

CHRISTIAN LEADER

THE MAGAZINE OF U.S. MENNONITE BRETHREN

NOVEMBER / DECEMBER 2024



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Being a congregation that cares for one another and pays attention to the needs around us takes intentional effort. Our spiritual heritage emphasizes Jesus, community and reconciliation.

Generations

Being a church for all generations

One recent Sunday morning as I looked around the church sanctuary, I realized that while the congregation wasn't large, it included seven generations, from 102-year-old Bob to 20-month-old Isaac. That morning the people who gave announcements, led singing, shared prayer requests and gave the sermon represented Boomers (born 1946-64), Generation X (1965-1980), Millennials (1981-1996) and Gen Z (1996-2012) while the Greatest Generation (1901-27), Silent Generation (1928-45) as well as Generation Alpha (2013-2025) were represented in the pews.

Researchers say we are significantly impacted by what happens during our formative years, or at least we're impacted differently than when we are adults. So, it can be helpful in our understanding of one another to be aware of world events, technological changes and other variables that have shaped the attitudes, beliefs and values of each generation.

But there is one thing we all have in common, regardless of the generation we are part of. God created us all with a need to experience love, belonging and acceptance from God and one another.

When Jesus was asked to identify the greatest commandment, he summed it all up in the word "love" (Matt. 22:36-39). The one thing God doesn't want any of us to miss is love. Jesus lived, died and rose again to demonstrate that he loves us and empowers us to love others. Love is the mark of the church, specifically love for the "least of these" — the stranger, the prisoner and those who are hungry, thirsty, naked and sick (Matt. 25:31-48).

We Mennonite Brethren live our faith from an Anabaptist perspective, with the life and teachings of Jesus at the core. We are disciples of Jesus who seek to love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul and mind. We love our neighbors as ourselves and prioritize connecting and supporting one another as a genuine community of faith despite generational differences. This sense of community, of belonging, is important

and extends beyond our congregations to the needs of those around us.

Being a congregation that cares for one another and pays attention to the needs around us takes intentional effort. Our spiritual heritage emphasizes Jesus, community and reconciliation. Let's commit to being people who prioritize authentic relationships so that all of us, from 20 months to 102 years, are part of faith communities that value one another.



**Connie Faber,
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CHRISTIANLEADER

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Jesus calls us to baptize others, which is the result of sharing the good news of Jesus, and to teach others to obey what we have learned from Jesus.

Making disciples

Discipleship isn't as complicated as we think

There is a good chance you could at least roughly quote the words of Jesus in Matthew 28:19-20. For those who don't immediately identify the citation, I imagine you recognize the great commission. A simple command from Jesus to go and make disciples. Making disciples is central work together as Mennonite Brethren churches. Yet there are so many in our churches who can quote this passage but are not obeying the command found in it.

Are you making disciples? In this issue, you will read about young adults and the challenges churches currently face in engaging and retaining this age group. You will also read a heartening personal story of why one young person has remained involved in her local church.

We could rightly sound an alarm looking at statistics of young people and their disconnect from the local church. We could invest tremendous resources and dream up new tactics, methods and strategies. But perhaps the hardest thing for us to do is to stop, look in the mirror and ask, "Am I making disciples as a follower of Jesus?"

Some of us get stuck on where to start. Many of us haven't experienced being disciplined. While the command to go and make disciples is not complex, it isn't easy either, and there is a personal cost. The hard reality is that we cannot consider ourselves obedient to Jesus if we are not personally invested in discipling others as followers of Jesus.

I am convinced our lack of disciple-making is central to our shortage of ministry leaders and a key to reengaging younger generations in the church if we effectively address the problem. Addressing the problem doesn't begin with a new program; it starts with people like you and me committing ourselves to disciple others. The good news is that discipling others isn't as complicated as you might think.

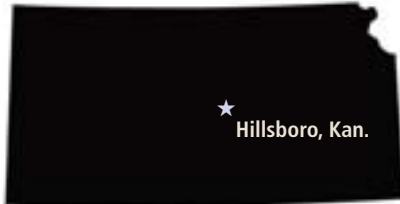
Jesus calls us to baptize others, which is the result of sharing the good news of Jesus, and to teach others to obey what we have learned from Jesus. That second part seems to trip many of us up. We might wonder what curriculum to use or where to begin.

The first person to disciple me simply asked if I wanted to have coffee together and begin reading through 1 Peter. All Greg did was invite me to read God's Word and have a conversation where he could share with me what he had learned from Jesus. It wasn't a program; it was a natural conversation between one more mature follower of Jesus and me. There was nothing complex about it, but this became a relationship that deeply affected my understanding of Jesus and the life I was called to.

If you aren't currently discipling someone, I ask you to find a person younger in their faith and invite them to coffee or a Coke and to read through 1 Peter or John or another book of the Bible together. You are part of the solution to the challenges of the church, and this is an issue of obedience to Jesus.



Aaron Box
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Parkview MB Church Hillsboro, Kan.

Established: 1869
Joined USMB: 1954
Attendance: 199
Lead Pastor: Tom Byford

Our congregation in three words:

Generous, Serving, Patient

Connect with us!

www.parkviewmb.com

Facebook: [ParkviewMBChurch](#)

Instagram: [parkviewmbchurch](#)



Top Photo: Team Kid is the Wednesday night Awana program for 3rd-5th graders that includes music, activities, Scripture memory and small-group time.

Middle: A traditional meal of verenika, made by volunteers, and sausage was served as part of the 150th celebration.

Bottom: In addition to meeting Wednesday evenings, junior high and senior high youth do service projects and on Sunday help with the nursery and serve as greeters.

News in Brief

Compiled by Janae Rempel Shafer

USMB seeks donations on Giving Tuesday

Individuals and churches have an opportunity to support USMB on Giving Tuesday, Dec. 3. Giving Tuesday is a global day dedicated to generosity that falls on the first Tuesday after Thanksgiving.

Donated funds will be used to resource USMB church planters, facilitate leadership development through the Leadership Pipeline and support immigrant congregations through CORD.

"With your help this past year, our Leadership Pipeline saw a 350 percent increase in participation, City Church in Pueblo, Colo., was assisted with funds for their building purchase and CORD was able to provide much needed funds to emerging Congolese churches," says National Director Aaron Box. "Your donations will allow greater investment in young leaders and new and emerging churches in 2025."

In the 10 years USMB has been part of Giving Tuesday, donors have contributed more than \$255,000, including \$10,950 last year.

The Giving Tuesday movement raised \$3.1 billion in donations in the U.S. last year.

For more information, visit www.usmb.org/GivingTuesday. Donors may use the hashtag #USMB2024.—USMB



ICOMB announces staff transition

Due to a serious financial deficit, the International Community of Mennonite Brethren Global Board has released Elton DaSilva as the ICOMB global director, effective Oct. 1, 2024. DaSilva, previously the national director of the Canadian Conference of MB Churches, has served as the global director since Jan. 1, 2024.

ICOMB Global Board chair Paul Gerhard Dück announced the decision in an Oct. 3 letter. "For the foreseeable future, the board will carry out primary leadership duties with assistance from a Global Ministry Team of senior regional and ministry leaders," Dück says.

"Only a part-time executive assistant will be retained as paid staff."

Dück affirmed DaSilva for his vision and energy and says the board will implement DaSilva's vision for ICOMB as "financial realities permit."—ICOMB

SOAR Central Valley connects churches

Youth from six USMB churches participated in SOAR Central Valley June 10-15. SOAR Central Valley brings together English and Spanish church teams to be equipped and to serve along local ministry partners.

SOAR, a mission training program of Multiply, has three components: orientation to prepare teams for a cross-cultural experience, assignment with local mission partners and debrief in preparation for returning home.

"The church teams served with love and care as they worked together, stepped out of their comfort zones and grew together in their faith," says Silvia Lopez, Multiply Western USA staff member.

Churches that participated in SOAR Central Valley were New Life Community, Dinuba, Calif.; Ebenezer Church, Portland, Ore.; Templo De Oración, Traver, Calif.; Adonai Church, Fresno, Calif.; Reedley (Calif.) MB Church and Iglesia De La Comunidad, Raisin City, Calif.

Following a day of orientation, the 70 participants spent two days serving with either New Life Community to host an Art and Science Children's Camp or Adonai Church to



hold a carnival that drew more than 70 people from the community.

The next day SOAR volunteers served at one of three Fresno area ministries, and the final day they toured three ministries that have found creative ways to serve their communities and concluded with a debriefing session and banquet.—CL

National Pastors' Orientation slated for March in San Diego

The U.S. Board of Faith and Life will host the biennial by-invitation National Pastors' Orientation (NPO), in San Diego, Calif., March 24-26, 2025. All new pastors, either new to the pastorate or new to USMB, are invited to attend.

The NPO provides a chance for new pastors to get to know the USMB family and find encouragement, networking, refreshment and fun. Pastors learn about the resources available to them, such as life insurance, annual IRS reporting, administrative support, LEAD initiatives, *Christian Leader* magazine, events and more.

When he was a new MB pastor, National Director Aaron Box found attending NPO confirmed that he wanted to be part of the U.S. Mennonite Brethren story.

"NPO served a critical role in my life helping me move from being the pastor of an MB church to seeing myself as an MB," Box says. "It was at NPO that I connected relationally to other pastors and leaders who have been a great support to me personally and in ministry. NPO is truly one of the most important events for our pastors to be a part of."

For more information, visit www.usmb.org/npo or contact J.L. Martin at jl@usmb.org.—USMB

Fresno Pacific University celebrates 80 years

Eighty years to the day after 28 students and their teachers began classes at Pacific Bible Institute, more than 400 students, faculty, staff, administrators, board members and guests celebrated the birthday of Fresno Pacific University, Sept. 18, 2024.

Jordan Ringhofer, Pacific District minister, shared three essential points of Anabaptism: Jesus is the center of our faith, community is the center of our life and reconciliation is the center of our work. After chapel, refreshments, including a birthday cake, were served.

The school was established in 1944 and had moved to its present main campus by 1960 and become Pacific College. Accreditation to offer bachelor's degrees came in 1965, and the first master's program was approved in 1974, two



years before PC became Fresno Pacific College. In 1990, the first bachelor's degree completion classes were offered. The institution took the name Fresno Pacific University in 1997 and today its impact is felt through about 26,000 alumni, 95 percent of whom come from California.

Rooted in a mission to "develop students for leadership and service through excellence in Christian higher education," the university has built a legacy that continues to empower students to serve with ethical leadership and innovative spirit.

For a celebration schedule, visit <https://80.fpu.edu>.—FPU

World Fellowship Sunday set for Jan. 19, 2025

Mennonite World Conference (MWC) invites Anabaptist-related churches around the world to observe Anabaptist World Fellowship Sunday on Jan. 19, 2025. The theme is "The Courage to Love" and coincides with the 500th anniversary of the Anabaptist movement. Many churches choose to celebrate on the Sunday closest to Jan. 21, the date in 1525 when Christians in Zurich, Switzerland, held a baptismal service that launched the renewal movement known today as Anabaptism.

MWC has prepared materials that contain biblical texts, prayers, song suggestions, sermon ideas and stories. Resources may be found at www.mwc-cmm.org/en/resources/anabaptist-world-fellowship-sunday-2025.—MWC

| Read longer versions of these and other articles at christianleadermag.com |

MB leader receives award

Margarita Angulo, a social worker and Mennonite Brethren church leader from Colombia, has been awarded the 2024 Michael J. Sharp Global Peacemaker Award for fostering peace in her community and for the way peace infuses her daily life in an environment of constant danger. Angulo's real name is not being used for her security.

Colombia's Chocó region has suffered for decades as the result of the violence of armed guerilla groups and paramilitaries and the control the groups exert through curfews, murders, displacement, confinement and extortion.

Angulo organized a church initiative to teach children about peacebuilding and the possibility of living without violence. The initiative started with children and then progressed to adolescents and eventually youth and adults—80 people currently.

The purpose of the church initiative, funded by MCC through the MB Conference of Chocó, is to "awaken the desire to live differently, to be peacemakers, create ideas, to learn different ways of seeing, saying, doing and giving," Angulo says.

Together with a team of women from her church and the community, the children spend two evenings a week learning about peace. They practice peaceful interaction as they play, make art, create dramas, dance and listen to various teachings.

MCC created the Michael J. Sharp Global Peacemaker Award in 2023 in honor of Sharp, who was committed to peacebuilding. Sharp, a former MCC worker, was killed in 2017 by unidentified assailants while working for the United Nations in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.—MCC

CCMBC names national director

Delegates to the Canadian Conference of MB Church's Annual General Meeting held virtually June 13, 2024, unanimously affirmed the Executive Board's decision to appoint Cam Stuart as CCMBC's national director.

In his response, Stuart described the discernment process that ultimately led him to take the role, and how grateful he is to have served as an MB pastor for over 30 years and now to serve as CCMBC's national director. Stuart encouraged delegates and attendees to take the posture of servanthood described in Philippians 2:1-10: to serve like Jesus by humbly listening to each other and to the Spirit of God who leads.—CCMBC



5 minutes with...

ACACIA CHRISJOHN

Acacia Chrisjohn, far right, didn't really need another interest to pursue at Hesston High School. She was an artist, played in concert and jazz bands, and was active with her youth group at Koerner Heights Church in



Newton, Kan. The school's robotics team wasn't even on her radar, but some friends encouraged her to try it in her sophomore year. By her senior year, she and two teammates won the Kansas state championship and went on to compete at the VEX Robotics 2024 World Championship last spring.

What are the basics of a robotics team?

VEX Robotics develops a game every year. High school teams design, build and code a robot to play the game. Last year's game had scoring objects the robots had to get into low netted goals on either end of the field and obstacles for the robots to navigate. Four teams are in the arena during each game, randomly assigned into two alliances who compete two on two against each other. You're often teamed with others you've never played with before so there's a lot of communication and strategizing with people you don't know.

What does it take to create this robot?

It's a lot of strategizing, designing and trial and error. One of our team members did most of the actual building and coding. My role was notebooking with daily entries, reviews of every single competition, the strategies we saw in other teams and explaining our thought process on why we chose specific mechanisms. My team completely re-built our robot four times before we got to the state championship.

How does the notebook help in your competition?

Besides getting us points for the overall state championship,

we also submitted the notebook for the Innovate Award. Based on our notebook explanation of why we built our robot's climbing mechanism and why we thought it would be effective in our game-playing, we won that award, too.

What was it like to compete at the World Championship in Dallas, Texas?

It was very interesting to see how the game strategy had developed differently in other parts of the world. They had completely different robot builds. One of the partners we were teamed up with for a competition was from India and didn't speak English. It was a real test of our patience and communication abilities, but definitely in a good way.

Are there ways you have found your faith affected by this competition?

I really enjoyed the way Hesston's team members got together to pray at the beginning of every competition. It calmed a lot of nerves and brought our team together in friendship and with God. Not everyone in robotics is a Christian, but some others also came into our prayer times, and I found it amazing how it kick-started their relationship with God.

Interview by Kathy Heinrichs Wiest

Association of MB Churches of Colombia

Asociación de Iglesias Hermanos Menonitas de Colombia (Association of MB Churches of Colombia) marked a historic milestone Aug. 7-10 as it gathered for the first official National Congress in the serene town of La Cumbre, northwest of Cali. This momentous event brought together approximately 80 leaders from across the country for worship, fellowship, community building and spiritual reflection. The congress, a culmination of decades of growth and dedication, symbolizes the unity and shared vision of the MB community in Colombia.

Each day began with lively worship sessions that set the tone for the rest of the day. Leaders from Colombia's three established district conferences took turns leading the morning devotions. These moments of worship were more than just routine activities. It was a time for leaders to reconnect with their faith, draw strength from their shared beliefs and prepare their hearts for the discussions and activities that lay ahead.

Guest speaker Elton DaSilva, former ICOMB global director, led the plenary sessions that delved into the challenges and opportunities that the global church faces in today's rapidly changing world. The leaders engaged in deep and thoughtful dialogue centered around how the Christian faith can effectively respond to an often-antagonistic global agenda that seeks to undermine the principles of God's kingdom.

Plenary sessions were followed by table discussions and strategy sessions to develop actionable strategies for the local context. The collaborative nature of these sessions fostered a sense of unity and shared purpose, as the leaders worked together to chart a course for the future of



During the congress, discussions about how the church can be countercultural were grounded in the New Testament church.

their conference.

In the afternoons, participants heard reports from the various districts, showcasing the dedication and creativity of the leaders in fulfilling their mission in Colombia and beyond. Leaders shared updates from the mission agency, training and discipleship centers, schools, theological training centers, social enterprises and missionaries and international partners.

The evenings were spent building community and fellowship, with games and interactive sessions designed to foster connections across generations. This intergenerational connection underscored the importance of mentoring and investing in the next generation of leaders. The passion, energy and fresh perspectives of the next generation was evident throughout the congress, signaling a bright future for the MB community in Colombia.

The Colombia national conference, with its approximately 45 congregations spread across the country, traces its beginnings to the work of North American missionaries in 1945. This first National Congress celebrated the church's rich history and was also a pivotal moment in its ongoing journey. As the leaders returned to their communities, they carried with them a renewed sense of purpose and a shared vision for

Did You Know?

- Colombia is a “megadiverse” country. For example, it has more bird species than Europe and North America combined.
- The traditional national sport is tejo, a team sport that some describe as a high-pressure game of cornhole.
- By law, radio and public television must play the national anthem daily at 6 a.m. and 6 p.m.

WHY CHURCH

Three reasons I value the local church



My local church has impacted me in important ways. When I was asked to write about why, as a young adult, I stay involved with the local church, I confidently said yes, sure that I had many ideas as to why the church is important. However, as I sat down to write, my mind could only come up with, "Well, my dad says it is important, and I know the Bible talks about it somewhere." That was at the beginning of June.

This summer I was an intern at Bethesda Church in Huron, S.D., the church I grew up attending. During my internship, I learned many things and was able to dive deeper into why I believe some of the things that I do. One of those things is why involvement in the local church is important to me and other members of the body of Christ.

As a result of my internship, I have a fuller biblical understanding of the importance of the local church. And, though I trust my dad's advice and judgment, I am glad that my view is now grounded more firmly in Scripture.

The New Testament includes many letters written by Paul to specific bodies of believers, to local churches. He writes about how to live as believers within the body of Christ. Given what Paul writes and my own experiences, here are three reasons why I value being part of a local congregation.

Intentional discipleship

While the local church is a powerful tool for evangelism, it is also a place where intentional discipleship can happen.

Granted, it is not the only place where discipleship happens, and many churches need a lot of work in this area. However, healthy churches include intentional disci-

pleship. When I talk about discipleship, I am referring to believers coming alongside their brothers and sisters and walking with them as they seek to grow as disciples of Jesus Christ.

During my summer internship, I was discipled mainly by two members of the Bethesda church staff: Pastor Aaron Garza and worship coordinator Lorena Blom. Through reading books, studying Scripture, having conversations and working alongside them, both Pastor Aaron and Lorena challenged and encouraged me. They pushed me to think deeply and step into leadership roles that stretched my comfort zone. Their discipleship has served to grow me and equip me to lead better, both in how I function in my position as a leader and how I come alongside those I lead with. Discipleship is essential for any believer, and I have seen the fruit of it in my life.

Accountability

With discipleship comes accountability. It is so easy to remain at the same place in my faith when I don't have anyone to keep me accountable. I need people who make sure my life matches what I profess to believe. I am blessed with a group of friends who keep me accountable and challenge me as we seek Jesus together. However, I appreciate that attending a local church allows for those same things to happen with people of different ages and in all stages of life. The diversity within my churches in Huron and Hillsboro is beautiful, and I feel blessed to be part of them.

As a worship leader, I am accountable to God as well as the congregation for what I put into my mind and heart each week. Leading worship is not just standing in front of people and singing. It is also speaking truth and encouraging the congregation to think about who they are worshipping.

I believe it is important to include Scripture between songs to connect what we sing to the truth that we hear from God's Word. That is why I need to spend time daily with God and fill my heart with truth from his Word, so that what comes out on a Sunday morning is in line with truth. So, it is not just individuals who hold me accountable but the whole congregation as well.

Service

Finally, being part of a church creates opportunities to serve the body and bring glory to God in doing so. At Bethesda, I have experienced much joy in serving in children and youth ministries, as well as on the worship team. At Ebenfeld MB Church, I have also served on the worship team and I am helping in a kids' Sunday School classroom.

As I was reflecting on how I have served in the church, I was led to ask why. Why have I chosen to serve in my churches rather than simply attend on a Sunday morning?

Service is something that has been stressed in my family for a long time. I grew up watching my parents selflessly serve countless numbers of people, both in and outside the church. As my siblings and I grew older, my parents encouraged us to serve in the church as well. After all, church is a place where I not only get poured into, but where I can also pour into others. I receive so that I can give.

Furthermore, I look to 2 Corinthians 9 for why I serve. In this chapter, Paul writes about generosity. I want to be generous with my time and the gifts God has given me, and the church is a wonderful place to do it. When I serve, I am so often blessed by my church body, even when I am serving on what feels like an empty tank. However, it is in these moments that I remember the ultimate reason for why I serve—so God will be glorified.

2 Corinthians 2:12-13 says, "This service that you perform is not only supplying the needs of the Lord's people but is also overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God. Because of the service by which you have proved yourselves, others will praise God for the obedience that accompanies your confession of the gospel of Christ, and for your generosity in sharing with them and with everyone else."

I am thankful for the opportunities God has given me to love and serve the people in his church. It's a beautiful circle of receiving and giving that is only possible because we received what Christ so graciously gave us first. When I think about what Christ did for me, it makes me want to serve.

God has used the churches I've been involved with to impact me in a big way. I take much joy in practicing Colossians 3:12-17 with my brothers and sisters. But while I love being involved in the local church, I have seen people hurt by the church. I am incredibly sad when people speak of experiences that have pushed them away from the church or worse, pushed them away from their faith. I pray that in these situations Jesus will heal the hurts, draw people back to himself and in his grace reveal the beauty of his church as it is intended to function.

As part of my internship, I read *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church* by Mark Dever. This book helped me appreciate the local church more and solidified my belief that the local church is essential to a believer's walk with Christ. I love what Dever says: "Being part of the church is being part of a family. Committing yourself to relationships within the church will bring glory to God." That is my desire—may God receive all the glory.

Faith Nelson is from Huron, S.D., where she attends Bethesda Church. She is currently a junior at Tabor College in Hillsboro, Kan., where she attends Ebenfeld MB Church.

3 challenges to discipling young adults

The daunting impact of isolation, polarization and lack of space to search

By Russ Claassen

Not long ago I met an old friend for breakfast. We had a wonderful time catching up and reminiscing over days gone by. As we talked, I was reminded of the different paths people take in life. My friend and I used to participate in church youth group activities together, talk about faith and enjoy conversation from a relatively similar perspective.

This particular morning the conversation flowed like it used to—with one significant difference. Years ago, my friend had walked away from faith, at least faith as I know it, and our perspectives of God, life and eternity are no longer as similar. Both of us have been molded and shaped, just in different directions.

One of the things that churches and pastors struggle with today is how to disciple young adults. Our churches are filled with children's pastors, youth pastors, lead pastors and lay people that pour love, teaching and time into children, youth and young adults.

The lives of children and teens may show evidence of following Jesus and church involvement. Yet, these pastors and congregations are facing serious challenges and discouragement as they watch young adults leave not only their church, but possibly their faith.

As concerning as it is, this is nothing new. My friend's life story confirms that. Additionally, 30 years ago, I sat in college and seminary classes discussing the clear crisis of young people graduating (leaving) the local church when they graduated high school or college. The questions were: Why are they leaving? What can we do to get them to stay involved?

There were many theories, and most of them likely contained at least a little bit of truth. However, there were no easy answers. At the same time, there was an expectation that those leaving the church would return once they had families of their own. The same questions are being asked today, but without the expectation of a return.

In many youth ministry circles, the questions have moved from, "How do we grow as a youth ministry and then keep young people involved in the church after high school?" to, "How do we not lose them in high school and keep some of them after they graduate?" Pastors are searching for answers.

Navigating the challenges pastors face in discipling young adults is a daunting and possibly undefinable task. Three of the challenges I observe include isolation, polarization and a lack of space to search.

Isolation

In our phone-centric social media driven culture, we have become more and more isolated. We enjoy our space and do not appreciate it when others enter our physical spaces. It is harder and harder to find the high school hangouts. When not participating in an organized activity, teenagers are staying at home more than ever. Contact with their friends and the world is through the video game headset and social media. It isn't just young people. As a culture, the communities I've observed are less and less personally engaging and hospitable.

Isolation is not simply avoiding all contact with other people. It can also manifest itself in such rigorous schedules that there is no room for in-depth personal interaction and consistent community. Both types of isolation pose a challenge to gathering as the church as we are accustomed to. Additionally, young adults no longer come to a pastor or church for help, advice and answers. They have

Isolation is not simply avoiding all contact with other people.

everything they need at their fingertips, thanks to their phones. Amidst the challenges of isolation, pastors can find encouragement and hope in relationships. The ultimate goal is to do our part in making individuals and families feel loved and cared for. This can happen at a church service, but in today's culture that is only the smallest of starting points.

Personal communication, encouragement, checking in and showing up at events can go a long way in building meaningful relationships. It may be uncomfortable at first, but if pastors and individuals in the church take the lead in reaching out via phone/social media, they can instigate conversations. Digital conversations can even lead to in-person coffees and lunches.

Choosing sides

A second challenge is the polarization of our society. We are expected to choose sides on everything from what's happening in our backyard to politics to, well, just about everything. Everyone has an opinion or perspective and is encouraged to voice it without discernment nor compromise.

If someone does not agree with what has been expressed, then one of them must be wrong—the one I do not agree with.

Civil discussion, compromise, entering conversation with humility trying to understand

another's point of view and having an openness to changing one's opinion is only mildly tolerated, if at all. You must take a side. You are either for or against me. It is personal on every level.

This type of thinking has infiltrated our churches and is creating fear and hard lines in the sand regarding what a "real" Christian must believe, say and do in life, faith and politics. Kindness and compassion for the "other side" are often seen as weakness and a softening of principles. Things are much more complicated than our dualistic polarized lines can allow for.

When it comes to polarization, the hope and encouragement to pastors rests in contentment and confidence in Christ. It is okay to have differences of opinions and perspectives. The common denominator is still Jesus.

There is a huge need for followers of Jesus to step up and take the lead in bridging the gap between the two sides. Which two sides? Any and all of them. We are called to stand against fear, to stand in the gap, to be peace makers, to love our enemies and to show we are Christians by our love.

We are expected to choose sides on everything...

Space for questions

The third challenge is that young adults are open, curious and eager for truth. This is a great quality, but it means in their search for truth there must be space to ask questions, push back and explore a gamut of ideas. When young adults ask questions and curiously offer different ideas and perspectives, they are often met by a church that wants to feed them an answer, condemn their differences and quiet their questions. If not allowed to explore and engage the depths of their search for truth, young adults will leave and find a place that will embrace them.

Pastors can find hope and be encouraged by this opportunity to interact with people in search of the truth. The reality is none of us have a corner on the market of all truth. The apostle Paul taught us this. We are constantly learning, growing and maturing in our faith and it is still molding who we are. Are there certain things that we can all agree on? Yes, as Christians we find there are some common creeds and beliefs that we stand firm on.

The church is in such an amazing place to be able to handle questions and curiosities because it is made up of people seeking, wrestling and searching for the same truth. Sometimes our questions are different or come at different times.

When we hold a place for others to interact with their questions, doubts and differing thoughts, we hold space for God to provide answers. It is essential to use the knowledge and wisdom of Scripture that God has given to guide us within that space. It is also essential that we do not let differing opinions destroy our relationship and ability to listen and learn from others.

There is hope and encouragement for pastors and other church leaders. Shifts are constantly happening within our culture. While this means pastors and congregations constantly need to shift, it might actually be right in their wheelhouse.

As shepherds and people of the Word, pastors are primed to equip young adults with a listening ear, a love for people, spiritual disciplines including the much-needed silence and solitude, along with the simple truth of Jesus to stand on. Pastors and church leaders must face the challenge of discipling young adults head on with a dive inward. There must be a symbiotic relationship between knowledge of who God is as given in Scripture and the work of the Holy Spirit.

All too often pastors and congregations rely on their knowledge, programs and structure to provide the discipleship young adults need in their lives. Yes, these are

necessary elements, but the real needs might be addressed in intentionally reaching out, having open conversations, providing space for questions and doubts, humbly letting God do the inside work and seeing each person as someone fully loved by Triune God.

Russ Claassen is the Southern District Conference youth minister, a mobilizer for the USMB NextGen Leadership Pipeline and a trained spiritual director.

If not allowed to explore and engage the depths of their search for truth, young adults will leave and find a place that will embrace them.

WHAT NOW?

In 2019, nearly two-thirds of 18-to 29-year-olds in the U.S. who grew up in church and were active as a child or teen told the Barna research group that they had withdrawn from church involvement as an adult. Why is this happening? What can we do about it?

The Christian Leader posed these questions to two individuals involved in USMB ministry to young adults. Kyle Goings is the director of NextGen, the USMB ministry to young adults. He is also the NextGen pastor at Ridgepoint Church, Wichita, Kan. Joanna Chapa is a mission mobilizer with Multiply. Both Goings and Chapa spoke at the USMB leadership vision summit in January 2024.

An interview with Kyle Goings and Joanna Chapa concerning youth, their faith and the church

CL: Why are youth leaving the church?

Goings: This is a question many churches are asking. But if your starting point is this question, you've already missed the boat. This question assumes most youth grew up in the church and left when they got older. The reality is that each generation has fewer individuals raised in the church, which means that the number who can leave is declining.

Barna just released statistics that only 4 percent of Generation Z (born from 1997 to 2015) possess a biblical worldview. There are several reasons why this is happening:

- There is a decline in the priority parents place on nurturing their children's faith with church involvement, coupled with decreased church attendance among adults.
- Culture and technology have a growing impact on shaping young people's identities, overshadowing the church's influence.
- The traditional model of youth ministry (pizza, a game, then a Bible study led by a volunteer) is no

longer effective—and is even potentially counterproductive.

- There's a noticeable decrease in youth actively sharing their faith with peers or recognizing the importance of such outreach, even though with technology they are the most connected generation in human history.

This situation didn't arise overnight; it's the result of generational shifts, signaling a profound challenge for the church. Understanding the severity of this challenge is crucial to impacting the up-and-coming generations.

Chapa: That is quite interesting and sobering, Kyle. Quite honestly, it leads me to first lament this. But it also makes me wonder if those young people that did grow up "in the church" ever felt like they were a part of it to begin with.

I've had multiple conversations with adults who are worried—even panicking—that young people are leaving the church. But *what if* we are simply reaping what we have sowed with the lack of disci-

pleship or followership of Jesus within our churches, especially within the intergenerational reality of the church?

Might it be that because the church is engulfed with programs separating teens from “the church,” coupled with the radical individualization that is permeating our North American culture and our churches, we have potentially and inadvertently taught young people that they don’t belong—at least not yet.

So, they can’t leave a church they’ve never been a part of in the first place. I know this might seem like a harsh observation, but as we look at the biblical narrative, there are countless moments of the people of God missing the boat.

CL: So, has the church missed the boat?

Goings: The short answer is no, not yet. But we need to realize the current reality that there will simply be fewer Christians in the coming generations. This is reminiscent of the biblical account of Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. Despite the destruction of their homeland and being taken captive in Babylon, these young men stood resilient in their faith amidst a culture that pressured them to conform. Not only did they resist, they flourished.

David Kinnaman and Mark Matlock, in their book *Faith for Exiles*, talk about our current era as a “digital Babylon.” This context challenges us not to dwell on the number of youth leaving the church or the vast number of youth not in church but to invest in those who remain, fostering their resilience. Ministry to teenagers and young adults must evolve differently from the traditional methods experienced by us adults who are over 40. Recognizing this paradigm shift is crucial. By simply taking the time to observe and adapt, we can see that hope for engaging the next generations in meaningful faith experiences is far from lost.

Chapa: In the book *Mobilizing Gen Z*, Jolene Erlacher and Katy White also shed light on this Babylon reality. They write, “For many years, we were leaders in our own Judah, where our faith harmonized with the culture around us. Now, how-

ever, God is calling us to lead in a kind of Babylon where our faith stands in stark contrast to the culture in which we live.”

This makes me jump to the question, So, what do we do now? If there is a sense that we’ve somewhat missed the boat, what now?

CL: Good question. What can congregations do to help high school students and young adults stay connected to their local church and their faith?

Goings: Addressing the crucial issue of healthy youth ministries in churches highlights the pressing need for a fundamental shift in perspective. Despite the peak attendance of youth in churches during the 1990s, a misalignment in understanding and engaging young people has persisted since then. The wider culture (think advertisers) recognizes the value and potential of youth, often placing them at the forefront of change and innovation.

However, many churches continue to view youth ministry as merely an extension of the children’s ministry, focusing on basic biblical teachings and right behavior without truly challenging or involving youth in meaningful ways outside a Sunday school class or Bible study.

Youth are frequently sidelined and encouraged to observe rather than participate actively in church life. This contrasts sharply with societal trends where young voices are amplified and even valued. It’s not about assigning leadership roles beyond their capacity but rather integrating them into the ethos of church activities—be it through teaching younger kids Sunday school, leading Bible studies, being on the worship team or in the tech booth or even being an usher.

The question we face is how to bridge the gap between passive participation and active involvement, fostering a sense of belonging and contribution among our youth that leads to ownership in the body of Christ. By mentoring and engaging with youth directly, we can cultivate a generation that feels empowered to serve alongside adults, enriching our church community and ensuring its vibrancy for years to come.

Chapa: Yes! So, what if we started intentionally allowing the younger generations to live into the



“...They can't leave a church they've never been a part of in the first place. I know this might seem like a harsh observation, but as we look at the biblical narrative, there are countless moments of the people of God missing the boat.”

reality that they are a part of the church today? Not tomorrow. Not 20 years from now. Rather, they are a part of the church right now!

This means older generations start shoulder-tapping high school students and young adults, even children, with the desire to hear them out, ask them questions with the hopes of understanding the cross-cultural realities that are intergenerational differences and not trying to make them into a replica of their own generational values.

It means that older generations encourage younger generations to follow Jesus in their generational realities, walking with them as the next generations are empowered and released to discover their God-given giftings.

“Intergenerational relationships are crucial,” Er-lacher and White write. “The number one predictive factor as to whether or not a young Christian will retain his or her faith is whether that person has a meaningful relationship with an older Christian.”

I encourage us to approach a cross-generation relationship as we would (or should) approach a cross-cultural relationship. Before jumping to assumptions, solutions and conclusions, we should choose to humbly and with sincerity be curious to get to know those in other generations and their story as we ask questions, observe and listen. Many would agree, if we are seeking to help someone, we must first seek to understand someone.

Read more: Youth and the church

Read online at www.christianleadermag.com

“Raising and keeping the next generation” by Brent Warkentin

“In what ways are students and young adults more than just the future of the church?” asks Brent Warkentin. “In what ways are they the present? And perhaps more importantly, how can we tap into the gifts and contributions of the next generation?” Warkentin considers these and other questions in this essay.

“How do you define community” by Michele Fiester

There has been a shift among young people in how they think about community, writes Michele Fiester. “Through advancing technology, complex conversations and solid relationships can now be built without regard for geographical proximity.” Fiester explores ways to help young people build community online and in person.

Come, Be Born in Us Again

Adam and Eve's defiance afflicts us
we pretend you are not here God
fearless serpent entices us to trust him
we need no one to tell us
what we can and cannot do

we taste the forbidden fruit
our insides growl from conflict and despair
we twist and turn from our selfish pursuits
our hope rots without you God

You made us a little lower than angels
but that is not enough
You knit us together in our mothers' wombs
Come, be born in us again

Shirley Klotz Bickel

Shirley Klotz Bickel is a retired Christian educator.
Her poems have been published in magazines as
well as in *Voice of Many Waters: A Sacred Anthology for Today*.

The gift of waiting

Advent helps us slow down

"He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give him the throne of David, his father, and he will rule over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end" (Luke 1:32-33, CSB).

In our fast-paced, instant-gratification culture, the discipline of waiting is countercultural. Advent teaches us to resist the hurry and instead lean into the slow, deliberate pace of God's timing. It's an annual reminder that God doesn't operate on our schedules, that his ways are not ours.

For the next generation, the world is full of distractions. Constant notifications and ever-increasing busyness are the chorus of our world today. Beautifully, the practice of Advent offers something profoundly different: space.

Space to reflect, to pray, to reset our hearts and minds. In a culture that values productivity over presence, Advent invites us to focus on presence—God's presence with us, Emmanuel. This slowing down helps us all experience a different rhythm, one that aligns more with the pace of the kingdom than the pace of the world.

When we celebrate Advent, we pass on something vital to the next generation: a vision of faith that is not hurried, shallow or transactional. The practices of lighting candles, reading Scripture, singing hymns and waiting to-

gether as a community form a deep well from which future generations can draw.

For us as Anabaptists, the communal aspect of faith is crucial. Christmas and the Advent season remind us that we are not alone in our waiting. As we gather around the dinner table, in church services and in family devotions, we are reminded that faith is lived out in community. This is a gift for the next generation—learning that faith is part of a larger story, a story of God's people waiting together for the fullness of Christ's kingdom.

Advent also becomes a time of formation, shaping us into people of patience, hope, peace, love and joy. These qualities run counter to the anxious, divided world around us. Teaching our families to engage in Advent instills in us a sense of anticipation not just for Christmas but for the return of Jesus. It gives us a framework to process our longings and unmet desires, grounding them in the hope that Christ has come and will come again.

This practice of waiting, of celebrating the now-and-not-yet reality of God's kingdom, helps create a generation that is not driven by impulse but by purpose, not swayed by the winds but anchored in the peace of Christ.

Advent is an invitation to immerse ourselves in the beauty of Christ's story. In a world that pulls us in every direction, the season of waiting reorients us toward the most breathtaking reality—God coming to dwell among us. It becomes a reminder of beauty in a noisy and fragmented world. In the stillness of candlelight, we are

reminded of the radiance of Christ, shining in the darkness.

We should embrace Advent as a time of deepening discipleship, of preparing ourselves and our families to live like Jesus. Through the simple practices of Advent, we rediscover the richness of waiting, the beauty of community and the hope of Christ's kingdom.

Advent is an invitation to immerse ourselves in the beauty of Christ's story.



Matt Walker Thrift is lead pastor of Koerner Heights Church in Newton, Kan., and the author of *Follow: Genuine Discipleship in the Modern Age.*

Curious children

Questions kids ask about spiritual topics

Kids are curious. Anyone who has spent time driving with a child knows how many questions they can ask and how quickly they can ask them.

Theologian Kaitlyn Schiess takes a special interest in kids' questions and is using her podcast "Curiously, Kaitlyn" to further conversation. She notices many of us are curious about aspects of spiritual life but adults tend to get self-conscious about asking questions. "Fortunately," she points out in her trailer video, "kids don't have that problem." She receives queries from children across the country and invites spiritual leaders to answer using understandable language.

Like Kaitlyn, many of us wonder what our children are curious about. I reached out to several USMB children and youth ministry leaders to get a sense of what our kids and teenagers are asking about at church. The replies cover a wide variety of topics across age groups, primarily about the Bible, heaven, current culture and discipleship.

Many of our youngest community members are asking questions about the Bible. They want to know more about stories in Scripture as well as how to engage with the text in everyday situations. Groups have recently explored questions like: Is there a certain way I have to read the Bible? Why did Jonah disobey

God? And one of the questions I have been hesitant to ask out loud, why does the Bible have so many pages?

Multiple leaders say they are having conversations with kids about heaven and the spiritual realm fueled by questions about what heaven is like and when the world will end. There are many things we can't see or easily comprehend that our students want clarified: How do I know if God is even watching me? Why does Satan try to tempt us and why did he betray God? Do angels have big personalities? If so, why did God create us if he already had good company?

Our students are also asking questions about interpreting our culture and navigating spiritual commitments. Some of our teens are asking if Christianity is the only way to salvation and why we should try to persuade someone to become a Christian if they are happy with their lives. They are curious about sexuality and gender, preparing for a future career, as well as using technology with wisdom.

Young people in our churches are encountering conflict, whether that be drama at school or navigating stressful situations at home. They are seeking guidance from adult leaders and each other about how to be disciples of Jesus. They wonder how to avoid fights with siblings and how to deal with bullies at school. Groups are exploring ways to be peacemakers and thinking through "what if" scenarios to be better prepared for life's challenges.

It is important for us in the church to realize that our young people are looking for others to

share in their curiosity. Just as Jesus invites the presence—and undoubtedly questions—of children, we too can "let the little children come" and examine things together (Mark 10:14). It is a privilege to ponder these questions and process spiritual topics together. We can provide a safe and loving environment for our kids to wonder and remind them that their questions are important to God and to us.

It is important for us in the church to realize that our young people are looking for others to share in their curiosity.



Caitlin Friesen, a graduate of Fresno Pacific Biblical Seminary, is married to Ben Friesen and is part of Cornerstone Community Church in Topeka, Kan.

In their own words

Students reflect on their mission experiences

Declining church attendance among younger generations has left pastors and church leaders searching for answers on how to encourage young people's continued involvement in the church after high school. This topic, including what to do about a shortage of young ministry leaders, is a conversation among U.S. Mennonite Brethren.

The feature articles in this issue focus on young adults and the church. Writers suggest that youth are not the future of the church; they

are the church. Fostering active participation and a sense of belonging are vital. Our youth must not be relegated to the sidelines.

In this issue, we did not just want to write about youth, we wanted to hear from them. We asked youth pastors for help in identifying students who participated in church mission trips, and we received the following seven responses. You will read reflections by students who stepped out of their comfort zones and onto the streets of Nashville and into the jungles of Peru. You'll read in

students' own words how they sensed God's presence, grew in their desire to serve their church community, experienced God's provision and developed hearts for those who don't yet know Jesus.

Students like these are continuing to not only engage in the church but also be transformed to be more like Jesus. We hope these stories encourage young and older generations alike as we follow Jesus together as members of the USMB family.—

Janae Rempel Shafer

Jay Darling, 12th grade Bethesda Church, Huron, S.D.

Mission trip to: Redemption Church in Owatonna, Minn., June 22-29

Group size: 11 students and 4 leaders

Purpose: To help Redemption host their first vacation Bible school and equip them for similar events in the future.

Working with the kids and youth at Redemption was a blessing. People opened their homes and welcomed us with open arms. Throughout the week, I saw friendships bloom and the seeds of God planted.

Before we left home, I had prayed for good communication in order to spread the gospel and make connections. When we arrived in Owatonna, we made friends with everyone and effec-

tively communicated the gospel with the kids that came to VBS.

One memory I have is the kids jumping to the front of the church to dance along. We sensed God's presence in the church and its members. I pray that anyone who walks into Redemption Church will see this.

I was so sad to leave. Owatonna is truly a beautiful place, and we will continue to pray for opportunities to spread the gospel.



Students from Bethesda Church in Huron, S.D., assist with vacation Bible school at Redemption Church in Owatonna, Minn. *Photo by: Chris Nelson.*

Mary LePage, 12th grade Community Bible Church, Olathe, Kan.

Mission trip to: Lakeview Church, Stansbury Park, Utah, July 24-30

Group size: 15 of all ages

Purpose: To encourage this 5-year-old church plant and continue in building relationships that persist.

Before our trip we did some research as a group about the LDS church. Because of that I had facts and information in my head and kept thinking, "How can people be so crazy as to believe these ideas?"

Getting a tour of the LDS conference center by two young women changed how I was thinking. I saw them so passionately talking about what they put

their faith in. I no longer thought they were crazy but instead found myself praying, "God, please show yourself to them so that they can know and worship the one true God."

Through meeting and hearing the stories of LDS members and former LDS members, God has given me a new heart and perspective for those who are deceived and misled.



The CBC team listens to a tour at Salt Lake City's Temple Square. This was CBC's sixth "partner" trip to Stansbury Park. *Photo by: Russ Friesen.*

Quinlyn Funk, 11th grade Hillsboro (Kan.) MB Church

Mission trip to: Camp Barnabas, Purdy, Mo., July 27-Aug. 2

Group size: 24

Purpose: To spend a week walking hand-in-hand with campers with cognitive and physical disabilities to provide a camp experience that would not be possible otherwise.

What a great summer to serve the Lord! Camp Barnabas is a special place. It's filled with joy and enthusiasm from the campers and the staff. It really is a glimpse of heaven on earth.

Before the trip, I wasn't sure what to expect even though I had been before. There were a lot of unknowns going into it, but it turned out great! After I

got home, I realized how different it was from the last time. Both years were great in their own way, but this year was especially awesome for me.

It's really incredible seeing campers celebrated for exactly who they are, and all the staff do a great job. I finished the week with a fire for the Lord lit inside me, and I am incredibly thankful for the opportunities I had this summer.



Quinlyn Funk (left) welcomes a camper to Camp Barnabas as music plays and others applaud. *Photo by: Janet Whisenhunt.*

Amelia Villareal, 2024 graduate and NLC intern New Life Community, Dinuba, Calif.

Mission trip to: California's Central Valley, June 10-15

Group size: 13 youth among 70 total SOAR Central Valley participants

Purpose: To bring together English and Spanish church teams to be equipped and to serve with local ministry partners in the Central Valley.

Before my journey with SOAR, I didn't have many people who shared my faith or a deep connection with God. SOAR helped me open my heart to the Lord. Throughout this experience, I felt God's presence more strongly in my life. Having people by my side who were also seeking God's love was incredibly uplifting.

My experience with SOAR will forever impact my relationship with the Lord and with people in my community. I gained more understanding of what it means to

follow the Lord wholeheartedly. Throughout SOAR, I felt an overwhelming amount of love from everyone. SOAR has helped open my eyes to view the world with a 'kingdom lens.'

After my trip, I feel more connected to God and feel a greater need to serve in my church community.

(SOAR is a three-to-eight-day mission training program for people of all ages and is a program of Multiply, the mission agency of North American MB churches.)



Amelia Villareal paints the fence at the Open Gate homeless shelter in Dinuba, Calif. Photo by: Lydia Aquino.

Calvin Kohs, 8th grade Redemption Church, Owatonna, Minn.

Mission trip to: Nashville, Tenn., Aug. 11-15

Group size: 8 of all ages

Purpose: To do street evangelism with YWAM and distribute gift bags to people experiencing homelessness.

Before the trip, I viewed homeless people as people who didn't have homes. But during the trip I realized that they are so much more than that.

They are children of God who are suffering from many different things, including addiction, poverty, sickness, hunger and most importantly, a lack of knowing the good news of how Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, died on the cross

for their sins. But now that I am back home, I pray that they listened to what we said and accepted Jesus into their hearts.

I'm used to all the comforts and luxuries of living in a house, but during the trip I had to really step out of my comfort zone. That was hard for me. Now when I go to sleep every night, I thank God for having me do all that to worship and glorify him.



Calvin Kohs and his younger brother, Hudson, pray with a woman for her salvation during their trip to Nashville to do street evangelism. Photo by: Christian Kohs.

Nicole Loewen, 10th grade Reedley (Calif.) MB Church

Mission trip to: Lakeview Church, Utah, June 24-July 2

Group size: 46 of all ages

Purpose: To partner with the Lakeview congregation by serving in various work projects and building lasting relationships with church members and host families.

Something surprising for me on this trip was the evidence of God's provision. Almost every day of the trip, we were waking up early, working hard and then going to bed much later than I was used to. On any normal day I would have been exhausted physically and mentally, but during the whole trip, I never felt the way I would have expected to.

God's provision was clearly seen in how he gave me the energy to do his work. It was wonderful confirmation that we were doing his will. I have learned that when God calls us and we respond in obedience, he will be faithful. God provides us with the tools we need to accomplish the work he has asked us to do.



Nicole Loewen (right) and her father, Jonathan Loewen, measure the distance for new fence post holes to be dug during a work project for a couple at Lakeview Church. *Photo by: Jody Burkett.*

Kayden Scheer, 12th grade Ridgepoint Church, Wichita, Kan.

Mission trip to: Peru with Praying Pelican Missions, March 8-15

Group size: 29 students and seven adult leaders

Purpose: To work with local churches and pastors to reach people living on the Amazon River near Iquitos, Peru. Activities included door-to-door evangelism, vacation Bible school, food distribution and worship services.

Something that surprised me about the trip was how gracious and happy the Peruvians were. When we asked for prayer requests, all they asked for was good health for them and their families. None of them 'wanted more,' even though they were in what we consider extreme poverty.

I was kind of scared at first that we, rich Americans coming into their homes, wouldn't receive the warmest of welcomes, but that fear disappeared almost as soon as we entered the



Kayden Scheer (second from right) and other students pray for a woman in a village near Iquitos, Peru. *Photo by: Kyle Goings.*

village. They told us we were always welcome as part of Christ's family, which was incredibly sweet.

Living in an American culture, we are very focused on material value and individualism, and when we encounter cultures like that of the Peru villages, we are way more caught off-guard than we should be.

Saying yes in faith

Box calls U.S. Mennonite Brethren to remember our story

Aaron Box spent the summer before his senior year of college leading outdoor worship services at Glacier National Park in Montana. The “sanctuary” consisted of a semi-circle of wooden benches surrounding a cross, and Box had only a bag of hymnals and his guitar.

Box was working with A Christian Ministry in the National Parks, a student-led ministry that sends members to 45 national parks to work and serve employees and visitors through interdenominational worship services. For Box, the formative experience demonstrated a simplified expression of church and awakened in him a love for the outdoors as a place to connect with God. It also helped him realize what it meant to live out his faith.

As one of three or four Christians among the 40 employees, Box was among the few who chose not to party every night. Box recalls drinking Pepsi at the end of summer party and talking with a guy who said Box’s example caused him to consider God’s existence.

“That moment marked me, like, ‘This isn’t complicated; it’s just hard,’” he says. “I felt called to love these students. This was one of the first times I had to stand on my own two feet.”

Throughout his life, Box has had faith-building opportunities to say yes, including moving cross country to plant a church, pastoring the church he grew up in and now, leading the USMB family as national director.

Steps of faith

Growing up in Eugene, Ore., Box

found it more profitable to have spiritual conversations while snowboarding on the slopes than distributing tracts or describing the four spiritual laws.

“I had to figure out how to live out the gospel because nobody wanted to hear it,” he says.

Box’s studies took him from engineering to psychology to music composition before landing on ministry. Homework was a challenge in his seven-year journey to complete his undergraduate degree—a struggle he later learned stemmed from undiagnosed attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).

At a retreat before his summer in Glacier, Box committed to a life of service.

“I came to this place of understanding that a life following Jesus wasn’t just about agreeing to some ideas and believing something,” Box says. “Jesus said, ‘I want you to give your life to serving for me and my name.’”

Fresh out of school with a bachelor’s degree in Bible/theology and youth ministry from Multnomah University, Box served as a youth pastor on a military base in Germany. However, the transience made relational longevity difficult. After a year, Box moved to Seaside, Ore., where, after he married his wife, Jenn, in 2001, he served as a youth pastor and later, interim lead pastor.

In 2009, Box said “Yes” to church planting in Virginia, which meant selling the beach cottage he had spent five years remodeling.

Box co-founded Restore Community Church in Sterling, Va., designing service and outreach initiatives and leading a church plant focused



Aaron Box was installed as the new USMB national director during Gathering 2024 this summer in Omaha, Neb.

on service, generosity and relationships. His plan was to move to another planting work after two years.

During a support-raising trip home, however, Box was approached by Rick Eshbaugh, then-interim pastor at North Park Community Church, Box’s home church in Eugene. Eshbaugh invited Box to apply for the lead pastoral role. The couple sensed a call to say “Yes.”

So, in 2011, Box and his family (wife Jenn, daughter Elizabeth and son Charlie) moved back to Oregon, where the North Park congregation numbered 20 following a church split. One of the first things Box did was lead the congregation to invite its neighbors to join in serving a nearby school.

"Our first event was a cleanup around the school right before teachers came back from summer," Box says. "Then we started focusing on addressing food insecurity for kids in our neighborhood elementary school."

Box helped clarify the church's mission, establish a vision and advance a healthy organizational culture.

"North Park is still a small church, but it's a pretty vibrant place," Box says. "It's gone from being completely unknown in the community to being part of the fabric of the neighborhood."

Part of the story

As a new MB pastor, Box was drawn to the Mennonite Brethren story at the National Pastors' Orientation.

"Between the story of who we are and the Confession (of Faith) I felt like these are my people," he says.

Box served on the USMB Leadership Board from 2014 to 2022, where he helped develop USMB's three core commitments: church multiplication and evangelism, leadership development and disciple-making. He also went back to school, earning his Master of Business Administration from Bushnell University in 2022.

Now as national director, he calls Mennonite Brethren to remember their history.

"We're called to be people who are willing to step in at personal cost and sacrifice to bring peace (and) reconciliation and to show the way of Jesus in how we live," Box says. "We have something unique to offer in our culture if we can be the kind of people we celebrate from our history."

Box is working to connect people in the Mennonite Brethren family in order to share resources and ministry, and to de-silo structures between districts, national office, agencies and schools to work together instead of unintentionally competing for resources.

"If we can be the best of who we are, we have such a beautiful expression of the gospel to present to our communities," he says. "I want us to understand our story better so we can see our place in the one that's being written."—*Janae Rempel Shafer*

To hear more of Box's story, listen to LEAD Pods Episode 105.

An advertisement for 'Gifts that multiply' featuring a collage of diverse people, including children and adults, with a white gift icon in the center. The background is orange.

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Continued partnerships

CORD Committee announces second recipient congregation

Pastor Jules Mukaba needs a van so his congregation can get to church.

Restoration Church in West Chester, Ohio, is a Congolese USMB congregation in a northern suburb of Cincinnati. As with many immigrant churches, members lack transportation and struggle to get to church or to appointments with their doctor or immigration lawyer.

"This church is connecting well with immigrants coming to Cincinnati," says Eastern District regional minister Henri Ngolo. "We are looking forward to buying a van so we can help immigrants."

To help with these and other needs, Restoration Church has been named the second congregation to receive CORD funding. Terry Hunt, CORD Committee chair, made the announcement at USMB Gathering 2024 in July.

"Your gifts will make a huge difference," Hunt said to Gathering attendees prior to an offering for CORD.

About CORD

The CORD acronym describes USMB's partnership with immigrant churches: connecting immigrant churches to resources and other congregations within the MB family; organizing and assisting with establishing a stable place of worship; retooling through biblical training and educational resources centered around the USMB Confession of Faith; and developing pastors and key leaders capable of shepherding a healthy church.

USMB has committed to partnering with up to three vetted congregations by providing \$55,500 to each church over three years. This includes \$12,000 per year for a facil-

ity, \$6,000 annually for pastoral needs and \$500 per year for education.

In addition to Hunt and Ngolo, the CORD Committee includes national director Aaron Box, district ministers Brian Harris (Southern), James Moore (Eastern), Jordan Ringhofer (Pacific) and Daniel Rodriguez (Central), Multiply's Doug Hiebert and Stephen Humber, retired national director Don Morris and Garry Prieb, a retired Multiply worker who grew up in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).

Giving back

Christian Center the Hand of God

(CCHG) in Hamilton, Ohio, was announced as the first CORD recipient in 2023 and is now in its second year and fully funded. The Congolese congregation continues to grow with attendance around 200 people with a sanctuary built for 60. Its Wednesday Bible study has doubled in size.

Most immigrant pastors, like CCHG's Hermann Mputu, are bivocational, with responsibilities that would make holding two services difficult. CORD funds will contribute to a building expansion project. The blueprints are drawn, but the architect's illness has delayed the start of construction. Ngolo says the hope is



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to be ready to break ground in the spring.

While the CCHG congregation waits for more space, Mputu has quit his third job, thanks to CORD funding. Because he now works only one job in addition to pastoring, Mputu has more opportunities to connect with the congregation, including via a Wednesday Zoom meeting, and undergo training. Mputu is a student of The Urban Ministry Institute (TUMI) and is also teaching a TUMI class in French. A former lawyer in DRC, Mputu has completed Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) immigration law training and is working toward accreditation from the Department of Justice, allowing him to assist immigrants with legal issues. He has also completed USMB's LEAD Coaching.

"He's a very dedicated person who's looking to grow the church," Ngolo says.

In August, 40 people from three Cincinnati churches, including CCHG, Restoration Church and Royal Family International Church, partnered with MCC to pack back-to-school kits for children in Ukraine and DRC and make blankets for refugees around the world.

"We are giving back," Ngolo says. "The vision is to give back not to be always receivers."

Transportation needs

Restoration Church, the second congregation to receive CORD funding, is about a 10-minute drive south of CCHG. The congregation averages attendance of 45 to 70, Ngolo says, and is seeking to invest in the second generation through Sunday school.

Rent has increased on Restoration's worship space, and the congregation would like to set aside money for its own building, Ngolo says.

"The church has been in existence for over 18 years without having a building or a plot of land," says pastor Jules Mukaba via email. "Every time we change addresses, we lose members."

Mukaba has several temporary jobs with no benefits, and CORD funding will allow him to dedicate more time to his pastoral work. Mukaba plans to enroll in TUMI classes next fall.

Transportation is a major hurdle, making a van one of Restoration's biggest needs.

"If your church has a van you are not using or can help with a used van, please give it to CORD," Hunt says.

Thanks to a gift of \$55,500 from MB Foundation, Restoration Church is fully funded, allowing CORD fundraising efforts to focus on the third church, which is yet to be named.

"Thanks to MB Foundation's generous gift, Restoration Church is fully funded," Hunt says. "But the need doesn't stop there."

"We are already raising funds for the third CORD recipient, and we cannot commit to this next church without funding," Hunt says. "Please give to CORD so we can partner with more immigrant churches."

More than 10 churches have requested assistance, Ngolo says, and conversation continues among the CORD Committee to determine the next recipient.—*Janae Rempel Shafer*



People from three churches pack school supplies for children in Ukraine and DRC with Mennonite Central Committee in August. *Photo by: Henri Ngolo.*

Church Life

Compiled by Janae Rempel Shafer

MILESTONES

Baptism/Memberships

Sixty-seven people have been received as members at **SouthLife Church, Wichita, Kan.**, since its founding, and 13 people have been baptized.

Sheah Thurston and Shaylene Cordero were baptized Sept. 15 at **Renewal MB Church, Rapid City, S.D.** Shanyn Dupris, Mitchell Black Feather, Joseph McDaniel and Jacob Bernie were baptized Sept. 8.

Shane Rollag, Theodore Curry and Natasha Curry were baptized Sept. 8 at **Salem MB Church, Freeman, S.D.**

Tim Swift, Michelle Swift and Raydyn Eustice were baptized Sept. 8 at **Redemption Church, Owatonna, Minn.**

Andrea Miyasaki, Seth Brown, Lillian Pursifull, Elise Pursifull and Joaquim Vincent were baptized Sept. 1 at **South Mountain Community Church, Draper (Utah) Campus.** Lucy Overholt, Nickie Bellah, Anna Spence, Colbey Fife, Eden Overholt and Sariah Gray were baptized Aug. 18.

Loren Dick, Cathy Dick, Donnie Hostetler, Laura Hostetler, Russell Schmidt and Suphawan Schmidt were received as members at **Corn (Okla.) MB Church, Sept. 1.**

Jeanne Brungardt and Elliot White were baptized Sept. 15 and received as members Oct. 6 at **North Oak Community Church, Hays, Kan.** Emily Corber, Mitch Paneno and Suzanne Paneno were also received as members. Kiana Cooley, Josiah Conner, Abigail Kumer, Maddox Paneno, Caleb Robben and Janae Ross were baptized Sept. 15. Emily Corber was baptized Aug. 25.

Eight people were baptized at **Greenhouse Community Church, Saratoga Springs, Utah.**

Alexiana Ferguson, Cheryl Brown, Anty Lipford, Taylor Dickson, Kristen Hood, Amber Johnson, Andrew Johnson, Amy Turnmire, Diane Corpening and Margaret Forney were baptized at **The Life Center, Lenoir, N.C.**, Aug. 25. Keylen Clemons and Sylvia Hightower were baptized July 21. Kristen Cass and Grayson Dancy were baptized April 21.

Jared Austin, Clay Brooks, Sidney Brooks, Andrew Gramkow and Ethan Gramkow were baptized Aug. 25 at **Zoar MB Church, Inman, Kan.**

Warren Penner, Odette Penner, Realee Nation and Alex Riley were baptized Aug. 25 at **Valleyview Bible Church, Cimarron, Kan.**

James Maatta and Marsha Maatta were received as members at **Buhler (Kan.) MB Church, Aug. 25.**

Cody Bradley and Matt Gunn were baptized at **Lakeview Church, Grantsville (Utah) Campus, Aug. 18.** Sophie Selway was baptized at the Stansbury Park (Utah) Campus.

Kevin Malamma and Rosalyn Malamma were received as members at **Shafter (Calif.) MB Church, Aug. 11.**

Tim Blackburn, Brenda Blackburn, Obi Barnes, Charlotte Stone and Webster Johnson were baptized at **Community Bible Church, Olathe, Kan., Aug. 11.** Tim Blackburn, Brenda Blackburn, Luke Beltz, Stacy Beltz, Jimmy Sackovich, John Trenary and Heidi Trenary were received as members Aug. 25.

David Burtner, Jayna Burtner, Jordan Grussing and Ashlee Grussing were received as members at **Bethesda Church, Huron, S.D., Aug. 11.**

Addison Riley, Becky Warner, Brent Ehresman, Caroline Joseph, Claire Frenzel, Claire Joseph, Courtney Meyer, Craig Plisek, Credence Clark, Dana Wiggins, Eli Miller, Emmy Goings, Grace Ethridge, Grace Peebles, Hannah

Ayotte, Haven Lorson, Heath Weninger, Hope Ndabaga, Howard Talbot, Jarek Reynolds, Jaxon Young, Juliet Schantz, Karen Hostetler, Katelynn Enegren, Kenzy McArtor, Kristen Potter, Kyra Rolen, Landyn Schrag, Landyn Walston, Lauren Frenzel, Lily Coke, Macie Bachelor, Makynzie Schrag, Margaret Gonzales, Michael Clark, Noah Miller, Priscilla Talbot, Rory Kelley, Sadie Rorabaugh, Stephanie Gonzales-Plisek, Taryn Taylor and Violet Dennis were baptized at **Ridgepoint Church, Wichita, Kan., Aug. 14.** Amy Ragland, Bradley Ragland, Carol Bradford, Chuck Miller, Danielle Randall-Vix, Denise Douglas, Frances Holmes, Gail Dull, Hadley Vasquez, Jennifer Miller, Jordan Vasquez, Kaitlyn Regier, Karen Miller, Ken Ediger, Lacie Hutchins, Linda Johnson, Linda Moffitt, Lynette Bartsch, Mary Avila, Melanie Dull, Paul Holmes, Rachel Ediger, Stephen Hutchins, Steve Avila, Steven Long and Timothy Regier were received as members.

Tate Rosemeyer and Lisa Copsey were baptized at **South Mountain Community Church, South Jordan (Utah) Campus, Aug. 4.**

Rita Duarte was baptized at **North Fresno (Calif.) Church June 9.**

Workers

Cailin Stahl began serving as secretary at **Bethel MB Church, Yale, S.D.** Julie Hohm concluded her service in that role.

Dani Maxon began serving as office administrator at **Cornerstone Community Church, Topeka, Kan., Sept. 24.**

TeriAnn Knox began serving as youth leader at **Faith Bible Church, Omaha, Neb.**

Reuven Isaac began serving as tech director at **Ridgepoint Church, Wichita, Kan., Sept. 3.** Dennis Dull began serving as assistant tech director. Kim Bontrager concluded her service as worship arts director Oct. 20.

Deaths

Ediger, Jacob David, Topeka, Kan., member of Cornerstone Community Church, Topeka, May 19, 1930—Aug. 14, 2024. Parents: David and Helena (Heinrichs) Ediger. Spouse: Esther Braun (deceased). Children: Elaine Fast, Judy Faul, Sharon Overton, Lynn, Ron, Ken; seven grandchildren, 11 great-grandchildren.

Ewert, Frances, Reedley, Calif., member North Fresno (Calif.) Church, March 12, 1935—July 24, 2024. Parents: Henry and Pauline Regier. Spouse: R. Glen Ewert. Children: Denise, Darren (deceased).

Ewert, R. Glen, Fresno, Calif., member of North Fresno Church, Oct. 20, 1931—Sept. 1, 2024. Parents: Bernard and Susan Ewert. Spouse: Fran Ewert (deceased). Children: Denise, Darren (deceased).

Gaede, Larry S., San Jose, Calif., member of Lincoln Glen Church, San Jose, Dec. 8, 1942—May 10, 2024. Parents: Clarence and Agnes Gaede. Spouse: Sharon. Children: Troy (deceased), Tiffani.

Gardner, Kenneth Gale, Corn, Okla., former MB pastor in Oklahoma and Kansas, March 23, 1937—Sept. 9, 2024. Parents: Hugh and Ruth Gardner. Spouse: Lillian (deceased). Children: Douglas, Midnitte.

Goertz, Linferd Joel, Lynden, Wash., member of Good News Fellowship, Ferndale, Wash., Oct. 21, 1929—July 27, 2024. Parents: John F. and Adelea S. (Schmidt) Goertz. Spouse: Pearl (deceased). Children: Jeff, Kevin, Terrell; six grandchildren, three great-grandchildren.

Hinz, Lowell James "Jim," Corn, Okla., member of Corn MB Church, July 27, 1931—Sept. 3, 2024. Parents: Ferd and Sarah (Ediger) Hinz. Spouse: Joyce Darlene Vogt (deceased). Children: Jimmie, Debra Zahorsky,

Terri Weichel; eight grandchildren, 13 great-grandchildren.

Hunt, Thomas Raymond, Peoria, Ariz., member of Axiom Church, Peoria, March 16, 1935—Aug. 13, 2024. Parents: William R. and Mary J. Hunt. Spouse: Vicki Vinck (deceased). Children: Steve, Craig. Stepchildren: Scott Shaffer (deceased), Deby Shaffer; 15 grandchildren, 11 great-grandchildren.

Hunt, Vicki Lee, Peoria, Ariz., member of Axiom Church, Peoria, April 21, 1943—July 25, 2024. Parents: Robert T. and Nancy Callin. Spouse: Thomas Hunt. Children: Jeff Vinck, Katie Thompson, Chad Vinck; four grandchildren.

Martin, William "Bill," Reedley, Calif., member of Reedley MB Church, July 17, 1935—Sept. 2, 2024. Parents: Robert L. and Artie Mae (Hinson) Martin. Spouse: Joella Martin. Children: Lori George, David, Judi Beddow; nine grandchildren, six great-grandchildren.

Noteboom, Wendell, Clovis, Calif., member of North Fresno (Calif.) Church, Oct. 31, 1944—Aug. 19, 2024. Parents: Gerrit and Cora Streefman Noteboom. Spouse: Judy McMillen. Children: Erin Noteboom Bow, Wendy Noteboom Ewell (deceased). Stepchildren: Joe, Jeff, Jerry, John; eight grandchildren.

Oliver, Lysbeth "Liz," Reedley, Calif., member of Reedley MB Church, June 29, 1949—Aug. 9, 2024. Parents: Stanley and Anna (Koehn) Martens. Child: Jon; three grandchildren.

Penner, Edith Annette, Hillsboro, Kan., member of Ebenfeld MB Church, Aug. 13, 1935—Sept. 10, 2024. Parents: Dick C. and Grace Crist Eitzen. Spouse: Reno L. Penner (deceased).

Schroeder, Leatrice Elaine, Buhler, Kan., member of Buhler MB Church, Oct. 24, 1926—Aug. 29, 2024. Parents: John and Emma (Froese) Peters. Spouse: Milo "Mickey" Schroeder (deceased). Children: Maxelin Wiebe, Nancy Kopper,

Don, Gail Regehr (deceased); eight grandchildren, 21 great-grandchildren, seven great-great-grandchildren.

Toews, John E., Newton, Mass., MB educator, July 20, 1937—Sept. 29, 2024. Parents: J.B. and Nettie Toews. Spouse: Arlene (deceased). Children: Delora, Dawn, and Mark; three grandchildren.

Webb, Linda Jane "Janie," Weatherford, Okla., member of Corn (Okla.) MB Church, Dec. 11, 1932—Sept. 22, 2024. Parents: John B. and Agnes Heinrichs Nikkel. Spouse: Gid Elvin Webb (deceased). Children: John, Judy Haley; two grandchildren, five great-grandchildren.

Wollman, Alma A., Freeman, S.D., member of Salem MB Church, Freeman, Nov. 23, 1925—Aug. 19, 2024. Parents: Andrew A. and Anna J. (Stahl) Hofer. Spouse: Reuben Wollman (deceased). Children: Belya Laughlin, Cheri Hansen, Merle; four grandchildren, six great-grandchildren, three great-great-grandchildren.

REACHING IN

Discipleship

Valleyview Bible Church, Cimarron, Kan., hosted a marriage conference Oct. 18-19 with pastor Nathan Ensz from Kingwood Bible Church, Salem, Ore.

Copper Hills Church, Peoria, Ariz., held a workshop Sept. 20-21 designed to help parents guide children in understanding God's plan for purity.

North Fresno (Calif.) Church Fellowship hosted a parenting workshop Sept. 15.

The **Bethany Church, Fresno, Calif.**, congregation held a men's disc golf event Aug. 10 and a women's game night Aug. 9.

Bethel MB Church, Yale, S.D., held an old-fashioned Sunday school picnic Sept. 29.

Community Bible Church, Olathe, Kan., held a game night Sept. 27.

Faith Bible Church, Omaha, Neb., planned a week of outdoor activities Sept. 16-21.

The Neighborhood Church, Visalia, Calif., congregation held a Fall Vibes party Sept. 29.

Butler Church, Fresno, Calif., held a cultural celebration night Sept. 29.

Omaha, Neb., youth from **Faith Bible Church** and **Stony Brook Church** gathered for an Olympic themed event Sept. 19.

Women from **Buhler (Kan.) MB Church** had a paint night Aug. 17.

Seniors from **North Oak Community Church, Hays, Kan.**, had a bingo bash Sept. 21.

Women from **Zoar MB Church, Inman, Kan.**, exchanged favorite items Sept. 15.

Families from **Heritage Bible Church, Bakersfield, Calif.**, enjoyed a taco bar Sept. 15.

Women from **SouthLife Church, Wichita, Kan.**, had brunch Sept. 14.

The Ridgepoint Church, Wichita, Kan., congregation held Back to School Sunday Aug. 25.

Valleyview Bible Church, Cimarron, Kan., hosted a back-to-school bash with other churches Sept. 8.

Salem MB Church, Freeman, S.D., celebrated grandparents with a meal Sept. 8.

The Living Hope Church, Henderson, Neb., congregation camped Aug. 24-25.

Good News Fellowship, Ferndale, Wash., held a family camp Aug. 22-25.

Shafter (Calif.) MB Church women had a fall kick-off salad potluck Sept. 8.

Axiom Church, Peoria, Ariz., men had an Italian food potluck and game night Aug. 17.

Corn (Okla.) MB Church enjoyed singing and ice cream Aug. 11.

Men from **Hillsboro (Kan.) MB Church** hosted a Golf and Grub event Aug. 11.

Cornerstone Community Church, Topeka, Kan., adults did putt-putt golf, Aug. 9.

Community Bible Church, Mountain Lake, Minn., held a neighborhood block party July 18.

REACHING OUT

Locally

Men from **Faith Bible Church, Omaha, Neb.**, went on a work retreat Oct. 18-20.

Community Bible Church, Olathe, Kan., raised \$1,314.41 for a pregnancy care center.

Hesston (Kan.) MB Church planned a pumpkin patch outreach event Sept. 25.

Zoar MB Church, Inman, Kan., provided snacks for school staff Sept. 23.

The **Ridgepoint Church, Wichita, Kan.**, men's ministry held a car show fundraiser Oct. 12.

With help from people from **Hillsboro, Kan.**, and **Henderson, Neb.**, **Greenhouse Community Church, Saratoga Springs, Utah**, held its Summer Bible Adventure and Game Changers sports camp.

North Fresno (Calif.) Church collected supplies for a local school.

Renewal MB Church, Rapid City, S.D., hosted 53 children for a summer extravaganza with help from **Mountain View Church, Fresno, Calif.**

Pine Acres Church, Weatherford, Okla., fed breakfast to the Weatherford football team Sept. 27.

Lincoln Glen Church, San Jose, Calif., held a block party Sept. 13.

Kingwood Bible Church, Salem, Ore., held a car show and BBQ Sept. 14. The congregation gave \$1,025.32 for the Hope Pregnancy Clinic.

Lighthouse Church, Denver, Colo., hosted around 700 people for its Back to School Bash, giving away more than 500 backpacks, around \$2,000 worth of school supplies and more than 100 haircuts to children.

Classifieds

Senior Pastor: Grace Bible Church in Gettysburg, S.D. is seeking a senior, expository pastor. Regular responsibilities include overseeing worship services, delivering sermons, visiting church members, providing counseling, performing weddings and funerals, working with deacons and committees, attending business meetings, representing church on community, district, and national levels; and serving as chief administrator to paid staff. Applicant must meet biblical standards in 1 Tim. 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9, agree with our Statement of Faith, and work with all age groups. A Bible degree is required; Master of Divinity degree and pastoral experience preferred. More information can be found at www.gracebiblesd.com.

Lead Pastor: Ebenfeld MB Church, Hillsboro, Kan., is seeking a full-time teaching pastor who will be responsible for providing sound biblical teaching, leading and equipping the congregation in its mission to "Gather, Grow, Go," with a relational and engaging spirit through personal connections with the congregation. His role and responsibilities also include pastoral care of members and attenders and active involvement in the local community. Ebenfeld is committed to an Anabaptist-evangelical theology as articulated in the MB Confession of Faith. <https://usmb.org/confession-of-faith-4/> For more information or to submit resume, email to ebenfeldsearch@gmail.com

Worship Director: Ridgepoint Church in Wichita, Kan., is seeking a full-time worship director to oversee its worship ministry, primarily providing leadership to our contemporary services. Ridgepoint is a mid-size church (1,000 in attendance) with three Sunday morning services. Experience as a worship leader is a requirement. Visit ridgepointwichita.com/employment for more information or to apply.

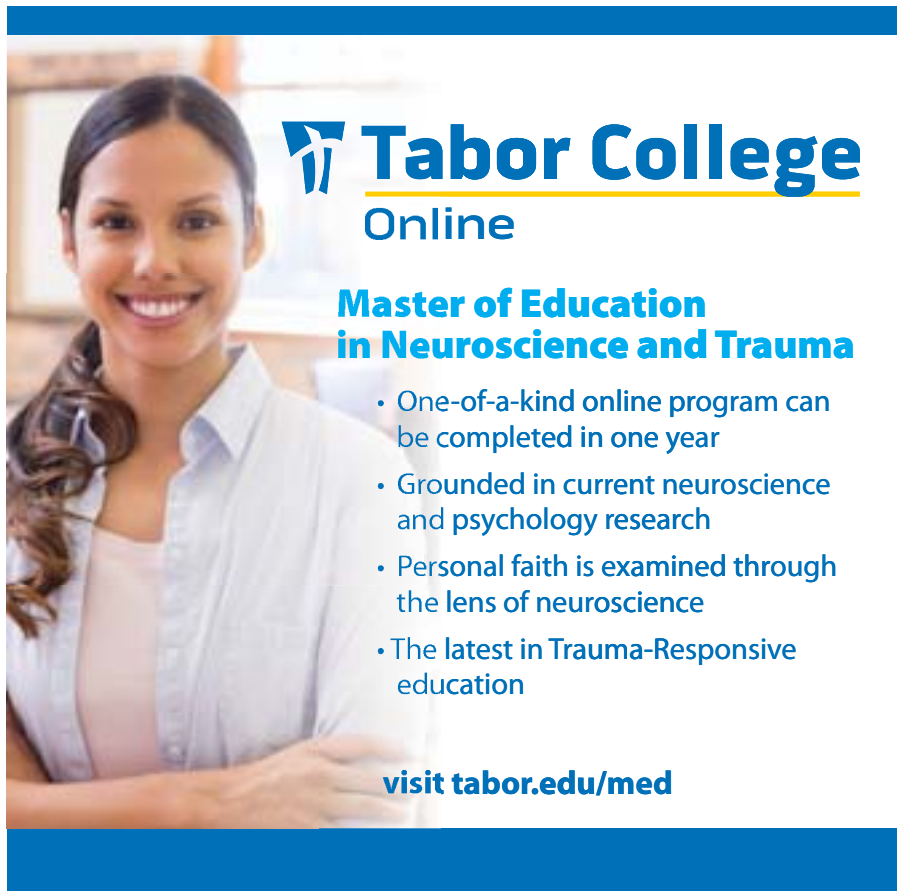
Senior Pastor: Heritage Bible Church, Bakersfield, Calif., is seeking a senior pastor whose primary responsibility will be fulfilling, training, discipling and developing the staff, members, and attendees of Heritage Bible Church as it engages in its mission. The senior pastor will also

be invested in the ministry of Heritage Christian Schools and the discipleship of HCS staff, employees and families. Bachelor's required, master's preferred. Salary Range: \$60,000-\$75,000 plus benefits. For more information, contact www.heritagebible.us.

Youth Pastor: Heritage Bible Church, Bakersfield, Calif., is seeking a full-time youth pastor/campus pastor. The church began Readyland Preschool in 1967. Today there are 300+ students on our church campus each day, from preschool through 8th grade. Primary responsibilities include: direct Junior High and High School ministries, train volunteer leaders and organize camps and mission trips. This per-

son will also serve our school as a campus pastor, assisting in chapels and being available to teachers, classes and students for spiritual guidance. For a full job description, contact www.heritagebible.us.

Pastor of Student Ministries: Shafter (Calif.) MB Church is searching for a full-time pastor of student ministries to oversee junior high, high school and college ministries. Shafter is a community of approximately 20,000 located in the southern San Joaquin Valley of California, 10 miles northwest of Bakersfield. A full job description and additional information is available at <https://www.shaftermb.org/psm/>



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