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CHRISTIAN LEADER

July / August 2022

Who is my neighbor? Page 14

The currency is relationships Page 21

Proclaim the good news Page 31



The magazine of U.S. Mennonite Brethren

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July 26 - 30, 2022

**Stoney Creek Hotel and Conference Center
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Connect 4 the win

Connection is a priority for the global family

The object of the classic game Connect 4 is to be the first player to connect four tokens in a line while preventing your opponent from doing the same. Players take turns dropping colored tokens into a suspended grid seven columns wide and six rows high. The disks fall straight down, filling the lowest available space within the column. It may look easy, but this is not simple stuff. Calculations show there are about 2 trillion moves that you can make on a Connect 4 rack to get four in a row.

Essays and news stories in this issue encourage us to connect with the global Christian church, specifically with Mennonite Brethren brothers and sisters living in one of 20 countries around the world and with immigrants, many of them Christians, who have moved to the United States and are our neighbors.

Connecting cross-culturally isn't always easy, and one of our goals in this issue is to do more than encourage connection and relationship. Experts, writers and panelists suggest specific things we can do to connect with the global Mennonite Brethren family and with newcomers to the U.S., including immigrants from DR Congo.

An experienced Connect 4 competitor knows the key to winning is to be the first player and to concentrate your play in the middle column. If you manage these two things, you can win every time. How do we "win" at connecting across cultures? By prioritizing relationships, say USMB leaders interviewed in this issue.

"For the Congolese, and probably with immigrants in general, the currency is relationships," says Rick Eshbaugh, chair of the USMB Congolese Task Force (story page 19-21). "They desperately need that connecting person to the culture that they can trust and ask questions."

Bob Davis, ICOMB U.S. advocate, says something similar when talking about connecting Mennonite Brethren national conferences (story page 21-23). Partnerships tend to be task-oriented and short-term, Davis says, and end when the task has been completed. "Relationships are deeper and longer and more substantial than just the accomplishment of a task," Davis says.

I hope you will be moved to act by what you read in this issue about the immigrant experience in general and specific opportunities for connecting with Congolese pastors and congregations. Contact USMB about supporting a Congolese pastor who is attending USMB Gathering 2022 or donate to the CORD program. Does your community include immigrants? Step out of your comfort zone and connect with a newcomer. If your city is home to a college, find ways to connect with international students. You may not have 2 trillion options for connecting, but there are many ways you can connect with one of the 50.6 million people living in the United States and born in another country. ▀



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Convention business agenda set

When USMB Gathering 2022 comes to the metro Kansas City area this month, the convention schedule includes two business sessions. Delegates will elect new board members and representatives and will be asked to affirm the budget and the Historical Commission Memorandum of Understanding. Convention-goers will also hear brief reports about USMB Youth, church planting, LEAD Initiatives, Multiply and other MB and inter-Mennonite agencies.

The children's ministry team from Community Bible Church in Olathe, Kan., will provide childcare and youth activities for children ages 0-18. The team will offer fun and creative Bible studies, crafts and indoor and outdoor activities for children and adventure, excursions and a possible service project for older youth.

USMB Gathering 2022 will take place July 26-30, including the National Pastors' Conference July 26-28 and the national convention July 28-30, at Stoney Creek Hotel and Conference Center in Independence, Mo.

Register by July 22 at www.usmb.org/gathering2022 or by calling 1-800-257-0515. Hotel reservations are subject to availability and will be at prevailing rates.—USMB

Harris hired as church planting mobilizer

Brian Harris, lead pastor at Pine Acres Church, Weatherford, Okla., since 2004, has been hired as the new USMB church planting mobilizer. He will oversee the Church Planting Council and be responsible for estab-

lishing a national MB church multiplication vision with the goal of producing new disciple-making, reproducing Mennonite Brethren churches.

Harris will be formally introduced at USMB Gathering 2022 before beginning his new role Aug. 1.

Harris is a member of the Southern District Conference Church Extension and Evangelism Commission (CEEC) and has a heart for church planting. Before coming to Oklahoma, Harris planted a church in suburban Cleveland. He has also served as an assistant pastor and youth pastor. Harris and his wife, Stephanie, have been married 30 years and have two daughters.

—USMB



Eshbaugh joins MB Foundation

Rick Eshbaugh has resigned his position as the Central District Conference minister effective July 31, 2022, and will transition to director of financial discipleship at MB Foundation in Hillsboro, Kan.

Eshbaugh has served as a USMB pastor in the Southern, Pacific and Central districts for more than 35 years. For the past nine years, he has served the CDC's 39 churches in eight states and overseen the district's church plants and church renewal projects. He has also served on national boards and chaired the Congolese Task Force.

"We are very grateful for Rick's many years of service to the Central

District family of churches and for his strong relational and administrative talents," says CDC chair Lynn Schneider. "We wish Rick and Esther God's best as they press on to follow the Lord's leading in their lives."

As director of financial discipleship, Eshbaugh will champion biblical stewardship and will also give leadership to the Leadership Generation Fund, Financial Health and THRIVE.

"I'm excited to have Rick join our team," says Jon C. Wiebe, MB Foundation president and CEO. "Rick has a deep love for the local church, enormous experience and the communication skills to help us champion stewardship among our national family."

Eshbaugh and his wife, Esther, will relocate to Hillsboro, Kan.

—CDC/MB Foundation

Multiply names general director

The Multiply Board of Directors has appointed Bruce Enns as the next general director, effective

May 16, 2022. Enns brings a wealth of experience from his previous pastoral and leadership positions. For

17 years, Enns served as lead pastor of Forest Grove Community Church, a multisite church in Saskatoon, Sask. Enns served as a member of the Multiply Board for 12 years and more recently as moderator of the Canadian Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches.



Enns and his wife, Lisa, will continue to live in Saskatoon and will schedule regular in-person time in Canadian and U.S. offices and international travel as needed. —*Multiply*

MB Foundation announces staff changes

MB Foundation has announced staff changes in its Fresno, Calif., office. Ken Warkentin has joined the Fresno team as planned giving advisor. Warkentin has more than 30 years of experience owning and operating a small business. He was also the executive director for a nonprofit agency and has served on a variety of boards. He and his wife, Lisa, attend the Well Community Church in Fresno.

Bruce Porter retired May 31 from his position as planned giving advisor. Porter joined the team in January 2019 after many years as a USMB pastor. His pastoral work and understanding of the local church have helped to further the ministry at MB Foundation. —*MBF*

Stephens named to FPU presidency

André Stephens will assume the presidency of Fresno Pacific University, effective July 1, 2022.

Stephens has 30 years of experience in Christian higher education in California, most recently as vice president for student development at Biola University, a post to which he was appointed in 2016. Before that, Stephens was associate vice president of university admissions. A member of Biola's enrollment management team since 1991, he started as an admissions counselor. Under his leadership, Biola saw 12 consecutive years of enrollment growth.

Beyond his professional duties,

Stephens served Biola and Christian higher education on a number of university committees and task forces.

Stephens completed his bachelor's degree in communication with a public relations emphasis from Biola, his master's in speech communication with an emphasis in intercultural/interpersonal communication from California State University at Fullerton and his doctorate in education with an emphasis in higher education administration/student affairs from Claremont Graduate University.

Stephens and his wife, Beth, have three children.

Stephens succeeds Joseph Jones, who completed five years of service. —*FPU*

Tan appointed as seminary dean

Sharon Tan has accepted the position of vice president and dean of Fresno Pacific Biblical Seminary, part of Fresno Pacific University, effective July 1, 2022.

Tan replaces Tim Geddert, who served as interim dean after Valerie Rempel stepped down as dean and vice president in July 2021. Geddert will return to his position as professor and program director of New Testament.

Before coming to the seminary, Tan served as acting dean and professor of theological ethics at Eden Theological Seminary in St. Louis, where she was involved in accreditation, program development and faculty leadership. She has also served United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities as vice president for academic strategy as well as dean and vice president of academic affairs and McVay Professor of Christian Ethics. She began her career as an attorney in Atlanta.

Tan earned her doctorate degree in religion with a concentration in ethics and society from Emory University as

well as a Juris Doctor from the Emory University School of Law. Her master of theological studies is from the Candler School of Theology at Emory. She also has a bachelor of science in business administration and English Bible from Oral Roberts University. —*FPBS*

FPU dedicates new \$15 million building

Fresno Pacific University held a ribbon-cutting celebration for the Warkentine Culture and Arts Center (CAC) May 25 on its main campus. The \$15 million CAC, named for longtime FPU supporters Al and Dotty Warkentine, will serve as a place of learning and outreach. The 26,000 square-foot building includes a 400-seat mainstage theater; black box theater, which seats about 100; and an art gallery, home to a sculpture by John Wiebe for the CAC; as well as support spaces. —*FPU*

FPU recognizes 714 graduates

Some 714 students were eligible to participate in Fresno Pacific University's May 7 graduation: 310 from bachelor's degree completion programs, 244 from graduate programs (including Fresno Pacific Biblical Seminary); and 160 from traditional undergraduate programs.

In his commencement address, Vong Mouanoutoua advised graduates to understand where they came from to know where they are going.

"Find out your original story, otherwise you are lost," the Clovis City Council member told a crowd of around 6,000 people at Selland Arena in downtown Fresno. "Tell that story over and over again. All these stories are special."

Mouanoutoua, director of external relations and project development at

5 minutes with...

Community Medical Centers and a lecturer at Fresno State University, came to the U.S. as a child in 1976 and was one of more than 150,000 Hmong refugees who fled Laos after the “Secret War.”

One faculty member, four graduates and one Fresno church won awards: Ken Cheung, professor of chemistry, received the Nickel Excellence in Teaching Award; Juliet Anastasia Hardy, Callen Dale Moon and Chole Alexa Sharp all received Academic Awards for perfect 4.0 grade point averages; Veronica Mendez Garcia received the Harold Haak Award; and Westside Church of God Pastor Paul Binion received the Seminary Service Award. —FPU

Tabor holds two commencements

Tabor College’s 112th Commencement May 21 was the first of its kind as 124 undergraduates and 49 graduate and online students were honored in separate ceremonies.

Alistair Robertson, a 1984 Tabor College graduate, gave the keynote address, speaking of God’s calling into the social work profession and a nearly 40-year, award-winning career. He lived in Kansas from 1981 to 2002 and has spent the last 20 years at Valley Children’s Hospital in Madera, Calif.

Toby Penner, Whitewater, Kan., gave the undergraduate address, challenging his classmates to not let collegiate accolades be their defining moment. Amy Ongstad spoke on behalf of graduate and online students. A part of the inaugural cohort for the M.Ed. in Neuroscience & Trauma, Ongstad emphasized the relationships formed through this breakthrough program. —Tabor College



Henri Ngolo

One hundred years ago Mennonite Brethren missionaries brought the gospel to the African country now known as Democratic Republic of Congo. Henri Ngolo’s grandparents are among the Congolese that heard the good news and established their country’s Mennonite Brethren conference. As a third-generation Mennonite Brethren, Ngolo continues the mission today overseeing five church plants that are ministering to immigrants in Ohio.

How did your work with immigrants and refugees begin?

In 1995 after the genocide in Rwanda, I was a young Mennonite Brethren and was accepted to help set up camps with MCC for the Rwandan refugees. While working there, I planted the first Mennonite Brethren church in Eastern Congo.

What brought you to the United States?

A Canadian pastor working with our Rwandan refugee program said we needed to help our young men grow. They invited me to come to the U.S. and attend Bluffton College.

What is your goal with immigrants?

Most immigrants are not prepared for the difficulties they face. We have to help them find the resources they need to become self-sufficient—a place to live, transportation, school for their children, preparation for interviews and employment. But most important, we provide these supports through Mennonite Brethren churches so they have a faith-based environment to help stabilize and support them.

You also have a ministry to children in Congo.

Everyone in Congo lives with hardship. The east is on fire with war. More than 12 million people have died and over 18 million abandoned children are

left to live in the streets. We have 350 acres where we are building Kids Village. We build small homes and find Christian brothers and sisters to live in those homes and become foster parents for orphaned or abandoned children. These children learn to become productive and will be future leaders of the Congo from our Mennonite Brethren.

What can we learn from the immigrants you work with?

American Mennonite Brethren coming alongside our immigrant church planters is a give and take relationship. The immigrants have the obedience and resiliency to serve and plant churches through great hardship. As our U.S. churches help the immigrant churches to settle, they will find the fire that will come from the immigrant churches. Brothers and sisters, we are here to extend the kingdom of our Father together.

Where do you find inspiration in Scripture?

Genesis 12:1-3 has been my Scripture of all time. Abraham had to leave his country by faith. Everybody has a calling and a mission. As I make myself available to him, I really find joy in serving the Lord, planting churches and helping people in need.

Interview by Kathy Heinrichs Wiest

We went on a cleaning spree

Couple quits jobs, religion and finds Jesus

I grew up in a safe, busy and fun home with great love and care in Sandy, Utah, just south of Salt Lake City. Being from Utah, it's not surprising my parents raised me and my five siblings in the LDS church. My dad served as the local bishop for many years and held other regional leadership positions within the Mormon church throughout my youth.

As I grew, I became very good at doing and saying the right things. I knew how to "be religious." I tried to find my relationship with God by doing good, being good and acting good, but it felt a bit like running on a spiritual treadmill: a lot of effort with no forward movement.

This continued into my early 20's when I married my (now) wife of 25 years. Heather also played the good religious part proficiently. Two or three years into our marriage, we were struggling badly behind closed doors, but on the outside, we were an up-and-coming young couple. Both of us were youth leaders in our local LDS congregation, and we had a great reputation within church circles. No one knew that behind the scenes we were openly discussing divorce, and neither one of us had any confidence in our personal faith.

One night we sat down together in our tiny apartment to finalize what our divorce would look like. For the first time we were truly honest with each other. I shared openly with her about my shortcomings as a man and husband, and she shared openly with me. It felt really good to tear down the barriers and be vulnerable and real.

That night we came to three conclusions. First, we were hypocrites. We were living and acting like people we factually were not. Second, we had serious questions about whether our religion was correct, and we felt lost and confused in our relationships with God. Third, and probably most importantly for that night, we discovered we were still madly in love with each other, but we had way too much "stuff" between us. So, we

went on a cleaning spree. We both quit our jobs that hindered our marriage and moved on to better ones. We eliminated unhealthy and unsupportive friendships, and we quit our religion.

At her new job, Heather worked with a young lady named Janna, a new believer in Jesus fired up about her relationship with the Lord. She was engaged to a young man named David, and the four of us became fast friends. Dave and Janna never made their faith—or our lack thereof—an issue in our friendship. They just invested in us. They liked us, and we liked them. Whether or not it was intentional, they brought Jesus into our lives.

As our friendship grew, we eventually began to ask questions about what they believed and why they believed it. Over the course of months, they patiently answered our curiosities. Eventually Dave gave me a book about LDS doctrines and what the Bible said about each subject. It was simple: LDS scripture on one page, Bible on the next. At the back, a goofy, low-budget illustration depicted how to receive Jesus as your Savior: sad stick figure drops his burdens at the cross, receives Jesus as his Lord and becomes a happy stick figure. A terrible \$3 illustration, but it stuck! That day I had eyes to see and ears to hear the gospel and recognize what it was.

I wrestled with that stupid stick man for several days. One day on my way to work, I pulled over at a city park. I walked to the middle of a soccer field, looked up at the sky and broke. For the first time I was honest and vulnerable with Jesus, and I received him as my Lord and Savior. I did point out to him, however, that I thought he was a little nuts for wanting trashy people like me in heaven. Leaving that park, I knew I was saved. My life had just changed for eternity!

I wanted Heather to have the same experience, but I wanted her to come to it on her own in a genuine way, so I put the book on her nightstand and asked her to

“

Dave and Janna never made their faith—or our lack thereof—an issue in our friendship. They just invested in us. They liked us, and we liked them. Whether or not it was intentional, they brought Jesus into our lives.

”

check it out so we could talk about it. About a month later I came in the front door and found Heather waiting for me. We made eye contact and started crying. She pulled the book out of her back pocket and held it up, and I nodded. She, too, had received Jesus.

Neither one of us had ever stepped into a non-LDS church, and we had no idea what to do next. Lucky for us we had Janna and Dave. We called them and said, “We have both accepted Jesus...now what?” Dave and Janna found a church for us that would not mishandle our new and delicate faith.

They took us to South Mountain Community Church, the first USMB church plant in Utah.

SMCC received, taught, disciplined and loved us into spiritual maturity. I will forever be grateful for the pastors and believers who were willing to be equipped and to get busy serving the Lord in this way. Thank you, Jesus, for loving them, and thank you Janna, Dave and SMCC for loving us the way he loved you!

John 13:34 says, “So now I am giving you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love each other.”



Jeff Hubrich has served as pastor of Lakeview Church's Grantsville campus in Tooele County, Utah, since July 2020. He and his wife, Heather, have been married for 25 years. They have two children: daughter Cessna, 19, and son Lance, 15. Prior to entering full-time ministry Jeff spent 20 years in the aviation field, and the last 15 years of his career as an airline captain. When the call came, he excitedly left the secular world behind to serve the Lord full time in Tooele County. Jeff is passionate about reaching the lost and seeing the miracle of life-change when someone receives Jesus.

Global Mennonite Brethren blessings

ICOMB's mission: foster healthy national conferences that learn from one another

By Rudi Plett and Bob Davis



“If I did not get this help, I don’t know where my wife and I would be,” Samuel said as we talked. Samuel (not his real name) had been asked to serve as the director of his national Mennonite Brethren conference at a difficult time.

“They chose me because I was not involved in the regional struggle,” Samuel said.

The struggle, to which Samuel referred, had shaped this national Mennonite Brethren conference over decades and included some nasty episodes. Leading would be a challenge, and Samuel, a bi-vocational pastor with limited leadership experience, was apprehensive and fearful. The help for which he was so thankful came from the global Mennonite Brethren family.

Representatives from the International Community of Mennonite Brethren (ICOMB) had visited this national conference before, and soon after Samuel’s appointment, global leaders paid another visit to encourage and support the new leader. This visit was followed by others. ICOMB also arranged and financially supported visits between Samuel and other regional leaders and gathered regional leaders for a retreat intended to build a conference vision and to address hurts and mistrust.

Leaders from various ICOMB conferences continued to visit and provided leadership training, women’s retreats and personal mentoring for Samuel and his

wife. ICOMB encouraged the national conference to hold more retreats and strategic meetings, and as a result the conference moved toward unity and a shared vision. In time this conference began supporting short-term youth mission work, church planting and long-term missionaries. They made necessary legal adjustments.

This national conference still has a ways to go to become a healthy and strong conference. But even with COVID-19 restrictions, we are greatly encouraged by what God has done in the personal life of leaders and with the whole conference over the last four years.

Samuel’s story tells us something about ICOMB. ICOMB desires global Mennonite Brethren conferences to be healthy and to learn from one another.

Nurturing healthy conferences

“ICOMB exists to facilitate relationships and ministries to enhance the witness and discipleship of its national member conferences—connecting, strengthening and expanding.” This is how we state our purpose as the International Community of Mennonite Brethren on our website homepage.

Our aim is for each national conference to build relationships with other conferences, providing fellowship that enhances becoming a healthy conference. A healthy conference aids local churches to witness and

ICOMB

International Community
of Mennonite Brethren

make disciples with a missional focus. A healthy conference reaches out to the world in ways that most local churches cannot.

A national conference can experience fellowship with other conferences that strengthens their vision and helps them navigate through critical situations, such as natural disasters, national crises (war, financial breakdown, persecution, etc.), leadership problems and lack of resources.

A national conference can also experience a fellowship that enhances mission, whether nearby or far away, in the same country or on another continent.

Many of the 22 ICOMB national conferences connect through regional cohorts. In July 2018, the Latin American ICOMB cohort (Brazil, Colombia, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Peru and Uruguay), with the support of Multiply, held a regional gathering in Paraguay. Each conference was invited to send at least three leaders representing conference leadership, education (theological and discipleship) and mission.

The purpose was to expand the connection between our Latin American conferences and to promote an exchange of experience and resources. Connections that started or deepened at this gathering have grown and developed, much like what Samuel experienced in his region. Gatherings like this and previous visits from international leaders have shown that there are a lot of resources and support in the region; not all has to come from the north.

Learning from one another

It's been said that our spiritual and personal growth can be hindered when we only spend time with people who look and think just like us. Being part of a multiethnic and diverse family of believers challenges many of our preconceptions and biases, allowing us the opportunity for growth.

When we consider the cultural context of many in our global family and compare that to the circumstance of the New Testament church, we observe a closer correlation than what we experience in 21st century America. Many of our MB family live in difficult and desperate circumstances yet thrive with courage and faithfulness. For example, they often lack the material, educational, medical and technological advances we in the U.S. enjoy but manifest the realities of the kingdom of God in ways that inspire and challenge those of us in the West.

Another area where we can learn from our global family is in relation to persecution and opposition. In many places around the world, Christians have never known the favor

of those in authority and therefore don't expect governments to support or protect their rights. We in the U.S. can learn much from their many years of experience in serving God in less than favorable circumstances.

That is not to say that Americans have nothing of value to offer in our relationships with the global MB church. Our advancements and experience, when offered with humility and generosity, can greatly bless our global family. The global family often looks to North American churches for guidance and advice, especially in places where the church is just now emerging.

Such exceptional experiences are possible when we have a sense of belonging to one family. We desire for ICOMB members and newcomers to grow in their sense of belonging to one family.

ICOMB conferences and church groups are quite heterogeneous. We are culturally different, with implications for worship, learning and evangelism. The unique history of church groups and their theological background affect church life. To live and be the church in a context of wealth and freedom or in poverty and the everyday struggle for bread or persecution shapes how we understand and live our faith.

ICOMB has all these differences. But at the same time, there is a value in being a family, locally, nationally and globally. The best way to learn more about our global family is to engage as individuals and as churches in a fellowship beyond one's comfort zone. We invite you to visit, invite, share, read, pray and bless for and with the others of our global Mennonite Brethren family.

To connect with ICOMB:

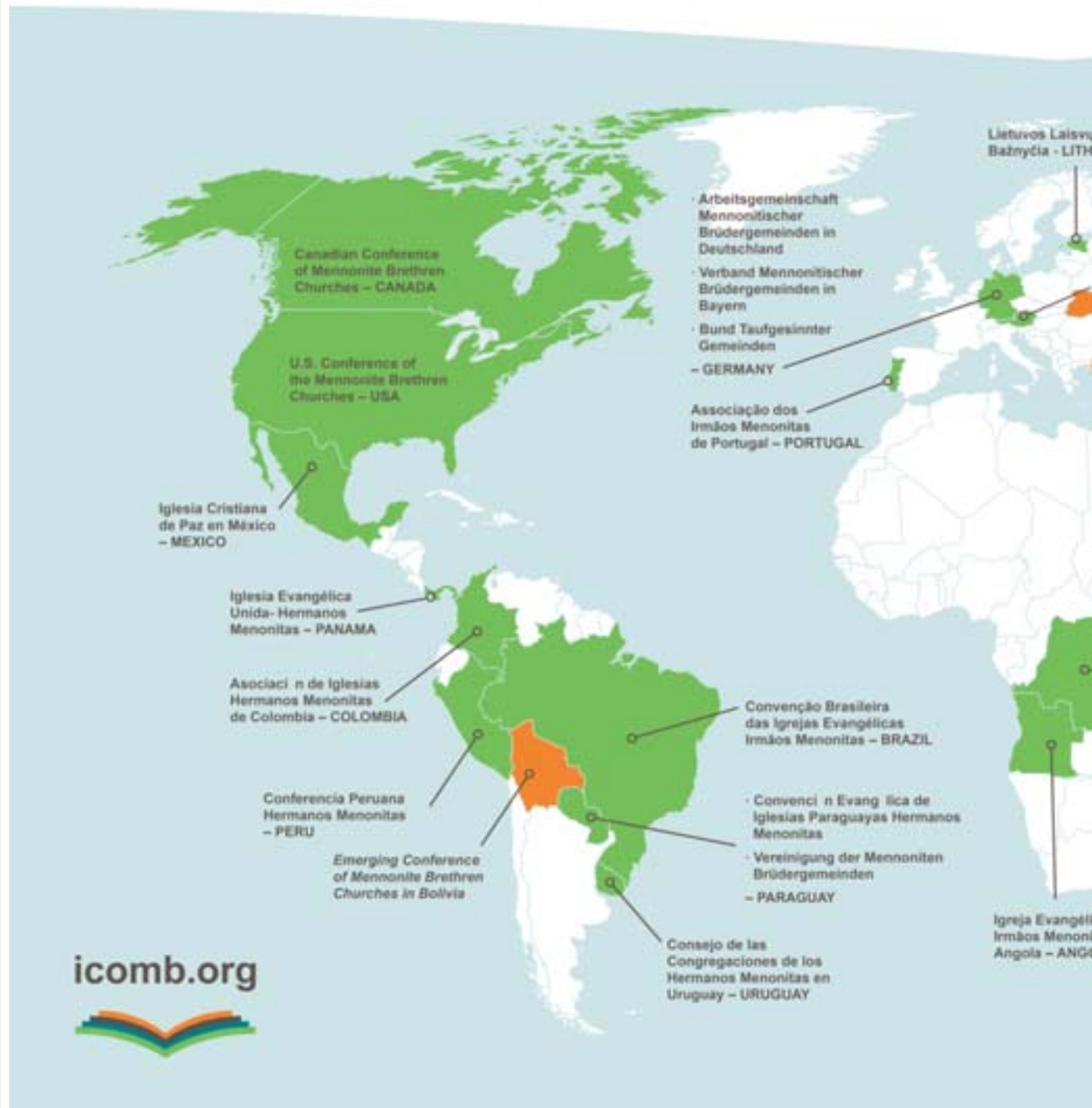
- Visit our website at www.ICOMB.org;
- Sign up to receive the newsletter updates;
- Join Nations Praying for Nations meetings, found on the website, and
- Listen to the LEAD Pod (<https://usmb.org/lead-pods/>) with Bob Davis.

Rudi Plett is the ICOMB executive director. He and his wife, Ruth Ratzlaff de Plett, live in Asuncion, Paraguay. They have five children. Bob Davis is the ICOMB U.S. advocate. He and his wife, Chris, live in Birch Bay, Wash. They have five children.



The International Community of Mennonite Brethren (ICOMB)

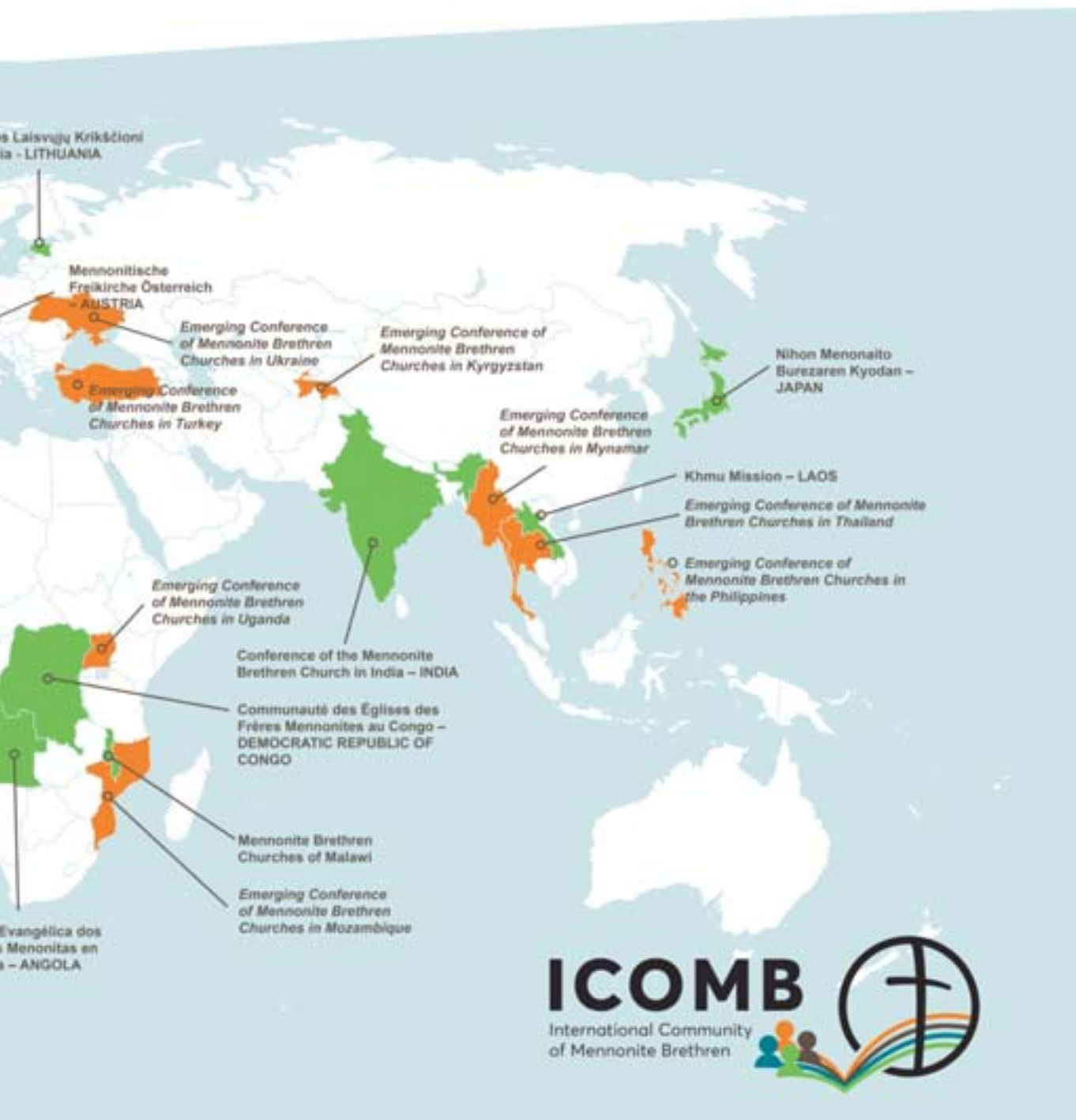
Our global family has approximately **500,000** members



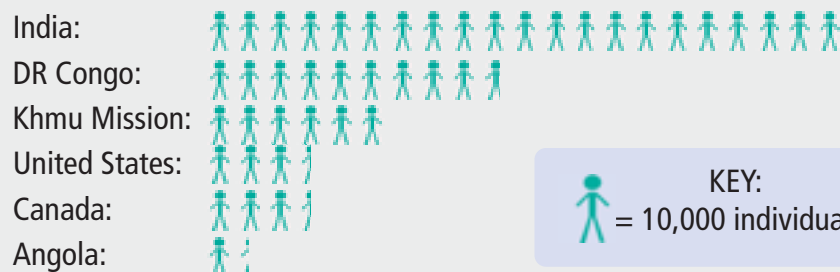
ICOMB conference numbers

The 22 national conferences that make up ICOMB range in size from almost 1,000 local churches to less than a dozen. Conference membership varies from more than 200,000 individuals to just over 100.

ICOMB) is made up of **22** national churches in **20** countries.
100,000 members in **3,000** congregations.



ICOMB
conferences
with more
than 10,000
members:



KEY:
 = 10,000 individuals

Who is my neighbor?

By Rick Eshbaugh

God asks us to serve displaced people relocating to our communities

My son Matt gave me a Christmas present last year purporting to trace the origins of my personal DNA. Based on family stories, I wasn't too surprised when it identified my ancestors as coming from England, Ireland and Germany, with a dash of Scandinavian and French. My paternal and maternal grandparents told tales of their grandparents fleeing famine, persecution, war and illness. They left what was familiar for a new beginning. Their stories, like so many others, remind us of the pain and courage of such transitions.

According to the United Nations High Commissioner of Refugees, 8.4 million people were forcibly relocated in 2020 because of persecution, conflict, violence, war and civil rights and severe human rights violations. This equates to 1 in every 95 people in the world. The number in 2021-2022 will be even higher because of the 5 million Ukrainians identified to date who are refugees (living outside of Ukraine) with an additional 7 million who are still in Ukraine but displaced from their homes.

Diaspora (dispersion of a people group) continues to make the United States the "melting pot" of the world. Pew Research reports 14 percent of the U.S. population in 2020 was born in another country. Over half of those coming into the U.S. indicate they are Christians.

How do we respond?

How should we respond to such a massive displacement of people? How do we respond to the new people showing up in our neighborhoods?

Diaspora is nothing new. From Adam and Eve to the early church, God's people have been moved around the globe. I

believe God is calling us to understand the opportunity before us. Ephesians 5:15-16 says, "Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil" (ESV).

What has God called his people to do in the past?

God provides the nomadic Israelites a welcome refuge in a time of famine in Egypt. Things go pretty well for them at first, but seasons change and soon they are seen as a threat and enslaved (Exod. 1:8). Their experience informs them what it is like to be both welcomed and mistreated.

When they receive their new land, God says: "Do not mistreat foreigners who are living in your land. Treat them as you would an Israelite and love them as you love yourselves. Remember that you were once foreigners in the land of Egypt" (Lev. 19:33-34). Jesus quotes this passage as the second most important commandment—"love your neighbor as you love yourself"—and second only to loving God (Mark 12:31a).

Total engagement

To love your neighbor meant more than mere tolerance. It was an active, total engagement with those considered vulnerable. Moses told Israel, "[God] makes sure that orphans and widows are treated fairly; he loves the foreigners who live with our people and gives them food and clothes" (Deut. 10:18).

When Jesus is asked who is our "neighbor," he responds with the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37). The priest and the Levite are well trained in the law and the function of the temple, but they are not modeling the loving God they are called to represent. Love demands that we see the need of others and do something about it. "If we say we love



God, but hate others, we are liars. For we cannot love God, whom we have not seen, if we do not love others, whom we have seen. The command that Christ has given us is this: whoever loves God must love others also” (1 John 4:20-21).

Likewise, in Matthew 25:31-46, Jesus pronounces judgment and reward based on how we treat “the least.” When the righteous ask, “When did we ever see you a stranger and welcome you in our homes, or naked and clothe you?” (v. 38), the King replies: “I tell you, whenever you did this for one of the least important of these followers of mine, you did it for me!” (v. 40).

As we explore how the Israelites are to structure their God-given kingdom, we see a model of the national, local and individual. In the book *The Bible and Borders, Hearing God’s Word on Immigration*, M. Daniel Carroll R. writes, “Ancient Israel did not have government programs and social systems in place as we have today to provide assistance through local, state, and federal channels. Help for the needy had to occur at several levels and through other means: individual families (giving rest on the Sabbath, including sojourners in the celebration), the community (gleaning laws), workplaces (payment of wages, periodic rest), religious centers (collecting the tithe) and at the city gate with the elders or other legal gatherings (fairness in legal matters). In a sense everyone was involved somehow in the care of the sojourner. The prophets clearly declare that God holds all the people responsible, from individuals to the whole society.”

Serving our neighbors

So how should we respond today? I believe the Holy Spirit will bring into our lives opportunities to serve our displaced

neighbors. When this happens, I try to remember these things:

Engage with their present need. As part of the majority culture, it is often difficult for us to understand the needs of those who have been displaced and become the “least” in our context. They will have immediate physical needs like shelter, clothing and food. Meeting these needs can be daunting without help. We know the language and can read menus, street signs, legal documents, contents of packaged food and textbooks. We have established kinship communities like our families, coworkers, softball teams, neighborhoods, churches, etc. We know people who know people. We know how to “do” American life and can use these resources to meet their needs and establish relationships.

Be patient and resourceful. A conversation with someone new to our country may include an interpreter explaining what it was like in their country and us explaining how things get done in the U.S. For example, in their country they receive cash for their labor. Here, their paycheck comes in an envelope or is automatically deposited into a bank account. This means they need to open an account using their federal ID and Social Security number. When the account is set up, they receive something called a debit card.

Needless to say, they have a very steep learning curve. One individual told me what it was like to come from a refugee camp which only provided the basic needs for survival to being in a country where their children are now learning on iPads!

Learn to know them as individuals, not just part of a group. COVID-19 brought to focus the needs of immigrants in Sioux Falls, S.D., where many Congolese brothers and sisters were working in close quarters at the Smithfield meat packing plant. The virus spread quickly causing the plant to

shut down. Since the physical office where they would normally go and talk to someone about unemployment was closed, employees were told to apply online.

Immigrant employees needed someone with a computer and internet to help them fill out an online form in a language they could not read. Through the helping process we learned their names, families and stories and felt their grief. They were not just a number. Statistics inform us, but when we open our lives and our hearts to others, we learn to grieve with those who grieve and rejoice with those who rejoice.

When one of our Russian church members tells me they are raising money to pay for airline tickets for Ukrainian refugees to come to the U.S., my heart opens. Or when I learn of our 24 Ukrainian MB Churches choosing to stay open and do whatever they can do, I want to help.

Open my eyes to the global church. It is very easy to “nest” in our cozy communities and local churches. Everyone knows your name, where you work and the color of your car. When we hear testimonies of how God is moving in other parts of the world, we can support the work and rejoice in their fruit. When those from other parts of the world come to our soil, we should embrace them as partners. They bring their spiritual gifts and experiences to enrich us. Likewise, through them we have a unique opportunity to reach those who are open to the love of God.

“Love demands that we see
the need of others and do
something about it.”

God is calling us into the diasporic harvest field and to assist “the least” in our sphere of influence. May our hearts be tender and receptive to his calling.

“For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord” (Eph. 2:18-21, ESV).

Rick Eshbaugh is the Central District Conference minister. He and his wife, Esther, live in Dell Rapids, S.D.

Tips for welcoming newcomers

The CL asked individuals with experience living and working cross-culturally for their advice on effectively building relationships. Read full responses online at www.christianleadermag.com.

Jesus ate with a variety of people, and so I like to think that sharing the table with people that are different from me means I’m representing Jesus’ way of effectively connecting with others that have a different background and story. —Joanna Chapa serves with Multiply in Peru.

I’ve learned to put myself in places where I’ll rub shoulders with people of various cultures. In these places we get to know each other as we work on common goals or interests. The relationship then grows naturally. —Darren Duerksen is a Fresno Pacific University associate professor and Intercultural and Religious Studies program director.

I work with students who wish they could connect with English speakers. They just don’t know how to do it, and most feel their language is inadequate to initiate such conversations. Forming a relationship is as simple as asking them out for coffee (your treat) or inviting them to walk or picnic in the park. —Mary K. Humber has been an ESL Instructor at New America College, Aurora, Colorado, since 2016.

Keep visits to 30 minutes or an hour. It is exhausting to speak in a foreign language for any length of time. Thinking in one language and trying to find words in another is frustrating, draining and often time-consuming. —Advice from Mary K. Humber’s ESL students

It’s so important to remember that my culture is just that—it’s my culture. It’s not right, it’s not best, it’s just familiar and it’s mine. If I want to show love and care to someone from another culture, I need to remember that their culture is theirs. It’s not wrong, it’s not less and by enjoying the differences I can better love the person. —Karen Janzen and her husband, David, Tabor College presidential couple, mentored college students and were sponsors for two international student associations while David taught at California Polytechnic State University.

Relocating, even temporarily, to a new country and culture is overwhelming. Navigating a new language, newcomers often must relearn basic life skills. The simple things like enrolling their kids in school, finding a family doctor, furnishing a home or even shopping for groceries are daunting tasks. All of this can feel humiliating, so show empathy by posturing yourself as their servant in this process. —Nasser al’Qahtani is the Multiply regional team leader for North Africa and the Middle East.

Consider how time is viewed differently. Perhaps your new neighbors are newly arrived refugees. You take some fresh fruit to their door. They invite you in. Your schedule for the day is packed and so you say you’ll come again another time. They say, “Come anytime! We are waiting for you.” They really mean it. You can stop by anytime. —Charity Stahl works with international students, refugees and immigrants in Omaha, Neb.

A refugee's journey

Lengthy resettlement process relies on partnerships



Over the past few months, we have borne witness to a heartbreaking refugee crisis in Ukraine. We've seen families forced to make life or death decisions in a matter of hours. We've watched as mothers and grandparents crowd into trains, cars and buses to cross borders with their children, unsure of where they will go next or when they will be able to return. Ukrainians of color as well as immigrants and refugees who had made Ukraine their home have shared in the trauma of fleeing violence but have often received a hostile reception in comparison to the open arms that Ukrainians have received from the larger European community.

Sadly, this refugee journey is not unique to those fleeing Ukraine. According to the United Nations, there are more than 26 million refugees throughout the world who have been forced to flee their communities, and that number is growing. This fact can be paralyzing, and the constant reports of violence and persecution can numb us to the suffering of others. There are, however, practical ways that we as a Christian community in the United States can walk alongside refugees seeking safety and wholeness for their families and community.

One opportunity to practice hospitality is to welcome and advocate for refugees who are resettled throughout the U.S. Since 1980, the U.S. has provided permanent refuge to more than 3 million refugees from more than 60 different countries, and the church has played a pivotal part in advocating for, learning from and empowering refugees.

U.S. resettlement process

Although there is a great need for resettlement, less than 1 percent of all refugees worldwide will have the opportunity to resettle in the U.S. The resettlement journey typically begins years before a refugee family arrives on American soil.

When refugees are forced to flee their country, most first seek asylum in a nearby country. There, families register with the government or the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to receive refugee status. This designation may provide them protection and access to limited support since many refugees do not have the right to work in their country of asylum.

From there, UNHCR identifies especially vulnerable individuals and families for resettlement to the U.S. After being

recommended for resettlement, the U.S. vets each refugee with additional security checks, medical screenings and interviews.

To resettle refugees, the U.S. government partners with nine different non-profit organizations: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS), Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services (LIRS), Church World Service (CWS), Episcopal Migration Ministries (EMM), World Relief (WR), U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (USCRI), Ethiopian Community Development Corporation (ECDC) and International Rescue Committee (IRC). These organizations offer leadership to the more than 200 local resettlement agencies that operate in every state except Wyoming. Through a variety of programs, these organizations often not only serve refugees but also asylum seekers and immigrants.

Once a family has been approved for resettlement, these organizations receive the family's information and meet to identify where the family should be initially resettled. Agencies do their best to place refugee families where close friends or family are already living. If

def-i-ni-tion

We hear a variety of terms used to describe people who come to live in the United States. Words like immigrant, migrant, refugee, asylum seeker and humanitarian parole. What do they mean? For a helpful overview of these terms, visit www.christianleadermag.com

family reunification is not possible, the agencies try to place families in cities where the family will have the opportunity to connect with others who share their language and culture. After the family is assigned and approved, it may take weeks, months or even years for a family to arrive in that city.

Resettlement in action

Once the family's travel is finally booked, the local resettlement agency is notified, and they begin preparing to welcome the family. The U.S. government provides a one-time fund of up to \$1,225 per person to cover the first three months of expenses including rent, utilities, furnishings, clothing, food and pocket money.

In addition to meeting the family's most basic needs with very little resources, resettlement agencies act as the bridge to longer-term services and needs. Often resettlement agencies are staffed and led by incredibly talented and hardworking former refugees who not only help the larger community understand the refugee experience but also intertwine competency, pragmatism and empathy into their daily work with families. They help families access public benefits, English language learning, employment services, school registration and medical care. In addition to initial resettlement support, these agencies also typically provide long-term integration support like employment services and English classes.

These agencies are the backbone of the United States' resettlement program, but they cannot do it alone. Refugee resettlement agencies' funding fluctuates based on refugee arrival numbers, and the U.S. president decides how many refugees can be resettled in the U.S. each year. From 2017-2020, this number was whittled down to the point that resettlement agencies throughout the country were forced to lay off most of their experienced staff or, in some cases, close entirely.

In September 2021, however, the U.S. called upon resettlement agencies to help resettle more than 76,000 evacuees fleeing the Taliban regime in Afghanistan. In a matter of weeks, these hollowed out agencies were asked to help resettle more people within six months than they had resettled in the past four years combined.

Churches mobilize to welcome

This past year alone resettlement agencies across the country have worked heroically to increase their capacity to serve refugees and Afghan evacuees, but the lack of investment from 2017-2020 has caused undeniable and lasting harm. Regardless of political affiliation, the Christian community must join in advocating for fair and consistent refugee resettlement policies to ensure that the resettlement community is well equipped to welcome families.

In addition to advocacy, there are many ways the church can mobilize to welcome refugees. Before families arrive, churches can partner with resettlement agencies to help secure affordable housing, collect housing supplies and furniture, raise funds to provide the new family an emergency fund to supplement the limited support the government provides or assist in setting up the family's new home.

After families arrive, churches can partner with resettlement agencies either by welcoming one specific family through co-sponsorship or by volunteering in specific roles to help many newly arrived families. The church can accompany families as they go to appointments, sort and understand their mail and encounter their many firsts.

Beyond meeting the practical needs, the church is needed to show hospitality by simply being present with families and offering friendship. Unlike resettlement caseworkers, members of the church can visit with their new neighbors, accept offers of tea, coffee and hospitality, listen to stories, and laugh and stumble through the awkwardness of language or cultural miscommunication. Churches have an essential role to play in welcoming newly arrived refugees and have the opportunity to be transformed through the act of hospitality.—*Charity Stowell is the Mennonite Central Committee U.S. newcomer connections coordinator.*

RESOURCES



If you need help finding a resettlement agency near you or want to learn more about how refugee resettlement works, reach out to **Mennonite Central Committee** at welcome@mcc.org.

For more information about community sponsorship, go to www.mcc.org/community-sponsorship or contact **MCC** at welcome@mcc.org.

If you don't live near a resettlement agency but have a dedicated group of people interested in welcoming a family in your community, both resettlement agencies and other organizations offer programs where groups can sponsor a newcomer family in their own community.

There is also a great need to welcome asylum seekers who must prove their claim to asylum within the United States. Unlike refugees, asylum seekers receive very little to no support from the government and, in addition, are often subjected to immigration detention, unsafe living conditions, and expedited deportation. **To learn about asylum seekers, go to www.mcc.org/safe-refuge.**

Davis advocates for relationships

ICOMB U.S. advocate Bob Davis “oozes love” for global church

When Bob Davis visits congregations to advocate for the International Community of Mennonite Brethren (ICOMB), he poses a question.

“My go-to when I do these presentations is to start by asking how many people are members of ICOMB, and usually one or two percent raise their hand,” Davis says. “Then I explain that if you’re a member of an MB church, which is a member of USMB, which is a member of ICOMB, you are a member of ICOMB.”

In his new role as ICOMB U.S. advocate, Davis travels to churches and events to raise awareness of the global Mennonite Brethren family, increase engagement with ICOMB and facilitate global relationships.

A good fit

Davis’ experience as a pastor, missionary and church planter gives him a unique perspective for the role. He first connected with Mennonite Brethren in 2000 upon joining the staff of Birch Bay Bible Community Church (BBBCC) in Birch Bay, Wash., as associate pastor, following a 10-year stint doing church planting in England. He earned his master’s degree in Christian studies from MB Seminary in British Columbia.

Davis served with Multiply (then MB Mission) in Thailand from 2007 to 2015 and attended several ICOMB summits as a translator. After returning to the U.S., he served in other roles with Multiply, and since 2018 has served as Multiply regional leader for Southeast Asia. In 2020, Multiply added a regional leader for Myanmar and most of Thailand, lessening Davis’

responsibilities and causing him to consider retirement.

Around the same time, unbeknownst to Davis, Ed Boschman, USMB representative to ICOMB and treasurer on the ICOMB executive committee, assembled a task force which identified a need for an advocate to work on ICOMB’s behalf in the U.S.

As Davis conversed with Boschman—both attend BBBCC—the two explored what it might look like for Davis to step into the role. Be-

cause the position was compatible with Davis’ work with Multiply, he applied, and the USMB leadership board, ICOMB executive board and Multiply approved his hire.

“Even before we had asked, the Lord was ahead of us,” Boschman says. “It’s a really, really good fit. For him and for us.”

“Bob is a gifted communicator. He speaks with passion because he has personal experience. ... He just loves the global community, and that oozes

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out of him when he communicates,” Boschman says.

Fully relationally funded by donors, Davis will continue in part-time roles with Multiply as a regional leader and donor relationship coach. The nature of Davis’ work with ICOMB and Multiply naturally overlap, oftentimes allowing him to represent both when he travels.

“I’m a big fan of learning from one another in terms of the global church,” Davis says. “God put a desire in my heart to be an advocate—we chose the title advocate fairly deliberately because somebody needs to be advocating for relationships between everyone. ... It starts with raising the awareness that something like ICOMB exists.”

Raising awareness

Davis began with ICOMB on Oct. 1, 2021. He anticipates traveling from Birch Bay where he lives with his wife, Chris, two or three times a month to attend events, preach in churches and meet with people.

A U.S. ICOMB team will serve as an advisory group to aid Davis in meeting the partnership goals identified by the task force.

Team member Ruth Schale, also a task force member, says she has seen Davis make the most of opportunities to speak about ICOMB.

“Bob is passionate about Jesus Christ and the mission of sharing him with those who have never heard the good news,” Schale says. “Bob fully understands both the USMB churches and the global community of MB churches and is excited for the opportunity to raise awareness and facilitate connections between the two.”

In addition to Schale, who attends Heritage Bible Church in Bakersfield, Calif., team members are: Boschman, Samuel Hailemariam (Grace International Church, Indianapolis), Jana Hildebrandt (Ridgepoint Church, Wichita, Kan.), Fred Leonard (Mountain View Church, Fresno, Calif.), Rolando Mireles (Grace Point at Grulla, La Grulla, Texas) and Hermann Mputu (Christian Center the Hand of God, Hamilton, Ohio).



In May, Ed Boschman (left), USMB representative to ICOMB, and Bob Davis, the new ICOMB advocate, attended the 2022 ICOMB summit in Curitiba, Brazil. While Davis is new to his role as the ICOMB U.S. advocate, he has attended ICOMB summits in the past as a translator.

Photo by Ed Boschman

The team will meet with Davis every other month.

“We are a sounding board for him, review resource materials that he is developing, give him feedback on presentations and pray with and for him,” Schale says. “This is a great time to be a follower of Jesus and part of the MB family. I look forward to seeing how God will use the global MB family to more personally impact USMB churches.”

Facilitating relationships

Davis envisions a world in which ICOMB helps facilitate relationships not only between church leaders but also between churches and church members.

In January, ICOMB began hosting prayer meetings on Zoom called “Nations praying for nations.” The ICOMB website lists prayer meetings and links to join.

“It’s not us praying for them that we’re after, it’s us praying with them,” Davis says.

Davis and the team will seek ways to facilitate relationship-based partnerships, moving away from a “transactional model.” While a partnership is task-ori-

ented and short-term—digging a well in sub-Saharan Africa, for example—relationships are longer-lasting, Davis says.

“The partnership ends when the project is completed, but the relationship between the church that’s receiving it and the donors that have given it—can and should continue,” Davis says. “Relationships are deeper and longer and more substantial than just the accomplishment of a task.”

Relationships provide opportunities to learn from one another, Davis says, including re-evaluating which cultural values align with the kingdom of God.

“We’re very task-oriented in the west, so we want to get there, get the job done, take some pictures, come back home and mission accomplished,” Davis says. “But the rest of the world really sees the need for relationship. The thing we have to be careful of and avoid is offering people partnership when what they’re really looking for is relationship.”

Davis and Stephen Humber will explore the topic of formation of healthy partnerships in a workshop at USMB Gathering 2022 in later this month.

“There’s a lot more to it in most places than just getting something done,” Davis says. “Sitting on the floor and eating rice together sometimes is the most powerful thing you can do.”

As Davis travels to churches to speak about ICOMB, he says he has been encouraged by the interest level, while recognizing the challenge the scope provides for one person.

“I wish more people knew that they have tens of thousands of brothers and sisters and cousins and aunts and uncles and other people in other places,” he says. “Every little group of 30 or 50 or 100 people that I can enlighten on that fact, that’s a step in the right direction.”

At the end of Davis’ presentations, he revisits the question: How many people are members of ICOMB?

“Usually close to 100 percent (raise their hand),” he says. “I’ve just done my job.” —*Janae Rempel*

Davis is available to visit churches and may be reached at bobd@multiply.net. For more information, visit www.icomb.org.

For immigrants, currency is relationships

Forming connections is goal of two new programs

Emmanuel Musinga holds multiple jobs to support his family of seven and his ministry as senior pastor of Grace Tabernacle Ministries (GTM), a Congolese USMB church in Indianapolis.

In addition to working in home care, Musinga drives for Uber and DoorDash and drives truck.

“I use my own money to do all the ministry work,” Musinga says. “If I take any payment, my church will not have any money in the account. My goal is to make sure my church is thriving.

Musinga’s congregation of 200, comprised primarily of refugees from Rwanda, Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, rents a worship space from another church but cannot access the building during the week.

“The ministry is growing,” Musinga says. “Maybe one day we will have a building. Any dollar (that) comes to my ministry, we save (to) maybe one day put a down payment for the church. We’ve been here 10 years. We have never even made (enough) money to buy a building.”

Musinga, and Congolese churches like GTM, could benefit from two programs developed by USMB’s Congolese Task Force, including Meet Me in Kansas City, which offers ways for churches to partner financially and relationally with Congolese pastors at USMB Gathering 2022; and the new

CORD program, which will provide longer-term financial assistance and relationships.

Meet Me in Kansas City

Ten Congolese churches have joined USMB across the Eastern, Central and Southern districts. Rick Eshbaugh, chair of the Congolese Task Force, says a primary need is relationships.

“(For) the Congolese, and probably with immigrants in general, the currency is relationships,” Eshbaugh says. “They desperately need that connecting person to the culture that they can trust and ask questions.”

A sub-committee of the National Strategy Team, the Task Force includes Eshbaugh, Doug Hiebert, Terry Hunt, Don Morris, Henri Ngolo, Garry Prieb and Claude Tambatamba.

Many immigrants come to the U.S.



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Worship at Naioth Revival Center, located in Columbus, Ohio, and led by Pastor Kadegembe Samwel is energetic. Naioth is one of the Congolese congregations in the Eastern District Conference. *Photo by USMB*

from villages and refugee camps, and adapting to life in the U.S. can be challenging. Musinga helps immigrants by serving as a translator, interpreting in immigration court, teaching people to drive, assisting with legal paperwork and job applications and teaching about building credit and saving for retirement.

"A lot of American pastors tell me, 'The work you are doing, it is very hard; you can quit,'" Musinga says. "If I follow my mind, I should (have) quit 10 years ago, but my heart doesn't allow me to quit."

The Task Force recognized an opportunity for relationship at USMB Gathering in Kansas City in July. The goal is for the 10 Congolese pastors to connect with at least one pastor who will stay for the Congolese gathering on Saturday, encourage and pray for them and form a lasting sister church relationship.

"Meet Me in Kansas City is really a next step so they can connect church to church, build relationships, find mentors and then continue to grow," Ngolo says. "They are bivocational pastors, so they

have to learn with American pastors how to grow a church, how to sustain it, so that way we can build solid Mennonite Brethren churches in the community of the future."

The cost for Congolese pastors will be prohibitive for some churches. Most will attend Friday and stay through Saturday's Congolese gathering, incurring hotel costs of \$120 per night and meals totaling \$80 per person.

Those interested in connecting or financing Meet Me in Kansas City may visit www.usmb.org/operation-meet-me-in-kc to learn more or to donate. Donations designated to Operation KC may also be sent to Donna Sullivan at USMB Churches, P.O. Box 20200, Wichita, KS 67208.

CORD program

For relationships formed as a result of Meet Me in Kansas City, and others seeking involvement, the CORD program offers a longer-term opportunity for relationship and financial partnership.

"Fifty-six percent of the immigrants are identifying as Christians, so they are our brothers and sisters," Eshbaugh says. "What is our responsibility as Christians? What are we supposed to do for our brothers and sisters who are in need?"

When the Congolese Task Force met in Cincinnati in 2019, it garnered input from Congolese leaders to determine

TEN CONGOLESE CONGREGATIONS ARE PART OF THE U.S. CONFERENCE OF MENNONITE BRETHREN CHURCHES

Christ Salvation Church	Kansas City, Mo.	Muhizi Serukiza	SDC
Christian Center the Hand of God	Hamilton, Ohio	Hermann Mputu	EDC
Disciples International Christian Church	Portland, Maine	Lawum Kayamba	EDC
Grace Tabernacle Ministries	Indianapolis, Ind.	Emmanuel Musinga	CDC
His Grace Christian Life Church International	Nashville, Tenn.	Alex Mutabazi	EDC
Holy Jerusalem Pentecost Church	Coralville, Iowa	Moise Byizigiro	CDC
Restoration Church of Christ	Cincinnati, Ohio	Jules Mukaba	EDC
Royal Family International Church	Fairfield, Ohio	Nico Kinwa Mandanda	EDC
Naioth Revival Center	Columbus, Ohio	Samwel Kadegema	EDC
New Jerusalem Temple	Sioux Falls, SD	Claude Tambatamba	CDC

needs of immigrant congregations including biblical training, a stable place of worship, pastoral development and connection. CORD will provide three Congolese churches with \$55,500 over a three-year span to help meet these needs, funded primarily by congregations and individual partners.

"We would want individuals to be donating and churches picking them up like they would a missionary," Eshbaugh says. "That's not to say that the districts won't get involved."

Lawum Kayamba pastors the 400-member Disciples International Christian Church in Portland, Maine. Kayamba's congregation has been asked to leave the Salvation Army church building in which they have been meeting.

"They were receiving a pretty fair deal," Eshbaugh says. "Now they don't have a place... and it's going to cost more. Most of our churches have been bounced at least once or twice."

To address needs like Kayamba's, CORD will provide \$12,000 per year for rent to secure a stable meeting place.

CORD will also provide \$500 per year toward biblical training and educational resources through The Urban Ministry Institute (TUMI) and the Evangelical School of Urban Church Planting. District Ministers will receive training as mentors, and MB Foundation will provide financial training.

CORD will also provide a \$6,000 per year stipend, which the congregation will be asked to match, to allow lead pastors to hold one primary job with benefits and devote more time to training and congregational development. Pastors will be assigned a coach.

CORD will connect churches to other congregations, who can help immigrants navigate paperwork and share resources, ideas and equipment.

To qualify for CORD, a church must have joined a USMB district and credentialed its pastor.

CORD will launch at USMB Gathering.

"I hope that within our MB family of churches, some will prayerfully consider adopting a Congolese MB church to help walk alongside them for the next five to 10 years," says EDC minister and task force member Terry Hunt. "I know this will help these churches become more self-sustainable and reach their God-given potential sooner rather than later."

A mutual friendship

While CORD will help meet physical and financial needs, the hope is for a mutual exchange of friendship, support and ideas.

"We don't want the relationship to be based just on supplying their need," Eshbaugh says. "They have a lot to offer us as well."

Immigrant churches tend to display emotions in exuberant worship and a reliance on the Holy Spirit, Eshbaugh

says. Immigrants also bring connections to their home countries, creating opportunities for increased global awareness. Musinga has 10 church plants in Uganda and Kenya. Eshbaugh says the Task Force is exploring ways, possibly through Multiply, for others to provide resources for churches like these.

"The world really is a big place, and God's doing a lot of things, not just here," Eshbaugh says. "It makes you hungry to see God working in our churches the way he works in their churches."

For Musinga, God's grace is sufficient even when life gets hard.

"I am who I am because of Jesus," Musinga says. "Through his word, I have faith and hope, and now I pursue serving God and to encourage other people. God has sent me to preach his gospel and to serve other people, not to complain." —*Janae Rempel*



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Day(care) dreaming

Daycare dream prompts Swiers to hit the road

In April, Bryant and Alyssa Swiers of Strawberry Lake Church in Ogema, Minn., left their jobs, packed their camper and embarked on a year-long trip to visit and learn about ministry to children.

The Swiers took this step of faith after realizing while on vacation last year that they each felt a similar calling from God.

"It was a bit of a challenge for me," says Bryant of the decision to leave their jobs. "But because we both felt the calling independently of each other at the same time, it just felt like, this is what we're supposed to do so let's do it."

"It's hard because it's a change," says Alyssa. "But we feel like we are where we're supposed to be."

Alyssa dreams of opening a daycare facility that would operate out of Lake Region Mennonite Church in Detroit Lakes, Minn., about 30 miles from Strawberry Lake Church. Both Strawberry Lake and Lake Region are former Mennonite Church USA congregations that joined the Central District Conference (CDC) in 2017.

Alyssa has worked as a nurse on a women's and children's floor of a hospital. She feels called to work with children but wants to be more involved in their daily lives, building personal relationships and watching them grow and learn about Jesus.

"I'd really like to run [the daycare] as a ministry and not a business," Alyssa says.

The Swiers' focus for their trip is to learn more about how to make this daycare a reality, as well as to connect with other Mennonite Brethren churches.



Bryant and Alyssa Swiers of Strawberry Lake Mennonite Church in Minnesota embarked in April on a year-long trip to visit other churches and learn about children's ministry. Their first stop was Stony Brook Church in Omaha, Neb., where they learned from Pastor Jon Annin and organized the church's VBS program in June. Alyssa's dream is to one day open a daycare ministry in the building of Lake Region Mennonite Church in Detroit Lakes, Minn.

Photo by Bryant Swiers

"One of the main purposes of our trip is to be out observing ... how is the ministry of having a daycare within a church working? What's the best way to be effective in your ministry?" Bryant says. "And then part of our reason for doing the trip is to serve along the journey, wherever we're at, and also to build connections between the churches."

God has a plan

Talitha Sannes-Venhuizen, a member of Lake Region's church council, says several church members attended a community awareness event several years ago and learned about the significant need for affordable childcare in their area.

"It was very eye-opening to hear them talk about this need, and then out of that they felt that God is calling us as a

church to be part of reaching out to our community," Sannes-Venhuizen says.

A daycare would allow the church to provide a much-needed service to the community, she says, provide jobs and also work as a ministry to reach children and their families for Christ.

In September 2019, Lake Region broke ground on a building project that would improve and expand on their existing building. Part of that project included adding a walk-out basement.

Sannes-Venhuizen says the congregation wanted to use this new space as a daycare but didn't know who would take the lead in running the endeavor.

"We just didn't know how God was going to work those details out," Sannes-Venhuizen says.

The Swiers have connections to Lake Region, as Bryant's father Jesse Swiers is the lead pastor. When Alyssa reached out to the church with her dream of starting a daycare in the new space, Sannes-Venhuizen says it was an "amazing affirmation."

"I can't even tell you how it felt to have Bryant and Alyssa come to the council and say, 'We feel like God is calling us to do this,'" Sannes-Venhuizen says. "It was really an answer to prayer."

The Swiers have also felt God's hand in planning the logistics of their trip even before they made the decision to go, such as in their purchase of a camper last summer.

"Things fell into place pretty well for us," Bryant says. "It's amazing how God had this all planned out long before we did."

Bryant and Alyssa receive financial support from their home church and Lake Region, but they are small congregations and the couple is trusting God to continue to supply their needs throughout the year of travel.

First stop: Omaha

The first stop on the Swiers' trip was Stony Brook Church in Omaha, Neb. While the church does not operate a

daycare, lead pastor Jon Annin has extensive experience working in youth and children's ministry settings. After graduating from Fresno Pacific University, Annin spent 18 years on staff at Clovis Hills Community Church in Fresno, including several years leading a children's ministry of about 350 children and 70 volunteers.

"With a church that size, there's an organizational aspect to it which would possibly be something like a daycare or a preschool that a church might have where you're monitoring kids and staff members," Annin says.

Annin says Stony Brook's children's ministry program has grown considerably since his arrival in September 2021.

"Kids' ministry is really important, so we're going to treat it that way," Annin says. "Now we're at a point where in general it's one of our strengths."

The Swiers connected with Annin and Stony Brook after reaching out to CDC district minister Rick Eshbaugh, who knew of Annin's background in children's ministry.

"I was excited about the opportunity, both for them to grow and for us to partner with them," says Annin.

Back home, Bryant and Alyssa were active at Strawberry Lake Church in children's ministry, teaching Sunday school and vacation Bible school (VBS).

The Swiers have integrated into Stony Brook's volunteer staff, helping with youth ministry and Sunday morning programs alongside Annin's wife, Lauren, the church's Next-Gen director. They organized the church's VBS program in June.

"Had they not come, that VBS may or may not have happened," Annin says. "That was a cool partnership because we were a little under-equipped to do that at this point with our volunteer base."

The Swiers have been meeting weekly with Annin to talk about their work, learn from him and together read

the book *Children's Ministry on Purpose* by Steve Adams.

"A lot of really practical conversations flow out of us generating the VBS as well as reflecting on what's happening on Sunday mornings," Annin says.

The value of connection

Bryant and Alyssa have taken advantage of their time in Omaha by connecting with other churches and ministries, such as fellow CDC congregation Faith Bible Church, Good Neighbor Ministries and a Nazarene church that operates a daycare ministry. Following the week of VBS at Stony Brook, the Swiers helped to lead the same program at Faith Bible Church.

Bryant believes that making connections between churches is a key aspect of their trip and of the Christian faith in general.

"There's a great value in knowing there's a community out there that wants to support what's going on," Bryant says. "As a church, you're not doing this alone, this mission work. The kingdom of God is just that—it's a kingdom; it's much bigger than the individual churches."

Annin emphasizes the importance of having a team mentality as believers.

"As congregations, we have strengths and weaknesses and we're all different parts of the body," he says. "There's value in us coming together to build one another up because if the church anywhere in the world is weak, then we are weaker overall."

Bryant and Alyssa plan to remain in Omaha as they seek God's direction for where to go next and for the remainder of their trip. —Jessica Vix Allen

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An experience beyond expectation

Coaching helped me become a better follower of Jesus

“**W**ould coaching actually help church leaders in measurable ways,” I asked myself. “Would it be worth their time? Would leaders invest money to make it happen?”

Then the kicker: If we did promote this, we would need first to experience coaching ourselves.

“What is coaching going to teach me at this point in my life,” I smugly wondered. At 60-plus, I had years of schooling, a Doctor of Ministry plus 27 years of pastoral experience and a decade of national and binational ministry.

In 2020, my third year as USMB executive director, I connected with pastors struggling with discouragement, exhaustion and declining effectiveness. Don Morris, the Mission USA national director, immersed himself in the grassroots realities of church planting and renewal ministries. He, too, encountered burned-out pastoral staff fighting the urge to bail. Encouragement dwindled to a low ebb.

Don and I agreed to find a way to ramp up the resilience and effectiveness of church leaders. He found Ministry Coaching International (MCI), a life and ministry coaching initiative specifically for church leaders adapted from the gold star Building Champions approach and format.

Digging into MCI, we learned about Greg Saliccioli, a respected coach, consultant and keynote speaker with Building Champions, the folks who coach the Chick-fil-A restaurant company. Sensing God’s leadership and an opportunity to support church and ministry leaders, Saliccioli founded MCI. He authored *The Growth Guide* as an anchoring manual and its partner, an Excel program called Ministry Action Plan (MAP), as a journal to record several Big Hairy Audacious Goals as well as action items, insights, visions and plans, providing measurable accountability.

Our digging revealed that the One-On-One Coaching System offered two helpful self-evaluating inventories, one providing feedback on natural behavioral tendencies and how we behave in the context of external expectations and a second measuring emotional intelligence.

A review of *The Growth Guide* showed the first chapter would invite us to take stock of priorities, health, family, friends, finances, service and faith. The second and third chapters would facilitate clarifying a ministry vision and ministry plan. The fourth would measure administrative efficiency, effectiveness in management and offer insights and systems to ramp up those capacities by “mastering workflow” and eliminating dropped balls.

We’d partner with a skilled, spiritually sensitive coach. Our coach would not function as a subject matter expert consultant, nor a teacher-instructor, nor an older wiser mentor, nor a counsellor unpacking the past. Our coach would partner as a supportive ally and prayer partner, with a high level of discernment and trained to ask powerful questions to “coach through the gap” between present realities and a preferred future.

“Sign me up!” I said, as did Don and others we invited. The experience helped me beyond expectation. The smugness I had felt became embarrassment, erasing my skepticism. I became a better follower of Jesus, under-shepherd, husband, father and friend. I learned a ton and became a more efficient and effective leader.

After we had experienced this partnership, several of us became certified so that we could offer valid coaching to leaders in our USMB family. USMB LEAD Coaching is a live opportunity. It helps in measurable ways. It is worth the investment. Just ask the 24 coachees who have experienced the journey. Or ask Don. Or me.



Ed Boschman serves as the head coach for the USMB LEAD Coaching initiative and gives leadership to a national team of trained LEAD Coaches and helps facilitate connections with those coaches. He is the USMB representative to the International Community of Mennonite Brethren and served as the USMB executive director from 2007 to 2014.

Freely receive, freely give

Following God from pastorate to Peru

I have are two reasons for surrendering my role as a pastor and accepting the invitation to long term missions. The first reason is very simple: God is inviting me to Peru. Second is a deep desire to share what God has poured into my life. Well, that was too short, so please let me give you a quick tour into my heart.

After a rebellious period during my teen years, I came back to my senses as the prodigal son. I had a deep desire to know God and to be known by him. Dialoguing with God, I told him: “You know everything I have done, and I don’t deserve a second chance. But if you forgive me and take me back, I want to have a personal relationship with you. I will follow you wherever you lead me, and I will do whatever you want me to do.”

During this time, God gave me Psalm 32, a passage that has been key in my development as his son. At the beginning of my second conversion, I experienced his forgiveness, mercy and love, as it says in the first part of the psalm. Verses seven to 10 have shaped my development as a Christian and as a leader. My desire has always been to be obedient to God.

Shortly after arriving from Mexico, God called me to a pastoral role. For 16 years, I served as a bi-vocational pastor at Iglesia El Buen Pastor in Orange Cove, Calif. After a few difficult years of adjustment, I enjoyed a thriving season in ministry. Full of ideas and energy, I desired to reach people with the gospel and to develop leaders.

Then I went through a time of depression and burnout. I had failed to observe the sabbath. Since I was serving the Lord and had a personal relationship with him, I thought there was no need to rest. A Christian should not get tired when serv-

ing, I thought. After a few years of battling depression in silence and feeling worthless, useless, dumb and inadequate, my Savior rescued me and started my healing process.

I realized I was trying to impress God and seek his approval through my performance. I am thankful for the people the Holy Spirit brought into my life to help me. Having a community of believers to walk with me, love me and hold me accountable was key. As I started healing from depression, I grew to love my ministry once again and to lead in a more healthy and godly way. I did not have the pressure to perform to impress anyone; I understood that God loves me and that he is longing for the same thing I am—to have a meaningful, intimate relationship with me.

Two and a half years ago, life was good. My children were doing great, getting good grades, involved in sports and growing in their faith. I was a tenured math teacher working at a high-performing middle school. My wife was working as a mental health therapist. And serving as a pastor, I enjoyed the trust of a church that loved me and my family.

However, having experienced God’s healing and abundant grace stirred in me a deep desire to share this blessing with other pastors and leaders. My heart felt heavy when I thought about pastors and leaders, especially in Latin America, who struggle in isolation with depression and burnout and wrestle with feelings of inadequacy and performance issues. During my discernment process I felt the Holy Spirit guiding me and putting in my heart the Mennonite Brethren pastors in Peru. I want to walk with my brothers in Peru, to give freely what I freely received.■



Pablo Chavez and his wife, Maricela, live in Orange Cove, Calif., where they have been the pastoral couple of Iglesia El Buen Pastor. Chavez has been a bi-vocational pastor for 16 years. The couple, both born in Mexico, has been married for 18 years, and they have three sons. Read their story and more about their call to Peru: <https://multiply.net/story/bound-for-peru>

Frontlines is a column written by USMB pastors. The definition of frontline is “a person or thing that is a part of a leading position” and pastors are leading our local churches. They provide insight into ministry and the USMB three core commitments: church multiplication and evangelism, leadership development and discipleship.

MILESTONES

BAPTISM/MEMBERSHIP

Shawn Ludwig, Rachel Ludwig and Anabelle Selway were baptized at **Lakeview Church, Stansbury Park (Utah)** Campus May 29.

Gauge Taylor, Steve Ferry and Cessna Hubrich were baptized at the Grantsville, Utah Campus.

Cami Hershberger, Lacey Holcomb and Chris Yutzy were baptized and received as members at **Buhler (Kan.) MB Church** May 22.

David M. was baptized and received as a member at **North Fresno (Calif.) Church** May 22. Joshua M., Joe Martinez, Joseph J., and Pierra F. were baptized and received as members April 17. Clint Bergen, Carla Bergen, Dona Warkentin, Nancy Powell, Adam Powell, Mark Baker, April Imboden and Valerie Rempel were also received as members.

Ben Petersen, Tru Helton, Michaela Butts and Caleb Hart were baptized and received as members at **Cornerstone Community Church, Topeka, Kan.**, May 1. Nicole Snyder was also received as a member. Destiny Helton, Raegan Petersen, Kailyn Petersen, Lilly Evans, Chanse Lomsdale, Nathan Petersen, Brooklyn Sawatzky and Arian Hernandez were baptized and received as members March 27. Jason Schutter, Kristi Schutter, Bob Thomas, Deanna Thomas, Jeff Maxon, Danielle Maxon, Nathan Traver and Kayla Traver were also received as members.

Jillian Avila, Kallie Nelson and Macy Eldredge were baptized at **South Mountain Community Church, South Jordan (Utah) Campus** May 1.

Nick Lentz, Alice Curry, Anne Curry, Charlotte Curry, Elizabeth Curry, Isaiah Curry, Natasha Curry and Stuart Curry were received as members at **Salem MB Church, Freeman, S.D.**, April 17.

Dave Tweedy, Kori Orsolini, Aaron Orsolini and Matt Orsolini were baptized at **South Mountain Community Church, Lehi (Utah) Campus** April 10.

Bryant Dalke, Eli Dalke, Haley Loewen, Karley Loewen, Cody Meyer, April Suderman, Becky Suderman and Ella Suderman were baptized at **Ebenfeld MB Church, Hillsboro, Kan.**, April 10. Alysia Yoder and Scott Yoder were received as members.

Kole Crotwell, Simone Fanene, Malialani Fanene, Shaun Hilton, Rubens Grigorio, Annabeth Sessions, Brook Bullard, Maxwell Bautch, Ashley Vandelaan, Ansley Schug and Leag Reitz were baptized at **South Mountain Community Church, Draper (Utah) campus**, April 10.

Alexander Meyer and Ryan Layton were baptized and received as members at **Rosedale Bible Church, Bakersfield, Calif.**, April 3. Jennifer Davis, Matt Posey, Gracie Posey, Pat Maloney and Joy Maloney were also received as members. Annalise Meyer was baptized.

WORKERS

Dave Stegall concluded his service as youth pastor at **Pine Acres Church, Weatherford, Okla.**, June 17.

Brian Wiebe concluded his service as lead pastor at **Bethany Church, Fresno, Calif.**, in June. Bruce Porter began serving as interim lead pastor.

Colton Olsen concluded his service as associate pastor at **Ebenfeld MB Church, Hillsboro, Kan.**, May 15.

Jackson Humphreys began serving as an intern at **Hesston (Kan.) MB Church** during pastor of children and family J.L. Martin's sabbatical.

DEATHS

Beckenhauer, Lydia, Reedley, Calif., member of Reedley MB Church, Jan. 9, 1932—May 13, 2022. Parents: Lloyd and Jessie (Jacobs) Selby. Spouse: Don. Children: Doug, Jan Schmidt, Kevin, Donna Ribero, David; 16 grandchildren, 16 great-grandchildren.

Edinger, Kenneth, Harvey, N.D., member of Cornerstone Community Church, Harvey, Aug. 16, 1935—March 11, 2022. Parents: Robert and Pauline (Huber) Edinger. Spouse: Mavis. Children: Tammy Sackman, Donna, Jodi Hammargren, Kent; nine grandchildren, 20 great-grandchildren.

Faul, Karen, Harvey, N.D., Cornerstone Community Church, Harvey, March 30, 1949—Feb. 6, 2022. Parents: Joseph and Louise (Genther) Usselman. Spouse: Kenneth Faul (deceased). Children: Joseph, David; five grandchildren.

Gross, Ruth J., Huron, S.D., Bethesda Church, Huron, May 1, 1930—May 6, 2022.

Parents: Jacob J.C. and Mary (Kleinsasser) Gross.

Heitzmann, Marion, Harvey, N.D., member of Cornerstone Community Church, Harvey, Dec. 2, 1925—Feb. 11, 2022. Parents: Albert and Emma (Wahl) Lang. Spouse: Ted Heitzmann. Children: Sandy Weinmann, Marshall, Jeffery (deceased), 13 grandchildren, 18 great-grandchildren.

Johnson, Ronald, Omaha, Neb., member of Faith Bible Church, Omaha, April 8, 1947—April 7, 2021.

Kliewer, Dean, Reedley, Calif., member of Reedley MB Church, April 1, 1933—May 14, 2022. Parents: Joy C. and Mary (Reimer) Kliewer. Spouse: Lucille. Children: Carol Bergen, Dan, Janet Laemmlen; seven grandchildren, 16 great-grandchildren.

Neufeld, Don Wayne, Shafter, Calif., member of Shafter MB Church, March 26, 1932—April 12, 2022. Parents: Milton and Leona Wahl Neufeld. Spouse: Dorothy Kroeker (deceased). Children: Debby Sperling, Brian, Leanne, Matthew; four grandchildren, three great-grandchildren.

Nickel, Scott Lynn, Fresno, Calif., member of North Fresno Church, June 28, 1959—April 3, 2022. Parents: Henry and Jeanette Nickel.

Stoesz, June Nikkel, North Oak, Minn., charter member of New Hope MB Church, Minneapolis, Minn., June 2, 1931—April 6, 2022. Parents: Henry and Agatha Nikkel. Spouse: Angus R. (deceased). Children: Michael, Patricia Hoium, Steven; eight grandchildren.

Thiessen, Richard Eugene, Fresno, Calif., member of Butler Church, Fresno, Nov. 18, 1938—April 10, 2022. Parents: Sam and Hilda Thiessen. Spouse: Evelyn Langenegger (deceased). Children: David, Mark, John; two grandchildren.

Warkentin, James "Jim" Leroy, Clovis, Calif., member of North Fresno (Calif.) Church, Feb. 16, 1951—May 21, 2022. Parents: Clarence and Adina (Buhler) Warkentin. Spouse: Shirley. Children: Melissa, Matthew; six grandchildren.

Willems, Edwin Lloyd, Fresno, Calif., member of Bethany MB Church, Fresno, Aug. 12, 1934—Dec. 11, 2021. Parents: Peter and Elizabeth Willems. Spouse: Velora (Reimer) Willems. Children: Mark, Jayne Pearson; nine grandchildren, four great-grandchildren.

Wipf, Merlin Mel, Huron, S.D., member of Bethesda Church, Huron, July 19, 1952—May 5, 2022. Parents: Elmer E. and Dorothy (Hofer) Wipf. Spouse: Judy Wedel. Children: Jory, Jarvis, Jasper, Jay; 15 grandchildren.

REACHING IN

Neighborhood Church, Visalia, Calif., hosted a Father's Day Fiesta June 19 with nachos, a mechanical bull riding competition and family photobooth. The church held a "Grill and Chill" marriage night for couples April 29 with games, giveaways and a conversation about relationships. The church celebrated moms and mother figures with "Mom-a-Ritas" and special treats for women, a succulent planting station and family photobooth May 8. The church served a dinner party for seniors June 12.

Salem MB Church, Freeman, S.D., hosted a family fellowship night May 29 with a hamburger cookout and games.

Stony Brook Church, Omaha, Neb., held a church picnic where the congregation could meet missionary Katie Mount May 29.

Butler Church, Fresno, Calif., hosted a picnic May 22 with an outdoor service, bounce house, pool time and BBQ meal.

Mountain View Church, Fresno, Calif., hosted ice cream parties June 3 at the Main Campus and June 10 at the Sunnyside Campus. The events included lawn games and a waterslide. The church women's ministry hosted a game night June 8. The men's ministry hosted board game nights the second Thursday of each month. The congregation held a Mother's Day Tea May 7.

House of the Gospel, Fresno, Calif., hosted a father/son campout June 24-26.

Ridgepoint Church, Wichita, Kan., hosted a drive-in movie in its parking lot and served popcorn and snacks, May 27.

Women from **Pine Acres Church, Weatherford, Okla.**, gathered for cookies and conversation May 19. Nineteen women met in May for salads and gardening tips. They received plants to take home.

Axiom Church, Peoria, Ariz., hosted a summer water bash May 22. The congregation had a family social April 24 with an ice cream bar and board games. The congregation was invited to hike the Bursera trail April 23 and to the Tonto Natural Bridge June 4.

Hillsboro (Kan.) MB Church held a women's salad supper May 1.

Children from **North Fresno (Calif.) Church** searched for 700 eggs and held 10-day-old bunnies on Easter Sunday.

Greenhouse Community Church, Saratoga Springs, Utah, had a potluck and egg hunt April 17. The congregation partnered with two area churches to hold a Good Friday service.

Women from **Faith Bible Church, Omaha, Neb.**, gathered for a game night April 30.

Bethesda Church, Huron, S.D., offered Easter activities and crafts for children April 17.

Lincoln Glen Church, San Jose, Calif., held an April 16 Easter egg hunt. The event included crafts and bounce houses.

Copper Hills Church, Peoria, Ariz., hosted a mother-daughter event May 7 with brunch and bracelet making.

WORSHIP

Buhler (Kan.) MB Church set up self-guided, interactive and family-friendly prayer stations for people to walk through to prepare their hearts for Easter April 11-15.

Hesston (Kan.) MB Church held a come and go Good Friday service April 15 with areas for reflection, prayer, confession and communion.

Axiom Church, Peoria, Ariz., hosted "Resonant," a contemplative prayer and worship experience including art, music and spiritual formation practices, April 15. Church leaders invited the community to 24 hours of prayer April 15-16.

The **Kingwood Bible Church, Salem, Ore.**, congregation gathered for worship, reflection and communion April 15.

Hillsboro (Kan.) MB Church held a classic praise and worship night March 20 with a devotional and prayer time as a send-off for an Israel study tour group.

CELEBRATIONS

Neighborhood Church, Visalia, Calif., celebrated the graduation of 13 students through the Neighborhood Degree Project, an initiative designed to dismantle generational poverty. The congregation donated more than \$11,000 to provide students with laptops.

Boone (N.C.) MB Church honored the 50th wedding anniversary of Pastor Michael and Venus Mathes with an April 30 celebration.

Mountain View Church, Fresno, Calif., celebrated its 28th anniversary May 1 with tri-tip sandwiches served after each service at all campuses.

Storms affect two SD churches

Severe storms impacted two USMB congregations in eastern South Dakota May 12, where a large cluster of thunderstorms brought straight-lined winds exceeding 100 miles per hour in some places.

Stuart Curry, pastor of Salem MB Church near Freeman, S.D., reported damage to his house and other buildings on his property near Dolton, S.D. The family lived in Freeman while the damage was repaired.

Bethesda Church in Huron (pictured) sustained water damage when the storm blew shingles off the roof of the church fellowship room. Volunteers spent less than three hours repairing the damage, according to a Facebook post.

South Dakota governor Kristi Noem issued a State of Emergency in response to the storm, which affected as many as 28 counties and left two people dead in South Dakota and a third in Minnesota.



Corn (Okla.) MB Church recognized graduating high school seniors at an all-church breakfast May 1.

REACHING OUT LOCALLY

House of the Gospel, Fresno, Calif., hosted a picnic with Ukrainian refugees June 11.

Mountain View Church, Fresno, Calif., hosted a training workshop May 5 to equip people to lead others to Christ.

Axiom Church, Peoria, Ariz., leadership challenged the congregation to love well during a "Summer of Love" campaign by gathering resources for homeless people, doing a school supply drive and raising resources for missionaries.

The **Hesston (Kan.) MB Church** congregation helped at a work day at Camp David on the Crosswinds Conference Center property May 25. Camp David provides summer camps for children in foster care and children of prisoners.

The **Faith Bible Church, Omaha, Neb.**, congregation served at the annual city sponsored cleanup day May 21. Members of the

congregation sang with and distributed pastries to homeless people on Easter Sunday morning, April 17.

Zoar MB Church, Inman, Kan., with the Inman Chamber of Commerce, offered painting, construction and yard work for community serve week June 2-4.

Renewal MB Church, Rapid City, S.D., assisted community engagement specialist Tyler Read by sanding and prepping playground equipment for painting at an apartment complex for the church's May Give Project, a monthly community improvement project. The event included a bake sale, a bouncy castle and drum group.

The **Cross Timbers Church, Edmond, Okla.**, congregation was invited to help sort clothing, clean and work with grocery items at the Hope Center May 7.

Buhler (Kan.) MB Church invited people to join a prayer walk May 5.

The women's ministry group at **Salem MB Church, Freeman, S.D.**, collected donations for the Union Gospel Mission in Sioux Falls to purchase bottled water. The group hosted a world day of prayer service June 3 with coffee and food. Community churches also participated.

Neighborhood Church, Fresno, Calif., hosted a "Play Streets" block party to promote traffic safety April 29. The event included a carnival, pet contest, kids' bike course, yard games, bounce house, dunk tank, movie night, resources, food and raffle prizes. The congregation planted a community garden and picked up trash June 4.

New Life Community, Dinuba, Calif., had a booth at a Cinco de Mayo Festival May 6-7.

GLOBALLY

New Life Community, Dinuba, Calif., volunteers made 362 pies for the West Coast Mennonite Relief Sale. The pies sold out by noon and contributed to more than \$5,000 of the \$145,000 raised for MCC.

A small group of people from **Cornerstone Community Church, Harvey, N.D.**, tied 103 comforters and made 235 bags for school kits to be sent to MCC.

Quilters from **Ridgepoint Church, Wichita, Kan.**, donated 25 quilts to the Kansas Mennonite Relief Sale auction. The quilts brought in more than \$5,700 for MCC.

CLEARINGHOUSE

District Conference

District Minister: MB Central District is seeking a full-time district minister to support, encourage and stimulate its 39 member churches to carry out the biblical mandate of Scripture and the vision of the Mennonite Brethren Conference. This man will lead the Central District Conference throughout its eight states of Indiana, Iowa, Minnesota, Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota and Wisconsin. He should have a minimum of 10 years in pastoral experience with a positive ministry record. Job description: cdconference.org or usmb.org. Inquiries/resume: lynngloria@hur.midco.net or send to: Central District Conference Chairman ATTN: Lynn Schneider 900 Beach Ave. N.E., Huron, SD 57350.

Local Church

Lead Pastor: Bethany MB Church is seeking a man who has a dynamic relationship with Jesus and a proven pattern of Spirit-led, theologically sound, Bible-based teaching and preaching. The lead pastor will champion the mission, vision and values of Bethany Church and must be an effective communicator who is both relational and relatable, someone who is skilled at empowering members to serve in roles of leadership within the body of Christ and committed to the power of prayer. To learn more, visit our Pastoral Search webpage: <https://www.bethanychurch-fresno.com/Pastoral-Search>

Associate Pastor: North Oak Community Church in Hays, Kan., is seeking a full-time associate pastor of administration and discipleship. The position is part of a collaborative ministry team and will fill the important role of providing leadership for the ministry teams, discipleship and

pastoral care for the congregation and administrative guidance for the church. For more information visit <https://northoak.net/>. To apply, please submit a cover letter and resume to pastorsearch@northoak.net

Pastor of Student Ministries: Reedley MB Church has an open full-time position for a pastor of student ministries. Reedley is a small rural town located in the middle of California. There are many opportunities for student ministries to flourish within the community. The pastor of student ministries will have many purposes and responsibilities including discipling students, providing Christian experiences to enhance spiritual maturity and to be a resource to students, parents, the church and the community. If you feel called to serve God and work with students, we would love to talk to you. Deadline: Aug. 1, 2022. Visit: reedleymbc.org/students. Contact the Reedley MB Church office with questions: 559-638-8123 or studentministries@reedleymbc.org

Worship Director: Good News Fellowship is a growing community of faith that is multiplying, equipping and empowering households of faith. GNF is seeking a part-time worship director to lead the church body in musically celebrating God. The worship director provides leadership by creating an inviting, worshipful atmosphere, a space in which people can meet with God; leading the congregation and the members of the worship ministry in growing their relationship with the Lord through worship; and developing a rotating team of worship leaders. More information can be found at: <https://www.goodnewsfellowship.org/worshipdirector>. Interested applicants can send cover letter and résumé to office@goodnewsfellowship.org.

Proclaim the good news

The Holy Spirit empowers us to be God's ambassadors

It's always been the church's responsibility to passionately and intentionally reach people who don't yet know Jesus. But we've usually not been very good at that. And too often, we've not even been concerned about sharing our faith with others.

Article 7 of our USMB Confession of Faith is rooted in Christ's command to share his good news with the world (Matthew 28:19-20): "The Holy Spirit empowers every Christian to witness to God's salvation. The church, as a body, witnesses to God's reign in the world. By its life as a redeemed and separated community, the church reveals God's saving purposes to the world."

The Holy Spirit empowers us to be God's ambassadors of the good news. The world needs to hear our individual stories about how Jesus has changed us—transformed us. I have a story to tell. You have a story to tell. People live near each of us who could relate to our story, and it just might make an eternal difference. When people hear what was accomplished on the cross by Jesus for our salvation—redemption and payment for our sin—substitutionary atonement (that Jesus took our place)—then they can become new creations in Christ Jesus. People need to know, must know, that they can have victory through Jesus.

We cannot be silent about the truth that we know. Jesus gave up his place in heaven to come to earth as a man, yet fully God; selected a core group of disciples; taught amazing truths; was falsely accused and convicted, tortured, abused and nailed to a cross where he remained in agony, bled (his blood an atoning sacrifice for us); died; was buried and then miraculously was resurrected from the dead after three days and then ascended into glory to be at God's right hand. This is good news that we cannot be silent about.

Who is being baptized as new believers in our churches? Who are we connecting

with who are far from God, needing someone to care enough to invest themselves in relationship so that they might understand and come to know the truth about Jesus? Who will remain lost (a word Jesus used) because we just aren't talking about Jesus? Because we're too shy or too busy.

Jesus says, "For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost." He said this after encountering Zacchaeus, certainly a man who needed to be made new. Succinctly, Jesus came because we were lost. Broken. Sinners separated from God. We were headed for the judgment of God's wrath upon our souls (yes, that is a biblical reality). But Jesus came. He intervened for us. He gave his sinless life—for us! For others. For the world, if we believe.

The Bible also speaks about when Jesus returns. Readers, this will not be Jesus as quiet, meek, mild and gentle. Jesus is returning in overcoming power and for judgment. Our Confession of Faith reads, "When Christ returns, he will destroy all evil powers, including the Antichrist. Satan and all those who have rejected Christ will be condemned to eternal punishment in hell, forever separated from the presence of God."

A lot of us don't often think about Jesus in this way. Yes, Jesus loves us, and he is kind, gentle, forgiving and gives us grace. Praise him! But his coming wrath is also real. Judgment is real. Sin, if not forgiven by belief and faith in Jesus, will result in forever being separated from God. Forever.

These truths should lead us to evangelism, spur us to grieve for those who are lost and motivate us to do all we possibly can to reach people, perhaps even our closest loved ones, with the truth!

"Jesus, help us to be your hands and feet, your voice. Help us to proclaim your good news to those who are eternally lost without you. Help us, Lord, before your triumphant return, to do all we can, that some might be saved!"



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

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