

SPECIAL  
CONVENTION  
COVERAGE

# C L

CHRISTIAN LEADER

September / October 2018

Heaven on earth Page 10

USMB convention celebrates diversity Page 17

We want more of Revelation 7 Page 31

unity in  
diversity





**USMB is serving to  
maximize the full  
potential of our  
local MB churches**

**LEAD One – One-day high impact leadership  
training events**

**LEAD Cohorts – Offering 11 different online  
cohorts this fall**

**LEAD Coaching – Life on life coaching  
with a trained coach**

**LEAD Consults – Church evaluation and  
vision consults**

**Church planting collaboration with Multiply**

Photo by Neighborhood Church, Fresno, Calif.



7348 W. 21st St., Suite 115 • Wichita, KS 67205

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



# in this issue

September / October 2018

## FEATURES

### 10 Heaven on earth

SCOTT HOLMAN

*Envisioning and pursuing  
unity in diversity*

### 14 Hearing from God in the discord

QUENTIN P. KINNISON

*Dissent can be an opportunity for  
leaders to experience the Holy Spirit's  
leading*

### 12 Becoming “my church” people

ERIC NELSON

*Introducing a road map for  
growing Q4 Christians*

■ Read additional feature articles  
at [www.christianleadermag.com](http://www.christianleadermag.com)

## DEPARTMENTS

### 5 The news

### 7 5 minutes with...

### 17 Body life

■ *USMB convention celebrates diversity,  
strives for unity*

■ *Delegates approve immigration  
resolution*

■ *Sessions include worship, music,  
testimonies*

■ *Workshops cover variety of topics*

■ *Tour highlights impact of SMCC*

■ *Pastors gather to recharge*

### 27 Church news

## COLUMNS

### 4 Editorial

CONNIE FABER

### 9 Testimony

AMY FAUST

### 25 Mission & ministry

### 26 Vantage point

TERRY W. HUNT

### 31 From the national director

DON MORRIS

# Come let us study together

Knowing what the Bible says about women in ministry

The U.S. Board of Faith and Life study conference scheduled for Jan. 14-16, 2019, in Tempe, Ariz., will examine what the Bible has to say about women in ministry. We already know that we read the Bible differently on this point and so we can expect to disagree about credentialing women as lead pastors. So, the question is: How will we graciously walk through this disagreement? How will we travel the rough terrain of theological differences in a Christ-like way? What does it mean to show one another respect, kindness and love in the midst of disagreement—especially when the debate can feel so personal to those who feel called to serve in pastoral leadership?

This issue of the *Christian Leader* attempts to answer some of these questions in the context of diversity and unity, the theme of the 2019 USMB National Convention. The feature articles highlight one congregation's intentional pursuit of unity in diversity, consider the relationship between discord and discernment and encourage us to share in God's search for the lost even when our search and rescue methods differ. Our coverage of the National Convention and Pastors' Conference highlights how convention-goers experienced both diversity and unity.

Those of us who attend the study conference will share some responsibility for answering these questions in ways that honor God. One way we can foster unity and understanding is in how we prepare. Some—if not most—of us know where we stand in terms of holding either a complementarian or egalitarian view. To varying degrees, we are familiar with the Scripture passages that support our point of view and may even have a list of books that make the case for it.

My suggestion is that we explore the alternative view to our own, including reading books that support that view. Most likely, the books will cite Scripture passages that support this view, which will give us the opportunity to become familiar with how a person with this viewpoint reads the Bible. And I propose that we do this not by looking for the weak link in the argument but by looking for points of agreement and with a humble willingness to consider a reading of Scripture different than our own that will stretch and challenge our understanding.

All of us can contribute to this study conference by already praying for the speakers and moderators as well as those who will attend and participate in table conversations and times of prayer. We can ask for God to pour out an extra measure of love, joy, peace, long suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (Gal. 5:22-23) and that those present at the study conference will collectively listen to the Holy Spirit. ▀



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

**Janae Rempel**  
ASSISTANT EDITOR

**Shelley Plett**  
GRAPHIC DESIGNER

The *Christian Leader* (ISSN 0009-5149) is a gathering place for the people, passions and mission of U.S. Mennonite Brethren. The *Christian Leader* is published bimonthly by the U.S. Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches. However, the opinions expressed here are not necessarily those of the church as a whole.

**COPYRIGHT:** The articles printed in the *Christian Leader* are owned by the CL or by the author and may not be reprinted without permission. Unless noted, Scripture quotations are from the New International Version.

**READER PARTICIPATION:** Letters to the editor should be 300 words or less and on one subject. Letters must be signed and include the writer's city and state. Letters will be edited for clarity, appropriateness and length. Letters will be published, as space allows, unless marked, "Not for publication."

Freelance article submissions are welcome; a SASE must accompany articles.

**SUBSCRIPTIONS:** \$10 for six issues and \$20 for 12 issues (\$15, \$30 in Canada; all other countries \$25 for six issues); \$1.50 per copy

**CORRESPONDENCE:** All correspondence, including subscription questions and address updates, should be addressed to

**Christian Leader**  
Box 155, 107 N. Main  
Hillsboro, KS 67063-0155  
Phone: 620.947.5543  
Email: [editor@usmb.org](mailto:editor@usmb.org)

**MEMBERSHIP:** The *Christian Leader* is a member of the Evangelical Press Association and Meetinghouse, an association of Mennonite and Brethren in Christ editors.

**POSTMASTER:** Send address changes to *Christian Leader*, Box 155, Hillsboro, KS 67063. Periodicals postage paid at Hillsboro, Kansas.

*Christian Leader* is published by



U.S. Conference of  
Mennonite Brethren Churches

## U.S. BFL to host study conference about women in ministry

The U.S. Board of Faith and Life (BFL) will host a study conference to discuss what God's Word says about women in ministry Jan. 14-16, 2019, at the DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel Phoenix Tempe in Tempe, Ariz.

The objective of the study conference is to study God's Word and to listen collectively to the Holy Spirit regarding the issue and to be faithful to the promise of additional study and conversation made decades ago by delegates to the national convention, says BFL chair Tim Sullivan.

Topics of discussion include how the New Testament church handled controversial issues; a historical overview of how Mennonite Brethren have dealt with the issue; theological arguments for the different positions; as well as prayer, table conversations and listening to the Holy Spirit.

Speakers include: Larry Martens, former president of Fresno Pacific Biblical Seminary and pastor; Craig Keener, professor of New Testament at Asbury Theological Seminary; James R. Beck, editor of the book, *Two Views of Women in Ministry*; Michelle Lee-Barnewall, author of *Neither Complementarian nor Egalitarian: A Kingdom Corrective to the Gender Debate*; Doug Heidebrecht, director of Global Training at MB Biblical Seminary in Canada; and Valerie Rempel, Fresno Pacific Biblical Seminary dean; with others yet to be named.

The event is open to anyone who calls an MB Church their church home.

"This is an open invitation to anyone and everyone who would like to learn more about what the Bible says regarding this issue," says Sullivan. "It is also an encouragement to come and participate in the way in which our faith family works at theological issues by going directly to the Bible to seek answers and understanding and listening together to the Holy Spirit."

The BFL welcomes our national family of churches to begin praying now for this time together at the study conference.—U.S. BFL

## Seminary announces changes

Discussions between the leaders of Fresno Pacific University, Fresno Pacific Biblical Seminary and the U.S. Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Churches (USMB) is leading to a renewed strengthening of the relationship between the seminary and the denomination.

Denominational leaders and a growing number of pastors and congregations in USMB and the Pacific District Conference have voiced concern with the direction of the seminary and most recently some teaching positions of visiting lecturers in a seminary master's program.

FPU president Joseph Jones has had several meetings with key leaders, as well as the U.S. Board of Faith and Life (BFL) during the denomination's July National Convention. Positions on issues vary, but denominational support for the seminary remains strong, Jones points out.

"The Mennonite Brethren community is called to peacemaking and reconciliation. Even in times when we fall short, we attempt to teach, model and practice this in our communities," he says. "Affirming these values does not prevent disagreement but provides a foundation to build trust in working relationships."

As the renewal process moves forward, this fall seminary dean Valerie Rempel will serve as interim vice president. Terry Brensinger, seminary president since 2013, will leave his administrative role and become professor of pastoral education in January 2019 after a semester-long sabbatical. In addition, visiting lecturers Greg Boyd, Bruxy Cavey and Brian Zahnd are no longer connected with the seminary's Master of Arts in Ministry, Leadership and Culture.

The master's program, which began in 2016, blends online courses and short residencies to educate solo pastors, outreach pastors, family pastors, youth and child pastors—anyone serving at least 10 hours a week in a church ministry. The program will continue to be offered at the seminary, taught by the full-time faculty.

Jones and Rempel express appreciation for Brensinger's leadership.

"Fresno Pacific Biblical Seminary programs have grown in enrollment and influence in the Valley and beyond," Jones says. "I have also appreciated Terry's counsel as a member of the university administration."

Rempel says, "(Brensinger) has given strong, visionary leadership to the seminary and served faithfully."

The realignment will be an ongoing process, campus and denominational leaders agree, to consider the many perspectives within the MB community on the seminary and the best way forward.

Other actions scheduled for the coming months, include:

- Updating the memorandum of understanding between the seminary, university and U.S. BFL. The seminary, founded in 1955 and located on the main FPU campus in southeast Fresno, became part of the university in 2010.
- Creating a process to address issues of concern between the denomination and the university and seminary.
- Further policy decisions by the FPU Board of Trustees following its October 2018 meeting.
- A joint letter from FPU and U.S. BFL to all constituents reaffirming their commitment and support to work together to strengthen the university and denomination.

"I highly value and appreciate the Mennonite Brethren Conference covering which the University enjoys and look forward to a strengthened partnership between the Church and University and Seminary," Jones says.—FPU

## Waldron, Pierce to host YouthCon 2019

The next USMB youth convention, YouthCon 2019, will take place April 3-7, 2019, back where it all began in 1975—Glorieta, N.M. The planning committee is hard at work confirming speakers, preparing for online registration and handling details necessary for the four content-packed days in April.

Sara Jo Waldron and Scot Pierce will serve as hosts for the event. Both have stories of how conferences like YouthCon have impacted their lives.



Sara Jo Waldron

Waldron, youth pastor at Hillsboro (Kan.) MB Church, has a heart for helping kids rest in their identity in Christ. She wholeheartedly believes in the power of events like YouthCon.

“People are changed, transformed, encouraged, inspired or directed when they make it a point to draw near to Jesus and sit at the feet of others who have been sitting at the feet of the Savior,” Waldron says. “That’s what happens at YouthCon.”

As a 17-year-old, Waldron sensed a calling and anointing from the Lord while listening to Suzie Schellenberg speak, hearing the Spirit whisper that one day she would stand on a stage and teach people about the love of Jesus. Waldron hopes her experience helps other youth open up to God’s call for their lives.

“We will see a multiplication of God’s kingdom when the students who encounter and experience God at YouthCon go out and do the works he prepared in advance for them to do,” she says.



Scot Pierce

Equally as passionate is Scot Pierce. Better known as ScotyP, Pierce is a Division II gameday announcer for collegiate football, volleyball and men’s and women’s basketball, including NAIA tournament championships. He serves as an administrator for a specialty pharmacy group of independent pharmacies and volunteers on the worship team at First MB Church in Wichita, Kan.

Pierce became a Christian at a youth conference while dealing with some of the same issues teens face today.

“I filled my tank with truth and love and freedom from the chains of the world I had been dragging for so long,” Pierce says. “To release despair (and) disappointment and realize that the one who created it all placed me in the sur-

round sound of those who told me, sold me and loved me like he loved me enlightened my soul, and I came home with a renewed redeeming love and spirit.”

He wants to pass that experience on to students at YouthCon.

“YouthCon will fill your tank with live music, fun in the Son, powerful word and life-changing moments,” Pierce says. “(Jesus) doesn’t ask or require us to be miraculous. He asks us to be faithful. YouthCon gets you off the couch and gets you in the game.”

—USMB Youth

## Canadian Conference decentralizes

Less is going to be more in a new approach to national decision-making and structure approved by Canadian Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches delegates July 14 in Saskatoon, Sask. With 97 percent agreement, delegates approved a “collaborate model” that emphasizes decisions at the provincial conference level by holding votes on national matters there.

Biennial national conventions will be discontinued, replaced by smaller gatherings of provincial and agency leaders who carry those regional votes to pro-



Canadian Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches delegates pray for new national director Elton DaSilva July 14 during the denomination’s biennial national convention at Forest Grove Community Church in Saskatoon, Sask. — Tony Schellenberg/CCMBC

# 5 minutes with...

## David Hardt

duce a national decision. The new approach is anticipated to increase the involvement of smaller provincial conferences.

“We are seeing more of the professional paid pastors representing their churches there instead of person in the pew,” says CCMBC national director Elton DaSilva. “We wanted to find a way to go back to the layman, to the person who is not involved in day-to-day ministry, to be involved in decision-making.”

The collaborative model has been in development for about 18 months. Input was sought from provincial conferences and MB ministry partners, the Board of Faith and Life and MB Seminary. The shift to greater partnership with provinces was already reflected in renaming the national leadership position from executive director to national director when DaSilva was affirmed by the CCMBC Executive Board in May.—*Menmonite World Review*

## LEAD Cohorts announced for fall

USMB has announced the fall lineup of 11 new LEAD Cohorts beginning in August and September.

LEAD Cohorts are free online meeting places for small groups of MB pastors and leaders or anyone interested in learning about a specific topic. Cohorts meet online via Zoom either weekly or biweekly for 60 to 90 minutes over the course of three months.

LEAD Cohorts discussing the following topics are currently being offered: stewardship, challenges in ministry, the Enneagram personality assessment, living as disciples of Christ in community together, five powerful practices found in Jesus’ ministry, Christ-centered spiritual formation, walking daily with Jesus, overcoming performing for God by abiding in him, practical disciple-making, refreshing your pastoral counseling and youth ministry.

For more information, including cohort leaders, start times and dates, or to register, visit [www.usmb.org/lead-cohorts/](http://www.usmb.org/lead-cohorts/). —USMB



### ***What is your day job?***

For 12 or 13 years I worked as chief financial officer in our family home-building business, but now I have my own realty company. And if you ever get a speeding ticket you can go to one of my online traffic schools.

### ***You were raised Catholic. How did you become Mennonite Brethren?***

I had a Catholic youth leader who stirred a love of Christ in me. My high school girlfriend, Amie, and I would go to Laurelglen Bible Church (a USMB church in Bakersfield) in the morning and Catholic church at night, trying to figure out what was the difference. I came to understand that faith was not about the hoops you have to jump through for God.

### ***What confirmed that Laurelglen was the right choice?***

Two years after Amie and I were married, our son was born with special needs—29 surgeries and on a feeding tube till he was 12. Laurelglen helped us through that serious hardship and got us involved in deaf ministry. For the last 10 years we have been at The Bridge, an MB church closer to our neighborhood.

David Hardt, the newly-elected USMB Leadership Board chair, sacrificed a little vacation time for a Five Minutes interview. Together with his wife, Amie, and their teenage son and daughter, Hardt was in Hawaii escaping a Bakersfield, Calif., summer heat wave. He sat on his ocean-view patio to share his story.

### ***How did you begin in US Conference Leadership?***

They were looking for diversity on the board. My name was German, but not the Mennonite kind. I was a business and numbers guy in my 20s. I served as USMB treasurer and just finished 10 years on the MB Foundation board.

### ***What would you say the conference is all about?***

We are here to help each church be the best they can be, to facilitate local ministry. We don’t want to put God in a box and force everyone to do things the same. Our churches need to focus on being relevant and successful in their local context.

### ***What unique contribution can a business person make in leading a denomination?***

Business experience can help the church move forward in a pragmatic way. We have a lot of pastors’ input on the board, with over 50 percent of the current board members serving as pastors. It’s a neat deal that with the district ministers on the board we have essentially five (more) pastors in the room. But a business person can help us keep going down the path that God has led us.

*Interview by Kathy Heinrichs Wiest*

## Quit focusing on “conversations”

By bringing “class or race” into the definition of the egalitarian view (May/June, p.16), it wrongly implies that the complementarian view makes distinctions in those areas as well, which is horribly incorrect.

One of the things that I don’t hear being said in this egalitarian/complementarian “conversation” is the acknowledgement that one view has to be wrong; they cannot both be right. The New Testament does encourage us to strive for unity but never by denying truth. Unity comes by speaking the truth in love, realizing that some will choose to turn away because of it. Unity is not created by pretending that opposing views are equally valid.

Seeking human agreement is also not what the church is called to do. The apostles did not teach that we need to make sure everyone’s opinion is heard. Quite the opposite! (See 1 Timothy 1:3-7.) The truth of Scripture doesn’t change, but humans will always come up with new ways to interpret it. Let’s quit focusing on “conversations” and turn the focus to Christ and his Word.

Dan Copeland  
Huron, S.D.

## Sin versus name-calling

I wish to voice some concerns over the article from Sara Jo Waldron called “When name-calling transforms” (March/April 2018). If I understand it correctly, Waldron equates talking about people’s sin in evangelism with name-calling.

If there is no conviction of sin, how can the gospel be received? She writes, “Evangelism requires us to see people as if they were fully restored in Jesus; only then can we speak the words of life.” I can see that we should extend grace to other believers and approach sin in their life with a humble spirit, desiring that they be restored to a right relationship with God, but she’s talking about evangelism.

She writes, “When I rub shoulders with unredeemed sinners, the enemy tempts me to do some name-calling: Jerk. Liar. Fool. Pervert. Drunk. Lost cause. I am in direct contradiction to the work of the gospel when I let those curses flow from my lips.”

Unfortunately, this means that the apostles Peter (1 Peter 4:1-6) and Paul (1 Corinthians 6:8-11) and Christ himself (Revelation 21:6-8) were in direct contradiction to the work of the gospel since they used words like: idolaters, liars, drunkards, greedy, adulterers, thieves, and homosexuals to describe those who “will be consigned to the fiery lake of burning sulfur.”

She writes, “Scripture says Jesus wasn’t assigned the job of convicting the world of their sins but of saving people from their sins (John 3:17),” but apparently she missed where Jesus said in John 16:7-8, “But very truly I tell you, it is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. When he comes, he will prove the world to be in the wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment...” So I guess the Holy Spirit needs to stop convicting the world of sin because Jesus did not come into the world to condemn it!

It seems to me this article confuses evangelism and sanctification and doesn’t have a right understanding of law and gospel.

Chris LaBelle  
Lenexa, Kan.

## Reading the Bible

Even though I have a fairly good grasp of literary analysis, three events in my last 10 years of occasional study drastically changed my comprehension of the Scriptures. As a result of attending Bible Study Fellowship sessions for six years, three years of graduate studies at California State University Fresno in literature and philosophy and one semester of auditing a class on Old Testament theology, the Scriptures started to open to me, as well as a much deeper communication with God.

In short, I view the Bible as a divinely written document on the development of human existence and accomplishment. The first period, from Adam to Moses, consists of various forms of polytheism and draconian justice. In the second period, God, through Moses, introduces monotheism to human existence via a very unique people’s race most commonly referred to as the Jewish people. Matthew, the third period, documents God to be real, via the incarnation of Jesus. The Apostle Paul, in Romans, explains the polarity between polytheism, as best advanced by the Greek and Roman writers and Christianity, as documented, in his treatise in Romans. That is the fourth period. The first three periods are largely ideas exemplified by human stories, in literature loosely termed as “narrative theology” and for the most part are not controversial—debatable yes, but not especially divisive.

Romans to Revelation is not narrative literature; these writings are metaphysical in nature, i.e., theoretical and yet quite definitive in their claim that mankind are eternal beings with an eternal afterlife and that the entrance into the eternal presence of God and eternal peace is not open to opinion. As a result, the fourth period is highly controversial because of the inherent nature of its exclusive view of human eternal destiny.

Paul D. Flaming  
Fresno, Calif.

---

*The Christian Leader* welcomes letters to the editor. Letters should be 300 words or less and on one subject. Letters must be signed and include writer’s city and state. Letters will be edited for clarity, appropriateness and length. Letters will be published, as space allows, unless marked “not for publication.”

# Giving church another chance

Worship music soothes, Scripture restores broken heart

I've always been drawn to music. A look at my past reveals a disenfranchised young church soloist who sought meaning in New Age music ministry and as a member of a mystical Jewish band before immersing herself in the LDS (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints) faith.

Each verse of my past story was different than the last but beat to the same refrain. Measures of time, never measuring up; my heart pounding a broken melody in its search for belonging.

I spent years trying to find my place in the world, seeking a connection with God by experimenting with religion, when all along Jesus was calling me to lay down my striving and rest in his love and grace.

I was born and raised in the church. Baptized at age nine, I began singing in church a year later. As I entered my teenage years, however, I found church boring. I prioritized partying over my presence in the pews, and my church attendance dwindled. The seeds of faith planted in my childhood lay dormant as I grew to adulthood, and life lacked greatness. I longed to reconnect with God.

I began experimenting with religion. Having moved from California to Utah, I joined the music ministry at a New Age church. At first it was fun and exciting. I was free to do and think whatever I wanted but still had a divine connection.

During this time, I also traveled with a mystical Jewish band, attending High Holy Days at an Arizona synagogue. I investigated the Jewish Renewal movement, taking conversion courses and studying with a rabbi, but it didn't resonate in my heart.

I stayed with the New Age church because it helped pay the bills, but my heart wasn't in it either. There's freedom in boundaries, and the church had none. I longed for a relationship with Jesus Christ.

Soon after, I married an LDS man. At that point, I had tried so many churches, I thought, "What's one more? Besides, they're into Jesus. It's in their name." I went all in. I met with the missionaries, was baptized and had a Mormon temple marriage.

But gazing below the surface, I realized there was more to it than I first thought. We read the Book of Mormon more than the Bible. A checklist of things to do weighed me down. No matter how hard I tried to be a good Mormon, I couldn't do it. I knew life as a Christian wouldn't be easy, but my heart told me it shouldn't be this hard.

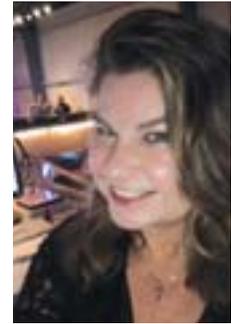
After 14 years, I couldn't maintain the facade anymore, and my marriage ended. I felt like a failure. My shattered heart ached for my kids, and my health plagued me. I didn't have a dime to my name. The pit in my stomach weighed heavy as I walked a lonely road. Months went by, and I wondered if I'd ever feel right again. Although I didn't realize it, Jesus was with me on that dark road.

During this time, a guy from my past resurfaced. We had been best friends and bandmates in high school. He relocated to Utah, and we married. A former Jehovah's Witness, he knew the difficulties of navigating out of a religion and supported me greatly during a time I wasn't attending church.

In time, I gave church another chance. The lyrics of the worship music soothed my broken heart, lifting me out of the pit and keeping me coming back for more. I dared to hope I could find my place and be me again.

The words of 1 Peter 2:24 I heard that first Sunday echoed my soul's cry for healing, and studying 1 Peter showed me Jesus was waiting for me with open arms.

When we moved to West Jordan to be closer to my kids, I found South



Amy Faust resides in West Jordan, Utah, with her husband, Mark. She is called "mom" by four beautiful kids: Kate, 21, Connor, 12, and twins, Abby and Ella, 7. Amy is employed by the United States District Court but her heart belongs to music! She and Mark serve on the worship team at South Mountain Community Church—she as a vocalist and he on bass and both work in the production booth. They were baptized together Sept. 24, 2017, and love their church community. Amy is excited to see where the Lord will lead her next and in what other ways she can serve him. This is her story, as told to Janae Rempel.

See FAUST, page 29

# Heaven on earth

## Envisioning and pursuing unity in diversity

I am blessed to serve as a pastor with Butler Avenue MB Church—Butler for short. Butler is an incredibly diverse church on the southeast side of Fresno, Calif. That diversity is found in so many ways: ethnically, economically, generationally and culturally. Each Sunday we worship in four different services and three different languages (English, Lao and Spanish). You will find families worshiping with us from such places as Congo, Mexico, Laos, Thailand, Cambodia, Honduras, Argentina, Ethiopia and more. Yes, our potlucks are amazing.

Butler is a very special and unique church. We often joke with each other that our humble fellowship is a preview of heaven, and there might be more than a little truth to that.

### A vision for unity in diversity

Many of us have memorized and often recited what we call the Lord's Prayer. As part of that prayer in Matthew 6:10, Jesus teaches his disciples to pray, "Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven." But what do we know of heaven? If Jesus' disciples are to invite heaven on earth, what are we asking for?

There are many images and ideas regarding heaven to explore, but I draw our attention to one specific image offered in the book of Revelation. Revelation 7:9 describes heaven as having, "a great multitude that no one can count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne [God] and before the Lamb [Jesus]."

Scripture points to a heaven where nations, tribes, peoples and languages of this earth are still intact. Together, an incredibly diverse assembly, standing united before our Lord and Savior. If that is heaven, what then might

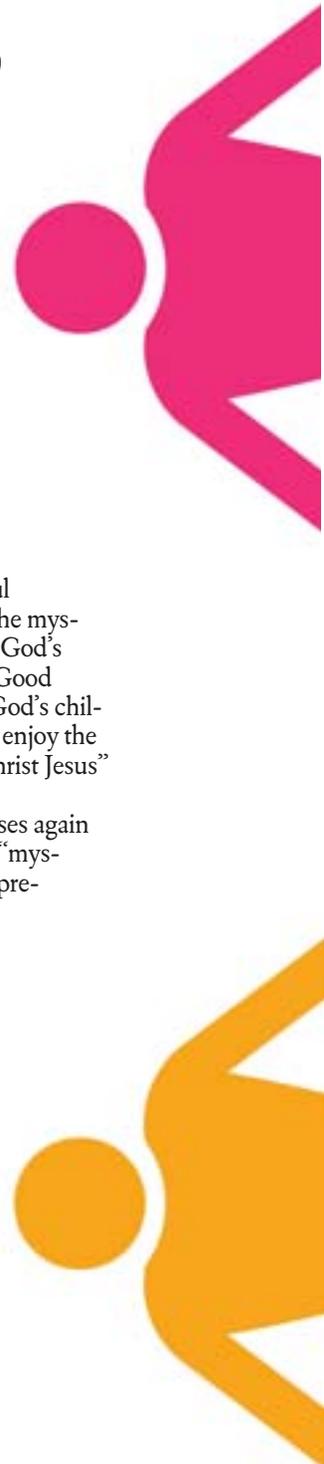
we the church expect and embrace on earth? If we pray with earnestness that God's kingdom would come on earth as in heaven, might we expect to see his church assemble together in diversity and unity?

### A plan for unity in diversity

In his letter to the Ephesians, the apostle Paul refers to the "mystery of the gospel." What is the mystery? Here is how Paul explains it: "And this is God's plan: Both Gentiles and Jews who believe the Good News share equally in the riches inherited by God's children. Both are part of the same body, and both enjoy the promise of blessings because they belong to Christ Jesus" (Eph. 3:6, NLT).

The good news is that Jesus lives, dies and rises again so that we might receive new life by faith. The "mystery," what God's people have not understood previously, is that in Jesus the good news is for everyone, and everyone belongs equally to one body. In Christ, all are loved, all are joined together, all share in his blessings. This becomes difficult when all really does mean all. Paul himself is threatened, beaten and imprisoned because he dares to bring Gentiles into the church.

This "mystery" is one which we must continue to unravel and highlight today. As our world is increasingly divided and hostilities escalate along racial, economic, political and other lines, the church which embraces the mystery of the gospel can speak truth and bring healing, with a hum-





ble authority that cannot be ignored. Unity in diversity then is not just a good idea or only for a crazy few, it is central to the gospel.

### Unity not uniformity

Paul says in Galatians 3:28 that in Christ, “There is no longer Jew or Gentile, slave or free, male and female. For you are all one in Christ Jesus.”

“There is no longer....” What does this mean? Does this mean that we are to drop all labels? No. This is a statement about value and worth, not uniformity and sameness. In each pairing found in this verse (Jew/Gentile, slave/free, male/female), there is a clear disparity in value and worth in their society. There are those that have power and influence, and those who are given little to none.

Jesus makes clear that in him, all have been given new life and divine status as sons and daughters of God. There is no one superior to the other. The poor man is just as valued, gifted and important as the rich. The woman is just as powerful, called and authorized as the man. No ethnicity, culture or people is any more God’s people than the other.

Unity in diversity does not mean that we must be colorblind or that we cannot celebrate what makes us wonderfully unique. That would be uniformity not unity. Unity in diversity means embracing our shared worth, value and power in Christ, while also recognizing how uniquely and wonderfully made we all are.

### Unity in diversity as witness

In John 17:22–23 Jesus is praying. He is praying for his disciples then and now. In these verses we find that Jesus prays specifically for a type of unity which cannot be ignored: “I have given them the glory you gave me, so they may be one as we are one. I am in them and you are in me.

May they experience such perfect unity that the world will know that you sent me and that you love them as much as you love me.”

The kind of unity Jesus prays for among his followers will turn heads. It is the kind of unity which can only be explained as an act of God. A boundary-breaking kind of unity. Jesus has a vision for a diverse church; a people who the world says will not, should not, cannot come together but by the grace of God call one another beloved.

Mark DeYmaz, in his book *Ethnic Blends: Mixing Diversity into Your Local Church*, makes a strong case for the church to take seriously this task of finding unity in diversity. He observes that, “in an increasingly diverse and cynical society, people will no longer find credible the message of God’s love for all people when it’s proclaimed from segregated churches. In these changing times, those without Christ will respond not to platitudes but rather to practice,

not to words but only to an authentic witness of God’s love for all people that is daily displayed in life and action.” There is indeed great opportunity for the church to demonstrate love and unity in an increasingly angry and divided world.

---

*Jesus has a vision for a diverse church; a people who the world says will not, should not, cannot come together but by the grace of God call one another beloved.*

---

### Unity in diversity requires intentionality

True unity in diversity does not come easily or without sacrifice. It does not come quickly or cleanly. Butler Church has been working intentionally toward this kind of unity for over 25 years, and we still have much work to do.

In his book *The Skin You Live In*, David Ireland says—regarding building unity across ethnic and cultural divides—that, “It’s not enough to simply have good thoughts about people or even to merely show them respect. You have to venture into their social world as if Jesus’ command to ‘love your neighbor as yourself’ (Luke 10:27) really matters to you.”

Unity in diversity can’t just be a slogan or an ideal. It requires intentional effort toward building deepening relationships. This involves surrendering our own preferences, stepping out of our comfort zones and entering into the life and experience of others not like ourselves. We must come humbly and with a commitment to listen, to learn and to serve.

I have been so incredibly blessed to be part of a church that saw fit to pursue unity in diversity long before I arrived. I have learned the immense value of knowing and being known by others very different than myself. I have witnessed firsthand the wonder and joy experienced by those who for the first time encounter a church where the color of skin or one’s station in life does not disqualify them from the love and warm acceptance of the church. It is not always easy, and it certainly requires much more work, but it is completely and totally worth it to experience just a little more heaven on earth.

*Scott Holman is the lead pastor at Butler Church in Fresno, Calif., where he has served for the last 12 years. Prior to coming to Butler, Holman grew up in Reedley, Calif., and served as youth pastor at Reedley MB Church for eight years. Holman is currently a student at Fresno Pacific Biblical Seminary in the online master’s in Ministry Leadership and Culture program. He has been married to Susan for 15 years, and they have a daughter and son ages 11 and 8.*

# Becoming “my

Introducing a road map for growing Q4 Christians

There is one word that can ignite a range of emotion in a range of people unlike any other. There is one word that can make you roll your eyes or make you roll out of bed in the morning. That word is “church.” But it’s the word before that word that most likely indicates a person’s relationship to church. Everyone you meet places a word before the word “church.” Words like “that,” “what,” “your,” “this” or “no” church. But there is one word I want as many people as possible to put before our churches and that’s “my” church.

People that put “my” before church are saying, “I belong here. This is an indispensable part of my life. I’m invested. You can count on me. This is my church, and these are my people.”

As a leader, the question that keeps me up at night is this: How do we lead people to become “my church” people?

During our USMB summer convention, I was asked to talk about unity and diversity as it relates to the Mennonite Brethren family of churches. There is one thing that unites us—more than that, one thing excites us. In Luke 15, Jesus tells a trilogy of stories that highlight God’s concern for lost people. Take a look and what you’ll find is that God searches for the lost and celebrates when they’re found. The local church is God’s primary vehicle in this search and rescue mission.

I know we are united by that mission, but we are diverse when it comes to method. It’s not enough for a church to have a great mission statement; churches have to create a great culture for lost people. We at South Mountain Community Church have a road map for leading people to become “my church” people. This isn’t the only way, this is just our way, but if something jumps out at you, consider including it in your way. Here’s our way.

## The SMCC road map

We’ve recognized that all relationships have a level of trust or connectedness as well as a level of expectation. Every relationship, including a person’s relationship to your church, falls into one of the four quadrants. Each quadrant has an emoji describing life in that quadrant.

In Q1, upper left, a person experiences a low degree of trust but a high degree of expectation. This is a miserable place to be. When people have high expectations for you but no real relational connection to you, it feels like people just want something from you, not something for you. You feel forced, pressured and controlled. Churches are

notorious for putting high expectations on people without connection with people. This produces people who are cynical, jaded and negative toward church. I’m sure you know someone in Q1.

In Q2, lower left, a person has low expectations and low trust placed on them. This quadrant describes acquaintances, not friends. In Q2, typically there aren’t negative feelings toward church. Q2 people are simply indifferent toward church.

In Q3, bottom right, you have low expectations and a high level of connectedness. These people are often raving fans and church is fun. These people know others and are known. These people aren’t necessarily Christians although many of them are. These are the people who would say, “I love what I experience at your/this church.”

The best relationships happen in Q4, upper right. In every Q4 relationship there is a high level of shared connectedness and a high level of shared expectations. More trust always beats less trust. More connectedness always beats less connectedness. The only ways to have deeply meaningful relationships in which we get to influence each other for good are the ones in which we give each other permission to expect certain things from us. These are the types of relationships we want with our spouses, kids, employees and co-workers.

## Jesus invites us into Q4

A Q4 relationship is the type of relationship Jesus has invited us, his followers, into. Look at what Jesus says about discipleship in these famous words known as The Great Commission: “Then Jesus came to them and said, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age’” (Matt. 28:18-20).

Discipleship happens in Q4. Jesus has high expectations for his disciples. They are to obey everything he has commanded. These are people who, because of their relationship with Jesus and because of their relationship to church, bend their wills, bend their schedules, bend their finances and bend their routines to engage. These are the people who say, “This is my church; these are my people. I’m an owner; I’m invested; and you can expect things from me.”

# church” people

Everyone that walks through the doors of your church falls into one of these four quadrants. When it comes to a method of discipleship, here’s why this matters. If you are a church leader, underline this next part: You cannot move people to Q4 without first moving them to Q3. If you try, you will sadly push more people into Q1. Our goal at SMCC is to make it as easy as possible to get as many people to Q3.

How do we do that? We invite people to connect with no strings attached. We invite people to give us enough time to earn their trust. We don’t try to control people. We allow people to grow at their own pace. We give people permission to belong before they believe. We let down the expectations and create environments that make it easy to connect to others. By doing this, people can move through all four quadrants. We have seen it happen for 20 years.

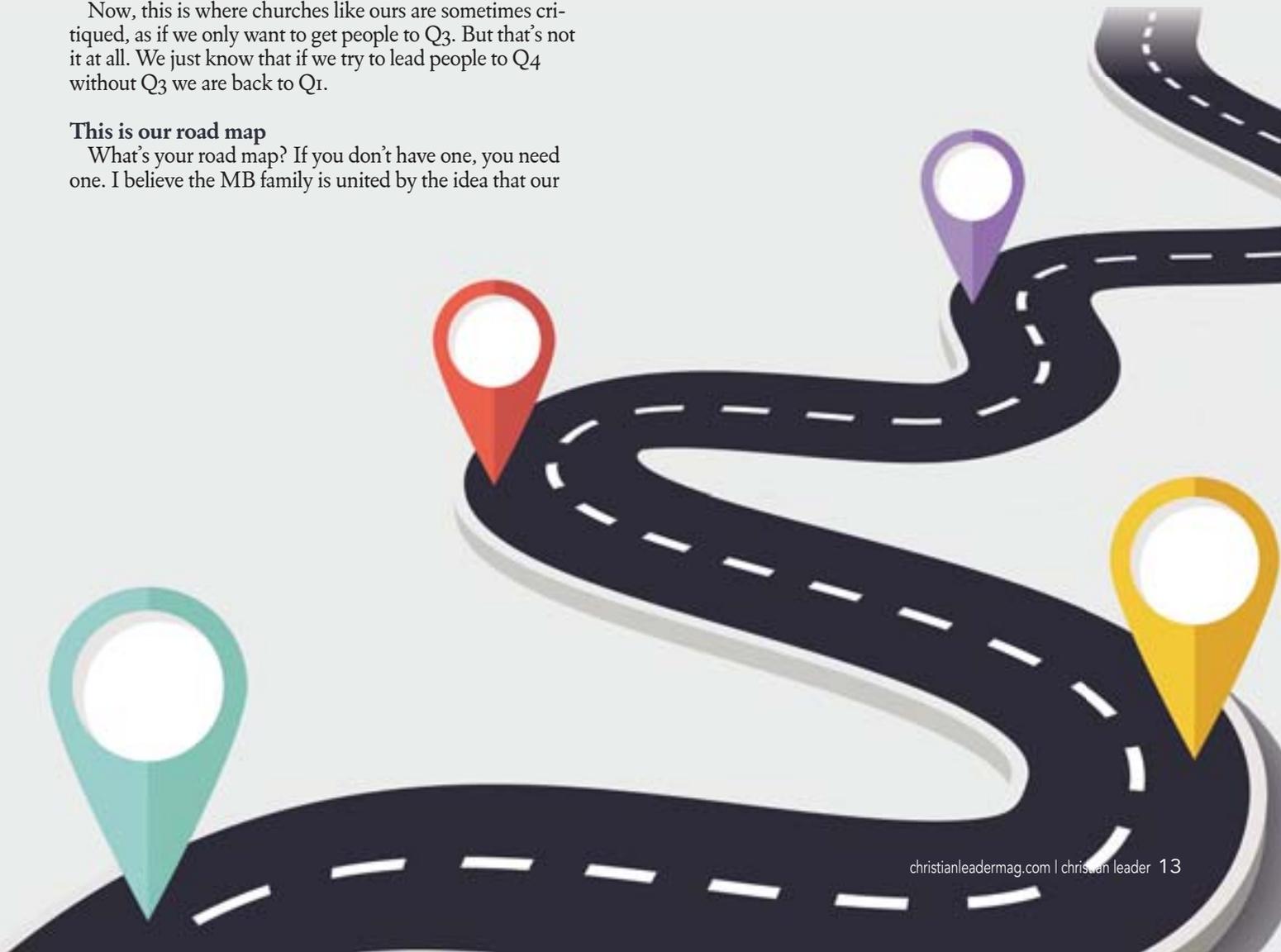
Now, this is where churches like ours are sometimes critiqued, as if we only want to get people to Q3. But that’s not it at all. We just know that if we try to lead people to Q4 without Q3 we are back to Q1.

## This is our road map

What’s your road map? If you don’t have one, you need one. I believe the MB family is united by the idea that our

churches can be a part of seeing the lost found. This happens when churches have a clear pathway to Q4 Christianity. My hope for your church is that more and more people will say, “This is my church, these are my people and Jesus is my Lord.” I know you want that too. However, great intentions are not enough. What’s your method? What’s your road map?

*Eric Nelson is the campus pastor of South Mountain Community Church—Lehi. Nelson and his wife, Carrisa, and their two children moved to Utah three years ago to plant a new SMCC campus in Lehi, Utah. Lehi is the least “churched” county in the U.S.; fewer than 1 percent of the residents are affiliated with an evangelical church. Nelson has a Master of Divinity from Multnomah University in Portland, Ore. The article is adapted from the sermon Nelson gave at the 2018 USMB National Convention.*



# HEARING FROM GOD



## Dissent can be an opportunity for leaders to experience the Holy Spirit's leading

It seems we live in a time filled with dissent. Often protest and dissent seem unruly, disrespectful, even chaotic. Many of us experience dissent in ways that are not nearly as spectacular as recent national events but which may be just as unsettling.

In church and denominational life, such dissent comes in a variety of forms: a congregant who aggressively pushes against sermon content; a volunteer who seems disagreeable about ministry changes; a denominational leader who is forcefully rejected by a congregation or vice versa; a ministry colleague who strongly rejects a particular plan of action; constituents who threaten to withhold support or at least to loudly make their displeasure known. For leaders, these moments of dissent might be perceived as disloyalty or the response of a particularly disagreeable person. But what if we thought differently of dissent?

What if we humbly were to see alternate possibilities as to what dissent might mean? For example: 1) dissent might present alternate options that must be considered, and 2) dissent might allow us to recognize an ill-informed opinion—either our own or that of another—that can be reshaped. Ultimately this leads us to a moment of discernment, which for Christian people means a moment to listen for and to hear the Spirit's guidance.

Assuming every voice of dissent is only ill-informed opinion denies the leader an opportunity to find another way in which the Spirit might be leading God's people to a desired goal. It also robs the people of the character-shaping activity of discernment, which God might be attempting to do in helping them to identify their underlying values and beliefs.

### Dismissing each other's wisdom

Recognizing the gift of dissent can be a difficult but important process of helping a faithful, Christ-following people to unearth

By Quentin P. Kinnison

# IN THE DISCORD

values and hidden meanings in how they view God, the world and each other. Some of what makes this difficult for those of us in leadership is that too often we have been programed to think of our work as providing “the” answers. So, when others reject or discredit our work, it feels like a rejection of our expertise or knowledge.

Such must have been the case in 2 Samuel 24 when King David opts to take a census of his kingdom and persists against the dissent of Joab. Or of Paul when Barnabas insists on taking John Mark on a mission (Acts 15:36-41). Or perhaps of Israel on the verge of entering the promised land but refusing to listen to Moses, Joshua and Caleb for fear of the inhabitants (Numbers 13). In each of these instances we might be left to wonder what could have been if leaders and the community had listened to the dissent and had as their goal discerning God’s desires.

Several years back, a friend who was a senior leader at Fresno Pacific University made a comment that has stuck with me, if not for the reason he intended. He said, “You know, when I was a faculty member, I was pretty smart. But somehow when I became an administrator, I lost 60 IQ points.”

His point was valid: We have a tendency to dismiss the wisdom of leaders after they rise from our ranks. But there is another viewpoint worth considering. Leaders likewise have a tendency to dismiss the wisdom of the community and the Spirit’s work in the community when they ascend to a place of authority. This disconnection from the wisdom God might be trying to give leaders through the community is as bad as the community’s discrediting of God’s wisdom in leaders because they are leaders.

Dissent does not necessarily offer a better option any more than it automatically offers a worse option. The process of discernment is the opportunity to learn again and discover afresh the presence of the Spirit-mediated Christ and the direction in which the Spirit of Christ leads (Rom. 8:9).



### Shaping the conversation

When dissent is discouraged or denied its proper place in shaping the conversation, it can become a force for passive aggressiveness or subversion. When encouraged or welcomed, it can become a force for reshaping people's understanding of God's vision for the community. This could mean that the community's vision of God is reshaped, and thus they are further formed into the image of Christ. Or it could mean that God's vision becomes clearer to his people and the outcome of that vision (plans, actions and activities) becomes more closely related to that vision.

And this is why dissent is helpful. Dissent is the means by which voices in the community raise their desires and concerns. In raising these desires and concerns, the community can identify important values and then spiritually shape the community's actions to match those values or to have those values reshaped in the Spirit's formation of the community. The goal of conflict created by dissent is that it develops in such a manner that it becomes exploratory and transformative.

In Christian churches and their institutions, like Fresno Pacific University where I teach, we are uniquely gifted with the opportunity to allow moments and seasons of dissent to become shaping experiences and opportunities to discover meaning that guides our work. We ought to experience these moments so that the community might be transformed into the image of Christ, allowing us to do our work of spiritually shaping people with a fidelity to Jesus that is reflected in our actions—how we treat others and how we treat one another.

At Fresno Pacific, this can be the process by which we embody our Fresno Pacific Idea, which calls FPU, and by definition its members, to be prophetic and reflect on "personal, institutional and societal values." The same could be said of the church.

### God working through our dissent

I think of a church finance committee meeting during which we were considering the coming year's budget. In the course of that meeting, I asked what priorities and values our budget reflected. I was met by stares until one member said, "I don't know. I just thought we were making a business decision." Everyone kind of chuckled. But my immediate conclusion was that we hadn't done enough as a pastoral team to help people understand that our work was shaped by values and beliefs that included, but also

transcended, "making a business decision."

At first, I was indignant. "What about Jesus?" I thought. But as we talked further, my own perspective was challenged. For many of these leaders, making good business decisions was a way to be faithful to Christ. It became apparent to me that there was room for all of us to grow in our understanding of what our budgets and budgeting processes said about what we believed. In the end, we were learning to be God's people in appreciation for the way God spoke and worked through each other.

In the Old Testament, a group of men and women rose up to speak to their community and the world about the intent of God for how life was to be lived. These women and men challenged God's people to live in faithful relationship to God, especially in their relationships and practices with one another. However, the community and their leaders rejected these dissenters, and these women and men were often disregarded or outright persecuted—even killed—for challenging their community. In hindsight, we know that these men and women were right. We know these men and women as prophets. Therefore, to be prophetic in a biblical sense has more to do with speaking God's truth into a context than foretelling the future.

Depending on who we pay attention to, these are difficult times in the church. What we need are ears to hear God's Spirit. This may mean that we listen more carefully to voices we have previously dismissed because they were too young, too old, too progressive, too conservative or because of gender, ethnicity, nationality, etc. In so doing, we are reminded that a body with many parts needs every part (1 Cor. 12:12-27).

In this way, we both honor the prophetic nature of community members to speak truth in love to the faith community (Eph. 4:15) and to offer as a community a prophetic demonstration to the world of how transformation is worked out by the renewing of our communal/institutional mind and our minds individually (Rom. 12:1-2).

*Quentin P. Kinnison is associate professor of Christian ministry and the biblical and religious studies division chair at Fresno Pacific University. His research and 25-plus years of experience in various ministry contexts inform his writing. This article is adapted from the author's April 5, 2017, contribution to the Fresno Pacific University Connections blog and incorporates material from his book, Transforming Pastoral Leadership, published in 2016 by Pickwick Publications.*

“  
Dissent is the  
means by which  
voices in the  
community raise  
their desires and  
concerns.  
”

## USMB convention celebrates diversity, strives for unity

Pastors, leaders deliver keynote addresses

When U.S. Mennonite Brethren gathered July 24-28 in Salt Lake City, Utah, for the Pastors' Conference and National Convention, planners intended the biennial events to celebrate USMB diversity and unity.

The theme of "Celebrating our diversity and unity" was most obviously carried by the USMB pastors and leaders who were the convention speakers and by the five individuals who shared their testimonies.

Delegates didn't just hear testimonies and sermons about diversity and unity. They experienced it during a Saturday morning discussion about the Board of Faith and Life (BFL) resolution regarding family separation at the U.S./Mexico border. The lengthy and at times emotional discussion revealed a variety of opinions on immigration issues. As delegates looked for harmony, they reminded one another that the resolution was narrow in its focus and that this focus—advocating for policies that keep children and parents together—was one upon which everyone seemed to agree.

In the end, delegates unanimously approved a revised resolution developed by an ad hoc group.

Delegates also seemed unified in their support of Multiply, described by MB Mission's Randy Friesen as a "new wineskin" for ministry that invites North American Mennonite Brethren to think differently about church planting. This shift, which officially launches in January 2019, was prompted by the merger two years ago of C2C Network, the Canadian MB church planting ministry that serves in North America, and



After closing his Thursday evening sermon with the encouragement to embrace interdependence, speaker Aaron Hernandez asks convention attendees to pray with one or two other people as he, background right, simultaneously prays for unity on behalf of the entire audience.

*Photo credit: Janae Rempel*

MB Mission, the North American global mission agency that works to plant churches globally among the least-reached.

Gathering in Salt Lake City gave delegates and guests the opportunity to learn more about church planting and church growth in a state where the dominant religion is Mormonism (The Church of

Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints) and only 1.5 percent of people are evangelical Christian. MB Foundation, the U.S. MB stewardship ministry, sponsored a bus tour Thursday afternoon that included a stop at the 10-acre Temple Square in downtown Salt Lake and visits to two SMCC campuses. SMCC lead pastor Paul Robie and other SMCC



Eric Nelson, pastor at SMCC-Lehi Campus, shares how SMCC nurtures "my church" people.

*Photo credit: Janae Rempel*

# 2018 USMB convention

staff led Friday afternoon workshops on Mormon beliefs and practices. The Friday evening worship service was held at SMCC Draper campus.

The 210 convention attendees represented 56 USMB congregations and all five district conferences. One hundred were delegates, 67 were guests or ministry representatives, 32 were children and 11 were staff. This compares to 263 total attendance (120 delegates) at the 2016 convention in Denver, Colo., 216 attendees in 2014 when the convention was in Santa Clara, Calif., and 298 in 2012 when the biennial event was held in Omaha, Neb.

The stories in this issue's BodyLife section cover the various components of the National Convention and give an overview of the Pastors' Conference. You can read our full coverage online at [www.christianleadermag.com](http://www.christianleadermag.com).  
—Connie Faber

## Delegates approve immigration resolution

### Agencies merge, Multiply to launch in 2019

A streamlined approach to transacting AUSMB National Convention business was well received two years ago, prompting 2018 convention planners to again keep oral reports to a minimum and to move efficiently through the business agenda.

That efficiency took a backseat when delegates took more time than scheduled discussing a U.S. Board of Faith and Life (BFL) resolution asking the United States government to “permanently abolish the practice of separating (immigrant) families and actively work

to quickly reunite families already separated.”

## Delegates approve resolution

Saturday morning more than a dozen delegates stood to speak in an open discussion regarding the resolution. The lengthy discussion covered a variety of viewpoints on immigration, at times became emotional and led to an approximately 30-minute delay in closing the convention.

The conversation initially focused on the resolution's opening sentence: “We deplore any immigration policies of the United States government which exist to separate children from their parents.”

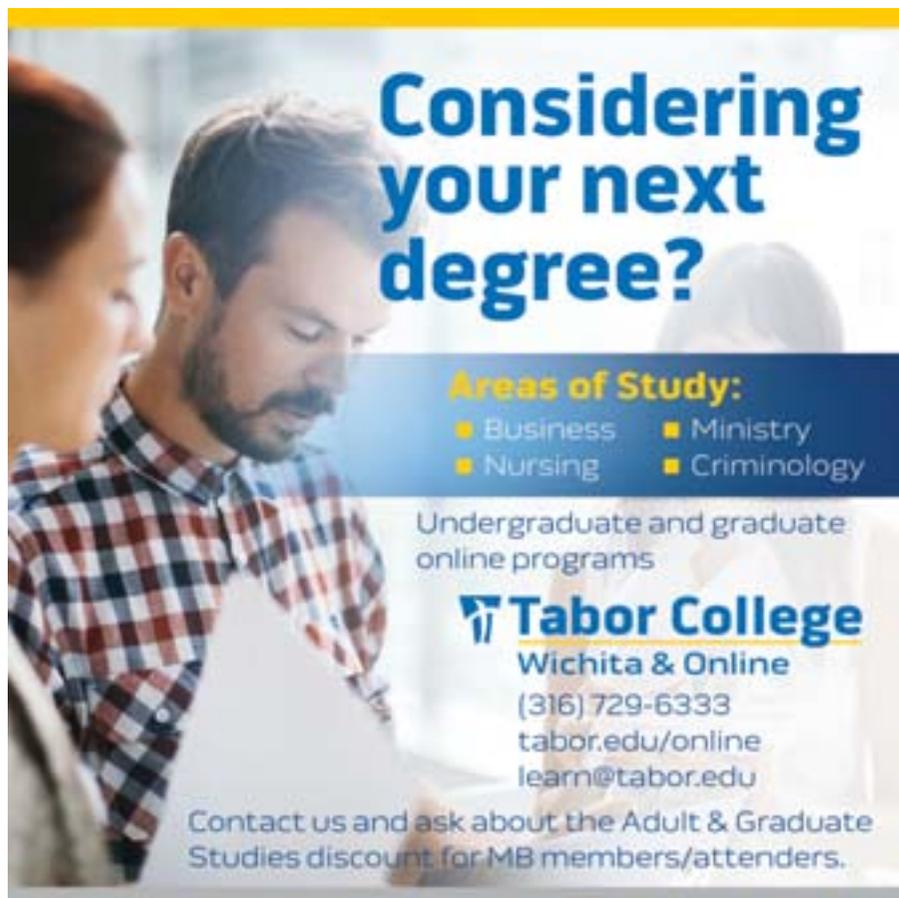
Dwight Carter of Inman, Kan., was among those who spoke. “My concern is the first statement: We deplore any activity that separates families,” said Carter, noting that some children cross the border with adults involved in human trafficking and drug trafficking.

Winnie Bartel, Shafter, Calif., also advocated for a revised opening statement. “I would rather approach this from a much more humble statement, saying we know there is a problem and we want to be part of the solution and not be pointing fingers or name-calling,” she said.

Xavier Piña, Hanford, Calif., who called the resolution a “good start,” spoke on behalf of the approximately 35 congregations that form the Pacific District Hispanic Council, which he chairs.

“When I go back to them (Hispanic Council) and report that the national conference was about celebrating diversity and unity and yet there (was) a disconnect with how our USMB family views the struggles going on in our congregations—that will send a message. The message is, yes, you are part of the USMB family but there really isn't an intent to work in harmony; there really isn't an intent to work together as the body of Christ.”

In an effort to find unity, a number of delegates noted that the resolution was limited to one issue—separating families—and that those present seemed to agree this should not happen. Several



**Considering your next degree?**

**Areas of Study:**

- Business
- Ministry
- Nursing
- Criminology

Undergraduate and graduate online programs

**Tabor College**  
Wichita & Online  
(316) 729-6333  
[tabor.edu/online](http://tabor.edu/online)  
[learn@tabor.edu](mailto:learn@tabor.edu)

Contact us and ask about the Adult & Graduate Studies discount for MB members/attenders.



"Yes, we understand there is government structures and yes, we understand that there are laws, but at the end of the day we are God's family," said Xavier Piña, Hanford, Calif., who spoke in support of the BFL resolution regarding separating families at the U.S./Mexico border. *Photo credit: Janae Rempel*

who spoke offered suggestions about how the document could be revised to alleviate concerns about the opening sentence.

"I read this as a narrow statement," said Ed Boschman, Bakersfield, Calif. "We're not trying to declare every reality but fundamentally we're saying that as a matter of policy, taking children from parents is not a God thing." Boschman went on to recommend reworking the order of various paragraphs and removing a "bomb word or two."

Eventually moderator Marv Schellenberg asked that the resolution be tabled so that it could be revised by an ad hoc committee.

"I want this to be something we're unified on," said Schellenberg as he drew the discussion about the resolution to a close. "It's a very sensitive issue, and everyone has different perspectives. This (discussion) is healthy. This is what this convention is about. But if we can't sit and discuss (this), we have other things we need to work on."

Tim Sullivan, BFL chair, Kansas, Terry Hunt, North Carolina, and Piña, Bartel and Gary Wall, all from California, were appointed to that committee and completed their work in about 30 minutes. When the committee was asked for their report, Sullivan read aloud the revised resolution, which delegates unanimously approved.

To read the revised resolution, go to <https://christianleadermag.com/delegates-call-for-reunification-of-families-separated-at-u-s-mexico-border/>

### Friesen introduces Multiply

MB Mission/C2C Network were also given a significant amount of time to report about their restructuring process. Randy Friesen, MB Mission general director, said the process that began two years ago of merging MB Mission, the North American MB global mission agency, and C2C, a church planting network of the Canadian Conference of MB Churches, reached a stalemate as leaders of both agencies struggled to determine how best to structure their combined ministries. That led to the decision to form a new agency that will launch in January 2019 as Multiply, an MB-based mission agency that serves cross-denominationally to facilitate church planting locally, nationally and globally.

Friesen said that the two agencies are uniting in order to enhance the collective witness of Mennonite Brethren. "We believe together there is a more powerful and effective mission, connecting mission local with mission global.... We are going from addition to multiplication."

Friesen's report did not include time for questions, but that afternoon delegates could give feedback and ask questions during the C2C workshop. During the Pastors' Conference Friesen also spoke about the shift to Multiply, and a question and answer time followed. In addition to Friesen, Don Morris, USMB national director, and Chris Douglas, U.S. church planting mobilizer, responded to questions and issues raised by about a dozen individuals.

The Friday evening session highlighted USMB church planting as convention attendees gathered at South Mountain Community Church-Draper, one of the six campuses that comprise this 20-year-old congregation. The first half of the evening included a time of worship and a message from Eric Nelson, campus pastor at SMCC-Lehi, while the second half focused on the C2C church planting report.

The audience heard from MB Mission's Friesen as well as C2C staff members Bill Hogg, C2C North American missiologist; Mark Burch, North Ameri-



David Hardt, Lud Hohm, Larry Smith, Jana Hildebrandt and Aaron Box (left to right) are commissioned by outgoing Leadership Board chair Marv Schellenberg for service on USMB boards.

*Photo credit: Janae Rempel*

# 2018 USMB convention

can director; and Chris Douglas, the U.S. church planting mobilizer. Phil Wiebe, who will be starting a new USMB congregation in Utah, shared his testimony.

## In other business

In other business, delegates were given a USMB budget update from Leadership Board treasurer David Hardt. Delegates affirmed the slate of nominees, and newly affirmed board members were commissioned during a time of prayer.

USMB Youth, Christian Leader, MB Foundation, Tabor College, Fresno Pacific University and the International Community of Mennonite Brethren gave brief reports that were interspersed throughout the six convention sessions. Video-only updates were provided by MB Historical Commission, Mennonite World Conference and Mennonite Central Committee.—*Connie Faber*

## Sessions include worship, music, testimonies

### USMB pastors, leader give keynote address

Sessions during the 2018 National Convention blended worship, testimonies, prayer and business. The diversity of individuals—all part of USMB congregations and ministries—who gave the opening and closing prayers, shared testimonies and led in singing, as well as those who gave the five keynote addresses and conducted the closing communion service reflected the convention theme of “Celebrating our diversity and unity.”

The convention opened Thursday evening with an energetic and passionate challenge from Aaron Hernandez to

be unified in diversity. Hernandez fluidly switched between English and Spanish, as he does every Sunday when preaching at the two USMB south Texas congregations he serves: Grace Point @ Grulla and Grace Point @ McAllen.

The Friday morning message was given by Winnie Bartel, a conference and retreat speaker from Shafter, Calif., who has served for many years as the USMB representative to National Association of Evangelicals (NAE). Her address focused on celebrating the witness and heritage of the Mennonite Brethren church.

Delegates traveled to South Mountain Community Church-Draper Campus for the Friday evening session that focused on church planting. After enjoying ice cream in the church lobby, the evening session began in the sanctuary with SMCC pastor Paul Robie recounting the growth of a church plant begun in his home 20 years ago that now numbers 3,000 people worshipping on six campuses at five locations across Utah.

The SMCC Draper Campus worship team led a time of singing that included four video testimonies from SMCC members. Speaker Eric Nelson, pastor of SMCC Lehi Campus, noted that USMB congregations have different ways of moving people from “no church” to “my church,” from lost to found” but are united by the search for lost people. C2C church planting reports comprised the second half of the program.

USMB national director Don Morris, speaking Saturday morning, challenged the audience to be “catalysts for a dynamic movement of God” and highlighted the picture in Revelation of a great and diverse multitude praising Jesus.

The last speaker, not identified for security reasons, was an individual who gives leadership to MB Mission’s Arabic Ministries team.

Most sessions included a personal testimony, which was another way in which event organizers helped to foster unity and connection among attendees. MB Mission Team 2000 members

The Intersection of  
Ministry, Leadership  
and Culture  
HAPPENS  
HERE.

Earn your M.A. in Ministry,  
Leadership and Culture

- ▷ Fully online program
- ▷ Designed for full-time pastors
- ▷ Anabaptist-focused coursework

FRESNO PACIFIC  
UNIVERSITY  
Biblical Seminary  
fpu.edu/mlc

# 2018 USMB convention



Henock Tsegaye, pastor of Ethiopian Christian Fellowship Church, Olathe, Kan., shared the story of his immigration to the United States and the way God led him from Florida to Kansas. Tsegaye also brought one of the sermons during the Pastors' Conference earlier in the week. *Photo credit: Janae Rempel*

Andy Owen and Ricky Sanchez as well as Sara Jo Waldron, youth pastor at Hillsboro (Kan.) MB Church, Henock Tsegaye, pastor of Ethiopian Christian Fellowship Church, Olathe, Kan., and Carlos Arcia, a visiting pastor from southern Venezuela, shared their stories.

Five different worship teams provided by SMCC led worship for each of the convention sessions. The convention offering went to the churches of Venezuela.

Terry Hunt, North Carolina district minister; Larry Smith, pastor of West End MB Church in Lenoir, NC; Aaron Hernandez, pastor and Latin America district minister; and Xavier Pina, pastor of Iglesia La Gran Comision, Hanford, Calif., and chair of the Pacific District Conference Hispanic Council, led the closing communion service. —*Connie Faber*



Friday morning convention speaker Winnie Bartel, Shafter, Calif., was one of five USMB pastors and leaders who addressed the theme "Celebrating our diversity and unity."

*Photo credit: Janae Rempel*

## CHARITABLE GIFT ANNUITY

*Rates have increased!*

INCOME FOR LIFE  
TAX BENEFITS  
GIFT TO CHARITY

Learn more at [mbfoundation.com/cga](http://mbfoundation.com/cga)



620.947.3151  
800.551.1547 Toll Free  
[info@mbfoundation.com](mailto:info@mbfoundation.com)  
[www.mbfoundation.com](http://www.mbfoundation.com)

# Moments from the 2018 National Convention



- 1) Convention attendees were treated to ice cream served by South Mountain Community Church-Draper volunteers prior to the evening session held on the campus.
- 2) Volunteers from South Mountain Community Church organized activities for children and youth during the Pastors' Conference and National Convention.
- 3) Rick Bartlett, Tabor College director of theological education, was part of a trio that presented a workshop on technology.
- 4) The Thursday afternoon bus tour gave participants opportunity to learn about Mormon beliefs, visit SMCC campuses and enjoy views of the mountains.

*Photo credit: Janae Rempel*



## Workshops cover variety of topics

### Two sessions, nine topics

Friday afternoon, National Convention delegates were encouraged to attend two rounds of workshops provided by ministry leaders and USMB pastors.

The workshop on Mormonism led by Paul Robie, lead pastor of South Mountain Community Church, and other SMCC pastors, was the only workshop offered in both rounds. It was a popular option as attendees were eager to learn more about The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, which has its headquarters in Salt Lake City.

The first session also included a workshop on church planting led by C2C staff members Mark Burch, North America director; Chris Douglas, U.S. church planting mobilizer; and Bill Hogg, missiologist. During this well-attended workshop, delegates could ask questions about the merger of C2C and MB Mission and the creation of Multiply, a new agency that will facilitate church planting locally, nationally and globally.

Two workshops were repeated from the Pastors' Conference: one on disciple-making led by Daniel Rodriguez, a USMB pastor from Omaha, Neb., and a second on technology presented by Rick Bartlett, Tabor College Wichita faculty member; Kyle Goings, youth pastor at First MB Church, Wichita, Kan.; and Dave Buller, associate pastor at North Oak Community Church, Hays, Kan. A workshop presented by Fresno Pacific University president Joseph Jones and Tabor College president Jules Glanzer on developing church leaders rounded out the options during the first session.

In the second round, MB Mission's Phil Wagler led a workshop on the agency's nine-step strategy map

for church planting and growth. Mennonite Central Committee staff members Dina Gonzalez-Pina and Nate Schroeder and board member Jill Schellenberg presented a workshop on immigration, including current U.S. law, using Scripture and testimony.

Two workshops focused on youth and children. J.L. Martin, pastor of children and family at Hesston (Kan.) MB Church, discussed discipling children, and Russ Claassen, Southern District Conference youth pastor, led a workshop designed to connect, develop and resource youth workers. Claassen's workshop was also offered at the Pastors' Conference.—*Connie Faber*

## Bus tour highlights impact of SMCC

### Foundation sponsors tour

Eighty-eight people filled a majority of seats on two buses that traveled the streets of Salt Lake City—each street numbered on a grid based on distance from the Mor-

mon Temple at its center—on the SMCC Ministry and Impact Tour sponsored by MB Foundation Thursday, July 26.

Sandwiched between the 2018 USMB Pastors' Conference and the National Convention, the tour made stops at Temple Square and two of South Mountain Community Church's five locations, highlighting Mormonism's grip on the city, the dynamics of SMCC's ministry in a Mormon environment and the partnership between SMCC and MB Foundation in funding SMCC's building projects.

En route between locations, speakers representing SMCC and MB Foundation—Paul Robie, Bruce Jost and Dennis Fast on one bus, and Mike Bell, Jon Wiebe and Garvie Schmidt on the other—fielded questions and dialogued about what tour participants heard and saw.

To better understand Mormon beliefs, tour participants traveled first to Temple Square for a guided tour given by Mormon "sister" missionaries. From Temple Square, participants went to SMCC's Draper location where the two groups toured the facility built in 2012 with funding by MB Foundation. The tour partici-



SMCC lead pastor Paul Robie was one of six SMCC staff and MB Foundation staff that provided commentary during the Salt Lake City Ministry Tour Thursday afternoon.

*Photo credit: Janae Rempel*

# 2018 USMB convention

pants converged in the sanctuary to hear briefly from SMCC church planter Robie, Jon Wiebe, MB Foundation president, and vice president Bruce Jost.

The tour concluded at SMCC-South Jordan campus, SMCC's most recent building project. MB Foundation also assisted South Jordan in purchasing land and constructing a worship facility. Tour participants were greeted with smiles and high fives from campus pastor Rob Ryerson and staff and were given a tour and a brief presentation from Ryerson before loading the buses and returning to the University of Utah.—*Janae Rempel*

## Pastors gather to recharge

Pastors' Conference also focuses on diversity, unity

**T**his summer, 108 USMB pastors and their spouses gathered at the University of Utah for the 2018 USMB Pastors' Conference, July 24-26. The gathering focused on the theme of "Celebrating our diversity and unity." Whether in sessions, workshops or affinity groups, attendees had opportunity to learn, fellowship and recharge in the shadow of the mountains.

Three pastors shared from God's Word during the conference.

### Welcoming people "not like us"

Terry Hunt, North Carolina district minister and pastor of The Life Center in Lenoir, N.C., challenged attendees to grow multicultural churches that reflect the ethnic makeup of their communities and ultimately, the makeup of heaven.

The church is the most segregated institution in America, Hunt said, adding the church must take the lead on combating racism, doing so by welcoming people "not like us."

### Becoming "walk-worthy" Christians

Brent Warkentin, pastor of First MB Church in Wichita, Kan., spoke about unity—what it is and how it can be



Brad Burkholder, Hesston (Kan.) MB Church pastor, and Ed Boschman, The Bridge Bible Church, Bakersfield, Calif., visit during a break. *Photo credit: Janae Rempel*

measured—using Ephesians 4:1-3 as his text.

Warkentin said unity is more likely to exist among humble, gentle, patient and loving Christians who are making every effort at unity.

### Two kinds of division

Henock Tsegaye, pastor of Ethiopian Christian Fellowship in Olathe, Kan., also spoke about unity, referencing passages in Ephesians and 1 Corinthians.

In Ephesians 3, Paul wrote about a great mystery—the oneness between Jews and Gentiles, then in chapter four, he spoke of smaller divisions in the local church, Tsegaye said while touching on each of the five elements Paul lists in Ephesians 4 to avoid division in the church.

### Attendees share testimonies, lead workshops

Throughout the conference, three individuals shared testimonies. Chandelle Claassen, a member of the USMB LEAD coaching team, shared her journey with bladder cancer. Brad Burkholder, pastor of Hesston (Kan.) MB

Church, listed three blessings of grace from God in his life. Michelle Hamilton, pastors' wife at Valleyview Bible Church, Cimarron, Kan., shared her experience with a brain tumor.

Pastors attended one of five workshops Wednesday morning: "Stewardship Grab Bag" by MB Foundation president Jon Wiebe; "Intentional Disciple-making" by Daniel Rodriguez; "Living and Serving in Diversity" by a panel of pastors' wives; "Technology and the Future" by Rick Bartlett, Kyle Goings and Dave Buller; and "Youth Ministry Live" by Russ Claassen.

Affinity groups for lead pastors, associate pastors, youth pastors and pastors' wives provided fellowship time Thursday morning, followed by a forum in which discussion centered around the merger between MB Mission and C2C Network into a new entity, Multiply.

A band from Greenhouse Community Church, a USMB church plant in Saratoga Springs, Utah, led attendees in worship throughout the conference. Twenty-three children participated in kids' activities during the Pastors' Conference.—*Janae Rempel*

# A church where we are loved

## How God led us to West End MB Church

We were regularly attending a church in our community but in January 2018 felt that God was leading us in a new direction. We began to feel like we needed something different. We knew Pastor Larry Smith from the church we had been previously attending. So, we decided to visit West End MB Church where Smith serves and seek spiritual guidance from him. As we walked in the doors of West End, we felt an immediate sense of acceptance from the people there. From that day on, we have not wanted to miss a day worshipping God there.

West End sits on a hill in Caldwell County in the foothills of North Carolina. From one direction you can see God's beautifully landscaped mountain called Table Rock. The other direction is our small city of Lenoir.

Our wonderful congregation is anywhere from 20 to 30 people each Sunday, with about eight people at Wednesday night Bible study. We have two teenage students and about seven regularly attending elementary age children. Our congregation ranges from ages 1 to 80. Some churches might worry if this was their attendance each Sunday. But, not West End. This church is small yet filled with God's spirit and love!

West End is small, yet mighty and we are growing. God is powerfully working in our church. On any given day you may see Ted Drew there checking on the building or pulling weeds. Marisa Drew works with our children's ministry to lead youth Sundays each month and makes sure everyone gets a hug and warm greeting each time they walk in the door. Our church mother, Mary Dula, shares the week's announcements with a love and kindness that fills our hearts. She also helps fill in for Bible study on Wednesday evenings when needed.

As part of our service in the church

Melissa leads the children's message during worship service and Troy, a NCSHP Trooper, patrols the church area, its neighborhood and the members' homes.

"You're so sweet to go help that church," some people told us when we started attending West End. They had no clue that it was this church helping us! We found that we were searching for more God and less church. That's exactly what we found here. So as of July 1, 2018, we are West End's newest members.

Pastor Smith is a gentle, God-loving man. He reaches out to the sick, shut in, incarcerated and many more people with a kindness that can only come from the Holy Spirit. His messages on Sunday are always about Jesus and his dying on the cross for our salvation. You won't find any judgment with Pastor Smith, just love. He often shares with his congregation his own weaknesses or areas that he wants to improve and asks for prayer. This helps us to know that we are led by a man who constantly seeks to be a better person and Christian role model.

Some of our members have not always had the easy road but are quick to give God the glory in everything they are and have in their life. We are a group of people that truly love others. Isn't that what God called us all to do?

The next time you take a trip to the mountains of North Carolina, stop by and visit us. We promise you will feel happy, loved and accepted. You're sure to hear a "Hallelujah" or two! You might not even want to leave.

We recently read that when God wants to change you, he makes you uncomfortable. Well, that's exactly what he did to us. That feeling brought us to West End. Now, we are on fire to do God's will and his work in building the kingdom of God.●



Troy and Melissa Stutts live in Lenoir, NC. We have lived here for 15+ years. Troy is a NCSHP Trooper in Caldwell Co. and has been in law enforcement for over 20 years. Melissa is a 3rd grade teacher who just completed her 20th year in Caldwell Co. as well. We enjoy exploring the Parkway, short trips to learn about cities and their history, and being together. Serving God at West End is a privilege for us.

## Thankfulness

Grateful for how our churches serve their communities

My wife, Kathy, can make a mouth-watering, jaw-dropping, mean coconut caramel cream pie. She always makes two for special occasions such as Thanksgiving, Christmas, Easter and the Fourth of July. Before eating too much at mealtime, I'm thinking about how good a big piece of pie will taste with a hot cup of coffee. Well, as you can imagine, after eating too much, I always end up with a small piece of that mouth-watering, jaw-dropping, mean coconut caramel cream pie. After settling down for the evening in my recliner and reflecting back on all that I consumed at dinner, I am so thankful for that small piece of pie.

The North Carolina District of MB Churches (NCD) is the smallest USMB district. There are seven MB churches in the western part of the state. As the district minister/pastor, I often find myself praying to God for more ways to multiply churches in our MB family and in particular here in North Carolina.

Yes, I sometimes daydream of what it would be like to have 20 or even 50 more churches on the East Coast. To have two or three new thriving church plants and excited churches supporting them. But then, I am reminded of and encouraged by the Holy Spirit to be thankful for the seven churches that we do have and the great things that are happening within the communities they serve. We are a small piece of what God is doing across this nation, grateful to be a part of a larger body of believers who agree with his Word.

As the Apostle Paul was closing out chapter three of his epistle to the Colossians, he reminds them and us to be thankful: "Most of all, let love guide your life, for then the whole church will

stay together in perfect harmony. Let the peace of heart that comes from Christ be always present in your hearts and lives, for this is your responsibility and privilege as members of his body. And always be *thankful*. Remember what Christ taught, and let his words enrich your lives and make you wise; teach them to each other and sing them out in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing to the Lord with *thankful* hearts. And whatever you do or say, let it be as a representative of the Lord Jesus, and come with him into the presence of God the Father to give him your *thanks*" (TLB, emphasis mine).

As a small district, we are grateful and thankful for the U.S. Conference that invites all five districts and over 200 churches into kingdom-building together. To networking resources as partners, maximizing disciple-making and church multiplication. Together, with thankful hearts, we can empower local churches (even small ones) to reach their full God-given potential to impact communities around the world. Now with more partners like Multiply (MB Mission and C2C) working with USMB churches, we have more tools for increase and reasons to celebrate.

The Boone MB Church, under the leadership of Pastor Mike Mathes, celebrated its 100 anniversary June 3-10. These eight days of celebration included a concert by the choir, three evenings of revival services, one evening of history and reflections, a picnic on Saturday and a Sunday mortgage burning with an afternoon meal. Two NCD pastors were also ordained at the centennial.

Thank God for each "small piece of the pie." ▀



Terry W. Hunt is pastor of The Life Center in Lenoir, NC and has served as the North Carolina District Conference minister since 2005. Hunt has lived and worked in North Carolina his entire life and spent 17 of 31 years in the pastorate as a bivocational pastor while working as a plant manager in the furniture industry. He is very active in his community and with USMB. He and his wife, Kathy, have four daughters and four grandchildren.

## MILESTONES

### BAPTISM/ MEMBERSHIP

Twelve people were baptized at **Stony Brook Church, Omaha, Neb.**, Aug. 5.

Caden Lierd was baptized July 29 and Timber Kalkbrenner was baptized Aug. 12 at **South Mountain Community Church, Lehi Campus.**

Ashley Bengston, Janelle Bengston, Trisha Bengston, Tyler Bengston, Thomas Evans, Abigail Siemens and Addison Wedel were baptized at **Zoar MB Church, Inman, Kan.**, July 22.

Garrison Reimer, Abigail Reimer and Karson Schmidt were baptized at **Corn (Okla.) MB Church**, July 22.

Lucas Burd, Graham Miller and Remi Randol were baptized July 8 at **Pine Acres Church, Weatherford, Okla.**

Six people were baptized at **City Church, Pueblo, Colo.**, July 1.

Debra Austin, Joe Dube, Allie Dube, Randy Hogan, Patty Hogan, Ryan Jones, Amber Jones, Hollis Lamb and Alisha Lamb were received as members July 1 at **Cross Timbers Church, Edmond, Okla.** Hollis Lamb, Alisha Lamb, Vivian Martens, Cale Canada, Addi Jo Ochsner, Hesston Ochsner, Matthew Johnson, Stephen Johnson and Timothy Johnson were baptized June 24.

Tim Collom and Bianca Martinez were baptized and received as members June 17 at **Heritage Bible Church, Bakersfield, Calif.** Phillip Herrera, Marissa Herrera, Ken Schmitz, Deb Schmitz and Joe Bowland were also received as members.

Jimmy Tabangcora, Robin Tabangcora, Melissa Tabangcora, Daniel Hanna and Joseph Hanna were baptized June 17 at **Laurelglen Bible Church, Bakersfield, Calif.**

Mark Arnold, Heather Arnold, Chris Campbell, Kristen Campbell, James Cheatham, Samantha Cheatham, Nathan Lauderdale, Jaymee Lauderdale, Matt Russell, Lacey Russell, Jerred Unruh, Kerrie Unruh and Dalton McAllister were received as members June 3 at **Enid (Okla.) MB Church.** Natalie Hamm and Evelyn Hartling were recognized after being received as members last December.

David Bloemhof IV, Ryan Enns, Alex Gonzalez and Philip Wolfe were baptized June 3 at **Shafter (Calif.) MB Church.**

Jessica Garcia was received as a member at **Parkview MB Church, Hillsboro, Kan.**, May 13.

### WORKERS

Cynthia Young began serving Aug. 20 as kid's ministry director at **First MB Church, Wichita, Kan.**

Jenny Crossman has concluded her more than 20-year ministry as children's director at **Laurelglen Bible Church, Bakersfield, Calif.**

Tom Byford has accepted a call to serve as lead pastor at **Parkview MB Church, Hillsboro, Kan.** Byford was installed July 8. Al and Cheryl Magnuson concluded their ministry as interim pastoral couple with an appreciation and farewell lunch July 1.

Mark and Laurie Isaac began their ministry at **Dinuba (Calif.) MB Church** July 1. The installation service for Mark as lead pastor and elder was Aug. 12.

Jamie Mack began serving in a part-time role as adult discipleship coordinator at **North Fresno (Calif.) Church.**

### DEATHS

**Dyck, David H. Jr.**, Reedley, Calif., member of Reedley MB Church, March 4, 1930—July 15, 2018. Parents: David H. Sr. and Elizabeth (Nikkel) Dyck. Spouse: Donna (Reiswig) Dyck. Children: Stanley, Myron, Rayford, Lanette Manley; six grandchildren; two great-grandchildren.

**Friesen, John**, Fresno, Calif., member of Reedley (Calif.) MB Church, March 5, 1942—June 10, 2018. Parents: Dan E. and Eva (Reimer) Friesen. Spouse: Harriet (Kliwer) Friesen. Children: Scott, Craig, Kim Jost; 10 grandchildren.

**Goertzen, Johnnie**, Reedley, Calif., member of Reedley MB Church, Dec. 10, 1921—Aug. 1, 2018. Parents: John J. and Nettie (Regier) Goertzen. Spouse: Adena (Seibel) Goertzen. Children: Raymond, Janis Haines, Debbie Goertzen; six grandchildren; 11 great-grandchildren.

**Guhr, Herbert**, Wichita, Kan., of Hillsboro (Kan.) MB Church, Jan. 1, 1926—July 3, 2018. Parents: Reinhold and Anna (Wedel) Guhr. Spouse: Doris (Wiens) Guhr. Children: Ron, Gary, Glenn, Stacey,

## First MB Church celebrates 75th anniversary

**F**irst MB Church, Wichita, Kan., celebrated its 75th anniversary Aug. 19, 2018. The celebration included three identical worship services, a mid-morning story time from the past 75 years, lunch, inflatables, photo booths, historical memorabilia and a group photo. The celebration concluded that evening with baptisms at a local lake.

The church traces its start to 1941 when the Southern District Conference encouraged a number of Wichitans with Mennonite Brethren backgrounds to begin meeting. In 1943 the church was formally organized with 19 charter members. The church grew and in 1958 the congregation broke ground for a new facility that would seat 300 in the sanctuary. By 1984 attendance neared 500, and so the congregation planted a new church in east Wichita and began planning for a new facility in west Wichita, which was dedicated in 1987. In 1995, the church plant, East Wichita MB Fellowship, dissolved. To meet the needs of its growing church family, First MB Church expanded its staff as well as the facility, first in 1993 and then again in 2009.



Quentin, Barbara Wardell, Carol Guhr; 10 grandchildren; six great-grandchildren.

**Klaassen, Harold**, Leonardville, Kan., April 18, 1935—April 28, 2018. Parents: Isaac and Anna Klaassen. Spouse: Esther (Klassen) Klaassen. Children: Linda, Richard; three grandchildren.

**Klassen, Victor**, Lodi, Calif., member of Vinewood Community MB Church, Lodi, March 21, 1920—March 18, 2018. Parents: John E. and Suzie Klassen. Spouse: Esther Becker, deceased, Martha Loewen, deceased. Children: Bruce, deceased; Mark; Cyndi Pagliaro; five grandchildren, four great-grandchildren.

**Kruger, Harold P.**, Holdrege, Neb., former member of First MB Church, Wichita, Kan., and former MB missionary in Belgium Congo in the 1950's and 1960's, Dec. 6, 1929—July 23, 2018. Parents: John and Tena Kruger. Spouse: Susan Kruger. Children: Rebecca Gaudino, Patricia Ferree, Grace Adam; four grandchildren; eight great-grandchildren.

**Nabakowski, Richard**, Visalia, Calif., member of Reedley (Calif.) MB Church, Aug. 7, 1946—July 25, 2018. Parents: George and Margaret (Landon) Nabakowski. Spouse: Carol Nabakowski. Children: Ginnie Clarke.

**Peters, Douglas Simon**, Shafter, Calif., member of Shafter MB Church, Oct. 5, 1932—June 7, 2018. Parents: Edward and Elizabeth Peters. Spouse: Donna (Newfield) Peters. Children: Deanna Peters, Darleen Reimer, Delayne Huskey; five grandchildren.

**Reimer, Lydia (Wiebe)**, Selma, Calif., member of Reedley (Calif.) MB Church, March 18, 1914—June 7, 2018. Parents: Jacob J. and Wilhelmine "Minnie" (Wall) Wiebe. Spouse: Nikolai "Nick" Reimer, deceased. Children: Wilbert, Dalton, Rosalie Carter, Eldene Farrar; eight grandchildren, 13 great-grandchildren, four great-great-grandchildren.

**Rosenfeld, Lois**, Squaw Valley, Calif., member of Reedley (Calif.) MB Church, July 22, 1939—Aug. 2, 2018. Parents: Menno and Marie (Traudt) Warkentin. Children: David, Doug, Paul, Anne Marie Dueck; 13 grandchildren.

**Sallaska, Orel Duane**, Corn, Okla., member of Corn MB Church, Nov. 5, 1950—July 15, 2018. Parents: James Francis and Miriam (Gossen) Sallaska. Spouse: Jeanne Marie (Bailey) Sallaska. Children: JoRel Nye, Jordan Sallaska; one grandchild.

**Weber, Dorothy Mae (Loewen)**, Sedgwick, Kan., of Hillsboro MB Church, Dec. 10, 1924—June 20, 2018. Parents: Solomon and Katherine (Schellenberg) Loewen. Spouse: Walter Weber, deceased. Children: Charlie, John, Kathy Nichols, Beth Spencer, Becky Harms; 12 grandchildren; nine great-grandchildren.

**Widows, Ramona (Allen)**, Garden City, Kan., member of Garden Valley Church, Garden City, Dec. 5, 1931—June 16, 2018. Parents: Carl and Cleo (Bailey) Allen. Spouse: Robert Widows. Children: David, Becky Brandt; four grandchildren, two great-grandchildren.

**Wiebe, John F.**, Hillsboro, Kan., member of Parkview MB Church, Hillsboro, Feb. 19, 1934—April 23, 2018. Parents: David V. and Martha (Frantz) Wiebe. Spouse: Caryl Wiebe. Children: Dorie Thiessen, Colene Wiens, Jon; nine grandchildren, five great-grandchildren.

## REACHING IN DISCIPLESHIP

**First MB Church, Wichita, Kan.**, hosted a six-week study, "Unpacking Prayer."

**Neighborhood Church, Visalia, Calif.**, held a "Families on Mission Overnight" camping experience Aug. 3-4 on the church's soccer fields. Fam-

ilies participated in hands-on experiments and challenges to learn what life is like in a developing nation, with the goal that kids and adults would be encouraged to learn compassion and be inspired to make a difference in the world.

## FELLOWSHIP

**Hillsboro (Kan.) MB Church** held an electronics-free camping weekend for youth and families Aug. 10-12, which included food, fishing and fellowship. The outing was intended for families of youth to spend time together and with fellow believers with the goal to experience creation and learn about God's nature through creation.

Al and Cheryl Magnuson were guests at **Martin Box MB Church, Marshall, Ark.**, Aug. 5. Al brought the message, "Goliath Syndrome." The Martin Box women served lunch.

**Zoar MB Church, Inman, Kan.**, held an all-church picnic and pool party July 22. Events included a picnic supper, baptisms and a pool party.

Women at **Stony Brook Church, Omaha, Neb.**, were invited for a morning of Bible quilt journaling July 14. A Bible quilt journal is designed as a devotional resource to help people actively create with Scripture.

**Mountain View Community Church Sunnyside, Fresno, Calif.**, held a house warming service July 8 at its new campus.

Cyndi Schnase shared about her trip to DR Congo during the July 8 service at **Bible Fellowship Church, Minot, N.D.**

**Shafter (Calif.) MB Church** held a Summer Sunday evening June 10 with music, games and ice cream sundaes. Men's ministries sponsored a day of fly fishing July 21.

**Enid (Okla.) MB Church** held an all-church picnic July 1 followed by games and activities.

## Grayson Piepgrass remembered

**G**rayson Piepgrass, Mennonite Brethren pastor, died July 31, 2018, at the age of 67. He was born Sept. 6, 1950.

He earned a double major in Bible and sociology from Fresno Pacific College, now Fresno Pacific University, where he met his wife, Bonnie Wiens. The two were married in 1972.

Piepgrass earned a master's degree in Christian Education from Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary, now Fresno Pacific Biblical Seminary, then served at two Baptist congregations.

He served Dinuba (Calif.) MB Church from 1986 to 2003, initially as associate pastor and the last four years as senior pastor. An active member of the community, he served as president of the Ministerial Association, on

various school site councils and coached youth sports. In 2002, Piepgrass earned his master's degree in Marriage and Family Counseling from the University of San Francisco. In 2004, the family moved to Visalia, Calif., where Piepgrass accepted a part-time role as associate pastor at Neighborhood Church. Following a stint at Tulara Evangelical Free Church, Piepgrass served as pastor of care at Shafter (Calif.) MB Church until his death.

Over the course of his life, Piepgrass visited ministries in Portugal, Brazil and Paraguay and served as trainer and manager of a basketball mission team to Thailand in 2006.

Piepgrass is survived by his wife, Bonnie; two children, Seth and Erin Piepgrass, and Noel and Megan Piepgrass; and seven grandchildren.



**Butler Church, Fresno, Calif.**, held a summer festival June 29 celebrating culture and faith with music, dance, food from multiple cultures and activities for kids and families.

**Buhler (Kan.) MB Church** held Church at the Park June 3 with a BBQ meal and games following the church service.

**North Fresno (Calif.) Church** held its annual neighborhood lunch May 27 with a taco and burrito bar at Robinson Park, as well as activities for all ages.

## WORSHIP

**Axiom Church, Peoria, Ariz.**, hosted New York-based indie worship band The Brilliance in concert Aug. 31.

**Bible Fellowship Church, Minot, N.D.**, sponsored a community-wide worship service with other area churches July 15.

**Willow Avenue Mennonite Church, Fresno, Calif.**, hosted a "Midnight Hymn Sing" July 14 with hymns performed and reimagined in a folk/rock/pop style by a new generation of Mennonites from San Francisco. The reception included hors d'oeuvres and refreshments, followed by the benefit concert.

**Neighborhood Church, Visalia, Calif.**, hosted a Night of Worship June 24. The pre-party included snow cones, popcorn and inflatables, followed by a time of worship.

## CELEBRATIONS

**Neighborhood Church, Visalia, Calif.**, held a ribbon cutting ceremony for its new kids' spaces Sept. 22 and followed with a grand opening Sept. 23.

**Axiom Church, Peoria, Ariz.**, celebrated its fifth anniversary July 29.

## REACHING OUT

### LOCALLY

**Mountain View Community Church, Fresno, Calif.**, hosted a Summer Spectacular children's outreach July 23-27 with 267 children in attendance who were served by 155 volunteers. Fifty-eight children and one volunteer made first time decisions for Jesus, while 33 children recommitted their lives to him.

**Stony Brook Church, Omaha, Neb.**, hosted an outdoor concert and community cleanup event Aug. 26. The event showcased three bands, Shred-it cleanup service, a bounce house and food trucks.

**Butler Church, Fresno, Calif.**, hosted more than 80 kids for a three-day basketball camp in early July. Seven children placed their faith in Jesus.

**Shafter (Calif.) MB Church** held its 10th annual Wrestling Camp July 16-20.

**Hillsboro (Kan.) MB Church** held an outreach "Pizza in the Park" event for youth in Lincolnville July 10, 17, 24 and 31. The evenings included food, songs, games, crafts and a gospel presentation. Special guest Juan Guzman from the Oklahoma City Energy professional soccer team shared his testimony at the July 31 event, which also included a color party, soccer games and a food truck. The church participated in a service day in several area communities June 24 in order to share Christ's love through service.

**The Adams (Okla.) MB Church** hosted vacation Bible school July 9-13 with an average of 37 children in attendance with 11 workers from the surrounding area.

**First MB Church, Wichita, Kan.**, sent a disaster relief team to Eureka, Kan., to assist with tornado cleanup efforts July 2.

**Fresno Area Community Enterprises (FACE)**, with MCC, opened a new thrift shop, Thrift on Black-

stone, with a soft opening May 21 and grand opening June 16.

**Lighthouse Church, Lakewood, Colo.**, hosted its first Neighborhood Movie Night June 22 with carnival games, food and a movie on the big screen.

**Cross Timbers Church, Edmond, Okla.**, sent 22 volunteers to the Hope Center to sort food and clothes and move inventory from the donation center to the resale shop. The church also purchased and delivered five days of snacks (about 1,000 treats) for kids at Camp Shiloh.

Fifteen youth and four sponsors from **Zoar MB Church, Inman, Kan.**, spent a week at a camp working on four farms in Durango, Colo., in July.

---

FAUST, from page 9

Mountain Community Church online. After one week, my husband and I knew we wanted to be in this together. We publicly declared our faith through baptism and have since joined the worship team.

Now I'm starting over, like a newborn baby craving pure spiritual milk. It's hard to think I spent so many years trying to be something I wasn't. Yes, I still have days of anxiety, doubt and sorrow, but I've found freedom in Christ.

Jesus gives me grace and peace I couldn't find in all my searching. There's no more guilt or shame. I am enough. I know where I belong, and my life breathes an anthem of grace. **D**

## Hesston to celebrate 40th anniversary

**H**esston (Kan.) MB Church will celebrate its 40th anniversary Sunday, Sept. 23, 2018. The event will include recognition of charter members, a slide show of ministry over the years and a fellowship meal.

The church began as a daughter congregation of Koerner Heights Church in Newton, Kan. In June 1978, a group from Koerner Heights began meeting in the Hesston Middle School band room on Sunday evenings. The group held its first Sunday morning worship service Sept. 24, 1978.

Six pastoral couples have served the congregation, including current couple Brad and Sally Burkholder who were installed in 2011. The church dedicated a new facility in 1982 and added a new sanctuary in 2006.

## Announcement from Trinity Church

**T**he elders of Trinity Church of Portland, Ore., have removed Art Azurdia as senior minister of Word and Worship, as an elder and from all pastoral ministry at Trinity Church due to his admitted sexually immoral relationships with two women. The announcement was made to the congregation July 1 and was announced to the Pacific District Conference July 2.

"We grieve the shame this brings to the Gospel and the sorrow it brings to God's people," say the Trinity Church elders in their announcement of the decision.

**Local Church Openings**

**Children's Ministry Leader:** Community Bible Church in Olathe, Kan., is looking for a part-time children's ministry leader to provide leadership and spiritual direction for CBC's children's ministry. This primarily includes directing and equipping the children's ministry leadership team (CMLT), which provides general oversight of the individual children's ministries of CBC (AWANA, Children's Church, Sunday School, Nursery, VBS, etc.) The goals of our children's ministries are to both equip parents to raise their children in the gospel of Jesus Christ and to directly minister to children. This position's primary role is to ensure our children's ministries, led by the CMLT, are fulfilling those ends. To apply, send resume to Aaron Halvorsen at ahalvorsen@cbckansas.org. Use subject line "CBC Children's Ministry Leader."

**Associate Pastor: Worship and Music:** North Fresno MB Church, Fresno, Calif., is seeking a full-time pastor of worship and music for our contemporary service. Responsibilities include pastoral leadership and oversight for our contemporary worship ministry. The qualified candidate would also provide leadership to another area depending on their gifting. To apply please contact Shawna Stocks at sdthiessen@att.net.

**Youth Pastor:** Garden Valley MB Church, Garden City, Kan., is seeking applicants for a full-time youth pastor with a passion for the spiritual development of youth as disciples of Christ. To apply, please send resume to gvchurch@gmail.com. A full job description is available at [www.gardenvalleychurch.com](http://www.gardenvalleychurch.com).

**Worship Leader:** Shorelife Community Church, Capitola, Calif., seeks a dynamic worship leader to lead our talented band. Our worship is contemporary, but we enjoy traditional music as well. Although this is a part-time position, there is the possibility of increased hours if the applicant has a desire to work in administration and progress to an associate pastor/worship leader role. There is also the possibility of a two-bedroom apartment as part of the package. Please apply by email to Pastor Trevor Lee at [trevor@shorelifecc.org](mailto:trevor@shorelifecc.org)

**University Openings**

**Faculty:** Fresno Pacific University is seeking a Nursing Department Chair in the School of Natural Sciences at Fresno Pacific University. Complete job description and requirements available at [www.fresno.edu/careers](http://www.fresno.edu/careers).

**Ministry Openings**

**Planned Giving Advisor:** MB Foundation is seeking a servant professional to assist our current and potential constituency in the Pacific District Conference with planned giving solutions such as will planning and lifetime gift plans. Resumes may be sent to Jon C. Wiebe, MB Foundation, PO Box 220, Hillsboro, KS 67063 or [jwiebe@mbfoundation.com](mailto:jwiebe@mbfoundation.com). A full job description is available at [www.mbfoundation.com/employment](http://www.mbfoundation.com/employment).

**VP-Business Development:** MB Foundation has provided a wide range of services to meet its partners' capital needs and charitable objectives for over 120 years ([www.mbfoundation.com](http://www.mbfoundation.com)). To continue to do so and to provide a sustainable revenue base, they seek an individual to serve as VP-Business Development with responsibility for developing and implementing a comprehensive marketing/business development program for the Foundation. The successful candidate will be entrepreneurial and have experience successfully building programs to expand and develop a client base. For more information please go to [http://bit.ly/MB\\_VP-BusinessDevelopment\\_OP](http://bit.ly/MB_VP-BusinessDevelopment_OP).

**COO/CFO:** For over 120 years, MB Foundation has served as a valued partner in meeting the capital needs and charitable objectives of a broad, diverse client base providing a wide range of services with over \$190 million currently under management. Due to sustained growth, they seek an individual to serve as COO/CFO with responsibility for providing strategic leadership and direction to all operational, financial and legal management of the Foundation. The successful candidate's background and experience will be evidence of his/her ability to be successful as COO/CFO. For more information, please go to [http://bit.ly/MB\\_COO\\_CFO\\_OP](http://bit.ly/MB_COO_CFO_OP).

**Anniversary**

**Shafter (Calif.) MB Church** celebrates 100 years with Homecoming Sunday, November 18, 2018. The day's events include a documentary video of the history of the church at 9:00 a.m., Celebration Service 10:30 am, lunch, afternoon service with a mission emphasis at 2:00 p.m. followed with a pie social and time to reconnect. Nursery and children's activities will be provided. All are invited. Hope to see you there. To leave an RSVP or for more information, e-mail [smbc100th@gmail.com](mailto:smbc100th@gmail.com) or 661-746-4969. A book on the history of the congregation, Building on Faithfulness, will be available on Amazon, at \$50.

## We want more of Revelation 7

Recalling highlights of the July convention

I am writing this column days after returning from the USMB Pastors' Conference and National Convention held in late July in Salt Lake City, Utah, and I can't help but reflect on the two events.

The theme, "Celebrating our Diversity and Unity," provided us an opportunity to share the magnitude of the unique differences among our USMB constituency. It became apparent as the days progressed that God has blessed us with much diversity—which can be challenging and rewarding. It's rewarding in that we can learn so much from other cultures about disciple-making, worship and unique experience in our relationship with Jesus. It can be a challenge simply by virtue of the language differences and cultural expectations.

A true highlight for me was the exceptionally inspiring worship times provided by the diversity of worship teams from The Greenhouse and South Mountain Community Church's various campuses. It's amazing how God uses the giftedness of people to encourage us to connect with our Savior through music and reflection. We also heard stimulating stories and reports about the many things God is doing in our midst and around the world. It was a special treat to worship at the South Mountain Community Church Draper campus on Friday evening and to hear about the remarkable things God continues to do in Utah.

Some of you may have heard that a resolution pertaining to immigration and the past southern border policy of at times separating children and parents received unanimous affirmation. The resolution was an encouragement to our government leaders to adhere strongly to the new policy of not separating children from their parents and to work diligently to reunite those who have been previously separated. As Mennonite Brethren, we care immensely for those who are suffering. May God use us to help bring godly solutions to the complex issues surrounding immigration.

Several times during the Pastors' Conference and convention we were drawn to the words of Revelation 7, where the apostle John witnessed the great multitude in heaven from "every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb." This scripture often produces a visceral response as we imagine that great scene. It also provides us with a picture of today as we celebrate the realities of that diversity even now. We affirmed that we want more of Revelation 7 to be expressed today.

Some have wondered how USMB is expressly addressing the diversity we have among our conference of churches. Are we serving our ethnic churches? Although we have a long way to go, yes, we are intentionally working to serve the various contexts that our ethnic diversity provides. For instance, USMB presented the first Spanish language LEAD One event in Fresno in June. Attendance and interaction with the presenters was healthy and beneficial. We pray this is just the beginning of this kind of leadership interaction among our Hispanic churches in the Pacific District.

We've held similar events in the LAMB Conference, presented in English and translated into Spanish. Many of our conference documents and pamphlets have been translated into Spanish and some have been translated into Russian for our Slavic churches' use. We have plans to do more. A Spanish-language LEAD Cohort is being considered. We also seek to engage more with our Ethiopian, Korean, Japanese and Native American brothers and sisters. New ideas are emerging.

As I think about our 200-plus USMB churches, I am encouraged by the connections we have and the expressed desire to remain unified. We certainly aren't perfect, but with God's help we are striving to be a conference of churches that's making a significant impact for the kingdom—together—through all of our diversity! 🙏



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.



**EARN** *a rate of return!* **& BUILD** *the Kingdom!*

We have **raised** our rates to help you **build** your savings. At the same time your investment helps us provide funding to growing churches, helping them reach their **full ministry potential**.

**CURRENT CERTIFICATE RATES**

DEMAND  
CERTIFICATE

**0.40%**

ADVANTAGE  
CERTIFICATE

**0.85%**

TERM CERTIFICATES

1 YEAR

**1.85%**

2 YEAR

**2.10%**

3 YEAR

**2.40%**

4 YEAR

**2.65%**

5 YEAR

**2.90%**

All rates variable

**START** *your investment today at:*

[www.mbfoundation.com/invest](http://www.mbfoundation.com/invest)



620.947.3151  
800.551.1547 Toll Free  
[info@mbfoundation.com](mailto:info@mbfoundation.com)  
[www.mbfoundation.com](http://www.mbfoundation.com)

The purchase of MBLF's securities is subject to risks, which are described in our Offering Circular. This is not an offer to sell you our securities and we are not soliciting you to buy our securities. We will offer and sell our securities only in states where authorized. The offering is made solely by the Offering Circular. Not FDIC or SIPC Insured. Not a Bank Deposit. No U.S. Conference Guarantee.