

# CHRISTIAN LEADER

November / December 2021

Merry Christmas, Herod Page 14

Shifting focus Page 22

Being thankful in a topsy-turvy world Page 31

## THE CHRISTMAS CAST



# #GIVINGTUESDAY™

A GLOBAL DAY TO CELEBRATE GIVING



**November 30, 2021**

You can help resource USMB church planters  
and provide LEAD initiatives for  
USMB pastors and churches.

**Support USMB on Giving Tuesday**

*#increasingkingdomimpact*



PO Box 20200 • Wichita, KS 67208

[usmb.org/GivingTuesday](https://usmb.org/GivingTuesday)

SAVE THE DATE!



**↑ INCREASING  
IMPACT**  
**REACHING THE LOST**  
LUKE 19:10

**USMB National Pastors' Conference and National Convention**

**July 26 - 30, 2022**

**Stoney Creek Hotel and Conference Center  
Independence, Missouri (northeast Kansas City)**

**[www.usmb.org](https://www.usmb.org)**

**#usmb2022**

# in this issue

November / December 2021

## FEATURES: THE CHRISTMAS CAST

### 10 The Simeons and Annas among us

BY DAVE THIESSEN

*Waiting for Jesus—then and now*

### 12 What angels long to see

BY TIM SANDY

*Yearning to understand God's great gift*

### 14 Merry Christmas, Herod

BY ERIC NELSON

*Herod was a control freak, and Jesus' arrival was very disturbing*

#### **FIND MORE ONLINE:**

Hoping for more stories? Find these and more online at [www.christianleadermag.org](http://www.christianleadermag.org)

- Why me?

BY DENNIS FAST

- The Magi scandal

BY DAVID REED

## DEPARTMENTS

### 5 The news

### 7 5 minutes with...

### 17 Body Life

- David Janzen enjoys his front row seat
- Summer interns offer shot of adrenaline
- Shifting focus
- Essay: Going boldly

### 28 Church news

## COLUMNS

### 4 Editorial

CONNIE FABER

### 8 Frontlines

JESSE SWIERS

### 9 Testimony

JOANNA CHAPA

### 26 Mission & Ministry

PLANTED AND GROWING

### 27 Vantage point

KYLE GOINGS

### 31 From the national director

DON MORRIS

# Conflict is inevitable

How we navigate disagreements matters

My husband and I have been married for 36 years, and we continue to navigate disagreement. As is the case with any significant relationship, we don't always agree. While we've learned a lot about handling differences of conviction in healthy ways, finding our way through the sometimes-rough waters of conflict is not always easy.

As a conference of churches, U.S. Mennonite Brethren have points of disagreement. Whenever I become aware of a disagreement—between me and my husband or between people in our USMB churches—my stomach twists, and I get an icky feeling.

I don't like conflict, but I know that disagreements happen all the time. It's to be expected. Disagreements crop up in our families and churches, among friends and coworkers. The challenge is what we do when we find ourselves in conflict.

Some time ago I served on a church committee with a person I didn't know well. As the committee discussed one particular agenda item, we realized this person and I clashed on a theological issue. I was tempted to ignore the disagreement, but this person suggested we meet to talk. Over coffee, we each explained our beliefs, and then she made a suggestion. Neither of us were likely to change our point of view, she said, but could we commit to being friends in spite of this difference? Yes, I could do that! What a wise solution.

As I think about the disagreements we face as U.S. Mennonite Brethren, I hope for two things. First, that we acknowledge when we disagree and accept the discomfort that comes with differences. And that as we maneuver our way through skirmishes, we pledge to maintain our relationships, to forge friendships in spite of disagreements. Author and pastor Max Lucado has said, "Conflict is inevitable, but combat is optional."

We can avert combat when we remember that even though we may disagree, we desire the same things – to be honorable followers of Jesus Christ, to faithfully follow the teachings of the Bible and to be part of God's plan to bring shalom to our families, churches, communities and the world. I know there is more to this than can be covered in this brief essay. We feel strongly about our convictions and standing by our beliefs while making room for divergent convictions is difficult and complicated. I can talk myself in circles as I mull this over. I don't have the answers, but I'm concerned that we don't know how to disagree well. If we want to be a healthy conference with an authentic witness, we need to figure out how we will navigate the waters of differing convictions.■



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**  
ASSOCIATE 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 are published online ([www.christianleadermag.com](http://www.christianleadermag.com)) and should be 500 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.

**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





## Save the date for USMB Gathering 2022

USMB Gathering 2022, the USMB National Pastors' Conference and National Convention, will be held July 26-30, 2022, at Stoney Creek Hotel and Conference Center in Independence, Mo., the location initially intended for Gathering 2020, which became a virtual convention because of the coronavirus pandemic.



Independence, Mo., is a suburb of Kansas City providing easy access to all the city has to offer. A small oasis awaits at Stoney Creek, where a lake, waterfall, park and 2-mile walking trail provide a beautiful backdrop for the hotel, which with its large wood beams, outdoor themes and modern rustic décor has a lodge-type feel.

The conference center, located at one end of the hotel, is on one level. The special room rate of \$112 for one to four people includes a complimentary breakfast buffet, coffee, wireless Internet and parking.

Save the date and make plans to attend USMB Gathering 2022, where you will experience community, support our national MB family and be encouraged, challenged and resourced. We have missed in-person fellowship and look forward to gathering as a USMB family in July.

For more information about the location, visit [www.stoneycreekhoteles.com](http://www.stoneycreekhoteles.com) or call 816-908-9600. —USMB

## Support USMB on Giving Tuesday

Individuals and churches will have opportunity to support USMB on Giving Tuesday, Nov. 30, 2021. Giving Tuesday is a global day dedicated to generosity that falls on the first Tuesday after Thanksgiving, Black Friday and Cyber Monday.

Donated funds will be used to support USMB mission and ministry.

"Every dollar given on Giving Tuesday goes toward ministry, not overhead," says USMB National Director Don Morris. "Your gifts can help us better resource our MB pastors and churches through our many USMB LEAD initiatives, provide project management resources for our MB church plants, assist with church internships and provide connecting points for immigrant churches seeking a family to belong to. Your donations make a huge kingdom difference."

In the seven years USMB has been part of Giving Tuesday, donors have contributed more than \$210,000, including \$25,421.69 last year, which was divided evenly between church planting, LEAD initiatives and ethnic integrated ministries, with \$8,473.90 going toward each.

In 2021, USMB offered 23 LEAD Cohorts with more than 140 registrants, produced more than 20 LEAD Pods, hosted a Gospel Fluency Workshop with Ben Connelly in La Grulla, Texas, and formed a new Church Planting Council to provide a national vision for USMB church planting, among other initiatives.

"Thank you for giving to USMB on Giving Tuesday," Morris says. "Your continued donations provide us with resources to mobilize for mission and ministry. We are increasing impact, together."

For more information about USMB's Giving Tuesday campaign, visit

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

USMB invites donors to use the hashtag #increasingkingdomimpact.

Begun in 2012, the Giving Tuesday movement raised \$2.47 billion in online gifts in the U.S. last year, fueled primarily through social media and collaboration. —USMB

## MB young adults visit civil rights sites

A diverse group of 20 Mennonite Brethren youth and young adults gathered in Montgomery, Ala., in late July to begin a nine-day study of Christ's peacemaking mandate, while studying the history of racism in the U.S.

The gathering, called the Multicultural Peace Collaborative (MPC), was a partnership between Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) U.S., West Coast MCC, USMB and Multiply, the mission agency of the MB church in the U.S. and Canada.

MPC began with four days of interactive learning in Montgomery and Selma, Ala., and Atlanta, Ga. For one day, the group overlapped with USMB leaders who also had gathered to learn, lament and reconcile with the history of racism in the U.S.

"Something happens to our body, our hearts and our minds when we are physically present together in the spaces of historical racial acts," says Dina Gonzalez-Pina, West Coast MCC executive director and a MPC facilitator. "It is from that space that we hear the blood crying out for justice and, as peacemakers, we cannot live as though we don't hear and see the injustice."

After the intensive, hands-on learning, the MPC headed to North Carolina to reflect on what they had seen and experienced.

The MPC was the first event of its kind for USMB youth and young

adults. Due to overwhelmingly positive feedback from participants, planning for a second event is underway.—*MCC*

## Janzen inaugurated as president

David S. Janzen was inaugurated as the 14th president of Tabor College during a Sept. 24 ceremony in Hillsboro, Kan.

Following an invitation-only dinner, attendees gathered in Richert Auditorium in the Shari Flaming Center for the Arts for the public inauguration ceremony, highlighted by a message from keynote speaker Mike Jordahl, senior vice president of The Navigators.

“David, my prayer for you is that under your leadership, Tabor would send out many answers to Jesus’ prayer request—people who will experience how much Jesus loves them, that they’ll love him back, and to live out and be the disciples and followers that he wants,” Jordahl said.

Three former presidents participated in the ceremony by speaking blessings, presenting the presidential medallion or reading Scripture: Vernon Janzen (1980-1987), Larry W. Nikkel (1999-2007) and Jules Glanzer (2008-2021). Nikkel and Glanzer read prayers from former presidents LeVon

Balzer and David Brandt, who were unable to attend.

In his response, Janzen said: “Tabor students live and learn in a context where the Bible, God’s word to us, is integrated in all aspects of the college. For 113 years, students have come to Tabor where they learn in community from faculty that know and love God. They go out into the world not to just make a living, but to make a difference for Christ and his kingdom.”

Following an opening prayer by Jeff Nikkel, search committee chair and member of the board of directors, these individuals offered a welcome on behalf of faculty, staff, students, the board and USMB: Christopher Dick, faculty chair; Ruth Funk, staff member; Natalie Ford, current student; Don Morris, USMB national director; and Susan Franz Koslowsky, Board of Directors chair.

Janzen’s family and friends participated as well. His sister, Kristin Wiebe, read Scripture; his wife, Karen, introduced the speaker; and Karen’s brother, Mark Isaac, pastor of New Life Community in Dinuba, Calif., gave the benediction. Janzen’s friend and 1991 Tabor graduate Bryce Unruh served as emcee.

The Tabor College concert choir performed an anthem, “Sun, Wind, Rain,” composed by Christopher Teichler,

director of instrumental music, with text by MB poet Jean Janzen.—*Tabor College*

## World Fellowship Sunday set for Jan. 23

Mennonite World Conference (MWC) has invited Anabaptist-related churches around the world to observe Anabaptist World Fellowship Sunday (AWFS) on Jan. 23, 2022, a day to observe a common theme in a worship service as an act of solidarity.

According to a Sept. 2 release, many churches choose to celebrate on the Sunday closest to Jan. 21, the date in 1525 when Christians in Zurich, Switzerland, held a baptismal service that launched the renewal movement known today as Anabaptism.

“AWFS is an opportunity to remind our communities of faith that we are all part of one body made up of many tribes, languages and nations,” says MWC general secretary César García, referencing Revelation 7:9 and Galatians 3:28. “It is (a) proclamation that now there is no discrimination among us on the basis of race, social status or gender. It is a demonstration that we are living a new life in a new society where we mutually support one another, carry those who suffer, serve the world and interdependently learn from one another what it means to follow Jesus. On this day, we celebrate that, in Christ, and by the power of the Holy Spirit, the cultural and national boundaries that separate us have been overcome by the cross.”

The theme for AWFS 2022 is “Following Jesus together.” Each year, different churches that are part of the global MWC community prepare guiding material that can be used for AWFS. This year, material has been prepared by churches in Indonesia—as they look ahead to hosting MWC’s Global Assembly in July—and contains biblical texts, prayers, song suggestions, sermon



Jules Glanzer presents the presidential medallion to David Janzen. *Photo by Michael Klaassen*

ideas and stories.

Resources may be found at [www.mwc-cmm.org/awfs](http://www.mwc-cmm.org/awfs). —MWC

## Registration for MWC Assembly 2022 opens in December

Registration for Mennonite World Conference's Global Assembly 2022 held in Semarang, Indonesia, July 5-10, 2022, will open in December 2021. Early bird registration rates are \$550 for adults and \$150 for children until April 30, 2022. Hotel rooms will cost an estimated \$30 to \$50 per night, with dormitory-style lodging at a local school available for \$10 per night.

MWC encourages congregations in the global Anabaptist family to attend in person or online. The every-six-year event will include worship, workshops, storytelling, an art exhibit, soccer, church visits and more.

For more information or to register, visit <https://mwc-cmm.org/assembly/indonesia-2022>. —MWC

## Multiply correction

The "Multiply board has 'complete reset'" article published in the Sept/Oct CL incorrectly stated that all Multiply board members, except for David MacLean, resigned in September 2020.

The terms of USMB representatives Kimberly Jost, Hillsboro, Kan., and Archie Eutsler, Wichita, Kan., expired in 2020, as did the term of board-appointed member Ruth Schale, Bakersfield, Calif. The terms of Jeff Gowling, Bakersfield, and Brent Warkentin, Wichita, were to expire in 2022. Eutsler, Jost and Schale were not reappointed, and Gowling and Warkentin resigned. —CL

# 5 minutes with...



## Casey Ratzlaff

When *Christian Leader* last talked with Casey Ratzlaff, he was a 14-year-old rising star on the world stage in junior wheelchair tennis. Nine years later his dedicated training earned him a place on the United States Paralympic wheelchair tennis team. Ratzlaff, who was born with spina bifida, grew up at Ridgepoint Church (former First MB Church) in Wichita, Kan. He recently moved to Birmingham, Ala., continuing to pursue a career as a professional wheelchair tennis player. He took time out after playing in the World Cup tournament in Sardinia, Italy, to share his story.

### *How did you earn your place on the 2020 Paralympic Team?*

It was the culmination of all the work I've put in and a dream for many, many years. The qualifying pool for direct entry is the top 42 players in the country, and I was part of that pool, actually placed about #23 in the world with the International Tennis Federation International Rankings.

### *The pandemic had a huge impact, even postponing the event for a year.*

Yes, it put a lot of us in the athletic world on hold. More private courts, like the ones where I usually practiced at Wichita State, were closed, and we had to find other courts we could train on. It was a struggle getting through the lockdown. When the event didn't happen in 2020, we just decided to keep going and stay ready for whatever they decided.

### *How was the experience in Tokyo when it finally came?*

I'm really glad they had it and wasn't really worried about COVID-19. I would have liked to have my family and

coaches there, but I just focused on going and enjoyed it for what it was worth. It didn't feel quite as big as I expected, playing in the empty facilities.

### *Did you accomplish your goals for the event?*

My goal was to win a few rounds. We won the first round in both singles and doubles. In the second round in singles, I lost to a guy from Belgium who is currently #4 in the world. And in doubles we lost our second round to Spain, also among the best. You play as hard as you can and learn a lot. It's very fun to play at that level.

### *What have you learned as an athlete that would also be helpful in a Christian walk?*

I've had struggles where I feel like I'm going nowhere, running into a dead end. I've had to learn to be patient and realize it's a process. Put in the work daily. The reward could come next week, next month or maybe 10 years from now. You just have to stay with it, be faithful and cherish the people you meet on the way.

*Interview by Kathy Heinrichs Wiest*



# When people come and go

The Holy Spirit guides yesterday, today and forever

One of the things that the Lord is revealing to me is this: The same Spirit who guided past generations is the one who guides us in this present age. I know this is a basic teaching of truth that is rooted in the Word of God. So it gives me tremendous encouragement when I see it played out in the life of the church.

Stephen's speech to the Sanhedrin must have burned deep into the ears of all who could hear his voice—even as it does today as we read it. The unmistakable faithfulness of our God throughout the generations (Acts 7). Remembering the faithfulness and yet rejection of he who is faithful.

To be honest, it is hard as a pastor to see partners in ministry come and go from the local church. Let me give you a couple of examples from my experience.

Meet Betty. When I was called into the pastoral ministry she was there, serving the local church with her gift of playing piano and leading worship. When she talked, people listened. Betty was always encouraging, just loving people, offering Scripture, challenging and praying. Above all, she had a heart for the surrounding community. My desk always has a card or hand-written letter on it from her. She even took Scripture and composed music to it for our congregation.

Habakkuk 3:17-18 says, "Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will be joyful in God my Savior!"

We sang this as we said farewell to Betty. She is moving to Montana to live with her daughter. Her song brings us the same Spirit of God that Habakkuk had. "Renew them in our day," Habakkuk writes (3:2).

Meet Abby. She was not that old when I first met her. Her mom made sure she was

in church, Sunday School, camp, etc. I was never quite sure what was going on in her head. She had a love for acting and could make you laugh with her quick wit and humorous attitude. As she grew, so did her love for Jesus, so much that she gave her life to him. I had the tremendous honor to baptize her and to hear her publicly give her testimony.

After graduation, she agreed to teach the pre-kindergarten Sunday school class. Soon I could see she needed to step up in her calling. I suggested that she consider a short-term mission project. I heard of a Mennonite Brethren church plant in Rapid City, S.D., and thought it would be a great place for her to grow spiritually. She has thrived and short-term has turned to long-term. She is still serving Jesus at Renewal MB Church.

"Therefore go and make disciples....And surely I will be with you always, to the very end of the age" (Matt. 28:18-20). The authoritative spirit in which Jesus commanded his disciples is the same Spirit even to this day for us.

Meet Don. Don was on the leadership board and was so helpful to this young preacher. He was so encouraging to my whole family as we made the transition into our role as pastor family. He would often tell me, "This is a good fit."

His gift was greeting people and making them feel welcome. Don would always be at the church before anybody else to make sure the building was ready for worship. As people would come, Don would greet them with a smile and welcome them as family. Don passed away a couple years back, and we still miss him dearly. He truly greeted people as Jesus would. I think that he is an extension of Hebrews 11: "surrounded by such a cloud of witnesses."

This brings me once again to the concept of the same God guiding throughout all generations. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus the author and perfecter of our faith. ■



Jesse Swiers, is a bi-vocational pastor at Lake Region Mennonite Church in rural Detroit Lakes, Minn. He and his wife, Rhonda, have served Lake Region as pastor couple for 13 years. Along with his church responsibilities, Swiers owns and operates JES Wood Products. He also serves on the Central District Board of Faith and Life. Jesse and Rhonda have five children.



## Even if

The significance of with-ness in lament

**H**ave you ever wondered what it actually felt like for David when he wrote about the “valley of death” in Psalm 23 or the “anguish in his soul and sorrow in his heart” in Psalm 13? Was he exaggerating his reality and being what some call a “drama queen”? Or might he have been leading by example in a type of worship that many of us normally don’t know how to express?

Even though there’s no way to know exactly what David was experiencing when he wrote Psalm 13 and 23 (and many other psalms), one thing I notice about his life is David is not hesitant to be honest in his expression of grief, fear, anguish and even questions, while at the same time reminding himself of who the Lord is. This is worship through lament, and it’s safe to say I’m becoming familiar with it.

You see, these past 18 months have been my own “struggle with anguish in my soul and sorrow in my heart” and even a “dark valley of death.” For more than two months, I did not leave my home in Peru while living under an extreme military-enforced quarantine. Then in May 2020, I abruptly boarded a repatriation flight, leaving a country and people that the Lord has invited me to live and serve alongside since 2016 for his kingdom purposes. I did not know when I would return home to them.

I grieve the heaviness that comes with a world stricken by selfishness, hate, violence, racism, pride and idolatry. I grieve and mourn the loss of more than 30 family and friends in south Texas and the many in Peru that have passed as well, primarily due to the COVID-19 virus. I personally contracted COVID-19 in December 2020 and experience debilitating symptoms to this day. The COVID-19 virus “activated” at least one autoimmune disease (and potentially more), and I do not yet know how it will affect my life from here on out.

“When will this end? Will I ever catch a break? How long will this last, O Lord? Are you listening?”

Lament is a type of worship many of us are not accustomed to because we were not allowed to express it. We don’t know how to lament. “Don’t ask those questions! Don’t talk like that!” is what I’ve heard many times throughout my life as responses to what I like to call “people crying out their own Psalm 13s.” In our lives we want to recite Psalm 13:5-6 without Psalm 13:1-4.

But the reality is that grief is the evidence of someone or something deeply loved or cherished and then lost. We all grieve at some point of our lives. And when expression of grief is denied—when lament is not allowed—I’m learning we actually reject the reality of love. We also reject the reality of the confidence in the relational intimate trust with the Comforter and Shepherd. I’m learning a new depth that, like David, we can be honest and raw with our emotions and our grief before our Lord who is well-acquainted with grief and sorrow himself.

I can easily say that these past 18 months have been some of the hardest months of my life. But I can also say that they have been some of the most authentically intimate months of my life with Jesus. Is it because I received all the answers to my questions or that my prayers were answered the way I hoped? Most definitely not.

Rather, it has been because of the Lord’s with-ness with me. He is Immanuel, God with us. And even if—like Habakkuk, Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego and Jesus himself—my prayer isn’t answered the way I hope, I will remember who he has been, is and forever will be. I’ve learned that as I cry out my own Psalm 13 and “even if” prayers, his with-ness is constant. That is the fruit of lament.■



Joanna Chapa  
has served with  
Multiply in Peru since  
2016. She has been  
stateside since  
May 2020 due to the  
reality and impact of  
COVID-19. Before  
moving to Peru, she  
served as the Multiply  
short-term mission  
mobilizer in the U.S.  
Midwest and as an  
elementary physical  
education educator after  
graduating from Tabor  
College in 2009. Chapa  
was born and raised in  
Grulla, Texas, where  
she was commissioned  
by Grace Point Church  
(formerly Grulla  
MB Church).



# **The Simeons and Annas among us**

**Waiting  
for Jesus -  
then and  
now**

By Dave Thiessen

I don't like waiting in lines. Never have. Recently my family spent over two hours crossing the border into Canada to visit family that due to COVID-19 restrictions we hadn't seen in almost two years. Only the strong desire to see loved ones kept me going as we ran the gauntlet of questions, paperwork, testing and application navigation. Without my Millennial children helping, I'm sure it would have taken four hours, and I probably would have ended up in custody!

While I wait, I know that I can learn patience, redeem the time, look out for God sightings and practice other personal disciplines. These habits are far more Christlike alternatives to impatience and frustration, and I do practice them—most of the time. But I admit I still don't look at long lines at the grocery store or the DMV and say, "Yay!"

### Keep watch

However, another kind of waiting that I have learned to love is waiting for the Lord's appearing. The apostle Paul presumes a posture in which we "eagerly wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed" (1 Cor. 1:7). And Jesus himself instructs his followers on many occasions to wait. "Be always on the watch," he says in Luke 21:36. "Keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come," he says in Matthew 24:42.

David Ewert, in *And Then Comes the End*, his classic book on the end times, says, "All the aspects of the doctrine of future things is overshadowed by the expectation of the coming of the Savior, Jesus Christ." This is the kind of waiting that we should embrace and practice as a lifestyle. The kind of waiting that doesn't drain us but rather fills our hearts with joy.

In the account of Jesus' birth, we see that there were those who anticipate his appearing—in this case his *initial* appearing. Most notably, Simeon and Anna. Luke tells us in 2:25-26 that,

"There was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon, who was righteous and devout. He was waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was on him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Messiah." The Spirit leads Simeon to the temple courts just as Joseph and Mary are presenting their son to the Lord, and there he holds the infant Jesus and prophesies about his future as Israel's savior.

Luke then records in 2:36-38 a second encounter at the temple, this time with Anna. He writes Anna is a prophet who "never left the temple but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying. Coming up to them at that very moment she gave thanks to God and spoke

about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem."

Evidently, we are to understand that the coming of the Messiah was not a surprise to all. There was a remnant in Israel, of which Simeon and Anna were important examples, waiting expectantly for God to rescue the nation.

### Eagerly waiting today

So, who are the Simons and Anns today? Might they be the elderly saints who have seen the Lord's faithfulness over the better part of a century and continue to live righteous and devout lives? Luke plainly says that Anna is "very old," and we know that Simeon is promised that he will not die before he sees the Messiah, a serious hint as to his advanced age.

Are they the prophets of the church, who see the way God is working in the world and the way the god of this world works to undermine the kingdom? Or perhaps they are the intercessors who, like Anna, worship the Lord day and night, fasting and praying.

Whoever they are, I believe we can all join them this Christmas season. We can do so by keeping our eyes fixed on Jesus and regularly meditating on both his initial appearing and his imminent return. We can also take this season to faithfully pray and work for a harvest of new disciples, knowing that this is the Lord's heart and the reason for the delay in his return (2 Peter 3:9).

The New Living Translation describes Simeon as "eagerly waiting" for the Messiah. Jesus commands us

"I believe we can all join the Simons and Annas this Christmas season by keeping our eyes fixed on Jesus and regularly meditating on both his initial appearing and his imminent return."

to be watching and waiting for his appearing. Are we? This season is a wonderful time to renew our anticipation of the second coming of Christ, even as we celebrate his initial appearing. And keep an eye on the Simeons and Annas in our midst. It's likely that they will be first to hear the sound of the final trumpet and the first to see the clouds being rolled back as a scroll.

*Dave Thiessen is executive pastor at Mountain View Community Church in Fresno, Calif. His responsibilities include helping to develop church vision and direction, School of Ministry, preaching, administration and conflict management. He is a graduate of MB Biblical Seminary and University of British Columbia. He and his wife, Connie, have three children.*



# What angels long to see

Yearning to  
understand  
God's great gift

One cannot tell the Christmas story without including angels. Who has seen a Christmas play that has not included one or more adorable children dressed in white robes with sparkling wings and a halo over their head?

The angels of heaven filled some significant roles in the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ. We see their involvement at the pronouncement to Mary (Luke 1:26), the assurance to Joseph (Matt. 1:20), the prediction of John's birth to Zechariah (Luke 1:11) and, of course, the angel appearing to the shepherds the night of Christ's birth (Luke 2:9). But have you ever wondered what the angels thought about as they participated and witnessed the incarnation?

## The angels' perspective

We might be tempted to think angels have such a unique view that their perspective is much clearer than ours. But according to I Peter 1:12 the angelic host may not have as clear an understanding on God's redemptive work as we might expect. Peter writes that the prophets foretold the gospel of Christ and longed to see its fulfillment. At the end of verse 12 he describes the angels' perspective as "things into which angels long to look" (ESV).

The words "long to look" give us a clue on the perspective angels might have on God's redemptive plan. According to biblical scholar W. E. Vine, the word

translated "long" speaks of an earnest desire which "stresses the inward impulse rather than the object desired." Likewise, the words "to look" mean straining one's neck to see or look intently at something.

From this short phrase we gather that the angels have a longing to better understand the gospel of Jesus Christ. With this in mind, join me for a journey into our imaginations as we ponder what one angel's thoughts and feelings might have been as the heavenly host witnessed the incarnation.

*This is it! This is the night! The one they will call Jesus, the Christ, Immanuel is entering humanity. How long I have waited for this moment. It is time for us to pierce the veil and proclaim, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."*

*Oh, those poor shepherds. Did I ever surprise them! Their eyes grew larger and larger as the night sky lit up with the heavenly host. What awe and wonder were on their faces.*

*I admit I was a bit surprised at their shock. I guess maybe for them it was strange to be given a glimpse of what takes place on this side all the time. This celebration in choirs, this singing of the heavenly host continuously fills the air around the throne. But for them it was quite a special event.*



By Tim Sandy

*This night is actually a special event for me too. This has never happened before—God becoming man—nor will it happen again.*

*As the shepherds left their flocks, they seemed so animated, so excited, each one talking at the same time about what they had just seen. Though they could no longer see me, I could still watch them. They were so eager to discover if the things I told them were true or not. They could not get to Bethlehem quickly enough.*

*Oh Bethlehem, that small little village, what a privilege has been given you tonight! I wonder, are you capable of understanding what this night truly means? Can humanity grasp the significance of the incarnation, this demonstration of love, this humbling of the Most High?*

*I should not be so hard on these who have been made lower than us angels. The reality of the matter is I have difficulty understanding this plan of redemption for humanity. Maybe this comes from the fact that I cannot begin to understand what it would be like to live in a broken relationship with our Creator. Oh, the love of God for these jars of clay is such a mystery to me. It is so amazing to witness, yet in a way I feel like an outsider looking in.*

*From the moment of my creation, I have known this night would come and that this plan was part of God's purpose even before he created this world. I have also known what part I would play in this amazing story. The holy Scripture says, "For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways. On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone." (Psalm 91:11-12 ESV)*

*When the Spirit of God inspired these words, the psalmist did not perceive that the focus of our care would actually be the one born this night. So, I have my charge which begins in earnest this very moment. I will minister to and protect this one, the Son, Jesus, Immanuel! I will fulfill my duties perfectly. There shall be no harm come to this one under my watch. Nothing will happen to him until that day. O yes, until that day.*

*Humanity, humanity! Do you know? Do you have the slightest idea what he is doing for you? On that day, not unlike this night, the heavenly host will be gathered and all of us will be focused upon the events on earth. It will be a gathering that even exceeds this special night.*

*But unlike tonight, I will not pierce the veil and make great declarations or sing out praise to men. We all will be charged with the most difficult command ever given us. We will stand back and watch as humanity kills our Lord, their Savior! How can he allow them to do that?*

*But praise and glory be to the eternal Father, for death shall not win! The Son will break forth in glorious resurrection. This is the very thing he is born this night to do. He will remove the sting of death and pay the price for men's transgressions. Then he will rise victorious over the grave and provide salvation for all who would come to the Son and trust in him.*

*I know these things must be fulfilled. I know them as sure as I see these events unfold before my eyes. Yet I fail to completely comprehend this act and demonstration of love. Oh, how I long to look into these things with better understanding.*

*We do not actually know what the angels thought or felt the night of Christ's birth. It does stir within me a greater awe and gratitude for this familiar story to think that even the angels have difficulty understanding the riches of God's love and grace for us. May we too "long to look" and with wisdom and knowledge better understand the depth and riches of God's great grace, love and gift of his son, Jesus Christ.*

*Tim Sandy has served as lead pastor at Corn (Okla.) MB Church since 2006. He has also served churches in Colorado and Texas. He is a graduate of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Tennessee Temple University and Eastern New Mexico University. He and his wife, Carol, have been married for 37 years and have four adult children and nine grandchildren.*



## Herod was a control freak, and Jesus' arrival was very disturbing

**W**ho do you identify with most in the Christmas story? Not the one with the Red Ryder BB gun, but the one set in the 1st century. Do you identify with Joseph, Mary, the shepherds, the angels or someone else?

The person I identify with most is King Herod (Matt. 2:1).

You, like I, may have more in common with Herod than you realize. There's a reason Herod is not a staple in nativity scenes. He's the villain, the bad guy, the antagonist, and unfortunately, I relate to him most.

Herod's life is built on the foundation of preserve, protect and control. He was a control freak, which is why the arrival of Jesus was so disturbing for him.

***When King Herod heard this, he was disturbed... (Matt. 2:3).***

I'm convinced there's a little bit of Herod in all of us. We all have a desire to preserve our power, protect our comfort and control our circumstances. The arrival of Jesus exposed the control freak inside of Herod, and Christmas

By Eric Nelson

has been exposing the control freak inside of people ever since.

*Tuck your shirt in. Smile for the picture. Clean the house. Get the lights up. Wrap the presents. Get the tree. Set the table.* We all do some controlling or feel controlled around the holidays. However, the arrival of Jesus has always and will always rival humanity's need for control. This is a good thing and here's why. Your capacity for joy goes up when your desire to control goes down. There's an inverse relationship between joy and control. When one goes up, the other goes down.

Back to Herod.

Herod is known as a builder. He built a temple, port cities, aqueducts, palaces and fortresses. He is an extraordinarily talented person, but he is far too ambitious for his own good. He is so addicted to his own power and legacy it drives him crazy. He kills sons, wives and any other person to preserve and protect his position of power. He is the epitome of a control freak.

By the time we get to the biblical narrative, King Herod is about 70 years old and suffering from a very painful kidney disease. He knows he doesn't have long to live when he gets the most disturbing news possible. Just five miles south there is a new king, and he's learning to walk. The control freak comes out.

***Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. He sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and search carefully for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him" (Matt. 2:7-8).***

Herod is desperate and frantic. Like all control freaks, his desire for control leads him to use people for his own gain and to skew the truth. While Herod resists this news, others are overjoyed by it.

***When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh (Matt. 2:10-11).***

In the Christmas story, we see two completely different reactions to Jesus' arrival. There are those like Herod who resist miserably and others who



“

My invitation to you this Christmas is to give up trying to control your Christmas and receive joy from the God who is in control at Christmas and all year long.

”



worship joyfully. Resisters control, protect and preserve while worshippers submit, give and enjoy. They relinquish control. In the Christmas narrative we see that the people with the least control have the most joy, while the person who controls the most has no joy. This should teach us something: Give up controlling Christmas.

Herod dies soon after this. Before he does, he gives orders that all the influential people be rounded up to be killed right after he dies. His goal is to make sure that as many people as possible are grieving at the time of his death, even if they aren't mourning his death.

All the influential people are indeed rounded up and imprisoned, but instead of killing them, his successor releases them at the moment Herod dies. So, instead of grief there is a giant celebration at the news of his death.

Herod had always been able to figure out a way to control outcomes, preserve his name and protect his power but now he is outsmarted by a baby and two parents. The baby that rivals the power of a miserable, control freak named Herod grows up and teaches us about joy by saying this:

“Very truly I tell you, you will weep and mourn while the world rejoices. You will grieve, but your grief will turn to joy. A woman giving birth to a child has pain because her time has come; but when her baby is born, she forgets the

anguish because of her joy that a child is born into the world. So with you: Now is your time of grief, but I will see you again and you will rejoice, and no one will take away your joy (John 16:20-22).

There is a joy to experience that no circumstance can ever take away. This joy comes as a by-product of trusting Jesus. You and I can live with a delight that no circumstance can take from us because our joy is based on what Jesus did for us. Remember, the desire to control must go down in order for joy to go up.

My invitation to you this Christmas is to give up trying to control your Christmas and receive joy from the God who is in control at Christmas and all year long. To those with a little control freak in them, let me say, “A very merry Christmas, Herod.”

*Eric Nelson is executive pastor of teaching and ministry at South Mountain Community Church, a multi-site church meeting at four locations throughout Utah—Draper, Lehi, South Jordan and St. George. The church also has a Spanish language congregation. After a 10-year career in student ministry in the Pacific Northwest, Nelson and his wife, Carrisa, moved to Utah to plant SMCC Lehi. The Nelsons have two children.*

For to us a child is born,  
to us a son is given,  
and the government will be on his shoulders.



And he will be called  
Wonderful Counselor,  
Mighty God,  
Everlasting Father,  
Prince of Peace.

Of the greatness of his government and  
peace there will be no end.

Isaiah 9:6-7a



## David Janzen enjoys his front row seat

New president brings entrepreneurial spirit to Tabor

When David Janzen decided to leave California Polytechnic State University, becoming president of Tabor College was not on his radar.

But, spread too thin between leading Cal Poly's software engineering program, being a full-time professor, doing research, owning a company and serving in ministry on-campus and at church, Janzen says he and his wife, Karen, recognized it was time to make a change.

"We knew God was calling us to something new," Janzen says. "We had no idea what it was."

As it turns out, that call was to a familiar Mennonite Brethren institution in Kansas from which Janzen earned his undergraduate degree 31 years ago.

"I wasn't making plans (to become president of Tabor College)," Janzen says. "But it was very much a moment of God bringing everything together and preparing me for this."

Janzen was inaugurated Sept. 24 as Tabor's 14th president, bringing an entrepreneurial spirit to campus as he seeks to elevate Tabor to the highest level of Christian education and partner with USMB churches.

### From Kansas to California and back

A native of Independence, Kan., and Enid, Okla., Janzen is a 1990 Tabor graduate with degrees in mathematics and computer science. He earned his master's and doctoral degrees in computer science from the University of Kansas in Lawrence.

Janzen was Cal Poly's first hire in software engineering in 2006, where he helped grow the program as director and taught the capstone course.



David Janzen was inaugurated as 14th president of Tabor College in a Sept. 24 ceremony. Janzen brings an entrepreneurial spirit to campus and seeks to partner with USMB churches to equip college students to help churches thrive. *Photo by Janae Rempel*

For the past 15 years, Janzen has served as a full-time faculty member at Cal Poly, with previous stints in education at Bethel College in North Newton, Kan., and the University of Kansas, as well as five years as a software engineer at Sprint in Kansas City.

Janzen's involvements have extended beyond the classroom. He is co-founder of Steadfast Innovation LLC, which created the handwriting note-taking application, Squid, and is the owner, consultant and trainer of Simex LLC, for which he develops and presents training courses to professional software developers.

Eventually, his schedule contributed to his desire to make a change.

"I was just too busy," Janzen says. "I was spread too thin."

When, as a result of the coronavirus pandemic, Cal Poly offered an early exit program with an incentive to retire, Janzen took the opportunity.

"After praying, my wife and I said, 'I think God is in this,'" he says.

Janzen announced his decision to leave Cal Poly a week before Tabor President Jules Glanzer announced his retirement. But it took some nudging—including a text from a friend and a call from Tabor board chair Susan Franz Koslowsky—to persuade Janzen to consider the position.

Certainly, Janzen had considered leaning into Christian higher education again, having served as an adjunct faculty member in computer science at Westmont College in Montecito, Calif., in fall 2020, while working remotely for Cal Poly.

Seeing Tabor's prospectus sold him on applying.

"I was very impressed with the quality and the transparency," Janzen says. "It felt like they were really being honest with themselves—what are the strengths and what are the challenges that we have at Tabor. They weren't sugarcoating it."

Janzen says he and his wife—who also attended Tabor from 1986 to 1988 before graduating from Fresno Pacific University—prayerfully discerned God's direction with an "open hand" mentality, giving it his best and leaving the rest to God.

Tabor's board of directors selected Janzen, and he accepted the offer.

"Dr. Janzen's professional and higher education experience, his familiarity with Tabor as a former student, his Mennonite Brethren background and strong spiritual commitment and passion for Christ, caused his application to stand out," Koslowsky says. "His conservative values along with an entrepreneurial and innovative spirit was a unique combination and blend that we felt could serve Tabor well."

## Committed to the mission

Janzen began his role as president July 1, 2021. He is excited about Tabor's mission of preparing people for kingdom work, as well as new and renovated spaces on campus and an opportunity for growth.

"I sense that there is a genuine interest in our mission," he says. "Across the board people are genuinely leaning into that mission, and they want to be a part of it."

Janzen has inherited a campus with the recently-constructed Shari Flaming Welcome Center and Shari Flaming Center for the Arts, and Tabor has enjoyed two consecutive years of record first-year enrollment, highlighting a need for new residence halls, Janzen says.

Janzen hopes to foster continued growth by elevating the quality of education.

"We have a strong academic program, but if we're going to grow, I think we would financially be a little more stable if we would get a little bit bigger," Janzen says. "We're primarily going to grow through academics."

While this won't mean diminishing athletics, Janzen says he hopes to not only raise the level of excellence and academic rigor among current programs but also explore the creation of new programs.

He has invited constituents, including board members, to mentor students and faculty and hopes to leverage his connections to equip faculty and staff by connecting them with students for internships and ideas for undergraduate research projects.

Likening his vision to track and field, Janzen hopes to raise the bar.

"What happens when a pole vaulter or high jumper clears a height?" Janzen says. "The first thing they do is they celebrate, and then they raise the bar and they strive to do even better. I think that's where we are."



Tabor College president David Janzen and his wife, Karen, have returned in a new capacity to the institution both attended as undergraduate students. David graduated from Tabor in 1990, and Karen attended Tabor from 1986 to 1988 before graduating from Fresno Pacific University. The Janzens have four adult children. *Photo by Michael Klaassen*

Faculty chair Christopher Dick says the general reaction has been positive and enthusiastic based on an appreciation for Janzen's academic training, experience as a faculty member and commitment to involving faculty in governance and decision-making.

"I have already heard several times from faculty that Dr. Janzen is 'a good listener,' and is hearing questions and concerns in a spirit of care and collaboration," Dick says. "There are many things that we are doing well at Tabor in terms of the education we are offering students. But there is always room for improvement. President Janzen brings a couple of really important pieces to the table. First, he is a firm believer in liberal arts education—something that is

at the core of Tabor's identity. However, with his business experience, he is also interested in innovation. I'm excited about how he can merge these two commitments."

## Entrepreneurship and innovation

Janzen brings an interest in entrepreneurship to Tabor. In 2009, he taught a ground-level class on Android at Cal Poly in which he helped students start businesses. As a result, student Andrew Hughes developed the app Squid, and Janzen later joined Hughes as a partner. Squid has more than five million downloads and has been named by Google as one of the top six education apps among two million apps in the app store.

Janzen says he sees entrepreneurial

opportunities at Tabor, too, and the institution is exploring grants, fundraising and possibly building toward that goal.

“We desperately need entrepreneurs,” Janzen says. “Businesses are closing all the time. If we don’t keep starting companies, starting businesses and growing businesses, people won’t have jobs, and we won’t be providing products and services for people to live their lives.”

Janzen envisions expanded innovation to all areas of campus.

“I think that we have students that come with a willingness to work hard and a desire to try things and take some risks,” he says. “I think we’re going to be very successful in exploring this space of entrepreneurship.”

### Partnering with churches

As president of one of two U.S. Mennonite Brethren institutions, Janzen sees Tabor as a partner with MB churches.

“I believe that Tabor is a first-class extension of the Mennonite Brethren churches’ young adult/college ministry (and) that we should be partnering very closely with the churches in pouring into that demographic,” Janzen says. “We want to help the churches, and we want the churches to see us as their partner.”

Tabor is making strides through its Tabor 20 program, he says, which seeks to make Tabor accessible, affordable and attractive to MB youth.

“One of the goals that I have is that every student who comes through Tabor would go back into the churches equipped to help the church thrive,” Janzen says.

Most of all, Janzen is optimistic about the road ahead.

“I have a lot of hope for what God is doing and will do through Tabor College,” he says. “This is going to be a really exciting season to see what God does. I’m very appreciative that I get a front-row seat to it.” —*Janae Rempel*

## Summer interns offer shot of adrenaline

### LeadGen scholarships help to develop future leaders

Dalton McAlister didn’t expect to be quite so busy last summer.

As one of six interns to receive a Leadership Generation Fund (LeadGen) scholarship from MB Foundation, McAlister immersed himself in youth ministry at Koerner Heights Church in Newton, Kan., this summer.

Whether teaching, editing and writing curriculum, counseling at camps or

managing a budget, McAlister’s internship, under the guidance of youth pastor DJ Toelle, was varied and full.

“Getting to know the behind-the-scenes of a full-time youth pastor was really crazy,” McAlister says. “It surprised me how much work a youth pastor actually does.”

This summer, MB Foundation’s LeadGen scholarship fund provided opportunities for McAlister and five other college-age interns to engage in leadership development while gaining practical experience in youth ministry at Mennonite Brethren churches in Kansas and Utah, a mutually beneficial opportunity for all.



Koerner Heights Church youth pastor DJ Toelle (center) facilitated training for LeadGen interns Dalton McAlister (left) and Sean Todd Williams (right) in summer 2021. “I can confidently say that I wouldn’t have been able to do this summer well without my interns,” Toelle says.

*Courtesy photo: DJ Toelle*





David Brown, Lakeview Church youth pastor, and his wife, Kaitlen, pause for a photo with Lakeview's Summer 2021 interns. From left: James Friesen, Jason Holmes, Noah Monson, Connor Moore, Cisely Dust, Kaitlen Brown, David Brown. *Courtesy photo: David Brown*

## About LeadGen

An initiative of MB Foundation launched in 2016, LeadGen provides scholarships to young adults exploring ministry leadership opportunities in the MB family.

"LeadGen was birthed out of a desire by our board of directors to help encourage the development of new leaders for our denominational family," says Jon C. Wiebe, president and CEO of MB Foundation, the stewardship ministry serving U.S. Mennonite Brethren.

MB Foundation provides up to \$50,000 per year in scholarship funds to encourage development and training for students, whether on the mission field or in the local church, including opportunities at Tabor College, Fresno Pacific University, Fresno Pacific Biblical Seminary, Multiply, FaithFront and internships in local churches.

Vetted by an awards committee, scholarship money is granted on three levels—each requiring progressively more levels of commitment—to high school,

college and graduate students.

Since LeadGen's inception, MB Foundation has awarded 92 scholarships, including 20 for internships in churches.

## A shot of adrenaline

Summertime is busy for youth pastor David Brown at Lakeview Church's campuses in Stansbury Park and Grantsville, Utah. So, in 2021, Brown enlisted the help of five interns from Utah, California and Kansas.

"We push really hard (in the summer) because the kids are out of school," Brown says. "We do five events per week, and I can't do that on my own. We really need the interns. They're like an adrenaline shot to the youth group."

Lakeview has had interns since 2019, but these were the first to serve Grantsville, which launched in April 2021.

"We're really big on developing future leaders at our church," Brown says. "Interns are a great way to do that. We're thankful that we have the programs

available to help us do that."

Four of five Lakeview interns utilized both LeadGen scholarships and the PDC's NextGen Leadership Development Grant. The fifth was a part-time NextGen intern.

Lakeview's youth programming is combined across campuses, Brown says, with weekly summertime activities including a bonfire; a game and movie night; Wednesday games, worship, lesson and small-group time; a "fun Friday" involving maybe a hike or swim; and a Sunday gathering.

In addition to helping with these activities, interns built relationships, counseled at camp and helped launch Grantsville's worship ministry. Lakeview baptized three youth this summer.

Cisely Dust's internship helped solidify her calling as she connected youth with God and each other.

"I (learned) to accept the girls before I tried to lead them," Dust says in a Lakeview highlight video from the summer. "It helped me realize that being a youth pastor is the only way to go for me."

Dust has continued as an intern and intends to attend Bible college, Brown says.

Meanwhile, Connor Moore gained experience to take to his Bethany Church congregation in Fresno, Calif.

"It really lit a fire in me to want to continue this," Moore says. "I am now a leader in our youth group, taking a lot of the stuff that I learned from this summer and using that experience to help grow my youth group even more."

For Brown, who also serves as worship pastor at Grantsville, having musically-talented interns was an added bonus, something interns James Friesen, from Community Bible Church in Olathe, Kan., and Noah Monson, from Salt Lake City, highlighted in Lakeview's video.

"It's such a mutually beneficial experience," Brown says. "If there are churches looking for young energy and someone to come and help out their youth program, I would highly recommend doing internships."



### Coming full circle

Meanwhile, for Toelle at Koerner Heights, having two LeadGen interns came full circle as a former intern himself.

As a college student in 2017-18, Toelle was a youth ministry intern at Pine Acres Church in Weatherford, Okla., igniting a passion not only for youth ministry but also for leadership development. So, when seeking interns for the summer, Toelle turned again to LeadGen.

"As I was looking at how we'd be able to make this work, the first thing that popped into my mind was the LeadGen grant because it enabled me to be able to do a paid internship," Toelle says. "For me to be a recipient of the LeadGen scholarship and then use that grant to impact generations that I might not even be around for is really special."

Sean Todd Williams, a former member of Toelle's small group at Pine Acres; and McAlister, from Toelle's home church of Crosspoint Church in Enid, Okla. (formerly Enid MB), received LeadGen scholarships.

"DJ put us through pretty serious training," McAlister says. "He gave us scenarios to try to figure out for ourselves."

Toelle's training included lessons about disciple-making; sermon writing; stage presence; event planning and promotion; the MB licensing process; conflict resolution; writing a testimony; social media; church technology; and, thanks to the COVID-19 pandemic, preaching to a camera in an empty room.

"I can confidently say that I wouldn't have been able to do this summer well without my interns, but because of that fact, one thing I really wanted to be cautious of was I wasn't just giving these interns busy work," Toelle says.

Interns also planned messages for four summer youth group meetings.

"It taught me that youth ministry isn't just about stage presence," McAlister says. "It's not just about filling out papers (or) writing sermons. It's about relationships. You can get on stage and you can talk to them for hours and hours, week after week, and still not reach their heart."

### Future goals

Since LeadGen's inception, MB Foundation has funded \$153,364 in awards for developing future leaders. Wiebe's goal is to see the full \$50,000 utilized annually—the most used in one year so far is \$38,600.

"I'd love to see our national family develop a more strategic leadership pipeline which LeadGen could help fund, and perhaps even increase our

commitment in years to come," Wiebe says.

For McAlister, who continues to volunteer at Koerner Heights as a junior high leader, the rigor of an internship was a learning opportunity and provided one of the best summers he's had, he says.

"I'm incredibly thankful for the LeadGen," McAlister says. "Without what they did for us, it would've been super hard to live that summer because then we wouldn't have been able to pay for a lot of things. The church would've helped us out, but nothing like LeadGen."—*Janae Rempel*

To learn more about LeadGen or to apply, visit [www.mbfoundation.com/leadgen](http://www.mbfoundation.com/leadgen).

## CHARITABLE GIFT ANNUITY

*Enjoy the advantages of:*

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)

## Shifting the focus

### Multiply board hopes for boring year

"I'm hoping that we can be boring and dull," says Wendi Thiessen, newly elected chair of the Multiply Board of Directors, when asked about her board goals for the next year.

"I really want the board to stop being the focus of conversations and for all of us to put the focus back where it should be," she says. "We want people to celebrate all of the good things that God is doing rather than asking: Is the board getting along? Are they listening to the owners? If the board can focus on governing well, we can shift the focus to churches getting excited about missions again and connecting with Multiply projects."

Multiply, the North American Mennonite Brethren mission agency owned jointly by the U.S. Conference (USMB) and the Canadian Conference (CCMBC), is coming out of a tumultuous season that led to the appointment of a new board in October 2020 and the search for a new general director following the April 2021 departure of Randy Friesen as Multiply president.

Multiply was formed three years ago following the merger of the mission

agency, then known as MB Mission, with C2C Network, a church planting ministry that began as the British Columbia MB provincial church planting board. The new ministry was launched in January 2019 as Multiply.

### Merger proves costly

With the addition of North American church planting to its portfolio, Multiply took the lead on USMB national church planting projects and replaced Mission USA as the USMB church planting ministry. But the merger did not go well.

In June 2019 the Multiply board announced it was releasing the North American church planting aspects of its ministry and was facing a "significant gap between expenses and revenue for North American church planting." In response to the \$1.5 million deficit, 17 Multiply staff members were released, and the short-term mission program was revamped. National church planting efforts shifted back to national conferences.

The Multiply board requested that USMB and CCMBC review the mission agency. In late 2019, USMB and CCMBC appointed a task force. The task force hired consultant John Radford to conduct an in-depth analysis of Multiply's culture, board functionality and senior leadership.

### Forming a new board

The task force developed 18 recommendations based on Radford's report. Radford's report and the recommendations were submitted to the USMB and CCMBC executive boards as well as the Multiply board. The three boards affirmed all recommendations, including immediately forming a new Multiply board as a first step in implementing the recommendations.

Consequently, in October 2020, Multiply board members from both national conferences whose terms extended past 2020 resigned and members whose terms expired in 2020 were not renominated. The U.S. board appointed member resigned, but David MacLean, a Canadian board appointee, did not.

The new Multiply board convened for the first time in November 2020. USMB appointees were Aaron Halvorsen, Olathe, Kan., Yvette Jones, Fresno, Calif., Fred Leonard, Fresno, and Vivian Wheeler, Blaine, Wash. CCMBC appointed Maryanne Berge, Saskatoon, Sask., Bill Seinen, Langley, BC., Chris Stevens, Waterloo, Ont., and Wendi Thiessen, Winnipeg, Man. MacLean, who continued, and Leonard, of the U.S., were elected as board co-chairs.

But upheaval continued.

In December 2020, Jones and Leonard resigned because they were not in agree-



Featuring Projects for Kids!

**2021 GIFT GUIDE**

give mission-focused gifts at [multiply.net/gifts](https://multiply.net/gifts)

**multiply**

ment with some of the board's decisions. Vince Balakian, Reedley, Calif., and Kathleen Sherman, Denver, Colo., were appointed as their replacements.

In July 2021, MacLean resigned, and Thiessen was named as interim chair. For nine months, the USMB Leadership Board had pushed for MacLean's resignation in order to assure a complete board reset. While CCMBC leaders did not support USMB's request that MacLean resign, the Leadership Board persisted and prevailed.

Chris Stevens, Waterloo, Ont., resigned in early 2021 because he is planting a church with another denomination. Thiessen says CCMBC will be replacing Stevens and the board will appoint a fifth Canadian to replace MacLean.

Multiply, a Canadian entity, is required by law to have one more Canadian on the board than American. USMB and CCMBC each appoint four board members. The board appoints additional members to achieve the required balance.

### "We're further ahead"

In spite of the resignations and the steep learning curve members have faced, Thiessen is happy with the board's progress.

"We made an awful lot of decisions," she says. "And by the grace of God, we're further ahead than we were 10 months ago."

USMB national director Don Morris agrees and highlights six achievements that address task force recommendations: the formation of a functioning board executive committee; improved relationships with the owner conferences; creation of a job description for the next general director; clarification on the nomination process for board members; balanced reporting of positive and negative news and a better balance between needs of USMB and CCMBC.

Morris is optimistic about the future of Multiply.

"Vic Wiens is providing solid leadership as interim general director and the executive lead team and global lead team are much more positive, active and dreaming again," Morris says. "Finances

are back on track, and the dents in the financial picture that gave rise to the demerger have been largely rectified and replenished."

### Current board priorities

Looking ahead, Thiessen, who was elected chair at the October 2021 board meeting, says the board will concentrate on governance.

"Our goal for the next 12 months is to become boring," she says. "We're going to focus on governance matters.... If we do governance, then the staff and the missionaries can do what they're supposed to do."

Thiessen's list includes reviewing the existing strategic plan, understanding Multiply's mission's vision and values and updating the governance manual and bylaws.

"The focus is catch up and clean up—taking all of these governance documents and making sure that they reflect our new reality," Thiessen says.

Securing a new general director is also a priority. "We are working actively with all of our stake holders in casting the net and engaging with interested parties," she says.

Thiessen hopes that the board's focus on the mundane will re-energize Multiply staff and missionaries, who are tired from doing ministry during COVID-19 and from the changes within Multiply.

"I think the entire world came to a stop for two years (because of COVID-19)," Thiessen says. "I think God's got some exciting plans for Multiply. And we have to set the groundwork and then wait to see what happens." —*Connie Faber*  
To read more of our interview with Wendi Thiessen, visit [christianleadermag.com](http://christianleadermag.com)

- Faith-based
- Online
- Business Degree

(316) 729-6333  
[tabor.edu/online](http://tabor.edu/online)  
[learn@tabor.edu](mailto:learn@tabor.edu)

**Master of Business Administration**

**Kingdom Awareness. Real World Readiness.**

**Tabor College**



## Going boldly

LCC offers hope

I traveled to the Soviet Union in 1991 together with 18 others from the United States and Canada to teach English for the summer. I viewed it as a bucket list adventure. Instead, I found my calling.

That Summer Language Institute in Klaipeda, Lithuania, has developed into the only fully accredited Christian liberal arts university in a region twice the size of the U.S. By comparison, 140 Christian colleges and universities in the U.S.—including Tabor College and Fresno Pacific University—make up the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities.

LCC International University was born because of the inspiring vision of two Mennonite Brethren couples—Art and Leona DeFehr, Winnipeg, Man., and Dennis and Rene Neumann, Abbotsford, B.C.—and a Lithuanian pastor and his wife, Otonas and Raimonda Balciunas. LCC was created to bring a western-style educational model with a decidedly Christian distinctive to the emerging democracies of the former Soviet Union.

This was a bold decision, moving into uncharted territory in that region of the world. At the time, there was not even a category for private institutions in the Lithuanian higher education system. Not surprisingly, LCC was frequently misunderstood by educational and political leaders, creating some significant challenges for the university.

Over time, however, LCC's alumni have demonstrated the university's unique mission and the quality of the student learning experience. Today, a common critique of LCC is that we do not produce more alumni!

LCC is unique when compared to other universities in the region. Most universities in Eastern Europe and Central Asia focus on disseminating knowl-



Students at LCC International University come from 57 countries, some of which are in conflict with each other. This offers the university a unique opportunity to help students learn the skills of reconciliation and peacemaking. *Photo by LCC*

edge. Class attendance is optional. There is very little concern about what happens outside of class. LCC, by contrast, focuses on developing critical thinkers, competent communicators and servant leaders. It is intentional in addressing the whole person—engaging students in intercultural relevant experiences through a residential campus community—all within a Christian worldview.

This will sound familiar to those of us who have attended or worked at Christian liberal arts institutions in the U.S. It is not familiar to most LCC students. This fall (2021), LCC welcomed 781 students from 57 countries. Eighty percent of our students come from outside Lithuania; 63 percent of our faculty come from the U.S. and Canada. LCC is an intentionally international university that happens to be located in Lithuania; it is not a Lithuanian university that claims to be international.

Being international means that we have become skilled at things that some universities never have to worry about—things like processing hundreds of visas each year. We help interpret local culture to new arrivals from other nations and different backgrounds. We work hard to ensure that students from different cultures can live, study, learn and communicate peaceably together, even when their own nations are in conflict with each other.

For example:

- LCC has hundreds of students and alumni from Belarus which shares a border with Lithuania. The Belarus president, often called “Europe’s last dictator,” is currently weaponizing migrants who are trapped at the border and are becoming a European crisis. Our Belarusian students and alumni live in fear.

- Students from Armenia and Azerbaijan, two countries that are fighting over disputed land, recently hosted a campus-wide candlelight vigil for all those affected by this crisis.

- Through LCC’s Middle East Scholars program, we have welcomed at least 40 students from Syria and Iraq, war-affected young people who have formed friendships on campus that have reshaped how we watch the news and think about global conflict.

- With hundreds of students and alumni from Ukraine and Russia, we recognize the deep political tensions in that region but are grateful for how our students relate to each other as friends in spite of the broader context.

- The world’s attention has been focused on Afghanistan. LCC has 12 Afghani students who are deeply concerned about their families. As the deadline for the U.S. pullout approached, the families of our students had to destroy any evidence of English language skills or that their children were studying



abroad. We are working with UNHCR and the Red Cross and the Lithuanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs to find ways to support the many family members who are now living under fear and enormous uncertainty.

Lithuania is a member of NATO. Over the past three years, LCC has had several visits by NATO officers who noted that LCC is doing the peacekeeping work of NATO. With the fall of the Soviet Union 30 years ago, peace and freedom were re-emerging in Lithuania. Today, LCC welcomes students from countries that are desperate for that same peace and freedom. LCC not only offers education; it provides hope.

Given the many challenges within this region of the world, LCC will soon be launching the Center for Dialogue and Conflict Transformation as a part of building a culture of hope. It will engage people in conversation where there is conflict, teach the skills involved in reconciliation and promote a culture of collaboration and peacemaking. As an initial step, Naomi Enns, the new director of this center, together with a team of colleagues and students are planning a conference for March 2022 with the theme of “Stories Shaping Peace.”

LCC is calling out and preparing a new generation of leaders for a world that is desperate for peace, hope and trust. Alumni like these are making a difference:

- **Anastasiya** works for an international nonprofit organization that is exposing corrupt practices in Ukraine.
- **Henrikas**, a Lithuanian entrepreneur, created a translation app that can be used in large venues, including large churches in the U.S., so that multiple language groups can worship together.
- **Saulius** and **Sanna** have pastoral hearts and this has led to the development of what is now the largest evangelical church in Lithuania.
- **Anton** returned home to Kyrgyzstan where he started a Christian mentoring

program for orphans who are transitioning to the “real world” at age 18.

• **Vitaliy** started a Christian camp in Ukraine that serves young people with disabilities and young people displaced by the ongoing war in Ukraine.

Over the past 30 years, LCC has mobilized literally thousands of faithful people on behalf of the vision for a Christian liberal arts university that would bring higher education and hope to the former Soviet Republics—and beyond. These include professors, researchers, chaplains, student life staff, construction workers and other volunteers. These supporters have brought their skills and talents to the Christ-centered mission of the university. Others have also helped provide the financial resources that have

made the original vision a reality. We have seen what has happened during these first 30 years. We pray that LCC’s vision will become a reality—to be a leading Christian liberal arts university “renowned for its flourishing academic community, spiritual vitality, and global impact.”

*Marlene Wa. is a graduate of Tabor College and received her master’s degree from Southern Illinois University and a doctorate from Kansas State University. She has served LCC in full-time roles since 2002—10 years as academic vice president and is currently in her 10th year as president. She is a member of Ridgepoint Church, a USMB church in Wichita, Kan. She can be reached at [mwall@lcc.lt](mailto:mwall@lcc.lt).*



**MCC**  
Gifts of comfort and  
*joy*

Choose gifts that delight your loved ones and share God’s love with our global neighbors this Christmas.

[mcc.org/Christmas-give](https://mcc.org/Christmas-give)  
888.563.4676 (toll-free)

**\$20**  
Give clean water at home!

## Planted and growing

How are churches today that were planted by Mission USA?

Where are they now? You've probably heard or read this phrase in reference to someone you've known quite a lot about in the past but perhaps haven't heard much about lately. As a variation to this, what about some of those MB churches that were planted several years ago when Mission USA was still involved? What are they currently up to? They were planted; are they growing?

### Axiom Church

Axiom Church in Peoria, Ariz. got its start over 10 years ago and is still going strong. In fact, a few years ago they purchased a property and converted it into a great worship and connection facility. Gavin Linderman, planting pastor, says, "The foundation my wife, Kendall, and I received through tangible support from our MB family—be it prayer, friendship and finances—gave us the opportunity we needed to honor the past and bless the future. Today we are firmly planted as a reservoir in a city that is very thirsty." Planted and growing.

### Christ Church Sellwood

Christ Church Sellwood in Portland, Ore. is just outside its 8th anniversary. Jared Pulliam, the pastor who with his wife, Julia, planted, says, "We continue to be grateful for God's kindness to us. During seasons that always seem to be changing, Jesus continues to unite us under the banner of the gospel—and this reality is a source of great thanksgiving. As time goes by, the Lord has proved so faithful

in our local congregation, granting us both persevering strength and opportunities to display the love of Christ in the world." Planted and growing.

### City Church

City Church in Pueblo, Colo., had its beginning with just a few dedicated families. Mission USA and CEEC, the Southern District Conference church planting commission, were heavily involved in helping the church acquire a building in order to get started. Current pastor Mario Trujillo and his wife, Stephanie, were a part of that original group. "The Lord led us to an old bar in the historic business district, an unlikely spot to plant a church," says Trujillo. "We have seen God move and transform lives. We're located in the heart of our city in downtown Pueblo where we desire to bring revitalization to our city, bringing the gospel to bear in the broken areas of our city where Jesus brings renewal, life and hope." Planted and growing.

### Stony Brook Church

Stony Brook Church in Omaha, Neb. began in 2010 under the leadership of Pastor Chad Stoner and wife, Elaine. Stoner recently resigned to pursue his love for music. Jon Annin has just begun his pastoral ministry at Stony Brook. Melissa Hanna, long-term church administrator, says this about the early days of the church and how that has impacted the present: "The meeting times we had with Mission USA and the Central District Conference's representatives at the

beginning were essential to the foundational strength of Stony Brook Church when we first began and continues to this day. For example, during our recent transition in pastors, we used the knowledge learned from those meetings during our discernment process and will use it as we move forward too—such a blessing." Planted and growing.

### The Heart Church

The Heart Church in Broken Arrow, Okla., planted in 2001 by current pastor Mike Miller and his wife, Kim, recently celebrated its 20th anniversary. Miller writes, "With the help of Mission USA, CEEC, Enid MB Church, Fairview MB Church and Westport MB Church, we began meeting with three other families. Many have found hope and healing with this church family and many have come to faith." Planted and growing.

### Lighthouse Church

A more recent project supported by Mission USA along with CEEC and Mountain View Church in Fresno, Calif., is Lighthouse Church in metro-Denver, Colo. Pastor Josh Shaw and wife, Brianne, started this church in the summer of 2015 with 12 friends.

Since 2015, Lighthouse has outgrown a warehouse, a high school and now is a fast-growing church that is bursting at the seams with the love and grace of God and having added a second campus. Planted and growing. —USMB news story

## Gathering or equipping?

God's kingdom expands when leaders develop leaders

Many years ago, when I was just starting out as a youth pastor, I thought I had a very successful year. The student ministry doubled in size, students were coming to Christ for the first time and I was asked to speak at different events. I was riding high when one of my mentors directly asked me, "Are you creating a group of people that will lead, or are you simply gathering a bunch of people that just follow you?" This hit me like a ton of bricks.

After processing the question, I knew my leadership style had to change. Being a leader no longer meant simply growing the group but raising up future leaders that would begin to lead beyond my own influence.

In Exodus 18, soon after Israel left the slavery of Egypt, Moses learned this lesson as well. At the time, Moses was the only real leader of a group that might have reached up to a million people. They were country-less, wandering in the desert, with really no court or government system. If someone had a dispute, they would take it directly to Moses, and he would hear each case, which took all day long.

Moses' father-in-law, Jethro, saw this and knew this was unsustainable. So, he gave Moses this advice: "You should continue to be people's representative before God...but select from all the people some capable, honest men who fear God....Appoint them as leaders over other groups of one thousand, one hundred, fifty and ten" (Exodus 18:19-21).

Moses was to appoint these men to be leaders who handled the more local or smaller matters, and he would handle the biggest ones. It's one of the first examples of a leadership hierarchy, and it sets up a

process of leadership development. Each leader is responsible for their group who in turn reports to a leader above them. This makes the work more manageable, speeds up the process and provides accountability—all things needed to develop leaders.

One person can't and should never try to do everything. A responsibility of every leader is not to think the people beneath him or her are their followers but rather future leaders, and they are to equip them to be leaders as well. That is the best way to grow and sustain the ever-expanding impact of the kingdom of God.

USMB Youth, the national leadership of youth ministry for Mennonite Brethren churches, has a passion for leadership development. USMB Youth provides:

- faith growing experiences for high schoolers through ASCENT, our annual summer camp held every June.
- connecting opportunities with our National Youth Worker Network through online cohorts or in-person gatherings.
- equipping future leadership opportunities through the development of a new Leadership Pipeline for interns and apprentices looking for real ministry opportunities.

USMB Youth sees the value in investing and impacting second and third level leaders—volunteers, part-timers, age-specific pastors and everyone else who helps under head leaders. We are excited to be announcing an exciting national leadership program soon. In the meantime, you can visit [usmbyouth.com](http://usmbyouth.com) to see what is brewing for investing in the next generation of leaders and even the generation after that. ■



Kyle Goings has served as chair of USMB Youth, the national leadership team for U.S. Mennonite Brethren youth ministries, since 2012. He has nearly 20 years of experience in youth ministry. Goings has been the student ministries pastor at Ridgepoint Church, formerly First MB Church, in Wichita, Kan., since 2014. He is a graduate of Judson University where he majored in youth ministry and adolescent studies and has a master's degree in ministry entrepreneurship and innovation from Tabor College. He and his wife, Katie, have two daughters.



## MILESTONES

### BAPTISM/MEMBERSHIP

Lucy Jordan and Hayden Devoe were baptized Oct. 3 at **Cross Timbers Church, Edmond, Okla.**

Kylee Rozkiewicz and Patricia Saldivar were baptized at **Stony Brook Church, Omaha, Neb.**, Oct. 3.

Nick Eiden, Sarah Eiden, Andy Eiden, Bethany Eiden, Luke Lundmark, Kalee Lundmark, Justin MacDonald, Joyce MacDonald, Chris Gianacopolos and Sharon Gianacopolos were received as new members Aug. 29 at **North Oak Community Church, Hays, Kan.** Scarlett Wittkom, Noah Lundmark, Bethany Eiden, Sheena Klaus, Savannah Crosley and Isaac Gianacopolos were baptized Aug. 22. Geoff Kuhn, Robin Kuhn, Steve Plotner and Martha Plotner were received as members Sept. 12.

Deb Mierau, Jeb Mierau, Jonathan Rempel, Abbie Rempel, Kevin Schultz, Rebecca Schultz, Sam Quiring, Zach Quiring and Ava Tessman were received as members Sept. 12 at **Living Hope Church, Henderson, Neb.**

Kim Britt and Linda Dewey were baptized at **Redemption Church, Owatonna, Minn.**, Sept. 12.

Clair Redcay and Karri Redcay were received as members Aug. 29 at **Corn (Okla.) MB Church.** Wes Vercellotti, Gavin Miller, Dora Miller, Brendan Miller and Emma Miller were received as members Aug. 8.

Jessica Manning was baptized and received as a member at **Rosedale Bible Church, Bakersfield, Calif.**, Aug. 29. Dave Anderson, Leslie Anderson, Jerry Boles, Larry Gaddy, Linda Gaddy, Diana Goodin, Bud Gonzales, Christina Gonzales and James Thompson were also received as members.

Aleacia Becker, Holly Becker, Carol Curry, Cameron Rollag and Megan Rollag were baptized at **Salem MB Church, Freeman, S.D.**, Aug. 29 and received as members Sept. 5.

Costello Dixon, Gwen Lytle, Derrick Hood, Anthony Hightower, Jennifer Brown and Chelby Brown were baptized at **The Life Center, Lenoir, N.C.**, Aug. 22.

Debra Garrison was baptized Aug. 1 at **Martin Box MB Church, Marshall, Ark.**

### WORKERS

Jon Annin was installed as pastor at **Stony Brook Church, Omaha, Neb.**, Sept. 12.

Kristen Co has concluded her service as communications and social media director at **North Fresno (Calif.) Church.**

## DEATHS

**Becker, Wanda Jewell**, Fairview, Okla., member of Fairview MB Church, Aug. 22, 1929—Sept. 25, 2021. Parents: Sol and Florence (Fuller) Bierig. Spouse: Harrison Ray Becker (deceased). Children: Harrison "Lyle," Lyndon, Lana Miles; nine grandchildren, 20 great-grandchildren, 10 great-great-grandchildren.

**Burkholder, Jared Theodore**, Hesston, Kan., former MB pastor, Oct. 18, 1943—Aug. 26, 2021. Parents: Harold and Barbara (Basinger) Burkholder. Spouse: Charlene Classen (deceased). Children: Brad, Jonathan, Tiffany, Candice Bradford; nine grandchildren.

**Dalke, John Foster**, Hillsboro, Kan., member of Ebenfeld MB Church, Hillsboro, May 27, 1934—Sept. 24, 2021. Parents: A.H. and Doris Foster Dalke. Spouse: Delores Penner. Children: John O. (deceased), Mark, Matthew; two grandchildren, two step-grandchildren.

**Fast, Gloria Jean**, Fairview, Okla., member of Fairview MB Church, Jan. 6, 1934—Aug. 14, 2021. Parents: Henry R. and Salome A. (Penner) Eck. Spouse: Melvin James Fast (deceased). Children: Roger, Randall, Cassie Schlotthauer; five grandchildren.

**Fast, Melvin James**, Fairview, Okla., member of Fairview MB Church, April 11, 1930—Aug. 16, 2021. Parents: Dan and Helen (Suderman) Fast. Spouse: Gloria Eck (deceased). Children: Roger, Randall, Cassie Schlotthauer; five grandchildren.

**Fleishauer, Doris Jane**, Reedley, Calif., member of Reedley MB Church and former member of Rosedale Bible Church, Bakersfield, Calif., Aug. 30, 1930—April 28, 2021. Parents: Bernard and Frena Wiebe. Spouse: Harold (deceased). Children: Steve, Christine; three grandchildren, one great-grandchild, one great-great-grandchild.

**Heinrichs, James Eldon**, Reedley, Calif., member of Reedley MB Church, April 26, 1936—July 31, 2021. Parents: Jacob and Sarah (Thiessen) Heinrichs. Spouse: Joan Buxman Heinrichs. Children: Kristen Kroeker, Greg; six grandchildren.

**Hines, Sue Ann**, Huron, S.D., attender of Bethesda Church, Huron, March 17, 1950—Sept. 10, 2021. Parents: Howard and Mabel (Engels) Lauseng. Spouse: Tom Redlin (deceased), Marilyn Hines. Children: Anthony Redlin, Sheila Leightenberg, Craig Hines, Jeff Hines; three grandchildren.

**Hofer, LaVonne Katherine**, Sun City, Ariz., former member of Bethesda Church, Huron, S.D., Oct. 27, 1932—Aug. 21, 2021. Parents: Jake P. and Lydia (Walz) Gross. Spouse: Allen Juraine Hofer (deceased). Children: LaVae Tschetter,

Sonja Peters, Tim, Terry; eight grandchildren, 15 great-grandchildren.

**Janzen, Jerry Wayne**, Reedley, Calif., Reedley MB Church, July 4, 1954—Sept. 29, 2021. Parents: Milton W. and Melita Loewen Janzen.

**Klassen, Robert Leonard**, Falls Church, Va., Nov. 10, 1935—Sept. 10, 2021. Parents: George and Leah (Leppke) Klassen. Spouse: Beverly Isaak (deceased). Children: Greg, DeeAnn Jeremiah; daughter-in-law Vivian; four grandchildren, one great grandchild.

**Koehn, Lavada Marie**, Fairview, Okla., member of Fairview MB Church, Aug. 17, 1950—Sept. 14, 2021. Parents: Fred and Elizabeth Penner. Spouse: David R. Koehn (deceased). Children: David, Fred Penner, Daniel, Jared Penner, Mar-shalene Wimer; 10 grandchildren.

**Langhofer, Joyce Jean**, Hillsboro, Kan., formerly of Cornerstone Community Church, Topeka, Kan., Feb. 24, 1938—Sept. 30, 2021. Parents: Bill and Minnie Kaufman. Spouse: Dean. Children: Stan, Kerry Shewey; four grandchildren; 10 great-grandchildren.

**Nikkel, Melvin Earl**, Bakersfield, Calif., member of Rosedale Bible Church, Bakersfield, Nov. 24, 1928—Aug. 6, 2021. Parents: Cornelius and Matilda (Erich) Nikkel. Spouse: Martha Quiring (deceased). Children: Jane Quiring, Carl, Donna Spoelstra, Nancy; nine grandchildren, 12 great-grandchildren.

**Ratzlaff, Ruth Rebecca**, Shafter, Calif., member of Shafter MB Church. October 13, 1956—September 29, 2021. Parents Henry B. and Faith R. Stalter Ratzlaff.

**Regier, Perry Lloyd**, Corn, Okla., member of Corn MB Church, July 22, 1938—Aug. 22, 2021. Parents: Henry and Frieda (Friesen) Regier. Spouse: Zorina "Pinky" Schmidt. Children: Ryan.

**Seaman, Dorothy Mae**, Tahlequah, Okla., missionary with Multiply, then Board of Missions and Services, April 3, 1935—Aug. 24, 2021. Parents: Ruffin Victor and Anna Mary (Hubbard) Woerz. Spouse: Maynard Maurice Seaman. Children: Dawn Bove, Dianne Mathews, Darlene Siliman, David; six grandchildren, two great-grandchildren.

**Thiesen, Martha**, Reedley, Calif., member of Reedley MB Church, Oct. 28, 1927—Sept. 24, 2021. Parents: Bernhard and Anna Harms Balzer. Spouse: John Thiesen, Jr. (deceased). Children: John, Ken, Ed, Donald (deceased), Ron; 13 grandchildren, 19 great-grandchildren, two great-great-grandchildren.

**Wall, Margaret Funk**, Madera, Calif., member of Madera Avenue Bible Church, Madera, Feb. 25, 1925—Aug. 23, 2021. Parents: Samuel and Anna Funk. Spouse: Bernard Wall Jr. (deceased). Chil-

dren: Sam, Ruth Wiens, Jim, Mary LeMaster, Esther Camp; 10 grandchildren, 10 great-grandchildren.

**Wedel, Frances Irene**, Dodge City, Kan., missionary with Multiply, then MB Missions, April 10, 1934—Aug. 28, 2021. Parents: Cornelius H. and Tena A. (Kroeker) Ediger. Spouse: Benjamin H. Wedel (deceased). Children: Carol Stevens, Sharon Loewen, Tim, Steve; 13 grandchildren, 19 great-grandchildren.

**Wiens, Ben J.**, Hillsboro, Kan., member of Hillsboro MB Church, Feb. 28, 1919—Aug. 19, 2021. Parents: Jacob and Anna (Willems) Wiens. Spouse: Mary Wall (deceased). Children: Sandra.

**Young, Hughey Damon**, Shafter, Calif., member of Shafter MB Church, March 8, 1925—September 19, 2021. Parents Wesley and Minnie Young. Spouses: Wilma Young (deceased), Adele Young. Children: Norma Luna, Janet Drescher, Terry, Pamela (deceased); Stepchildren Sandy Thomas, Dusty Miller, Ty Miller, Kay Sukraw; 15 grandchildren; 23 great-grandchildren

## REACHING IN DISCIPLESHIP

**Stony Brook Church, Omaha, Neb.**, launched Growth Groups intended to help people strengthen their relationship with God and develop meaningful relationships with others.

**The Bridge Bible Church, Bakersfield, Calif.**, hosted the Intentional Family Conference Sept. 24-25 to bring hope and help to families in all stages of life.

**Mountain View Church, Fresno, Calif.**, hosted an equipping workshop Aug. 12 and 14 for people interested in growing in their knowledge of spiritual gifts.

## FELLOWSHIP

**Bridge Bible Church, Bakersfield, Calif.**, will hold its annual family camping trip Oct. 29-31 with trick or treating, a student hangout time and more.

**Kingwood Bible Church, Salem, Ore.**, hosted a church family game night Oct. 29 with ping-pong, cornhole and other games. The congregation hosted a church service at the lake followed by a barbecue meal Aug. 15.

The **Parkview MB Church, Hillsboro, Kan.**, congregation hosted a fall family festival Oct. 27.

The **Mountain View Church, Fresno, Calif.**, kids ministry hosted a fall carnival Oct. 18 with games, prizes and food.

**Cross Timbers Church, Edmond, Okla.**, held a picnic in the park following its Oct. 17 worship service.

**Neighborhood Church, Visalia, Calif.**, hosted a fall vibes party after its services Sept. 26 with bounce houses, food trucks, fall crafts and pumpkin spice lattes.

**North Fresno (Calif.) Church** hosted a fall kickoff Sunday Sept. 12 with a taco lunch following the worship service.

**Stony Brook Church, Omaha, Neb.**, hosted a shredded pork competition and picnic Sept. 12 after the church's pastor installation service. Donations from the competition went to Release Ministries' Foster Care "Care Closet."

**Faith Bible Church, Omaha, Neb.**, held a service at the lake Sept. 12 with a meal and swimming.

**Living Hope Church, Henderson, Neb.**, held a church camp weekend Aug. 28-29 with communal picnic-style meals, s'mores by the campfire, a church service at the lake with baptism, swimming and other outdoor activities.

**Bible Fellowship Church, Minot, N.D.**, hosted a worship service and picnic at Roosevelt Park Aug. 22.

**Shafter (Calif.) MB Church** hosted a kick-off Sunday Aug. 15 with a meal, "Snow Fun Truck" and kids' activities.

J.E. Wadkins, pastor of **Martin Box MB Church, Marshall, Ark.**, shared the history of the Menonite Brethren church, including the beginning of the Martin Box MB Church in the early 1940's by George Voght and Dave Richardt. The presentation included dates and photos. The congregation celebrated Luke Wadkins' birthday Aug. 1.

**Cornerstone Community Church, Harvey, N.D.**, held a reconnection Sunday, July 18, with a concert during the worship service followed by a picnic.

## WORSHIP

**The Bridge Bible Church, Bakersfield, Calif.**, hosted a night of worship Oct. 15.

**Rosedale Bible Church, Bakersfield, Calif.**, congregation held a "Declare his worth!" night of worship Aug. 25 with songs in-person and on-line.

The **Axiom Church, Peoria, Ariz.**, congregation was invited to attend a live reading of the book of Mark Aug. 15.

**Post Oak MB Church, Indianhom, Okla.**, celebrated its 125th anniversary Oct. 10 with a special service and meal.

**Axiom Church, Peoria, Ariz.**, held a launch party Sept. 26 for its new community playground. The event included free burgers and drinks. In a church newsletter email, pastor Gavin Linderman says, "Our prayer is that our new outdoor space would be more than just a playground and yard but a haven for our neighborhood to relax, play and experience Jesus."

## REACHING OUT LOCALLY

Members of the Thursday morning women's Bible study at **Cross Timbers Church, Edmond, Okla.**, collected and donated shoes to refugees from Afghanistan coming to Oklahoma City through the local ministry The Spero Project.

Members of **Shafter (Calif.) MB Church** gave more than \$2,300 to the Bakersfield Pregnancy Center's baby bottle fundraiser.

**Bethesda Church, Huron, S.D.**, hosted a fall family festival with food and games.

Volunteers from **Zoar MB Church, Inman, Kan.**, staffed the Food Pantry in November. The congregation donated items to the food pantry Oct. 10-17.

**New Life Community, Dinuba, Calif.**, Home Resource Center furnished a three-bedroom home for an 11-member family that had come through Open Gate Ministries' shelter.

**Living Hope Church, Henderson, Neb.**, honored paramedics, EMTs, firefighters and law enforcement officers Sunday Oct. 24 and provided a free BBQ pulled pork meal after the service.

Members of **Parkview MB Church, Hillsboro, Kan.**, served by doing landscape work at Tabor College Oct. 9.

Volunteers from **Cornerstone Community Church, Topeka, Kan.**, served supper at the Topeka Rescue Mission Oct. 4.

**Neighborhood Church, Visalia, Calif.**, partnered with local organizations to help evacuees displaced by wildfires. The congregation was invited to donate water bottles, granola bars or other nonperishable food items and bring them to church Sept. 19.

**Kingwood Bible Church, Salem, Ore.**, hosted a neighborhood barbecue Sept. 12 in an event that also included a bounce house for kids. "Neighbor" is the church's word for the year.

Forty-five children registered for vacation Bible school at **Salem MB Church, Freeman, S.D.**, and nine accepted Jesus. Donations of \$2,148.00 went to Samaritan's Purse to provide 153 dozen chickens to families in need.

**Cross Timbers Church, Edmond, Okla.,** brought donations of non-perishable food items for the Hope Center of Edmond Sept. 5.

People from **Bethel MB Church, Yale, S.D.,** contributed to the Plus One Pregnancy Center's Baby Bottle Fundraiser, which raised \$15,000 in donations from 16 local churches and four businesses.

People from **The Bridge Bible Church, Bakersfield, Calif.,** partnered with a local group to pick up trash along the nearby Kern River, Aug. 29.

At its Summer Spectacular event for its Main, East and Old town campuses, **Mountain View Church, Fresno, Calif.,** raised \$1,900 for Christmas food boxes in Lithuania and Kyrgyzstan, welcomed more than 500 children and their families for a Friday night performance and carnival and witnessed 45 salvations and 29 re-dedications.

**The Greenhouse, Saratoga Springs, Utah,** hosted its third year of Game Changers sports camp with more than 100 campers learning athletic skills and character traits. The congregation also hosted a summer Bible adventure attended by about 80 children. Providing help for both events was a team of individuals from MB churches in the Midwest.

**The Neighborhood Church, Visalia, Calif.,** congregation donated 678 pieces of bedding to local non-profit, Sleep In Heavenly Peace, in the month of August.

## GLOBALLY

**Bethesda Church, Huron, S.D.,** bought supplies for 99 school kits, 86 hygiene kits and 35 sewing kits for MCC.

**Bethel MB Church, Yale, S.D.,** assembled 53 school kits for MCC.

In September, **Community Bible Church, Olathe, Kan.,** partnered with KanKen Connect by donating gently used children/young adult books for people in rural Kenya.

**The Cornerstone Community Church, Topeka, Kan.,** congregation collected items and money to ship 150 school kits for MCC.

**Hillsboro (Kan.) MB Church** hosted a Christmas in July Operation Christmas Child prep packing party Aug. 8 to make jump ropes, fill pencil bags and make paint handprints and jewelry.

People from **The Bridge Bible Church, Bakersfield, Calif.,** went to Mexico Oct. 8-10 to build houses.

## CLEARINGHOUSE

### Local Church

**Staff positions:** SMCC is hiring. South Mountain Community Church is a multisite church in Utah with five locations that exists to help as many people as possible take the next step towards being fully devoted and fully delighted followers of Jesus Christ. They do this by creating a culture where anyone can belong before they believe, where maturity is measured by love, where the process that God changes people from the inside out is honored, where the Bible is explained in helpful and hopeful ways, and where the members value the guest. If you would like to help create a culture like this by joining our staff you can check out [smccutah.org/jobs](http://smccutah.org/jobs).

### University

Fresno Pacific University invites applications for:

- Faculty in Music • Faculty in Criminology • Faculty in Biblical & Theological Studies
- Faculty in Nursing • Faculty in Psychology - Undergraduate • Faculty in Teacher Education - Division Chair. Complete job description and requirements at [www.fresno.edu/visitors/careers](http://www.fresno.edu/visitors/careers).

### Agency

MB Foundation is looking for a Planned Giving Advisor in our Fresno, Calif., location. This is a relationship-building type of position. If you like talking to people and caring for them, this is a job worth considering. If you are looking for a career change, have a heart for people, stewardship, and love the Lord, read on. This is a full-time position with a generous benefit package. Salary commensurate with experience. Training is available. If interested, go to [www.mbfoundation.com/employment](http://www.mbfoundation.com/employment) or email your resume to [hrdepartment@mbfoundation.com](mailto:hrdepartment@mbfoundation.com).

### Discipleship

**NEW program for young adults:** Seek is a new six-month intentional discipleship program from Mennonite Central Committee which encourages young adults (18-20 years of age) to learn more deeply what it means to be an Anabaptist follower of Jesus. The program will include multiple discipleship and service opportunities with MCC partners in Palestine and Israel and Jordan. The Seek program begins in January 2022 and takes place in Palestine and Israel. To learn more and apply for the Seek program, visit [mcc.org/seek](http://mcc.org/seek).

### Statement of ownership, management and circulation

Publication title: Christian Leader. Publication number 0009-5419. Filing date: 10/5/21. Issue frequency: bimonthly. Number of issues published annually: 6. Annual subscription prices: \$10. Complete mailing address of known office of publication: PO Box 155, Hillsboro, KS. 67063. Complete mailing address of headquarter or general business office of publication: U.S. Conference of MB Churches, PO Box 20200, Wichita, KS. 67208-1200. Full names and complete mailing address of publication, editor and managing editor: Publisher: U.S. Conference of MB Churches, PO Box 20200, Wichita, KS. 67208-1200; Editor: Connie Faber, PO Box 155, Hillsboro, KS. 67063. Managing editor: none. Owner: U.S. Conference of MB Churches, PO Box 20200, Wichita, KS. 67208-1200. Known bondholders, mortgages and other security holders owning or holding 1% or more of total amount of bonds, mortgages or other securities: none. Tax status has not changed during preceding 12 months. Issue date for circulation date: Sept/Oct 2021. Extent and nature of circulation: the first number represents the average number of copies of each issue during the preceding 12 months, the number in parenthesis is the number of copies of a single issue (Sept/Oct 2021) published nearest the filing date. (a) Total number of copies: 7,635 (7,311) (b) Paid circulation: 1) mailed outside-county paid subscriptions: 6,794 (6,472) 2) mailed in-county paid subscriptions: 461 (457) 3) paid subscriptions outside the mails: 0 (0) 4) paid distribution by other classes of mail: 230 (232) (c) Total paid distributions: 7,485 (7,161) (d) Free of nominal rate distribution: Outside county copies: 0 (0) In-county copies: 0 (0) Copies mailed at other classes through USPS: 2 (4) Nonrequested copies distributed outside the mail: 0 (0) (e) Total free or nominal rate: 2 (4); (f) Total distribution: 7,487 (7,165); (g) copies not distributed: 148 (146); (h) Total: 7,635 (7,311) (i) Percent paid and/or requested circulation 99.97 (99.94). I certify that all information furnished is true and complete I understand that anyone who furnishes false or misleading information on this form or who omits material or information requested on the form may be subject to criminal sanctions and/or civil sanctions. Signed: Connie Faber



## Being thankful in a topsy-turvy world

What am I thankful for right this minute?

We're entering the time of year when we think more intentionally about being thankful. Thanksgiving is just around the corner while at the same time Christmas is already promoted in stores and television ads and has been since September in some cases.

I think it's good that we put things in their proper order. I like order. God likes order. Just look at his creation or read through the Bible and you see order. So, can we wait on Christmas, even though it's a really good thing to focus on—when the time is right? It's alright to think about the incarnation of Jesus any time of year, I get that. But still. Can we chill a little with all the Christmas promo that now begins when it's still 100 degrees outside? Can we focus more on what we can be thankful about, especially now when our world seems so topsy-turvy?

The world does seem wild and crazy. What with Delta variants, turmoil in Afghanistan, vaccinations (or not), overflowing ICU units, conflicts among various nations, inflation, murder hornets, political battles between Republicans and Democrats, natural disasters, a national debt so large we can hardly even begin to calculate its enormity, masks or no masks, education challenges, new COVID-19 variants that we haven't even named yet, intense bickering on social media. Shall I continue? If I do, I will get myself really depressed.

The apostle Paul writes, "Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus" (1 Thess. 5:16-18). God's goodness doesn't change based on circumstances. That's good news, as he is always good. And we know that God's goodness is fully displayed through Jesus and his sacrifice. As followers of Jesus, we have a hope and confidence that those who don't believe simply cannot share. We know to whom we belong. We know we can have rock-solid, trial-tested hope in the one who has given us eternal life. When we give God thanks,

even in the midst of this messed-up world, it connects us with his goodness and can allow us to experience release from worry or anxiety.

If my thanksgiving to God is genuine, it can help carry me through any struggle or hardship, even intense pain or grief. Because God is good, all the time. When I pause and take stock of all that God has blessed me with, misery takes a hike.

For what am I thankful, right this minute as I write this?

I have a wonderful wife, Janna, to whom I've been married for 46 years. She is my soul mate and partner in life. We have three children, all married with children of their own. We have a quiver-full of grandkids and they give us, for the most part, great joy. We get to watch them grow up, and we observe their God-given gifts and how each one is a unique blessing from God.

I'm thankful that our youngest, our son, Brady, and his wife, Holly, have determined to invest their lives into full-time ministry. If you happen to know Brady's life story, you know that this is the outcome of redemption and healing that only God can accomplish. We're extremely thankful for how God is using our other two children as well. They all love Jesus. I'm exceedingly grateful for that!

I'm thankful for the freedom to choose what I do and where I go without being handcuffed by tyrannical restraint, as is sadly the case in many places in the world. In that same light, I'm thankful for the ability to attend church and worship freely. I'm thankful that I have a Bible setting open right in front of me and have no fear that someone might see and then report me as an offender. I'm thankful for the air that I breathe. I could go on.

My question for you is, for what are you thankful? What is God providing that deserves your utmost gratitude? It's good to pause, reflect and then express with conviction, "God, thank you!"



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.

# Celebrate 2022! REIGNITE YOUR CALLING

REGISTER NOW  
[www.mbfoundation.com/celebrate2022](http://www.mbfoundation.com/celebrate2022)



FEBRUARY 25-27, 2022  
BAHIA RESORT HOTEL

Celebrate 2022 is a national gathering designed to encourage boomers, builders and empty nesters in their faith and life journey. Join us in San Diego, CA for encouragement, fellowship and worship, featuring speakers Richard & Leona Bergstrom and the music of Brush Arbor.

PHOTO CREDIT: BAHIA RESORT HOTEL



Hosted by

620.947.3151  
800.551.1547 Toll Free

[info@mbfoundation.com](mailto:info@mbfoundation.com)  
[www.mbfoundation.com](http://www.mbfoundation.com)