

REFORMERS AND RADICALS

The challenges we face today, thanks to the Protestant Reformation

Five hundred years ago, a German monk by the name of Martin Luther sent out an invitation to debate 95 points of doctrine and practice in the Roman Catholic church. His invitation helped launch the great 16th century Protestant Reformation, and Christianity hasn't been the same since.

By the time the dust settled, what had been a unified church spread across Western Europe and the British Isles had split into five distinct movements that are still present today. Joining the Roman Catholic tradition were new traditions known as the Lutheran, Reformed, Anglican (Church of England) and Anabaptist churches. While each of these movements shared many things in common, there were enough differences to keep the various protesters from joining together to create one unified Protestant church. Instead, each movement took on its own expression of ideas that were critical to the success of the Reformation.

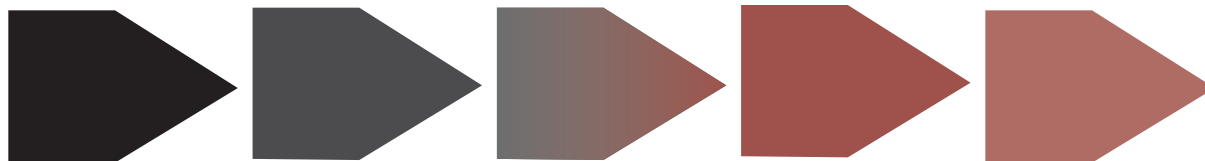
Salvation is free for all

Reformers began by protesting what they viewed as the abuses of the clergy and the hierarchy of the Catholic church. Martin Luther was especially troubled by the fundraising efforts of Pope Leo X. To reconstruct St. Peter's

Basilica in Rome, the pope had authorized the sale of indulgences. These were a bit like the "get out of jail free" cards in the Monopoly board game. By purchasing an indulgence, one could shorten or even eliminate the time spent paying for sins in purgatory. Luther was outraged by the idea that one could buy forgiveness of sins. If the pope really had the ability to free people from purgatory, Luther roared, he should do it freely, simply out of Christian charity.

By challenging the sale of indulgences, Luther and the reformers who joined him challenged the existing understanding of salvation. The idea that good works achieved merit before God had become prominent during the Middle Ages. Luther's reading of the book of Romans helped him view salvation in a very different fashion. Salvation, he said, couldn't be purchased. Salvation was freely given by God as an act of grace and was received solely through faith. Sinners were justified by the righteousness of Christ and never by their own merit.

Luther was pitting his reading of Scripture against the authority of the church. Existing Catholic doctrine maintained that salvation was mediated by the church through participation in the sacraments. Luther argued that Scripture



alone held authority, and that Scripture revealed Christ to humanity.

If Scripture was a means of revelation, then it seemed important that people have access to it. For centuries, only a Latin translation of Scripture was used, making it inaccessible to all but the very educated. Now, new translations of Scripture were made in the everyday languages of the people. The reformers began conducting worship services in the vernacular as well so that people might understand what they were participating in.

We take these things for granted: Church services in Spanish, English, German, Chinese or Swahili and the full Bible now translated into more than 600 languages. But this is a legacy of the Protestant Reformation and was made possible, in part, because of what was then new technology. The development of the printing press had an impact in that time like the advent of the internet in our own. Suddenly, people could read and talk about the same things at the same time. In addition to spreading the revolutionary ideas of the reformers, the printing press made it possible to distribute the Bible in new translations meant for the common people.

Restore rather than reform

Reformers agreed that salvation was a gift of God's grace and not achieved through works and on the centrality of the Bible as the authority for faith and life. But they did not agree on the practice of baptism or the meaning of the Lord's Supper. Most of the protesting groups retained the practice of infant baptism, seeing it as the entry point not only into the church but into the larger society as well. Baptismal records were like birth certificates in that they were used to establish identity. It was a group of radicals who insisted on believer's baptism and on a separation between the church and the state.

This group became known as the Anabaptists, a derogatory term that labeled them re-baptizers and thus heretics. Many were martyred simply for insisting that adult or believer's baptism was their first true baptism.

These early Anabaptists, the spiritual ancestors of the Mennonite Brethren as well as many other groups, sought to do more than reform the church. They wanted to restore New Testament church practice. They were especially drawn to the gospel accounts of Jesus. Like other reformers, they understood salvation to be solely the work of God in Christ. But the Anabaptists were radical Bible readers. They wanted believers to follow Jesus in everyday life, much as the first disciples did.

For example, they read Jesus's words in the Sermon on the Mount as a real-life guide for Christian

living. Christians were to practice love of enemies and seek to live at peace with each other. The example of the church in the book of Acts, where people sold what they had to take care of the poor among them, was to be the practice of the Christian community. The Lord's Supper was understood to be a memorial meal, uniting believers through faith in Jesus. At all times, allegiance was to be given to Christ alone.

Critics of these early Anabaptists thought their emphasis on discipleship looked too much like an emphasis on works and that the practice of adult or believer's baptism was an indication of disloyalty to the state, as was their refusal to bear arms. For the Anabaptists, however, good works were a natural result of a life given over to Christ. They were the fruit of salvation. As to loyalty, these Christians affirmed the practice of prayer for government leaders but maintained that their primary citizenship was always in the Kingdom of God.

Unintended consequences

The Protestant Reformation forever changed Christianity, and some changes were unintended, as is often the case with all movements.

Luther and the other reformers didn't set out to divide the church. However, by successfully arguing that Scripture outweighed the authority of established church structures, they set a precedent for other groups to separate out when they differed on points of doctrine or church practice. Today there are thousands of denominational groupings and many independent congregations around the globe. Jesus's prayer that believers might be unified hasn't yet been fully realized.

Likewise, putting Scripture into the hands of people has been a gift, but it has also encouraged an individualistic spirituality based on personal feelings and private interpretation of Scripture.

The separation of church and state, an early Anabaptist idea, has become enshrined as a pillar of democracy. But people still struggle with giving primary allegiance to Christ and not the state.

It is hard to imagine how different our Christian life would be without the changes brought about by the Reformation. The actions of these long-ago reformers changed the way many Christians understand faith and their participation in the life of the church. They remind us that the Holy Spirit continues to be at work. May we be open to what God has in store for us.

Valerie Rempel is associate professor, dean of the seminary and J.B. Toews Chair of History and Theology at Fresno Pacific Biblical Seminary, the Mennonite Brethren seminary in Fresno, Calif.



LEAD One event tackles racial issues

Traveling seminar encourages discussion, action

L EAD One is going on the road this fall and winter. The one-day, high-impact training will facilitate discussions on racial reconciliation and the value of networking. Pastors and leadership teams from the Central, Southern and Pacific District Conferences will have the opportunity to develop ideas and to consider tangible change they can implement in their home communities.

“America continues to struggle with racial issues, as does the church, even without always being aware of it,” says Don Morris, USMB national director. “Once it’s exposed, then it’s easier to address it with appropriate responses. It is something that we need to talk about throughout our churches and districts, which is why we’re taking it (LEAD One) on the road.”

LEAD One events are part of the Leadership Education and Development (LEAD) church health program. These initiatives are designed to train and equip pastors and church leaders so that local USMB congregations can ef-

fectively serve their communities and reach their full God-given ministry potential.

The LEAD One reconciliation series will follow a similar format to the pilot event held in Lenoir, N.C. in May. Terry Hunt, North Carolina District Conference minister, presented “Overcoming Racism from a Biblical Perspective,” highlighting how God created one race and identifies people by their nationality rather than the color of their skin.

Stephen Humber, regional mobilizer for MB Mission, spoke on “Growing Up White in America: You Don’t Know What You Don’t Know.” He explained how some past negative interactions exposed his own biased perceptions and reactions.

A small group of panelists shared testimonies and group discussions facilitated honest conversations how personal experiences have affected how they think about others who are different.

“My main goal is to expose the tragedy of racism in the church and in America from a biblical view,” says Hunt of the series. “I would like to see the church rise up to one of the biggest dividers in America today. To raise the awareness level and to initiate conversations around a huge problem that many

churches have not addressed or don’t believe even exists.”

Hunt hopes attendees will bring the conversations back to their communities, become more intentional in reaching across cultures and be moved to “repeal racism.” That’s what happening in Hunt’s community. Local business leaders in Lenoir who attended LEAD One are now volunteering to sponsor similar gatherings in the future, says Hunt.

“I am excited about the buzz in our city centering around racial reconciliation before any major problems erupt,” Hunt says. “I am very excited to be a part of a denomination that is not afraid to address issues that exist inside and outside of the church.”

The North Carolina District Conference is a seasoned leader in the fight against racism, beginning 100 years ago with Caucasian missionaries reaching out to African American children. Today, its seven congregations are either primarily African American or Hispanic.

The Lenoir LEAD One also included a segment presented by Morris on networking and other LEAD initiatives. “Networking is about pastors and leaders connecting with other pastors and leaders to share ideas and for support and accountability,” says Morris. “As we build networks among pastors and churches, it provides for inspiring one another—or iron sharpening iron—and is foundational for our new vision, resulting in greater kingdom impact.”

The LEAD One focusing on racial reconciliation and networking will be offered four more times in 2017:

- Tuesday, Oct. 10, at Cross Timbers Church in Edmond, Okla.;
- Thursday, Oct. 12, in Hillsboro, Kan., location to be determined;
- Tuesday, Dec. 5, at Laurelglenn Bible Church in Bakersfield, Calif.; and
- Thursday, Dec. 7, at North Fresno MB Church in Fresno, Calif.

A LEAD One on racial reconciliation will also be offered in the Central District Conference in early 2018.

A second LEAD One, the first to be offered in Spanish, could also be re-



The first in a series of LEAD One events focusing on racial reconciliation was held May 6 in Lenoir, N.C. Discussion times gave participants the opportunity to reflect on what the speakers shared and on their own experiences. *Photo credit: USMB*

peated in other locations. This LEAD One on the topic of disciple-making was held July 1 in Omaha, Neb. Presenter Daniel Rodriguez, pastor of the hosting church, Iglesia Agua Viva, hopes to offer these sessions in the Latin America and Pacific District Conferences where there are many Spanish-speaking churches.

“For our church it was really beneficial,” Rodriguez says. “Many of the participants said they learned more about making disciples and got answers to some of their questions about how to share with others. We live in a society that wants everything fast and easy, and the church is tuning into the same thing. It is a challenge to change the culture in our churches, but it is possible. Most people are willing to change, but we need to talk about it.”

This event opened the door to the possibility of offering LEAD One events in even more languages. “We need to think about other languages as well,” says Morris. “For instance, would it work to develop an Amharic-language event for Ethiopian churches? We have more to discuss about these possibilities.”

LEAD One events will continue to be offered in 2018 and beyond. Topics will support the USMB’s three core commitments: evangelism/church planting, leadership development and intentional disciple-making.

“I’m excited about the new round of events we have lined up and for our overall renewed thrust for providing new LEAD Ones in the future,” Morris says. “If this means that people in our churches become better, deeper followers of Jesus as a result of churches using new ideas, then that will be tremendously gratifying. If more people come to know Jesus for the first time because of our focus on evangelism and learning together how to reach more people—there aren’t even words for that.”

—Jenae Suderman

PDC internships build leadership skills

Local churches identify, supervise summer interns

Nearly 15 years ago, the Pacific District Conference established the PDC Board of Leadership Development with the goal of promoting a district-wide emphasis on developing young leaders. Since that time, the board, now called the Board of Next Generation Leadership, has provided the opportunity for over 230 young men and women to explore their leadership potential in ministry.

“The main ministry of this board is to encourage churches to identify gifted young men and women and provide them a paid summer internship experience,” says Gary Wall, PDC district minister.

The board supplies \$1,000 sponsorships for about 20 interns throughout the district each summer, but the selection and supervision of the interns is left largely to the churches.

“We rely on the local church to take the lead in selecting interns that suit

their local context,” says Wall.

Sabrina Elenes, director of children’s ministries at Reedley (Calif.) MB Church has worked with interns several times during her four years in the position, but this was the first year she was a direct supervisor.

Elenes says that having an intern can be a valuable reminder of the hopes and dreams she and other leaders in the church had when they first began ministry. “Internships don’t just affect the interns; God uses them to influence those of us who are currently in full-time ministry,” she says. “We get to hear a voice that is current and closer to the youth than we are.”

This summer, Elenes supervised intern Maverick Howard, who had previously worked with the children’s ministry in a volunteer role. “Maverick is very enthusiastic, passionate about children, a hard worker and so ready to learn about ministry,” says Elenes.

After several years of helping with vacation Bible school and counseling fourth through sixth grade students at camp, Howard decided to explore ministry as a possible career choice and applied for the internship at Reedley MB Church.



Thanks to his summer internship with Reedley (Calif.) MB Church, Maverick Howard, second from the right, front row, discovered how much he enjoys relating to children and is excited to be preparing for a career in education. *Photo credit: Reedley MB Church*

As an intern, Howard worked with VBS again, this time in a leadership role as recreation director, and attended three summer camps. He also worked with junior high and high school youth on Wednesday nights.

In addition to working directly with kids, the internship allowed Howard to expand his knowledge of ministry within the church as he attended committee meetings, helped organize and choose curriculum and performed administrative duties.

Elenes says she hopes that Howard came away from the internship with a greater understanding of both the joys and the difficulties of running a ministry.

“Learning how to plan a Sunday school lesson, answering and making calls to parents and not being afraid to say you don’t understand a task were a few things I had to learn how to do,” says Howard. “But they are all necessary skills, so I’m glad I got to learn them in that environment.”

Howard says that the internship helped him realize how much he enjoys building relationships with kids. He plans to attend Fresno Pacific University, the Mennonite Brethren university supported by the PDC, this fall with the goal of earning teaching credentials in elementary education and special education.

“From there we’ll see where and what God calls me to, but I’m excited about the idea of becoming an educator,” Howard says.

Gary Wall explains that while most of the interns in the summer program will not go on to become pastors, the ultimate goal is that the young men and women will develop their leadership abilities as workers for God’s kingdom.

“Our hope is that regardless of their vocational calling, each person will love Christ and his Church with greater passion and dedication as a result of their internship experience,” says Wall.—*Jessica Allen*

Ministry partnership offers handholds

SAS Club addresses relevant issues among teens

“These kids have 14-foot walls they have to climb before they get to the starting line,” says Mitch Redondo, youth pastor of Neighborhood Church, a Mennonite Brethren church plant in Fresno, Calif. In a partnership with Youth for Christ (YFC) and Roosevelt High School, Neighborhood Church is giving students in the high school’s lower-income neighborhood some handholds on those walls to success as adults.

More than 40 Roosevelt students gather at lunch each Thursday for SAS (Set Apart Squad) Club. For those 30 minutes in Mr. Altschuler’s trigonometry classroom it’s not about the equations on the board. It’s all about a place to belong and be loved.

“We’re going to talk about issues from a Christian perspective,” club president Amelia Konda tells the students. “But even if you don’t believe, you’re welcome to stay because you’ll meet a lot of great people here.”

Vetted through YFC’s system for on-campus volunteers, Redondo and his Neighborhood Church co-worker Grace Spencer walk freely on campus. SAS is considered a school club, giving the leaders access to campus facilities, including the gym for larger gatherings.

The partnership between the church, the school and YFC works because of a

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shared goal, says Redondo.

"We all have the same hope: that these kids would thrive and learn to serve their community," he says.

SAS club members are not your traditional church youth, says Redondo. "A lot of these kids have no stable family

unit. Maybe their parents have substance abuse issues or are incarcerated. They might be in foster care or raised by a grandparent or aunt." If they come to SAS it's because they want to be there, not because some authority told them to.

"You have to cross over into their world," he says. "If they don't like you, they'll tell you."

Making Scripture relevant to this mostly unchurched audience is one of the biggest challenges for Redondo.

Students clearly tell him, "If it doesn't connect with where I stand, what I think about, I want nothing to do with it."

When Redondo began in his role nearly two years ago, he and 15 students surveyed the entire student body to find out exactly where they could connect. Survey results have led to studies on feeling judged, dealing with conflict and struggles in relationships.

At each club meeting students get a card handout, professionally designed with teaching and discussion questions on the topic of the day. Redondo encourages them to take the card to talk about with their friends.

The conversations continue on Facebook, through text messages and in personal contact between Redondo and students throughout the week. His goal is to see the interactions and relationships "transform the culture from the inside out."

Neighborhood Church chose the Roosevelt area for their church plant precisely because of the challenges faced by families in poverty. The high school has become a key point of connection with the community. The church has already baptized several students, including one former gang member, who have become believers through SAS.

One key to transforming the students' culture is to let them know that they are not alone, says Redondo.

"Their parents are not there for them; they feel like they've been dropped in a jungle to fend for themselves," he says. "They need to know that Christ is with them—a living guide to look to when they feel lost."

The transformation of students who find Christ has a ripple effect on those around them—sometimes even those

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parents who are unable to provide a safe home for their children.

Redondo tells of receiving this Facebook message from one single mom who has left her son in the care of his grandparents: “I know we don’t talk, but I really admire and appreciate you for being there for Danny because he doesn’t have a male role model.”

In spite of her own substance abuse issues, Redondo says, the mom really does care about her kids.

The ministry partnership between church, school and YFC is filling in the gaps for these students with healthy role models and a place where they feel safe and accepted. —*Kathy Heinrichs Wiest*

Henderson MB spreads light

Garage Parties provide fun, community connection on Halloween

About five or six years ago, Luke Haidle, pastor of Henderson (Neb.) MB Church, forgot to turn on the house lights for Halloween evening. When a neighborhood kid rang the bell and asked for candy for himself and his friend, who was afraid to approach the house because it was dark, Haidle was struck by the irony.

“On a holiday that I would consider one of the most spiritually dark days of the year, why is my house scary?” he says. “The opposite should be true. My house should be the place of light, not only physically but also spiritually.”

The interaction rumbled about in his mind until three years ago, when he and his wife, Joanne, tried an approach to Halloween that has quickly turned into a fun way for the Henderson MB Church congregation to be that light and to connect with both their neighbors and other community churches.



Last year, there were at least half a dozen Garage Parties scattered throughout Henderson, a small Nebraska community of about 1,000 people, on Halloween night.

Photo credit: Henderson MB Church

The idea behind “Garage Parties” is simple: On Halloween night, host families open their garage, throw the lights on and invite their neighbors in. They provide candy for the kids and snacks for the adults, then visit with those who drop in.

Haidle notes that Halloween provides a remarkable opportunity for Christians to engage their community.

“It’s the only day of the year when all your neighbors will simply show up, knocking at your front door,” he says. The parties offer a way to have fun and build relationships.

The well-lit garage provides a safe, inviting space for both kids and their parents. Hosts are encouraged to decorate for fall, with leaves and pumpkins rather than with goblins and witches. Refreshments, folding tables and lawn chairs inspire lingering conversation.

Haidle notes that the parties work best with three or four adults working together to keep the snacks stocked,

hand out candy and wrangle children. And, Haidle says, folks do linger, so having volunteers prepared to simply chat is key.

The Garage Parties aren’t overtly evangelistic. The goal is simply to engage the community and to be a light.

“It’s a way as a church and as believers to engage in Halloween with some purpose and some intentionality, but also with a Christian mindset,” Haidle says.

Garage Parties also have helped Henderson MB Church connect with the other area churches. After the first Garage Party was a “raging success,” Haidle mentioned the idea to three area pastors with whom he meets regularly. The three churches now work together to make the garage parties happen.

Because the churches cooperate, the Garage Parties can have a bigger impact in the community. Not only can they have more host homes, which means more fun and more visibility, but they

can also promote Garage Parties as a community event rather than the effort of one church. That lends more credibility to the effort and allows them to, for example, distribute fliers in the local school.

Last year, at least half a dozen garage parties were scattered through-out Henderson, a small community of about 1,000 people. While the Garage Parties might not work as well in a larger city with competing Halloween alternatives, response in Henderson has been very positive. Haidle's experience has been that the garage is full of people all evening long, with perhaps 20 people at any given time.

Haidle suggests that others who are interested in trying Garage Parties start small, with one party as a test. Use a team approach to do it well. Have fun.

And, above all, be prepared to engage the neighbors who come.—Myra Holmes

VBS brings children to Jesus

Volunteers from small church see big impact

Vacation Bible school (VBS) is a summer standard for many USMB congregations and Grace Community Church (GCC), a USMB congregation in Sanger, Calif., with an average weekly attendance for all ages of 107, is no different.

What is somewhat unusual for a small congregation is that Grace volun-

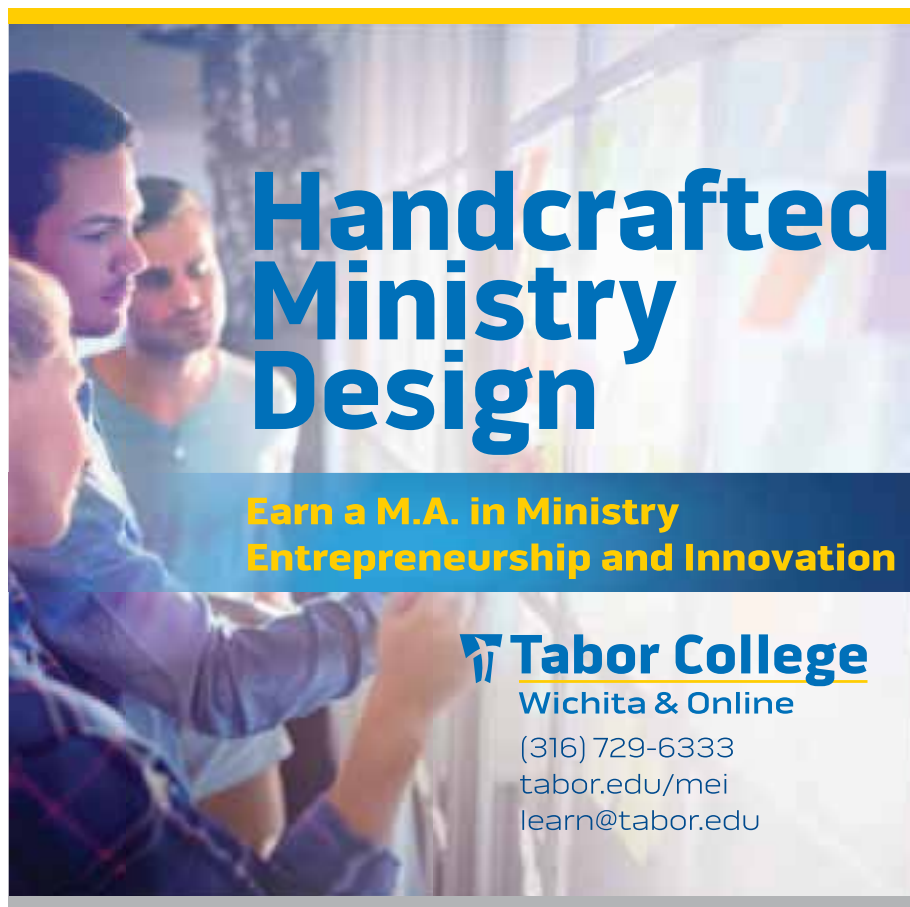
teers were involved with two VBS programs—one sponsored by their church and another that targeted children whose parents work at a local packing-house—that saw a total of 81 children accept Jesus as their Savior.

Ana Hernandez, Grace Community's children's director, organized a one-day VBS June 3 with the help of 28 adult volunteers from the congregation. The congregation promoted their VBS in the community and Hernandez also encouraged the congregation's children to be missionaries and invite their friends. The outreach efforts were effective. Of the 79 children who came to VBS, the majority were guests and 29 accepted the Lord that Saturday.

Ten days later, Hernandez and a team of 14 Grace volunteers spent four days working with Children's Champions, a ministry that equips and empowers children's and youth ministry leaders in California's Central Valley, and volunteers from other Sanger churches to host VBS for about 130 children whose parents work for Kings River Packing, a local fruit packing and shipping business. Hernandez reports that 52 children accepted Jesus as their Savior during the week.

This is the second summer Grace volunteers have been part of this outreach effort that is initiated and funded by the packinghouse. Children's Champion coordinated the morning VBS program and helped organize the wide variety of onsite activities held in the afternoon. This year Hernandez and her team were responsible for staffing the nursery, organizing registration, telling the Bible story and leading the opening and closing rallies.

"We are blessed to be involved with this," says Hernandez. "We are praying for the Lord to open more doors," she says, "as we meet the needs of our changing culture and community." —CL



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Lighthouse Church has a new home

“We want our zip code to know Jesus”

Lighthouse Church, a USMB church plant in Lakewood, Colo., is no longer unpacking and repacking, setting up and tearing down every Sunday morning for worship services at a local high school. In June the fledgling congregation moved to a church facility in west Lakewood that is owned by a Presbyterian church that closed its doors.

“We’re a real church now,” celebrated church planter Josh Shaw in a July Facebook post that included a photo of a freshly installed sign outside their new church home.

Lighthouse has signed a long-term lease and raised \$20,000 to update its new church home, located at 8210 W. 10th Avenue and in a neighborhood comprised of immigrant and low-income residents.

“As we’ve moved into our new neighborhood, our driving passion as a church has been to prepare the way for God’s kingdom,” says Shaw in an email. “We want our zip code to know Jesus, know his kingdom and know his healing power. And as we’ve moved, God has been so faithful.”

Lighthouse Church had its first Sunday service in its new home on June 25. The congregation welcomed over 100 guests in the first six weeks at its new location and has grown by more than 50 people.

“The neighborhood we are in is hungry for Jesus’ Luke 4:18 promise: ‘That he has come to set the captives free, to free the oppressed, to free those in bondage, and to bring the day of the Lord,’”



In June, Lighthouse Church began talking with a Presbyterian congregation that recently closed its doors about the possibility of this USMB church plant using their empty building. By the end of the month, Lighthouse began holding worship services in their “new” facility. *Photo credit: Lighthouse Church*

says Shaw. “They want Jesus, and they want his freedom in every area of life.”

Lighthouse Church was launched in October 2015 and began with 12 people meeting in a small warehouse. They describe their church as a place where “it’s okay to not be okay.”

Before moving to its current location, Lighthouse Church met at Green Mountain High School and made it a point to serve and bless that school. Twice the congregation raised funds to purchase needed items for the school, specifically the theater department. Their first project was to purchase sewing machines for the theater department and the second was to buy a storage unit. Shaw was excited to report that the sewing machines helped make it possible for two students to receive college scholarships for

theater production, specializing in sewing and the creation of costumes.

Lighthouse Church is supported by USMB, the Southern District Conference and Mountain View Community Church of Fresno, Calif. The Shaws were interns with MVCC, and MVCC is taking on the role of “mother church” for the church plant even though the churches are hundreds of miles apart.

“It’s great to see Lighthouse Church get a facility they can call their home, with use throughout the week,” says Don Morris, USMB national director. “This area of Denver is in great need of Christ-centered churches that are preaching the gospel. Josh and Brianne have doing that since the beginning, and we have witnessed several people come to know Jesus as a result.”

Too curious?

The problem with ignoring those raised hands

Children are curious. Some may read this statement and hear that children are strange and tend to do funny or peculiar things. Others may interpret it to say that children are inquisitive and eager to learn. I believe both of these observations are true.

My husband, Ben, was a curious kid. In elementary school he was a novel-reading, dinosaur-loving boy who liked to learn. He quietly listened to the lesson and waited patiently for the teacher's magic words: "Are there any questions?" Ben had a lot of questions and, much to his teacher's disapproval, was not always pleased with the answers given. His teachers had a difficult time navigating their agenda with his disruptions and eventually overlooked his raised hand.

In the church, we, too, tend to overlook the raised hands of our children. Teachers and leaders in youth and children's ministries can get overwhelmed by the amount of questions our students ask. Adults want to give correct answers, which can be difficult to do with the mysterious aspects of our spirituality. Many lesson plans don't include an opportunity for children to ask questions and instead fill time with facts to learn and verses to memorize.

As a way to overcome fear and unbalanced curriculum, the third through sixth grade teachers at North Fresno Church devoted two weeks of class time to asking questions. We handed out index cards and gave our students the chance to ask whatever questions they had about God, the Bible and life in general. Our students had a myriad of inquiries:

"How was God created?"

"What does heaven look like?"

"How did Jonah not get digested when he was swallowed by a fish?"

"Why are bad things happening in the world still?"

"Is his name really Jesus? Or is that the American pronunciation?"

The teachers could not answer a single question with certainty. We explained that we as a group could read Scripture and talk to our church leaders and learn from our own experience, but sometimes there is not an obvious answer. Surprisingly, our students happily agreed.

We are committed to exploring with our kids and encouraging them to ask more questions and to share their concerns and doubts. Our students enjoy having a space to process and discern together.

David M. Csinos and Ivy Beckwith address this idea of inquiry in their book, *Children's Ministry in the Way of Jesus*: "When we embrace honest, thoughtful and even challenging questions, we can guide children as they deconstruct their faith and reconstruct it in ways that allow that faith to seep into their bones, to form the core of their identity, an identity that won't fall apart when doubts arise."

Our children are not always looking for the correct answer. They are looking to be heard, to be told that their raised hands are worth calling on. By encouraging questions in our church communities—and not being offended when people doubt our answers—we can teach our young people that being curious is a spiritual act. ■



Caitlin Friesen is a native of Fresno, Calif., and graduate of Fresno Pacific University. She has a passion for Jesus and a heart for kids, both of which have been put to use as a backpacking guide, outdoor educator, camp counselor and most recently as associate pastor of children and family ministries at North Fresno Church. In September, she and her husband, Ben, will move to Topeka, Kan., where Ben will serve as lead pastor at Cornerstone Community Church.

When life is good *and* bad

Living with the intersecting seasons of life

It was the end of a long, hard day. While Hanna wrapped up the evening in another room, I put Claire in her footy pajamas and took her into the living room. I set her on the floor with a couple of toys and crumpled myself against the couch a few feet away.

I was physically and emotionally drained, feeling a little helpless and insignificant in the sudden quiet. Tears were starting to fill my eyes when Claire looked up, for no apparent reason, and gave me a huge, goofy grin.

That little smile seemed to communicate so much, and the burdens of the day simply vanished.

We talk about seasons of life the same way we talk about seasons of the year, as if there's a clear boundary between the good times and bad. I particularly enjoy this seasonal transition, when the leaves start to change color, the air cools and every coffee shop advertises one product or another with "pumpkin spice."

But life isn't like that. Though our intellect tries to organize everything into a black-and-white system, blessings and hardship are always intertwined.

My duties at Hillsboro MB Church often put me behind the soundboard during memorial services. The funerals I find most poignant happen over holidays: the sharp contrast of emotional tributes given against the backdrop of a twinkling Christmas tree makes it hard to rationalize the intersecting seasons of life.

It reminds me of "Hymn of Promise," written by composer Natalie A. Sleeth in 1986. The second verse be-

gins, "There's a song in every silence, seeking word and melody; There's a dawn in every darkness, bringing hope to you and me."

The hymn's beautiful lyrics and melody invite the listener to reflect on the fact that often the weeping and dancing happen simultaneously. It may not always make sense, but the reason—as each verse ends—is "unrevealed until its season, something God alone can see."

It puts a different perspective on the familiar "a time for everything" Ecclesiastes 3 prologue. The author lists 14 contrasting pairs of actions—weeping and laughing, mourning and dancing, tearing and mending—that I'd always understood to be happening at separately designated moments. But each phrase is structured with "and" instead of "or." If the author wrote, "There's a time to weep or a time to laugh," it would cast a distinctly different message.

But it's a time to weep and a time to laugh. God has purposefully woven happy and hard times together, a reminder of his grace and hope in all things. Paul adds that message to his conclusion of 1 Thessalonians: "Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances."

In this culture of carefully curated Instagram selfies ("#blessed"), it's hard to admit when our current season of life isn't all sunshine and pumpkin spice lattes. Yet it's vital to engage in hard moments, because it's in those times I think we most clearly see the real blessings God has placed along our paths, like a baby's grin after a tough day. ■



David Vogel serves as the worship director at Hillsboro (Kan.) MB Church, where he has been on staff since 2013. He and his wife, Hanna, welcomed their first child, Claire Elizabeth, in January, and live in Hillsboro, where David operates a graphic design studio. David is passionate about using music and multimedia to create an environment of authentic and passionate worship.

Where to start

LAMB focuses on healthy pastors leading healthy churches

What a wonderful and exciting time to be a part of the USMB family. This is a new season of partnering together that crosses over district, ethnic and traditional tribal lines. This vision forward truly is a move of God, a move of God that will cause us to lean in toward each other with greater force for the building up of his church. A move toward a greater opportunity to share resources, experiences and accumulated wins and losses that can be networked to help build others up outside our current reach and capacity.

Ed Stetzer, in an article about networks written for his blog, *The Exchange*, reminds us that people are ultimately attracted to fire, not fences. We are to work around and at times break down the barriers that previously held us back from coming together as one body. The general attitude of “we are doing this together, and we’re in this together” undoubtedly leads to momentum toward the greater cause of reaching the lost. So the question that continues to provide much imagination, creativity and opportunity is: How can we do this more effectively?

The LAMB District, in the southern tip of Texas, has been challenged by this question as we engage and participate in our three USMB core commitments: multiplication/evangelism, intentional discipleship and leadership development. Our desired future is that all three core commitments be spinning equally and functioning at full potential. But the challenge was where to start.

A few years back, Jon Wiebe of MB Foundation encouraged us to look into leadership and theological development thru The Urban Ministry Institute (TUMI), a World Impact ministry. TUMI focuses on equipping leaders,

which is directly in our scope of core commitments. LAMB’s leadership team prayed and agreed that this would be our area to start.

We would start by providing an opportunity for every church to send local members for leadership development that would eventually bring fruit to their local church. Fruit in the form of trained and developed leaders that would eventually lead their local churches in evangelism and discipleship efforts.

Our current batch of students has just completed their first module, and already churches are beginning to see the benefit of this effective program. Rolando Mireles, LAMB secretary and long-time lead member, recently commented that he is “encouraged by the steps being made by the district to provide some Bible training and leadership development to help the local church.” This is an opportunity that is allowing us to see new young leaders who serve well within the local church. Mireles also said, “In all my years God has been very faithful, and I know that he will continue to do so with the coming generation after us.”

As well, we are taking steps toward the spiritual health and care of our local pastors. The district has partnered with our local churches to provide a free pastoral retreat that will allow our pastors to find soul renewal and encouragement through relationship building. Our desire is to see healthy churches led by spiritually healthy pastors.

There is still much work to be done, as well as a greater intentional effort needed toward partnering with our different USMB agencies and districts. So, we ask that you continue to pray that the LAMB District’s future story be one that is linked together with greater force to our diverse USMB family. ▀



Aaron Hernandez is the Latin America District Conference (LAMB) minister. He and his wife, Alejandra, and their children live in La Grulla, Texas. Hernandez is also pastor of Grace Point @ Grulla and a daughter congregation, Grace Point @ McAllen.

MILESTONES

Baptism/Membership

St. George (Utah) South Mountain Community Church baptized 13 people June 25. They were Jocelyn Waters, Les Hudelson, Michael Haskie, Raydine Haskie, Victoria Haskie, Gavin Haskie, Tyson Haskie, Dan Gibson, Nadia Farnsworth, Katie Kelly, Alexis Waters, Ava VandeBrake and Joy Tohonnie.

Brax Meacham was baptized June 25 at **Pine Acres Church, Weatherford, Okla.**

Ashley Brazil and Emily Jost were baptized June 11 at **Hillsboro (Kan.) MB Church.**

WORKERS

Dustin Mulkey was installed Aug. 13 as the youth pastor at **Valleyview Bible Church, Cimarron, Kan.**

Jeff and Pam Blomquist have accepted the call to serve as pastoral couple at **Cornerstone Community Church, Harvey, N.D.**

Ben and Caitlin Friesen have accepted the call to serve as pastoral couple at **Cornerstone Community Church**, a USMB congregation in Topeka, Kan. Caitlin was serving as associate pastor of children's and family ministries at North Fresno Church, Fresno, Calif. She will conclude her ministry at North Fresno Sept. 1 and Jamie Mack will serve as interim children's ministry director.

Pine Acres Church, Weatherford, Calif., has made a transition in staffing. Associate pastor Tony Cannon is now pastor of care and connection and Garrett Hill is the part-time worship leader.

Dio Whiteface was installed July 9 as the new associate pastor at **Lakota Gospel MB Church, Porcupine, S.D.**

North Fresno Church, Fresno, Calif., has affirmed the giftedness and calling of Rhonda Dueck, director of the Micah Project, and commissioned her June 18 as an associate pastor.

Jeffrey Turner was installed June 4 as pastor at **Christ Community Church, Sioux Falls, S.D.** Turner, his wife, Angela, and their children moved from Dodge City, Kan.

Baldimar Felix served as the summer children's ministries intern and Alyssa Friesen and Katie Coyle were summer administrative ministries interns at **Shafter (Calif.) MB Church.**

Country Bible Church, Orland, Calif., celebrated pastor Paul Wright's 10-year anniversary June 11 with a special service featuring the congregation and the extended Wright family. A barbeque lunch and live music followed the service.

Bekah Hood concluded her service as youth director at **Enid (Okla.) MB Church** in June. A reception June 11 celebrated her ministry.

Bill Henneberg was honored May 31 for his 28 years of service as the junior high director at **First MB Church, Wichita, Kan.** Henneberg retired earlier in the year.

DEATHS

Correction: Clarence Wesley Nikkel was from Bakersfield, Calif., and was a member of Rosedale Bible Church in Bakersfield. The July/August issue incorrectly stated he was from Reedley, Calif.

Loyal Funk remembered

Thanks to the leadership of Loyal Funk, a generation of immigrants to the United States found a home with the Mennonite Brethren. Funk, who was director of Integrated Ministries from 1988 to 2004, died July 1, 2017.



When Funk joined the U.S. Conference staff, he was responsible for implementing a visionary plan, which included outreach "within and across cultural lines" with the goal of planting 60 new churches by the year 2000, with 30 of those congregations being among immigrants. By 1996, Funk's responsibilities had narrowed to serving as director of Integrated Ministries, as the work with immigrant churches was known. Funk also served as the U.S. Conference minister for many years. Prior to working for the U.S. Conference, Funk served for 40 years as a local pastor and home mission leader in the Central, Southern and Pacific District Conferences.

Funk was born Sept. 21, 1927, to Adolph and Anne Enns Funk in Wolf Point, Mont. On Aug. 18, 1949, he married Nancy Toews, who survives. He is also survived by his son, Rodney; daughter, Teresa Kirsch and husband, Jeffrey; and two grandsons.

Home teams support missionaries

North Oak Community Church, Hays, Kan., is forming "home teams" to act as active support for the church's missionaries. Each team is composed of five to 10 people who are committed to caring for and representing one of the missionaries or ministries that the church supports. Teams meet once each month, and team members make a two-year commitment.

Teams are expected to regularly pray for and communicate with the missionaries, assist them as they prepare to go and return from their assignments, express love and care during the assignment, educate themselves and others about the culture and ministry and convey missionary needs to the congregation. The church currently partners with 14 missionaries or ministries.

Dirks, Victor L., Buhler, Kan., member of Buhler MB Church, March 27, 1918—July 5, 2017. Parents: Isaac D. and Marie E. Janzen Dirks. Spouse: Evelyn. Children: Marlene Eitzen, Evonne Packard.

Franz, Raymond L., Hillsboro, Kan., member of Hillsboro MB Church, Nov. 16, 1929—April 29, 2017. Parents: Jacob E. and Ruth Suderman Franz. Spouse: Aldina Flaming. Children: Larry, Dale; three grandchildren.

Garcia, Baltazar Walter, Fresno, Calif., Mennonite Brethren pastor, Jan. 6, 1932—June 9, 2017. Parents: Anselmo and Petra Garcia. Spouse: Gloria, deceased. Children: Alexander, Diann Widaman, Alice Ayala; seven grandchildren; four great-grandchildren.

Koop, Alice, Hillsboro, Kan., member of Hillsboro MB Church, Sept. 30, 1926—June 7, 2017. Parents: Jacob E. and Katherina (Friesen) Klassen. Spouse: Hartley, deceased. Children: Roger, Murray; two grandchildren; one great-grandson.

Leppke, Sarah, Reedley, Calif., member of Reedley MB Church, Nov. 7, 1918—March 19, 2017. Parents: Henry L. and Anna (Toews) Buller. Spouse: Solomon Leppke, deceased. Children: Karen Wall, Ken Leppke, Barbara McDonald, Terri Thiessen; nine grandchildren; five great-grandchildren.

Marler, Amanda A., Hillsboro, Kan., of Hillsboro MB Church, Jan. 25, 1980—June 19, 2017. Spouse: Kevin. Children: Katie, Trinity.

Penner, Lula V., Hillsboro, Kan., of Hillsboro MB Church, May 30, 1925—April 6, 2017. Parents: Peter and Pauline (Javorsky) Schmidt. Spouse: Edward Penner, deceased. Children: Robert, Darryl, Berkeley, Barron, Arlen; 17 grandchildren; five great-grandchildren.

Unruh, Leonora Clara, Shoreline, Wash., former member of Shoreline MB Church, Jan. 7, 1923—June 24, 2017. Parents: Peter and Anna (Friesen) Wittenberg. Spouse: Menno Unruh, deceased. Children: Richard, Eden Sellers; five grandchil-

dren; nine great-grandchildren.

Weaver, Vernon, Bakersfield, Calif., of Rosedale Bible Church, Bakersfield, Oct. 15, 1929—July 17, 2017. Spouse: Peninnah Kliewer Leppke Weaver. Children: Stephanie, Philip; two grandchildren; one great-granddaughter.

REACHING IN

FELLOWSHIP

The annual **Shafter (Calif.) MB Church** backpack trip was Aug. 4-6. The trek, led by pastor Pat Coyle, gave adults and children the opportunity to enjoy an easy to moderate hike in the Kaiser Wilderness above Fresno, Calif.

Summer Life Groups at **Grace Community Church, Sanger, Calif.**, met in three locations on three different nights to study a six-week video series by John Ortberg, "All the Places To Go...How Will You Know?"

8-Tracks, the senior adult group at **Pine Acres Church, Weatherford, Calif.**, sponsored a trip July 6-15 to Hawaii. A total of 42 people went on the trip, with half coming from PAC and the other half being friends or coming from other MB churches in the area.

Valleyview Bible Church, Cimarron, Kan., hosted a July 15 screening of *God's Not Dead 2*.

Members of the **Rosedale Bible Church, Bakersfield, Calif.**, congregation suggested hymns to be sung at a potluck and hymn sing July 12. Brief devotionals were given for each of the 14 hymns.

The women of **Bethesda Church, Huron, S.D.** are using the "Take Them a Meal" website to coordinate meals when needed for their church family.

Men's Ministry at **Hillsboro (Kan.) MB Church** held their annual Fish and Fry for all men, boys and

girls June 3 at the Marion County Lake. The event included a casting contest, a prize drawing and a meal, including freshly fried fish and onion rings.

The Parlier (Calif.) MB Church hosted the California Mennonite Historical Society's dinner and presentation of "Hispanic Mennonites in California" held May 20.

WORSHIP

Reedley (Calif.) MB Church hosted Bryan Easter for a concert of worship July 16 as part of Easter's The Unshakable Tour.

This summer the art gallery in the lobby of **North Fresno Church, Fresno, Calif.**, featured the work of Krista Manela. The exhibit depicted Manela's passion and work among unreached people groups in Africa.

REACHING OUT

LOCALLY

The Giving Center is a joint ministry of **First MB Church** and **Lighthouse Community Church**, two USMB congregations in Wichita, Kan. The center provides help and care to those in need, including clothing, household items and nonperishable foods.

The congregation of **Corn (Okla.) MB Church** held a prayer walk Aug. 6 during Sunday school. Those interested in walking and praying met at 9 a.m. and those that wanted to pray at the church gathered 30 minutes later.

Volunteers from **Zoar MB Church, Inman, Kan.**, staffed the Inman Food Pantry Monday evenings and Thursday mornings during August. The congregation participated in the Inman Community VBS July 9-13. The VBS offering project was to col-

Church's endowment funds academic pursuits

When New Hope MB Church, of New Hope, Minn., closed its doors in June 2007, a portion of the proceeds from the sale of its property were placed in an endowment through MB Foundation to establish the Legacy of Hope, an endowment intended to support scholarship at Tabor College.

Since the Hope Scholars Program was established 10 years ago, the endowment has provided more than \$165,000 to Tabor students and faculty for professional development and academic pursuits.

In 2016-17, the endowment saw its largest year of funding, with more than \$21,000 awarded to a total of 24 faculty and students. Grants provided by the Hope Scholars Program are competitive and support scholarship activities that fall into three categories: scholarship grants intended to fund the systematic study of issues of significance through a Christian worldview lens; innovative curriculum development grants and logistical scholarship support grants that cover things like travel and accommodation expenses for presenting at academic conferences, minor equipment needs and exhibit competition fees.

lect items and money for The Children's Emergency Shelter in nearby Hutchinson, Kan. Each day the children were encouraged to bring one item from the designated category: canned food, boxed food, baby food, cereal and breakfast food and baby formula.

Shafter (Calif.) MB Church offered two sports camps for first through sixth graders. The evening basketball camp, led by John Wiebe, was July 10-13 and the morning wrestling camp, led by Pat Coyle, was July 17-21.

Bethesda Church, Huron, S.D. hosted their VBS, Super Summer Jam, at two city parks July 25-28, with a carnival July 29.

The congregation of **Pine Acres Church, Weatherford, Okla.**, is regularly invited to contribute to Food for the Badge, a meal the church provides to the local police department.

On the third Tuesday of every month, **Enid (Okla.) MB Church** volunteers with Forgotten Ministries to provide a meal at Don Haskins Park for needy people in the community. Forgotten Ministries is a ministry facilitator for local churches to reach the physical and spiritual needs of the community.

Grace Community Church, Sanger, Calif., collected school supplies for Mennonite Central Committee and two local elementary schools.

GLOBALLY

Each year at **First MB Church, Wichita, Kan.**, children in nursery through fifth grade contribute to a Sunday school offering. This year the offering of \$1,000 went to Foundation for His Ministry Mission, a ministry in Baja, Mexico, supported by the congregation, to provide breakfast for children who attend weekly Bible classes.

The Buhler (Kan.) MB Church congregation was invited to fill four suitcases with practical items for children that four church members would distribute when they went to Haiti in July on a mission trip.

Community Bible Church, Olathe, Kan., supported participants in two MB Mission summer programs. Five students and two sponsors were part of SOAR Vancouver July 14-24 and one person served with the six-week ACTION Peru team.

Three people from **Ebenfeld MB Church, Hillsboro, Kan.**, participated in MB Mission's ACTION France July 8 through Aug. 6.

Enid (Okla.) MB Church sent a team of six to Peru in late May to serve with MB Mission workers. The team took with them clothing to distribute to children attending kids' clubs and water filters to be distributed by local MB churches. The team led a three-day VBS, distributed school supplies and assisted families still digging out from recent flooding.

Happy belated birthday, Lena Dick

Lena Dick, the oldest living member of a U.S. Mennonite Brethren church, quietly celebrated her 112th birthday with family at the skilled care facility in Mountain Lake, Minn., where she lives. Dick, who was born Aug. 5, 1905, is ninth on Wikipedia's list of U.S. super-centenarians and is likely the oldest living Mennonite in

either Canada or the United States. A member of Community Bible Church, formerly Mountain Lake MB Church, Dick has lived her entire life in the Mountain Lake community. When asked what advice she would share with a young adult, Dick says, "Read the Bible. Trust the Lord."



CLEARINGHOUSE

Local Church Job Openings

Lead Pastor: Parkview MB Church in Hillsboro, Kan., is seeking a lead pastor. We are an Anabaptist Evangelical, multistaff church; discipleship and missions-valued with close connection to a local college. We have an average attendance of 290, an annual budget of approximately \$421,000 and are in a community of 3,000, located 50 miles northeast of Wichita (population 388,000). Additional information is available at www.parkviewmb.com and www.usmb.org. If interested please contact Andrew Jost at andrewjost55@icloud.com

Director of Student Ministries/Small Groups: Enid (Okla.) MB Church is seeking a full-time director of student ministries and small groups. Enid is a town of about 50,000 people, and our

current worship attendance averages 280 people. We are looking for a servant leader with a heart for God's work through the local church and a genuine love for people. We desire to find a leader with a passion for student ministry and discipleship through small groups in order to equip both youth and adults to become gospel-shaped people on mission with Christ in the world. For more information, visit enidmb.com.

Lead Pastor: Dinuba (Calif.) MB Church is looking for the right man to join our congregation and Elder Team as a lead pastor while we prayerfully implement a new vision for transitioning to a refreshed church. With 180 attending two services, we desire to more effectively reach our mostly Hispanic community with the gospel. The successful candidate should have a missional orien-

tation and excitement about embracing this opportunity. For more details email pastoralsearch-taskforce@gmail.com.

Ministry Job Openings

Director: Good Neighbor Ministries, a nonprofit ministry located in Omaha, Neb., is looking for a director. Requirements include strong communication and interpersonal skills, some degree of handiness, vision of neighborhood renewal, working closely with the neighborhood church, Faith Bible Church, and living in the Columbus Park neighborhood. Compensation includes housing, utilities and a monthly stipend of \$1,500 with the freedom to raise personal mission support. Please send resume to stephen@goodneighbor-network.net.

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Dreams for the future

Imagine how God can change our communities

I often daydream while on the road. I get plenty of windshield time and moments to reflect while sitting on a plane. I frequently think about where USMB is headed. What will the U.S. Conference of MB Churches look like in three, five or 10 years?

Much of what will certainly result is up to God's choice and direction. But I also think God allows us to express to him in prayer what we desire the future to be. I think that goes for our personal lives and the lives of our churches, districts and national conference. I remain totally convinced that God does indeed want to use Mennonite Brethren to have substantial kingdom impact in our communities.

As we pray and ask God to use us and help us to have that impact, what does the future hold? As a leader, I'm convinced that if we have no vision we'll get nowhere for sure! But to have a vision of the future means seeking God, not just coming up with our own ideas. I think we have done much seeking over the past three years as the new path forward for USMB was developed. I believe God has revealed his plan for us.

I believe without a doubt that God wants to bring more and more people into a saving relationship with Jesus. Wouldn't it be fantastic if we began to see in our churches a mighty wave of life transformation? If baptisms happened consistently and marriages were healed, addictions overcome and testimonies of God's power were shared regularly? This is happening now, but what if it increased exponentially?

Wouldn't it be great if connections and networking among our churches skyrocketed, with passions and ideas shared back and forth, making a powerful difference? It would be truly rewarding for mature churches to adopt church plants and for both to become enthusiastic champions for the another. By the way, a little of this is already happening.

What if we stopped holding onto petty grudges that occurred many years in the past and allowed God to heal so we could collectively move forward with renewed and impassioned zeal? What if the reality of being at peace with one another and our neighbors encompassed so much of what we are that the world simply had to notice?

What if instead of budget deficits, the local church, districts and USMB were all so well-funded that our ability to make strides in proclaiming the good news of Jesus was unparalleled in our history? What if we would be a denomination making such a powerful difference for God's kingdom that other churches noticed and wanted to be part of us?

Wouldn't it be amazing if in this preferred future we realized and experienced God's blessing, real power to be his witnesses, renewed energy from seeing God at work in people's lives, new ministry ideas that really benefit, churches that are happy and healthy, pastors that are invigorated, people ardently serving and giving, facilities being constructed and many, many lives being transformed? It truly would be the reality of our tagline, "Increasing impact together." I believe it can happen. ▀



Don Morris began serving as the USMB national director Aug. 1, 2016. Prior to accepting this new position, Morris served as the USMB interim executive director for two years and as the director of Mission USA since 2004. He and his wife, Janna, live in Edmond, Okla., where they attend Cross Timbers Church.



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