

CHRISTIAN LEADER

MAY 1999



Talking with our generations

Builders,
Boomers,
Generation X,
Generation Y—
what do we
believe?

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- **U.S. boards report** [PAGE 26](#)
- **MCC calling for Kosovo refugee kits** [PAGE 28](#)

FIRST WORDS ...from the editor

In the Bible, generations are valuable. They are the means by which the Great Story is told. The psalmist declares, "I will utter hidden things, things from of old—what we have heard and known, what our fathers have told us. We will not hide them from their children; we will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the Lord . . . so the next generation would know them, even the children yet to be born, and they in turn would tell their children" (Ps. 78:2-6).

There's a lot to be gained by listening to the voices of the generations that come before and after us. We see the vast number of ways God works, we are challenged by the needs, and we are encouraged by the strengths and celebrations.

Our first article asks representatives from the Builders, Boomers and Generation X questions relating to faith and the church. What aspects of living out the faith do they value the most? What can we do to reach their generations for Christ?

With differing experiences and outlooks, there are bound to be conflicts between generations. In our second article, Duane Ruth-Heffelbower examines why generations within families end up in conflict—and what we can do resolve that conflict.

Our third article looks at what the youth of Generation Y believe. Since 1968, Norman Thiesen has been surveying Mennonite Brethren youth every 10 years on issues ranging from doing devotions to sexual behavior. This article reveals the results from the latest survey completed in 1998.

In BodyLife, we also take a look at a Generation Y gathering—Estes '99—that challenged youth to strengthen their commitment to God.

I hope that by reading and hearing from the different voices in the Mennonite Brethren community you are both challenged and encouraged. God bless. —CA

COMING

- **JULY 8-10** – Biennial General Conference convention, Wichita, Kan.
- **JULY 11-14** – International Committee of Mennonite Brethren consultation, Buhler, Kan.
- **OCTOBER 28-31** – Joint Southern and Central District Conference convention hosted by Tabor College.
- **NOVEMBER 5-6, 1999** – Pacific District Conference convention hosted by Heritage Bible Church, Bakersfield, Calif.



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generations: Q&A

What aspects of faith do we value the most? What role does the church play in our lives? How can we best reach people for Christ? To find the answers, we asked questions about faith and the church to four people representing the Builder, Boomer and Generation X generations. Here's what they said.

Christian Leader: What aspects of faith does your generation value the most and wish for the generations after you?

Annette Dick: One of the most wonderful things that happened to me, I wish for everyone else that accepts Christ as Saviour—to see my identity with Christ and sell out completely to Him, being honest about the grossness of my sin, giving up my rights, and realizing that I have absolutely everything I need in Christ. I have found that there is no problem in my life that cannot be solved when I “reckon myself to be dead . . . and alive unto God” (Rom. 6:11). We are never hurt by what anyone does to us, only by our own reaction to it. Our personal, family, church and societal problems come because we want our own way. I often feel like shouting to the world, “God’s way works and brings joy—try it.”

Ron Braun: The importance of a deep faith in Jesus Christ that results in lifelong service and stewardship. There is special joy that comes when we realize we are serving our Lord and not ourselves, but the

tendency today is unfortunately more of the latter. Jesus spoke of having a faith that was more than words but also revealed by our actions. Serving and sharing with others is serving God; it is what He has called us to do.

Derk Madden: The aspect of faith that I think is most attractive and taken to heart in my generation is service. We seem to be drawn to causes and movements that improve the quality of life for those less fortunate. The 80’s, sometimes referred to as the decade of decadence, has had a strong influence in shaping our values. We are willing to give our time and resources generously, but, it must be to something meaningful that will make a difference. Activities that have unclear or questionable motives and/or degrees of effectiveness are not attractive.

Allison Basinger: I would pass on the strength in the Truth behind believing. One of the first steps of having faith or a Christian life for that matter is the actual decision to believe the Truth is true. There are many of us (people my age) who are used to the fast-

“I often feel like shouting to the world, “God’s way works and brings joy—try it.”

—Annette Dick



NAME: Annette Dick
BORN: 1923 (Builder generation)
PROFESSION: retired teacher
CHURCH: Mountain Lake MB, Minn.
INTERESTING TIDBITS:
◆ married to Emil, who passed away in 1995
◆ currently secretary of the Central District Conference
◆ currently bookkeeper at the MCC Care & Share Shop in Mountain Lake
◆ spent two years teaching in Medellin, Colombia
WHY MB: “I’m grateful for a church where the preaching and teaching has stayed true to the Word.”



NAME: Ron Braun
BORN: 1953 (Boomer generation)
PROFESSION: Regional Director for MCC, Central States, Newton, Kan.
CHURCH: Koerner Heights MB, Newton, Kan.
INTERESTING TIDBITS:
◆ married to Dena with two children
◆ spent three years with MCC in Bangladesh
◆ member of Southern District Board of Faith and Life
◆ past member of U.S. Conf. Peace Commission and Board of Communications
WHY MB: “I appreciate the emphasis on an evangelistic gospel and adherence to God’s Word . . . [and value placed on] peace, service and stewardship.”



NAME: Derk Madden
BORN: 1968 (beginning years of Generation X)
PROFESSION: Pastor
CHURCH: Greenhaven Neighborhood Church, Sacramento, Calif.
INTERESTING TIDBITS:
 ♦ married to Connie with two children
 ♦ member of executive board of the Sacramento branch of Area Congregations Together (ACT), a multid denominational nonprofit that works with local churches to effect change in communities
WHY MB: "I found the MB confession to be sound . . . [and I was] impressed by the commitment to values of humility and social service."



NAME: Allison Basinger
BORN: 1977 (final years of Generation X)
PROFESSION: student, Tabor College, Hillsboro, Kan.
CHURCH: Parkview MB, Hillsboro, Kan.
INTERESTING TIDBITS:
 ♦ serves as student representative to the Tabor Board of Directors
 ♦ involved in theater and directed a summer kids drama camp
 ♦ served one year in voluntary service in Phillippi, West Virginia with Head Start
WHY MB: "I realized in the MBs a genuine commitment to their faith and not the rules of religion."

paced living style: fast food, faster speed limits, quick-drying nail polish and minute rice. When God's answer doesn't come quickly enough, then we often are tempted to think He doesn't really exist, He doesn't really care or He doesn't understand. It takes strength in the Truth to believe that these thoughts are false and that His timing is really perfect and that He is really surrounding us.

CL: Thinking back on the contributions made by the generations preceding you, what one aspect of the Christian life do you prize most highly?

AD: As a child growing up, I was always impressed by the devotional priorities my parents and grandparents had. We were never invited for "faspa" (a simple evening meal) into homes without the Bible being read and discussed during those visits. Since I lived with my grandmother at various times, I will never forget how often I saw her just put her apron over her head, get into her private prayer closet and spend time with the Lord. Also she stressed that Saturday after supper was a time to read the Bible and pray to get set for the coming Lord's day. She might also, on Sunday morning, ask me a question like, "Annette, have you spent as much time with the Lord as you did with your hair?" I'm afraid our generation doesn't put as much value in sharing around the Word of God as some of our forebears did.

RB: God is a loving God. He sent His son Jesus as a sacrifice for our sins. Jesus loved His Father and each one of us so much that he obediently gave His life so that I could live eternally. I want everything I do to reflect that great love.

DM: Their commitment to holiness—particularly the Builder (World War II) generation. Being separate from the world and wise in what they expose themselves to and/or participate in. This seems to be lost on my generation who has seemingly often misused the grace of God for an excuse to sin. As I continue to mature in my faith, I see the temptation, devastation and separation from God that is brought on because we are not careful to screen the images, material and activities that we allow in our lives. Those who practice wise discernment in this area have a strong foundation which offers stability and security.

AB: That they (for the most part) do not waiver in their faith and Christian living. They are tempted

with the same thoughts that I discussed in the first question but the determination in their minds toward their decision to believe and keep that faith is astounding. It's almost a mechanical response; when things go wrong, their programmed faith steps in.

CL: Of the contributions made by those in generations coming after you, what one aspect of the Christian life do you prize most highly?

AD: Our youth perhaps have to take more of a stand when they sell out to Christ than we did. Christian values have diminished in our country. Television has influenced us toward affluent thinking and deserving our rights, and schools and business places have given us the idea that "religion" should not be expressed. Some of the young people in my church have put us to shame in regard to being more vocal for Christ. And they have made us exchange rigidity for more freedom in our worship expression.

RB: I am thankful for the enthusiasm and creativity younger generations exhibit.

DM: The aspect I value from them is their desire and commitment to living in community, exercising great generosity of time and resources with one another. It is not unusual for young families to serve, worship, and socialize a minimum of three to four evenings together each week. They are extremely generous in sharing their belongings with one another and value most open and genuine relationships. It is because of this characteristic that one may experience some great insight to the early Church.

AB: I have been disappointed in the lack of prizeworthy aspects of the younger generation. There seems to be a downward shift into a more lighthearted outlook on Christian living. However, there is a youthful fun driving this lightheartedness and when that fun is directed and tapped into the right subject, there is a sense of desire for knowledge relating to the Bible. This true desire is one that cannot be rocked by Satan or the outside world. What a praise that desire is!

CL: What role does the church play in your generation?

AD: To get together to worship our Lord communally, to come alongside each other for edification and

"I am thankful for the enthusiasm and creativity younger generations exhibit."

—Ron Braun

generations

"We are starving for genuine community and purpose and mission."

—Derk Madden, with his son at Disneyland

to use our gifts in the brotherhood is very important. Yet I think we must also honestly say that we come together as senior citizens and especially singles, for fellowship reasons. How often I have heard singles especially lament that there was no Sunday evening worship service, because Sundays can be one of the loneliest times of the week. That is one reason that I initiated an informal Koinonia group eight years ago to meet on the first Sunday evening of the month when we did not have a church service.

RB: The church remains our primary fountain from which we draw much of our spiritual nourishment. It also remains an important place to find and maintain friendships, though people rely less and less on the church for social contacts.

DM: The primary role the church plays in my generation of believers is a place for community. I think this may be strongly evident in the style of evangelism practiced today emphasizing the relationship rather than the Word or Truth as in generations past. Not to say the two are mutually exclusive but rather a different emphasis of significant aspects of ultimately the same message.

AB: The church is a safe place or a haven from the outside world that is, as much as we like it most of the time, moving too quickly. It provides a redirection of focus from our unfocused daily living. It presents a calm in the midst of the stir. There is a personal centering that takes place within the walls where God meets us. While that centering can be found in moments of daily living, there is a peaceful, unified feeling experienced when the generations (all of us with our differences and similarities) can step out of our chaos and join together to praise the God who brings us all together.

CL: How can the church best serve people of your generation?

AD: I suppose our first gut-level response is that we hate to be ignored. But then, we also have to tell ourselves that we come to church to serve, not to be served. There seems to be more emphasis on doing church to meet the needs of the young. Yet I so much appreciated the time when some of our younger couples favored doing away with age designed classes, and instituted a choice of topics instead, so there could be a mingling of ages. I'm thrilled when a younger person puts his or her arm around me and shows love and acceptance.

RB: By continuing to teach biblical principles regarding social issues in a time when that becomes less popular. The ministry of the church cannot become so superficial that we lose sight of our mission.

DM: By empowering and training us to serve our communities and churches according to our spiritual giftedness for the edification of the local church. With our strong value of serving those in need or attaching ourselves to a significant cause, the church must provide effective leadership to provide a vision for how the cause of Christ can be lived out in our society. The church must expand its focus to include the ills of our society such as the poor, the oppressed, the orphans and the widows. Creating effective strategies to minister to these groups in our local community can be significant opportunities to bring together and mobilize the Busters (Generation X).

AB: The church can best serve my generation by providing an atmosphere where we can "hang out" comfortably, enjoy ourselves as creations in Christ and grow in the wisdom of the Word.

CL: What contribution do you see your generation making to the life and community of the Mennonite Brethren church in North America?

AD: I believe we have a stabilizing influence to contribute: to use our experience to influence, encourage and calm others, to help keep our doctrine pure, to be a safeguard from excess, to contribute financially, and to pray more fervently for others and their problems.

RB: We are helping the church today move to becoming more seeker friendly. As we experience the urbanization of the MB church, we must be able to maintain the value of community (interdependence) as we extend ourselves into a growing community around us. We have a gospel of love and peace to share with a world more than ever experiencing pain, suffering and conflict.

DM: If mobilized effectively, the greatest contribution our generation can make to the life and community of the MB church is continued vitality and expansion of awareness of the MB testimony of faith and service going hand in hand. As we continue to seek to be a blessing to our communities, the testimony of the gospel will continue to go out. At the same time, our faith will become stronger as we exercise it in significant and meaningful ways. Essential to this being realized however, is effective leadership.

AB: In my generation (and the next) I have recognized a strong commitment to Mennonite Brethren mission organizations. Several of my close friends and I have participated in mission trips with Youth Mission International. My experiences have been witnessing through street drama, running vacation Bible schools, working in shelters or missions, puppetry and clowning in the parks, etc. Hundreds of people



with all different beliefs and backgrounds are reached by these outward actions promoted by many different mission organizations. By going through an MB organization our influences toward all these people are in accordance with the Mennonite Brethren beliefs.

CL: How can we best reach people of your generation for Christ?

AD: Our generation is perhaps the hardest to reach for Christ, because minds have been set for so long. Perhaps one of the best things we can do is pray for individuals as we befriend them, and often then God uses "pressure cooker" experiences to get them to face their lost condition. We have experienced several deathbed decisions in our community in the last few years.

RB: Our true desire to win others must be evident in authentic relationships that we develop. We cannot expect people to look and behave just like us before we decide to begin to develop relationships with them. We need to accept the responsibility to reach out and this will involve risk-taking.

DM: We are starving for genuine community and purpose and mission. We desire to be involved in something that will last or make a difference. We are not different from the Boomers in that we must be reached in relationship. However, we will be convinced and be more inclined to stay if there is some compelling reason or cause that we can identify with and see how we may fit in.

AB: By making faith a real thing, a purposeful solution in and for everyday life instead of a super powerful saving from all problems, all sadness, hurt and disappointment. Real faith does not need a selling point like this "all powerful" stuff, just the bare biblical facts. My generation needs mentoring in a gentle growing into faith so that each person can claim a concrete belief for himself or herself—a hope during hard times and joy in all situations.

CL: Do you think there are significant differences in the way different generations experience and practice following Jesus?

AD: Generally I would say yes, though I believe there are also differences within generations as well as between them. From my vantage point, I find the younger generation less dedicated to the local church. Aside from the Sunday morning service, other services are mostly attended by people of my generation. It's very difficult to get committee members to be faithful in their committee meetings and to even accept invitations into homes where Christian fellow-

ship and growth is to take place. Another thing I notice is that the present generation often practices following Jesus in a more emotionally oriented way.

RB: We are becoming less and less focused on tradition. Change is a key word, younger generations are more willing to implement changes, older generations tend to be more resistant to change. This impacts worship styles, emphases in ministry and other aspects in the church. Along with any change there is potential for tension and conflict. All the more reason to learn how to be more tolerant, loving and forgiving.

DM: There most definitely are differences in how each generation experiences and practices their faith. It is common for each generation to be molded by their reaction to their impression of the generation before them. For instance, we often appreciate what we consider to be the strengths of how the generation before us practiced their faith, but emphasize in our practice the other extreme of what we perceived to be their greatest weakness. For instance, one generation may be characterized by making legalistic or black and white laws on what activities a Christian should or should not participate in, so the next generation values to an extreme our freedom in Christ. The next generation sees the abuses in misusing God's grace and questions the integrity of belief of that generation and so they emphasize service which demonstrates the genuineness of their faith. Each generation emphasizes a different aspect of the Christian life. These differences are only significant when we attach more significance to our experience of the faith rather than being effectively led to embrace all facets of our faith as equally important.

AB: Again, it is all relative depending on what you think is significant. Take the hymns/choruses issue, for example. There are people from older generations who are very disturbed by the lack of hymn singing in the worship service and then there are the younger ones who can't stand singing anything but choruses. However, there are those "younger ones" like myself who would sing hymns every worship service over choruses any day and there are some from the older generations who would rather sing choruses. I'm sure we will see by the responses to this article that there are many differences in the way the generations practice and follow Jesus. However, I believe that we each choose whether we make them significant or we respect each other's differences, notice the things we have in common and worship together as a Christian family. ■



"In my generation and the next, I have recognized a strong commitment to Mennonite Brethren mission organizations."

—Allison Basinger, directing a summer kids drama camp

When families fight

BY DUANE RUTH-HEFFELBOWER

BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES FOR HANDLING FAMILY CONFLICT:

Unconditional love is the basis of all Christian relationships (John 15:9-14).

The agape love that Jesus demonstrated is not earned, just accepted. For us to work with conflict in our families, we must first have that same kind of love. To demand that the other person first become lovable is an exercise in selfishness and pride, not to mention futility. This does not mean that we ignore bad behavior or neglect to hold people accountable. It means that we work at conflict in a way which shows our caring and desire to improve the relationship.

It isn't possible to love God while hating another person (1 John 2:9).

When we push another person out of our hearts, our love of God goes with them. That's a terrible price to pay for separating ourselves from others rather than working through difficult issues. Hating closes down our feelings. The irony is that we only hurt ourselves when we hate. Revenge is the same. Both leave relationships broken rather than reconciled and separate us from God.

Families come in all shapes and sizes. In Genesis 14, when Abram went to rescue his nephew Lot, he took 318 trained men born in his house. Today, some modern families—actually a small percentage—include only the father, mother and children. Some include four generations with all the grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins. Some are one or more single adults choosing to live as family.

Family relationships are also the most intense of all human interactions. Think of the relationship of Jacob and Esau in the Bible. Jacob escaped from his brother, and then 20 years later escaped from his father-in-law. Who we are and how we think about ourselves have more to do with our family relationships than other relationships. We are more invested in family relationships than any others.

It is no surprise that family conflict is more intense and important than our other conflicts. A veteran courtroom bailiff once told me that family court was the only courtroom where people brought weapons. Other courts don't generate that level of emotion.

As I have worked with hundreds of families in conflict over the last 25 years, I have discovered some things they have in common when it comes to conflict. For the last two years, my focus has been on refugees and the conflicts that emerge when they are brought to the United States. Though trying to generalize about families is difficult, that experience has helped me to identify some themes in family conflict that apply to all of us.

CHANGES LEADING TO CONFLICT

■ **Family roles.** No matter what your relationship to a particular family, you have a role within it. The family expects you to play that role. Trying to change your role will lead to conflict as the stability of the family is placed in jeopardy.

Refugee families have their roles turned upside down. Within a very short time the children learn the new language and begin to adopt the new cul-

ture. The parents are lost in the new culture, are unemployed or have menial jobs and can only interact with the people around them with the help of their children. Everything the parents know about functioning in society is topsy-turvy. Parents lose their authority over the children, who resent being asked to stop acculturating. American society teaches the children that they have rights, a new concept to the parents. Social workers descend on the family as children complain of treatment which would have been normal in the "old country."

■ **Societal roles.** Culture can be defined as "what I know that everyone knows." Growing up in the small rural town of Newton, Kan., in the 1950s, I knew that every adult I met agreed with my parents on proper behavior. Every adult felt free to correct my misbehavior, knowing that my parents would approve.

Refugees come from societies like that. Proper behavior is known, understood uniformly, and enforced by the entire society. That's not how it is in North America these days. If I see a child misbehaving and correct her, I can expect to be sued as much as supported by her parents. There is little agreement on the standards of behavior not defined by criminal law, and even that is subject to interpretation.

■ **Professionalization of helping.** Refugees come from societies where extended family and village elders could be counted on for help when the family had conflict. So do middle-aged and older Americans. In North America these days, the helping function has been given over to professionals in many cases. How does one get help when problems in the family become too difficult?

WHAT TO DO?

Awareness of the changes and challenges in family life is the first step. Most of the changes described above have happened since the mid-1950s in North America. Accept the fact that society has changed its view of family life and has developed new ways to approach family conflict. Then decide



what you will do about it.

■ **Plug into the church community.** Where you can, recreate communities in which Christ-centered values are prized and passed on to children. The church is the logical place for this type of community. Dressing up on Sunday morning and sitting quietly in the pew doesn't do it. The key is to have a small group of adults—singles, parents with children at home and older persons with grown children—who are committed to living their values and passing them on to children and support each other in the process. This re-creates the extended family model described so often in the Bible. Being Christian is a daily decision, and we all need support to do it.

The studies I read and my own experience indicate that an interested adult outside the nuclear family circle is a powerful influence on children. In this age where extended families don't live together, recreating that setting can't be overemphasized.

■ **Go to the extended family for help.** Forget handling family problems within the nuclear family—father, mother and children. Refugees come from societies where they expect a wise person to be part of solving family problems. That is also a biblical pattern. Human beings are built that way.

If you have extended family available, use them. Aunts, uncles and grandparents are a tremendous resource. The usual pattern is for a person experiencing family conflict to speak to the wise one, who then talks to the other person involved, and privately advises both how to handle the problem.

For those of us without that family resource, professionals are available. Pastors, counselors, mediators, lawyers, social workers—all are prepared to help families in conflict. If you are part of a small group, someone in the group can probably serve the purpose.

■ **Use professionals wisely.** I am one of those professionals (lawyer/mediator/family counselor/pastor) and would be glad to help you in that capacity. I would be disappointed, however, if you called me before doing the things described above. When you do hire me, I will help you discern the type of help

you need and plan a process with you.

There is an old saying which says that a person whose only tool is a hammer sees every problem as a nail. That is also true of professional helpers. A couple with marital difficulties who visit a lawyer will usually be led down the path to divorce. A couple who visit a family counselor or pastor will likely be led down the path of falling in love again. A mediator will help you identify particular problems and make agreements about them. Choose wisely, and get advice from those who have used a particular professional.

WORKING TOGETHER

The most powerful tool for dealing with family conflict is the extended family. If you don't have a natural extended family, create one by forming a small group. When those efforts are inadequate, professionals are there to help you.

Training in conflict management and communication can also help. Imagine trying to have a fight without using the word "you." When we learn to speak of our own needs and ask the help of others in meeting them, wonderful things can happen.

The church can be the best place to create the community that helps families through tough times, but it requires more than Sunday morning to be useful. Family life can be difficult. Together we can make it better. ■

Duane Ruth-Heffelbower is associate director of the Center for Peacemaking and Conflict Studies and a member of the graduate school faculty of Fresno Pacific University in Fresno, Calif. An attorney and ordained Mennonite minister, he is a practitioner member and approved consultant of the Academy of Family Mediators. For the past two years he has been project officer for a federally-funded refugee conflict project. To learn more about training opportunities at Fresno Pacific visit <http://www.fresno.edu/pacs> or call (800) 909-8677.

Jesus reconciled us to God, and left us with the ministry of reconciliation (2 Cor 5:18-21).

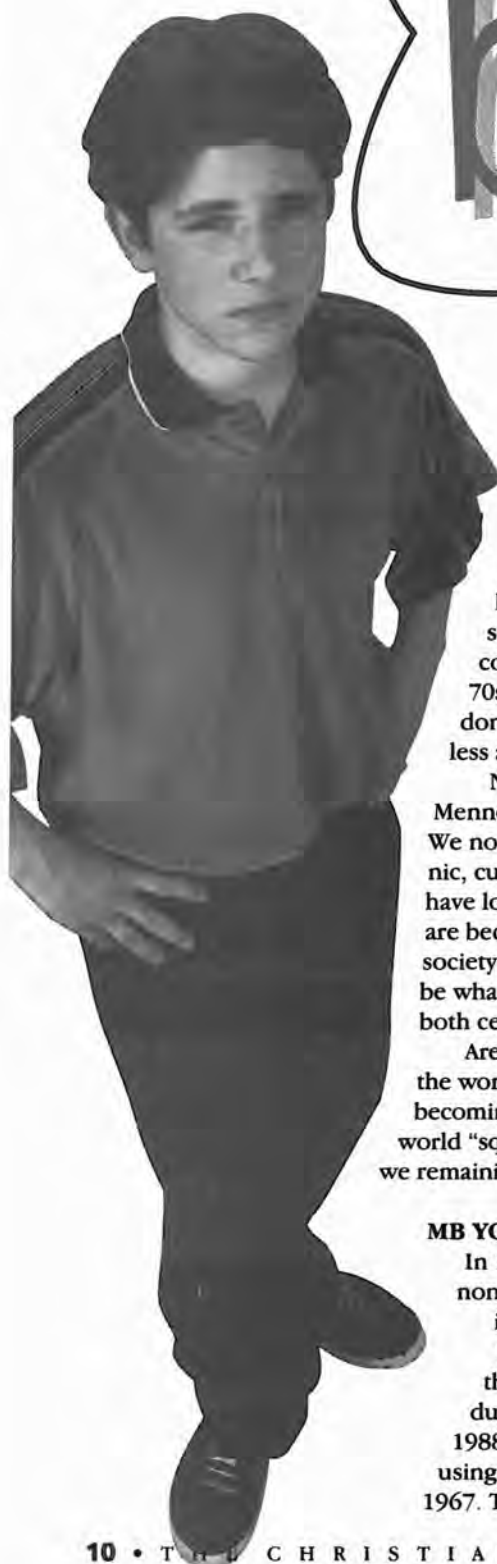
Humankind had separated itself from God, and that separation was not God's desire. In the same way, God does not want us to be separated from each other by conflict. Our work with family conflict is a lot easier than what Jesus had to do to bring us back to God. When we work at reconciliation between people in conflict, we are also working to reconcile them to God, who desires love between us, not separation.

If we claim to be sinless, the truth is not in us (1 John 1:8).

The Bible doesn't offer us a nice list of big sins and little sins, or bad sins and really bad sins. Sin is the willful rejection of God's desires for us. It is easy to decide that someone else is a bigger sinner than we are and not worthy of our love. That decision itself is sin. Our task is to reconcile people separated by conflict (particularly when we are one of the people), not to judge the gravity of the other person's sin. Our families are the place to start. —DRH

WHAT DO youth believe

BY NORMAN THIESEN



We are in the midst of a profound technological revolution.

Our lives and world are changing at an increasingly accelerating rate. Nothing seems stable any longer. We now live with a constant sense of "future shock" — a term coined by Alvin Toffler in the early 70s. Change is coming at us so fast we don't have time to adapt to it, much less assimilate it into our daily lives.

Not only is our world changing, we Mennonite Brethren are changing too. We no longer can assume a shared ethnic, cultural or historical background. We have lost our "separation" identity and are becoming more like the multicultural society that we live in. We can no longer be what we once had been—a cause of both celebration and sorrow.

Are we changing for the better or for the worse? Are our beliefs and behaviors becoming more or less biblical? Is the world "squeezing us into its mold?" Or are we remaining "salt and light?"

MB YOUTH SURVEY

In 1968, I conducted a study of Mennonite Brethren high school students in order to compare the values of Mennonite Brethren youth with the results of a national study. I duplicated that study in 1978 and 1988, and replicated the study in 1987 using a high school graduating class of 1967. This past year I did a follow up

study to determine how our MB youth have changed in their beliefs during the past 30 years.

I hope that this study will stimulate discussion and evaluation concerning what our youth believe. It should be kept in mind that the sample (112 students this year) is limited to one geographical region of the country that may not represent MB youth in general. Also, the responses indicate the stated standards or opinions of youth, not necessarily their actual behavior. Dated language in the survey was not updated in order to make comparisons across the decades.

SOCIAL BEHAVIOR

Attendance at movies is now virtually a totally acceptable behavior among our youth—99 percent approve compared to 67 percent in 1968. Watching late-night TV has lower approval ratings (83 percent), connoting something more inappropriate than movies.

Social dancing is now well accepted among our youth as well, with 78 percent saying they approve of dancing while only 6 percent say they disapprove. Social dancing has shown the greatest amount of change of these social behavior categories in the past 30 years, moving from 52 percent disapproval in 1968.

Drinking alcohol is also rising in approval and falling in disapproval. Today, 27 percent say that they approve of drinking alcoholic beverages and 54 percent say they disapprove. In 1968, 16 percent approved while 77 percent disapproved. Today, 20 percent indicate they are uncertain about the issue. Smoking, however, continues to be widely rejected by youth (77 percent disapprove).

The results indicate that separation in social behaviors no longer distinguishes us from "the world"—which presents us with an opportunity.

TABLE 1

	APPROVE				DISAPPROVE				UNCERTAIN			
	98	88	78	68	98	88	78	68	98	88	78	68
SOCIAL BEHAVIOR												
Attending movies at theaters	99	97	84	67	0	0	4	14	1	3	12	19
Watching late shows on TV	83	82	70	77	4	3	7	6	13	15	23	17
Social dancing	78	69	42	24	6	6	29	52	15	25	29	24
Drinking alcoholic beverages	27	14	15	16	54	70	75	77	20	16	10	7
Smoking	7	7	5	8	77	88	93	82	16	5	2	10

None of these social behaviors are specifically forbidden in scripture. We need to discuss, with wise discernment, what makes a behavior that is not specifically forbidden in Scripture either unwise or sinful. How should our separation from the world express itself in social behaviors?

SOCIAL AND POLITICAL ISSUES

Integration in living and worship is overwhelmingly accepted by the youth. Ninety-six percent say they approve of living next door to a family of another race in an integrated neighborhood, up from 88 percent in 1968. They say the same about attending an integrated Sunday school.

Intermarriage has grown most in acceptance and dropped in disapproval in the past 30 years of the items in this category—with 72 percent approving today while only 21 percent approved in 1968. Over the last 30 years, about 20 percent remain uncertain about the issue.

Holding political office is also widely accepted, with 90 percent approving—passing the pre-Watergate levels of 1968 for the first time. Serving in the armed forces shows the highest acceptance of the past 30 years (74 percent), though 19 percent are uncertain about the issue.

Capital punishment shows a drop in approval and a strong rise in uncertainty. Only 45 percent approve—the lowest in 30 years—compared with 67 percent who said they approved 10 years ago. Just over 40 percent are uncertain about the issue today, while 22 percent were uncertain 10 years ago.

Driving beyond the speed limits remains a confusing area. Showing disrespect for teachers and damaging property continue to be strongly disapproved.

The study indicates that our youth are increasingly color blind in their racial interactions, including marriage. While there are difficulties in an interracial marriage, few would label it a biblical sin. In our shrinking, multicultural world, we need to

address these issues candidly with our youth.

It appears our youth may no longer hold to our historical separation from civil government. Serving in the military has little disapproval. How should we address this conflict with our Anabaptist heritage?

DATING AND MARRIAGE

All categories, except marrying a Catholic, have dropped in approval in the past 10 years and almost all have increased in disapproval.

Though dropping from 10 years ago, kissing on the first date and going steady before 16 still find general approval and limited disapproval. Sixty-two percent approve of kissing on the first date, while 21 percent disapprove. In 1988, 75 percent approved and only 8 percent disapproved. On going steady before age 16, 66 percent of youth approve, while 16 disapprove, differing slightly from those of 10 years ago.

Petting and necking before marriage remains a confusing question for youth, possibly because the two activities are not considered equal in moral value. Thirty percent approve, 38 percent disapprove and 32 percent are uncertain. Marrying before 16 continues to be strongly rejected, with only 5 percent approving and 82 percent disapproving.

Marrying a Catholic has seen a steady increase in acceptance during the past 30 years, up from 14 percent in 1968 to 24 percent in 1998. Almost 40 percent disapprove of such a union, compared to 70 percent in 1968. Thirty-seven percent of youth say they are uncertain.

Dating a non-Christian has the lowest approval and highest disapproval in 30 years. Only 26 percent approve, the lowest since 1978 when 34 percent approved. Today, 49 percent say they disapprove of dating a non-Christian, the highest since 1978 when 38 percent said they disapproved. Roughly 25 percent remained uncertain on the issue over the last 30 years.

The high level of approval of affection on a first

Dating a non-Christian has the lowest approval and highest disapproval in 30 years.

TABLE 2

	APPROVE				DISAPPROVE				UNCERTAIN			
	98	88	78	68	98	88	78	68	98	88	78	68
SOCIAL & POLITICAL ISSUES												
Living next door to a family of another race in an integrated neighborhood	96	90	94	88	2	1	5	4	2	9	1	8
Attending an integrated Sunday school	95	93	95	85	2	3	4	8	4	4	1	7
Holding political office	90	82	77	84	2	2	8	6	8	16	15	10
Serving in the armed forces	74	66	56	61	7	11	16	21	19	23	28	18
Believing in capital punishment	44	67	50	49	14	11	19	25	41	22	31	26
Driving beyond speed limits	45	62	34	32	21	15	44	44	34	23	22	24
Intermarrying between Negroes and Whites	72	56	30	21	7	22	49	60	21	22	21	19
Showing disrespect for one's teachers	6	10	6	9	88	77	90	77	5	13	4	14
Damaging property	6	9	2	2	82	81	95	96	15	10	3	2

TABLE 3

	APPROVE				DISAPPROVE				UNCERTAIN			
	98	88	78	68	98	88	78	68	98	88	78	68
DATING AND MARRIAGE												
Kissing on the first date	62	75	62	49	21	8	14	32	17	17	24	19
Going steady before age 16	66	69	61	31	16	11	24	35	18	20	15	28
Petting & necking before marriage	30	43	41	26	38	28	32	48	32	29	27	26
Dating a non-Christian	26	42	34	44	49	33	38	30	25	25	28	27
Dating a Roman Catholic	34	43	27	35	32	16	34	38	35	41	39	27
Marrying a Roman Catholic	24	20	17	14	39	38	49	70	37	42	34	16
Marrying a non-Christian	13	17	10	11	72	64	75	78	15	19	15	11
Marrying before age 16	5	11	5	4	82	83	79	86	13	6	16	10

date and going steady at a young age forebodes problems. Sustaining high levels of physical contact over the years makes it difficult not to cross boundaries before marriage—at a national average of 27 years old for men and 25 for women. Our children and youth are growing up much too fast and do not have the psychological and/or emotional development to handle the situation into which they are thrust. While we may become out-of-step with our broader culture, I think we must discuss sexual behaviors and guidelines openly. Unfortunately, these discussions must begin at an increasingly early age.

The walls between Catholics and Evangelicals have come down noticeably in the past decades, but there remains a significant difference theologically between the two groups. How should we address these theological differences and what impact should they have on our interpersonal relationships?

Marrying a non-Christian is explicitly rejected in the Scriptures, while smoking is not. Yet our youth are more accepting of marrying a non-Christian than of smoking. It appears that our biblical morality is sometimes more a function of our surrounding culture than God's Word. How should we address this?

SEXUAL BEHAVIORS

In all but one category, approval has dropped in the last 10 years, and disapproval has risen. Percentages in 1998 are very similar to those of 1968.

Exactly 80 percent of youth disapprove of reading lewd or obscene literature and thinking immoral and unclean thoughts, up in both categories from 1988. A majority (78 percent) disapprove of masturbation, up slightly from 10 years ago (73 percent) but lower than 1978 (82 percent) and 1968 (80 percent). Almost 15 percent in the recent survey indicate they were uncertain about masturbation.

Over 70 percent disapprove of telling off-color or filthy jokes or stories, up from 58 percent in 1988. Only 8 percent in the recent survey approve while 14 percent are uncertain.

These findings indicate our youth affirm a high biblical morality in sexual behavior. But is their behavior congruent with their stated values? The Internet has brought pornography of the most graphic nature into our homes and has become an epidemic problem among males, including believers. Research on sexual activity of Christian youth shows fairly high levels of premarital experimentation. Even though our youth know right and wrong in this area, do the pressures of our society determine their behavior more than their biblical beliefs?

BEHAVIORS AGAINST SCRIPTURAL COMMANDS

Most of the items in this category show little acceptance and strong disapproval. Again approval has dropped in the past 10 years and disapproval has risen in all but one area.

Ninety-three percent of youth, the highest number in 30 years, disapprove of premarital intercourse. Only 5 percent approve of the behavior, while only 3 percent are uncertain.

In the recent survey, 89 percent or more of youth disapprove of lying, swearing, cheating, and stealing, up from 1988. Only 8 percent or less either approve or are uncertain about these behaviors in the recent survey.

Only 8 percent of youth approve of talking back to parents, the lowest in 30 years. The behavior grew in disapproval to 71 percent from 57 percent in 1988. This is still not as high as 1978 (84 percent) or 1968 (75 percent). Twenty-one percent are uncertain about the issue.

Only 6 percent approve of gossiping, down from 20 percent in 1988, while 80 percent disapprove. Only 9 percent approve of envying people, the lowest in 30 years. Sixty-one percent disapprove, while 30 percent are uncertain about the issue.

Losing one's temper and not giving a tithe show the most acceptance, at 21 percent each. Over 40 percent of youth disapprove of losing one's temper, up from 1988 (20 percent), but lower than 1978 (61

TABLE 4

	APPROVE				DISAPPROVE				UNCERTAIN			
	98	88	78	68	98	88	78	68	98	88	78	68
SEXUAL BEHAVIORS												
Petting & necking before marriage	30	40	41	26	38	33	32	48	32	27	27	26
Reading lewd or obscene literature	4	11	7	7	80	71	82	78	16	18	11	15
Thinking immoral and unclean thoughts	6	12	6	9	80	66	83	84	13	22	11	7
Masturbating	8	8	6	4	78	73	82	80	14	19	12	16
Telling off-color or filthy jokes or stories	12	21	4	7	71	58	81	87	17	21	15	6
Having premarital intercourse	5	9	4	4	93	86	92	89	3	5	4	7

Overall,
our youth
espouse an
acceptance
of Christian
ideals and
standards.

TABLE 5

	APPROVE				DISAPPROVE				UNCERTAIN			
	98	88	78	68	98	88	78	68	98	88	78	68
SCRIPTURAL COMMANDS												
Losing one's temper	21	42	29	19	42	20	61	70	37	38	10	11
Giving less than 10% of income to the Lord	21	22	19	17	53	38	58	61	18	40	23	22
Envy people who get "all the breaks"	9	18	14	17	61	43	74	59	30	39	12	24
Skipping personal devotions	12	11	11	13	42	47	71	66	46	42	18	21
Talking back to parents	8	20	9	11	71	57	84	75	21	23	7	14
Gossiping	6	20	7	10	80	63	85	80	15	17	8	10
Having premarital intercourse	5	8	4	4	93	86	92	89	3	6	4	7
Lying	4	11	4	2	94	74	94	90	2	15	2	8
Swearing	6	10	4	5	91	73	91	88	3	16	5	7
Cheating in school	3	12	3	2	89	73	93	96	8	15	4	2
Stealing	4	6	1	2	94	90	99	96	2	4	0	2

percent) and 1968 (70 percent). Thirty-seven percent are uncertain on the issue. Over 50 percent disapprove of giving less than 10 percent of one's income to the Lord, higher than 1988 (38 percent), but lower than 1978 (58 percent) and 1968 (61 percent). Just under 20 percent are uncertain about the issue.

Skipping devotions is highest in uncertainty for youth. At 46 percent, youth are more uncertain about this behavior than they have been in the last 30 years. Just over 40 percent disapprove, the lowest disapproval in 30 years.

CONCLUSIONS

I am pleasantly surprised that in many ways our youth today espouse more conservative and biblical ideals than they did a decade ago. Does this mean our families, churches and educational institutions are doing a better job? Whatever attribution we give to these results, they remain encouragingly positive. Overall our youth espouse an acceptance of Christian ideals and standards.

I remain concerned that the stated beliefs and behaviors of our youth might not coincide. Maybe future research could question not only their beliefs but also their behaviors. Unless beliefs become behaviors, we have accomplished little in the Christian education and training of our youth.

These results indicate that in some areas our youth are confused, uncertain or plain wrong in their views. What needs to be done to correct this situation should be a major point of discussion among our leadership, youth workers and educators—what we can do practically to address these areas.

We must teach our youth how to think critically and biblically. We shouldn't get caught up in legalism (the do's and don'ts approach) and neglect the relationship with God that he calls us to. The standards may be the same, but God also wants us to know him and his Word and then apply this knowledge in our decisions and activities of life.

We are about to enter the 21st century. I believe our witness, as followers of Christ, will be tested in countless ways as we attempt to be salt and light in an increasingly darkened world. What can we do to help our youth meet this challenge?

■ We need to recommit ourselves to teach a timeless truth in a constantly changing world. Due to the turmoil of our world and society, we need to focus more on application of biblical decision mak-

ing and morality in today's world. Helping our young people bring the Scriptures to life in the everyday aspects of their lives should be one of our highest priorities. We cannot expect this to automatically happen in their lives.

■ We need to challenge our youth not only to right belief but also right behavior. While right belief is imperative, without right behavior we have gained little. Our stress should remain on discipleship and following Christ.

■ We need to commit ourselves to model biblical critical thinking and decision making to our youth. Many of our beliefs and values are not taught but rather "caught." Are we providing them with adequate models to follow? Are we willing to wrestle with difficult issues without closing down discussion? We must remind ourselves that our youth are not only listening to us, but also watching us.

■ We need to constantly evaluate our relationship to our culture. While we are in the world, we are not to be of the world. How does this biblical admonition evidence itself practically? Too often we either lose our identity by immersing ourselves in the culture, or we retreat from the culture and fail to influence it effectively. This tension has been a struggle throughout church history and will probably remain a challenge for us.

While we are changing and our world is changing, our God is not. That is the reason we can look with anticipation and excitement to the new millennium. My prayer for us as Mennonite Brethren is Joshua 3:5: "Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow the Lord will do wonders among you." ■

Norman Thiesen, Ph.D., is chair of the Master of Arts Counseling Program at Grace University in Omaha, Nebraska. He also serves as part of the leadership team at Rolling Hills Church, Papillion, Nebraska, an MB church plant.





SDC joining forces to plant church in Wichita

World Impact and the Southern District Conference Church Extension and Evangelism Commission have joined in partnership with the goal of planting a Mennonite Brethren church in the low-income Oaklawn area of Wichita, Kan. This is south and east of United at the Cross Church, a World Impact/SDC church plant currently working toward affiliation with our conference. Relationships are now being built by WI staff and volunteer club activities that include the Tabor College Friday nights Kids Clubs as reported in the February 1999 issue of the *Leader*.

Facilities, ministry materials and equipment are being provided and the neighborhood is open to this ministry. Public school officials and others see this as a positive influence for their community. The challenge facing the SDC CEEC is the need for full time as well as short term ministry staff. The leadership team would become WI staff with the financial support of the SDC. They would benefit from the experience and guidance of WI and its Urban Institute and in cooperation with SDC CEEC. It is our prayer, and one in which we would like you to join us, that God's choice people might respond to this challenge and opportunity. For further information, please contact CEEC chair Joe Johns by phone at 580-772-0415 or by e-mail at jejohns@itlnet.net or SDC district minister Roland Reimer at 316-722-8680.

Editor's Note: This was submitted by Harold Kruger of the SDC CEEC as a follow-up to the article "Tabor students initiate inner city ministry" in the February 1999 issue.

Bible translations

In response to the article on Bible versions in the February 1999 issue, we

The Christian Leader welcomes brief letters on topics relevant to the Mennonite Brethren Church. All letters must be signed and will be edited for clarity and length. Send letters to Christian Leader, 7531 Delta Wind Dr., Sacramento, CA 95831 (e-mail: chleader@jps.net).

would draw your readers' attention to several important facts. First of all, do not Mennonite Brethren hold to the premise that Scripture is *verbally* inspired? If that is the belief, then how can the dynamic equivalency method of translation be justified? This method, which supposedly gives the thought of the passage, does not give God's exact words. Isaiah 55:8 says, "My thoughts are not your thoughts." Using this method of translation opens the Word up to man's interpretation, setting himself up as the authority rather than God. In Deut. 4:2, Deut. 12:32, Prov. 30:6 and Rev. 22:18-19, we are warned not to add or take away from God's words. The punishment for doing so is quite dire as indicated in the latter reference.

In Marten's article, the term "original" was used. The fact is that the original autographs no longer exist. What he terms "original" is in the 27th edition. Furthermore, the Greek text is edited by apostates and unbelievers, one of which is a Catholic cardinal who doesn't believe Jesus Christ died for our sins or that He resurrected or ascended into heaven!

Of what benefit is inspiration without preservation? God has promised to preserve his words for us even today (see Matt. 5:17-18, Matt. 24:35, Ps. 78:1-7, Ps. 119:32). For 1800 years, true believers used the Greek Received Text as the base of the New Testament. This text has been traced back to the first apostolic churches and was the text of the Bibles of the Reformation. It is still the text used in today's King James Bible. Many modern day "scholars" contend their versions are based on older and more accurate manuscripts. This is not supported by the evidence. The overwhelming majority of existing manuscripts agree with the readings of the KJB, while modern versions are supported by less than one percent of manuscripts. Further, the readings of these minority manuscripts disagree with each other. The KJB is the only literal and true verbal equivalence English translation produced today.

The proliferation of versions produces confusion so that readers don't really know what God did or did not say. By taking away and/or adding thousands of words we have new revised and reformed Bibles according to man.

Charles Spurgeon said it well: "The Holy Spirit didn't use words at random. We shall never consent to the liberalism that's taking things out of our Bibles. It really kills the life germ of our Bible."

*Larry and Sherry Jost
Peabody, Kan.*

No holds barred?

On several occasions, the *Christian Leader* has written about a task force assigned to conduct a review of conference ministry structures. The March 1999 issue did so recently on page 26.

The *Leader*, as does the task force itself, repeatedly uses the slogan "no holds barred" to describe it. It suggests the task force, and the conference that commissioned it, are bold, daring, and open to change. How exciting!

Unfortunately, the slogan is also mythical. At the US Convention held last summer in La Mirada, a "no holds barred" afternoon session was hosted by this task force to discuss the direction of the conference. Three people suggested *thinking* about merging with the Mennonite Church in the future as one possible way of restructuring the MB conference. This discussion was quickly dismissed with the explanation that such a topic is outside the charter of the task force.

No holds barred?

*Sam Kho
Sunnyvale, CA*

Forgiving President Clinton

In Marvin Hein's column in the March 1999 issue, a reader asked, "If Jesus tells us to forgive seventy times seven (Matt. 18:22), why are so many Christians so unforgiving toward President Clinton?"

Let me provide another answer to the reader's question. Jesus is replying to, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him?" While a victim may, at his discretion, forgive a crime, nobody else ever has that authority. The victims of Clinton's crimes—Hillary, Chelsea, Billy Dale, Linda Tripp, Paula Jones, Paula Casey, Gary Aldrich, Louis Freeh, Cathleen Willey, Juanita Broadrick, Vince Foster—these, not TV view-

ers, have an opportunity to forgive Bill.

And the constitutional remedy was removal, the remedy universally accepted for any employee unable to perform his job description. A Christian supervisor is under no moral obligation under Matt. 18:22 to retain nonperforming and malfeasant employees.

Perhaps the reader confuses hatred with vengeance. Yes, vengeance belongs to God. But I chafe at the view that hatred is always ungodly. For at least 38 times the Bible reveals God's hatred of liars alone—example: "A false witness will not go unpunished, and he who utters lies will perish" (Prov. 19:9). Nor is hatred reserved to God, for David too abhors evil men, "men who maliciously defy thee . . . that hate thee, O Lord? . . . I hate them with perfect hatred," adding "Search me, O God . . . and see if there be any wicked way in me" (Ps. 139:23-24).

God shows his love for us *both* in that he hates the sin that would destroy us *and* in that he redeems some from sin. Evidently God has not chosen to redeem Bill, for he appears unregenerate, incapable of scruple or remorse that would evince sanctification. But even if Bill's "contrition" were bona fide, that wouldn't guarantee him carte blanche.

I can pity Bill. I can pray God will enlighten him. I can forgive my portion of taxes he stole from Madison Guarantee and my portion of insecurity due to arms secrets sold. But I have no standing to forgive Bill his crimes, his injuries of others, nor his sins. For "Who can forgive sins but God alone?" (Mark 2:7).

*Peter Stearns
Lodi, California*

Growing healthy church members

Regarding issues of church self-evaluation in the March 1999 *Christian Leader*, I would like to share a few thoughts for reflection.

In a given church, you may have several different ministries functioning such as Sunday school, adult education classes, small groups, youth groups, worship team, greeters, etc. There are numerous people serving in these ministries and also people serving on functional committees and boards such as finance, missions, trustees, and hospitality. These people serve as servant leaders. As Christians our duty is to disciple and raise up others in these ministries from the body which we are a member of.

There seems to be a trend in churches today to separate various groups of certain ministries and allow them to specialize in one area only. There are benefits for training purposes and other reasons which I won't go into.

The problem with specialization, however, is that it causes exclusivism. As a result, the group is cut off from the remainder of the body.

Too often members of an exclusive group will not participate in the menial or mundane chores of the church. In effect, they cut themselves off from fellowship with the "ordinary" people of the church because of their status in the church.

When leaders help with the menial and mundane chores of the church, the leader is enriched by the experience. Working alongside ordinary people, leaders have opportunity to give a word of encouragement or receive one. They may

find themselves praying with an individual or using gifts and talents they didn't know they had. When leaders keep to themselves, in their specialized areas, they stagnate. They also miss the opportunity to get to know a lot of great ordinary people.

I am not suggesting that everybody should volunteer to do everything. There is a balance. One good balancing technique is rotating people in key positions and menial positions.

Have we overspecialized? Are we guilty of exclusivism? Can we enter the fullness of Christ if we are disconnected groups just sharing the same meeting place?

*Sharon A. Hubbard
Marion, Kan.*

MEDA: Putting faith to work

*When David Smucker wanted to put his
faith to work, he turned to MEDA.*

Smucker, a sales manager in Harrisonburg, Virginia, has a passion to help people realize their dreams and potential through the creation of small businesses. He is putting his faith to work through the Valley Microenterprise Alliance (VMA), a new MEDA-supported small business creation program for low income people in the Harrisonburg area. Through VMA he wants to help low income people find meaningful and sustaining employment.

"For me, work and faith are not disjointed," he says.
"Through MEDA and VMA, I have new opportunities to help others by sharing my faith and skills."



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A "Mennonite experience"

BY DON AND MARILYN BULLER

What is a "Mennonite experience"? In his best-seller book, *Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger*, Ronald S. Sider, a Mennonite professor of theology at Eastern Seminary, challenges us to seriously consider the claims of Christ in helping the poor and downcast of our world. Did not Jesus himself continually tell his followers to consider the poor and the oppressed?

The only questions remaining for us were how and when and where.

The journey to our Mennonite experience took us to our first Mennonite Disaster Service project in Birmingham, Ala., late last year.

We actually knew very little about MDS, but we had done other types of Christian volunteer work. The burden developed within our minds and hearts that we had an obligation to our Mennonite denomination to somehow learn more about and become involved in an MDS project. So, we contacted the MDS headquarters and began to explore locations of various needs—and opportunities for our Mennonite experience.

We were offered two locations and chose to give five weeks of our time to the Birmingham location where an April 1998 tornado cut a swatch 22 miles long and one mile wide. Hundreds of homes were destroyed and 34 people lost their lives.

Little did we know what was in store for us when we arrived and were joined by other Anabaptists—from General Conference Mennonites to Amish to Mennonite Brethren—all volunteering their efforts for different periods of time.

We were impressed by the setup of the camp and the MDS organizational structure. The camp was set up to feed and house all those who came to help. Laundry facilities were also available.

Our workday started at 7:00 a.m. with breakfast in the dining hall, where we



The Bullers spent five weeks as volunteers for Mennonite Disaster Service. MDS, founded in 1950 as a joint effort of Mennonites, is a network through which various constituencies of the Anabaptist churches can respond to areas affected by disasters in North America. While the main focus is on cleanup, repair and rebuilding homes, this activity becomes a means of touching lives and helping people regain faith and wholeness. MDS workers are volunteers who serve without pay. MDS averages 3000 volunteers a year. For more information, go to www.menno-disaster-service.org on the World Wide Web.

got acquainted with our fellow workers. Many people we worked with had taken a week off from their jobs to come and help. Others like us, who are retired, stayed longer and worked as crew leaders. Several recent high school graduates came and gave six months of time prior to starting college.

After breakfast and devotions, work assignments were made. All women on the project were assigned a job as well as the men. The project director takes abilities, interests and preferences into account.

By 7:45 a.m., we were headed toward the large enclosed tool trailer to search the shelves and bins for the myriad of tools necessary for our day's work. The equipment was loaded into MDS vans or pickups and team workers found their seats. We were off to the adventure of our life.

Our assignment in rebuilding tornado-destroyed houses began in a house that had been framed and sheetrocked prior to our arrival. Those of us more experienced taught others what to do. Everyone pitched in, learning a new job or working at what they already knew how to do—there was great comradeship. Marilyn started her experience on day one as an apprentice "mudder." By day three, she moved to journeyman mudder status.

By day's end, we were tired. The younger ones lingered behind after the evening meal to play a game or read a newspaper, and those of us a little older and more tired sauntered off to our bedrooms for some much needed rest.

We worked with people from different parts of the country, from different "brands" of Mennonite churches, and with different ways of life. It was interesting to compare our different modes

of worship, baptism, dress, etc., but most of all it was wonderful to share our faith in Jesus Christ and review our similarities instead of being concerned with our cultural differences. It was a learning experience in more ways than one.

During our five-week tenure we worked on a number of different homes, seeing two of them to completion. What a thrill to stand in the middle of the living room with the elderly owner of one new home just completed by our crew. The home had been built from the foundation up to a fully carpeted home with all rough and finish work done by various volunteers. Electrical and plumbing work had been contracted out. She stood there, surveying her new domicile, tears cascading down her wrinkled face in gratefulness. We had a few tears ourselves and were glad that we had the opportunity to be a part of helping to build her a new home.

We were impressed not only with the MDS organizational structure but also with local autonomy given the leadership, the coordination with over 28 other social service agencies, the cooperation and working together across denominational and ethnic lines and the coordination of building responsibilities among the different groups. It all flowed like a well-oiled machine.

We recommend to everyone, working or retired, to give of your time to have a Mennonite experience. All that is necessary is a willing heart and helping hands. Skills needed are learned from others. You will never be sorry. What a great time we had—and we are looking forward to another such experience. ■

The Bullers are retired and members of Bethany MB Church in Fresno, Calif.

Forum is a column of opinion and comment on contemporary issues facing the Mennonite Brethren Church. Manuscripts expressing an opinion for Forum should aim for a length of 800 words. Authors must sign articles, identify their church home and vocation, and include a clear photo of themselves.

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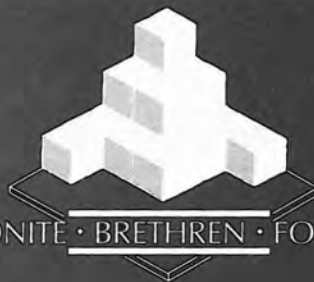
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Turning the other ear

At times, the Christian perspective to an issue is silence.

Now that the Monica Lewinski furor has quieted down, I think the time is right to talk about it. When popular media was broadcasting "all Monica, all the time," I never felt compelled to add anything. What was left to say? The line I kept hearing was, "This is none of our business," after which everyone seemed to drone on about it endlessly. One political cartoon I saw got it right in picturing masses of people gathered in front of a TV screen showing Lewinski. "We don't want to know!" the people shouted, while staring at the screen in rapt attention.

My own views on the matter seemed to run counter to public opinion. In contrast to those who felt that the president's private life wasn't important, I felt it was very important. Such a failure of morality and integrity was indeed our business. But not every sordid detail. Many said they didn't care what the president did in private, and then demonstrated a tremendous amount of interest in what the president did in private. I said I did care what the president did, but had no interest whatsoever in gawking at the particulars. When Lewinski appeared on one of those TV "news" magazines to air her laundry, you couldn't have gotten me near the show with a cattle prod.

Part of the reason for this is simply my distaste for the gossip element that has overtaken most news media. The author Henry David Thoreau once observed, when telegraphy was about to revolutionize cross-country communications, that, "We are in great haste to construct a magnetic telegraph from Maine to Texas; but Maine and Texas, it may be, have nothing important to communicate." Thoreau went on to

express concern that any communications revolution might merely promote a faster way to spread irrelevance.

He was right, of course. It struck me this morning as I was participating in the newest communications revolution—reading my e-mail—that relevant messages are often in the minority. Of the seven messages I read, in fact, only two were work-related, while five were advertisements or trivia. To paraphrase Thoreau:

We are in great haste to expand the information superhighway; but the information superhighway, it may be, has little of substance to deliver.

That certainly was my feeling during the Lewinski proceedings. But I don't think my skepticism was only a matter of taste. The thought that resonated strongly in me, as the nation eagerly anticipated Lewinski's interview and forthcoming book, was that I had no business indulging in the details of other people's wrongdoing.

To that end many Christians have done a good job of warning against certain aspects of modern media. We don't want to condone infidelity, violence, greed, sexism, moral relativism and other ills by being consumers of these types of programs and products. Yet I haven't heard many concerns of this kind raised regarding news shows. But there's truth in the old joke: "I turned on the TV and saw nothing but fighting, cursing, lying, shooting, explosions, car chases, and fooling around. And then when the news was over, I watched Jeopardy."

In raising questions about the con-

tent of modern news, I don't mean we should completely close our eyes to wrongdoing. We are called both to expose evil (Eph. 5:11) and work to change it (Matt. 5:15). But I don't think exposing evil means taking binoculars to it. Our culture has developed a voracious appetite for peeping into the private lives and sins of others, as evidenced in the explosion of talk shows and panel discussions and news magazines and "tell-all" interviews. At times I worry that Christians may be among the biggest gawkers. Some of the gloating and reveling that went on in the wake of the Clinton-Lewinski lapse, for instance, was truly an embarrassment to behold.

I'm reminded of a story that came out of the "Stand in the Gap" rally in Washington, D.C. a couple of years ago. One group of women reportedly took an unusual course of action in protest to what they felt were the Promise Keeper's sexist tendencies. They attempted to move out among the gathering of men topless, apparently hoping to incite some sort of confrontation.

But the men involved simply averted their eyes and closed their mouths. And their silence spoke far louder than any words or arguments or attempts to reason could possibly have done. In a similar way, I think there are many times when "turning the other ear" from today's culture of gossip would be a far greater witness than becoming engaged in it—even for the alleged purpose of interjecting a "Christian perspective." At times the Christian perspective is silence.

"Among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity," Paul writes, "because these are improper for God's holy people" (Eph. 5:3). Today I would suggest that this applies not only to performers but also to consumers of wrongdoing. Regarding those who are immoral, impure, and prone to empty words, Paul goes on to warn: "Do not be partners with them" (v. 7).



INQUIRING MINDS

BY MARVIN HEIN

Q *I am having difficulty understanding Leviticus 14:34-45. Is the statement about red and green depressions on the walls a kind of symbolic language? Please give me a short explanation of these passages. (California)*

A I must confess that I don't see any reason for wondering what the words in Leviticus 14 mean. Such a statement is not to be meant to be irreverent or disrespectful of the Bible nor the inquirer. I can report that when I posed the question to a more theologically inclined person than I am, he answered: "As for the red and green stripes, I don't think I want to know."

The passage in question is part of a long discussion on the matter of cleansing what is ceremonially unclean according to laws in place during the time when the Mosaic law was the rule for Israel. The particular counsel of the Lord to Moses and Aaron in this instance concerned houses that were being occupied when Israel entered the land of Canaan. Obviously the former occupants had not been concerned about laws of uncleanness. Apparently the red and green depressions on the walls of some of the houses indicated a deeper than usual state of uncleanness and therefore demanded extra care in making them ceremonially clean.

It appears that some form of lichen or mold, or as others think, dry rot, had affected these houses. To the Hebrew this was a kind of leprosy that needed to be considered very seriously. This "leprosy" was not simply a physical thing in the mind of the Hebrew; it somehow was either evil or at least represented wickedness. Someone has noted that just as circumcision of the flesh represented a circumcision of the heart, so this form of leprosy in the house represented a pollution, a spiritual evil. Therefore there was need for cleansing which sometimes, if the green and red depressions were deep enough, demanded rather extreme cleansing measures.

Personally, the most telling impression I receive from a passage like this is a deep gratefulness for living in the age of grace. While the Mosaic law was effective in being a "schoolmaster," I'm very thankful that in Christ we were delivered from the ceremonial laws of Moses.

Q *In studying for a sermon on Samuel, I found myself faced with 1 Sam. 2:25b where Eli is lecturing his sons on the manner of their lives as priests. The text then says: "But they would not listen to the voice of their father; for it was the will of the Lord to kill them." Wow! What do you do with that? (Manitoba)*

A The story is a familiar one. Eli's sons were grossly misusing their offices as priests. These were not private, but very public sins. Eli, the text says, was old but not so infirm that he did not know what was going on with his sons. Moreover, their sins must have been very apparent to the people because Eli says in effect: "I've been hearing reports from the people about the wicked things you are doing" (v. 23). Among those transgressions was the seducing of young women who assisted in Israel's worship at the entrance of the tabernacle (v. 22).

Eli apparently had tried unsuccessfully to bring the sons to repentance. He told them to stop their sinning. The sons would not listen to their father. So at that point the text reports that the Lord was already planning to put the sons to death. In an age when we have such emphasis on the grace and mercy of God, this statement about God's intention to kill may strain our understanding of God's true character.

As I do frequently, especially when questions come out of Old Testament passages, I visited with one of my professor friends. His insights were very helpful, and my response is based largely on his explanations.

We need to understand two things: the role of priests and the will of God.

Priests were ordained by God to be faithful to the Law. In this case, rather than preserving the Law, Eli's sons were abusing the Law. They were taking advantage of the system for their own benefits. There was an abuse of power. Their misuse of the priesthood was so obvious that even the common people were aware of their misdeeds.

God, on the other hand, is equally concerned about preserving the Law and the people of God for whom the Law has been conceived. He is insistent upon obedience to that Law because he knows it is best for his people. He demands obedience to the law because he knows it is the only way to preserve the people of God. It is not just God's sense of right and wrong that is offended by the priests' misdeeds; the very preservation of God's people is dependent on their commitment to God's laws.

Whenever the survival of God's people is threatened, God must act. And if the "powers that be," in this case the priestly sons of Eli, do not live and act so that God's people will be preserved, God has to take action. Another way of saying this is: if the state doesn't act (and Israel was indeed a state or nation), then God needs to act to save the integrity both of God and his people.

God certainly did not take delight in destroying the sons of Eli. Nor was God acting out of a malicious or jealous attitude because some of his people were stubborn and refused to do their part in God's program. He had to make a difficult choice: to either allow the sons of Eli to continue to misbehave and let his people go to ruin, or to step in with drastic measures and insure the survival of the people and God's plans for them. In essence, God's decision to kill came not from a motivation of condemnation, but of preservation. In other words, there is a larger issue here than the survival of the sons of Eli.

God takes no delight in destroying Eli's sons, nor anyone else. But when a greater cause is at stake (in this instance the preservation of the integrity of God and his nation), he takes extreme measures that may well appear to us as unfair and rash.

Have a question about a Bible passage, doctrine, conference policy, or other spiritual issue? Send it to "Inquiring Minds," c/o Marvin Hein, 4812 E. Butler, Fresno, CA 93727.



ON THE JOURNEY

BY ROSE BUSCHMAN

It's a matter of perspective

Our perspectives lend to our points of view. Somehow, in the midst of all this diversity, we need to find a way to do the Lord's work together

When the wind starts to pick up here in Western Kansas you'd better pay attention, especially if you are doing some work up on a ladder or other device which is not permanently fastened to withstand major gusts of wind.

So I felt it was my duty, when the wind began to increase late one afternoon in May, to suggest to my husband and son that maybe it was time to quit for the day. They were finishing the stone facade of our fireplace chimney and were almost to the top. The scaffolding they were on was designed for a wind-free environment and could easily be toppled by a strong gust. However, neither man would listen to me.

"It's not that windy yet. We're almost to the top and we want to finish this chimney today. We'll make it," they insisted. Concerned wife and mother that I am, my parting comment was: "Well, I'll go inside and cook supper. I can't bear the thought of standing here watching you two crash to the ground. Consider yourself warned!"

Fifteen minutes later, while peeling some potatoes, I heard a big crash and then everything was quiet. Quickly I dropped my peeler, grabbed a towel and wiped my hands as I ran to the front door, jerked it open and stopped to listen. Everything was quiet. No, Lord, no, I prayed. It can't have happened!

Afraid to go outside I called from the open door, "Are you guys all right?"

"Sure," came the answer. "We're almost finished."

"Is everything okay?" I persisted.

"Yeah, mom," my son answered.

"We're almost done. Don't you want to go and get the camera?"

I walked outside. Everything appeared normal.

"Did either of you drop something?"

I asked.

"No."

"Did you hear a crash just now?"

"No."

Puzzled I walked back into the house. I knew I had heard a crash. Just then I remembered almost tripping over

one of our kittens streaking through the hall just as I got to the front door. I started walking through the house in the direction from which the little one had come and, sure enough, in the study I found a mess. One of our big, beautiful ceramic vases that we brought back from Morocco lay in smithereens on the floor. The kitten must have been exploring some high book shelves and decided to jump back down via the vase on the file cabinet.

I was so relieved that it was a broken vase and not my husband and son that lay mangled on the ground that I couldn't even get upset over the mess. Later when my husband saw the broken pieces, his response was, "Well, that's \$80 down the drain."

"Frankly, I don't really care," I replied. "I'm just so glad it's a broken vase and not you two that got hurt."

What's left of the broken vase with its jagged edges and bottom half filled with thousands of shards still sits on top of the file cabinet in our study. To me it spells RELIEF. To my husband it represents money down the drain.

Seeing the same event from widely differing perspectives doesn't just happen in our home. I remember my mother expressing her dismay that I didn't agree with her on a certain issue.

"Why can't you believe the way you're supposed to?" she asked in frustration. "Don't you want to go to heaven?" I didn't think we were dealing with a salvation issue at that time, but I've

thought about her comment a lot.

Recently while having dinner with some friends, we were discussing how some people within our church have very different viewpoints on certain passages of Scripture. One man shared that he had been told in no uncertain terms by another member that the Bible was very clear on the issue under discussion and he couldn't understand why everyone didn't see it his way.

When it comes to biblical interpretation of a wide variety of issues such as Christians participating in war, the role of women in leadership in the church, elder governance or servant-leadership, which Bible translation is best (just to name a few divisive topics), much controversy exists. Why don't we all agree? Why do we have such different views on such a wide variety of religious issues? After all, aren't we all believers?

As I see it, we come at these issues from different perspectives which are determined, at least in part, by the different experiences we have had in life, by the various teachings we have been exposed to and by what we have accepted as the theology by which we will live. Our own interpretation of Scripture is filtered through glasses colored by our culture, our gender, our denominational upbringing or lack of it, our home training, our reading and many other factors. We each have our own perspective and because of this we have different points of view. And somehow, in the midst of all this diversity we need to find a way to do the Lord's work together.

I am reminded of a speaker who was addressing the problem of what to do with group members who do not agree. She explored a variety of strategies and then ended by saying, "We may not always see eye to eye on everything, but we must stand shoulder to shoulder in order to complete our assigned mission." That sounds like very good advice to me.



**"Don't mistreat any foreigners
who live in your land.
Instead treat them
as well as you treat citizens
and love them as much
as you love yourself."
Leviticus 19:33,34a**

**LIBERTY
and JUSTICE
for
ALL?**

In Chandler, Arizona, in 1997, police participated in a "roundup" to clean up downtown Chandler. More than 420 were arrested, many because of their skin color or for speaking Spanish. Legal residents and U.S. citizens were also arrested because, as one observer noted, they "look Mexican."

The Arizona Attorney General charged the city with racial targeting: arrests were made for, "no other reason than their skin color or Mexican appearance or the use of the Spanish language.

This is not an isolated incident. According to Immigration and Naturalization Service records, 81 percent of deportees in 1998 were Mexican. Another 9 percent were from Central America.

Become aware of immigration issues in your community and learn to advocate on behalf of the newcomer. Contact MCC U.S. and ask for "Welcoming the Newcomer: Doing Advocacy with Immigrants," an information packet on immigration issues. For more information about MCC U.S. work with immigration, contact MCC U.S. via e-mail at rjy@mccus.org.



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Singer Rebecca St. James (far left) shares her testimony during the Monday night concert. St. James and her band gave a full-length concert complete with a light show. Buster Soaries (middle left) and Lori Salierno (middle right) encouraged students to "power up" their identity as children of God and their commitment to Christ and his teachings. Actor Curt Cloninger (far right) illustrates different views of God during his Sunday night performance.

Photos of St. James and Cloninger by Rich Hawes. Photo of Soaries by Jodi Thomas. Photo of Salierno by Kim Bartel.

Estes '99 challenges MB youth to "power up"

■ Mennonite Brethren youth gathering challenges teenagers to power up their identity as children of God and their commitment to Christ and his teachings.

More than one student will admit having a good time ranked high on their "to do" list during the national MB youth convention March 20-23 at YMCA of the Rockies in scenic Estes Park, Colo.

"I was really looking forward to the fun we would have at Estes," says Jeff Wyssenbach, a junior at Maize (Kan.) High School who attends First MB Church in Wichita. "Now as I think back, I barely remember going skiing. The sessions were very challenging."

DeForest "Buster" Soaries, senior pastor of First Baptist Church of Lincoln Gardens in Somerset, New Jersey, and the New Jersey Secretary of State, and Lori Salierno, executive officer of Celebrate Life International and pastoral staff member at Town Center Community Church in Marietta, Ga., were the keynote speakers.

Soaries and Salierno were both impressed by their interaction with students during question and answer ses-

sions, says planning team chair Stuart Pederson. Pederson quotes from a letter he received from Salierno after the convention, "Your students are warm, responsive and eager to make a difference for Christ. I was overwhelmed by their response to the message and their commitment to prayer."

Soaries noted the depth and substance of the questions asked by students, says planning team member Rolando Mireles, who served as Soaries' host. Soaries said the open-mike questions didn't focus on his personal life nor on the students themselves but on others—something he doesn't always encounter.

The students weren't the only ones receiving commendations. Several times Soaries recognized the sponsors for their willingness to spend an extended weekend with "other people's kids" and he encouraged the students to look for opportunities to thank their sponsors and to be servants to them.

Keying in on the convention theme to "Power Up," the two speakers encouraged the students to power up their identity as children of God and their commitment to Christ and his teachings.

Soaries' four messages began in a measured style with Soaries' thoughtfully selecting his words and concluded in a lively and energetic manner as the preacher found his groove. A common theme was self-identity.

"The most important thing I can share with people is a strategy for finding who you are," said Soaries the first night. "You can never know who you are unless you know who God is. That's the reason we start (the convention) the way we do—not focused on ourselves but focused on God."

In the opening Saturday night session, Soaries used the words from Psalm 8 to remind his audience that they are created a little lower than the angels and given dominion over everything made by God. He challenged the students to

take control of their lives in areas of drug and alcohol consumption and sex. The audience responded with loud and enthusiastic approval to his call for sexual abstinence.

Monday morning Soaries encouraged the students to find happiness by serving others. Using the story of Jesus washing his disciples' feet, he quoted John 13:17: "Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them." Soaries said, "Jesus wasn't saying to serve your way to happiness—he's saying we should kind of happy our way to service."

Soaries again emphasized the importance of knowing who you are. "We don't serve each other because we're too busy trying to impress each other. My title only tells you what I do," said Soaries, "what's important is my testimony."

In the closing session Tuesday morning, Soaries again emphasized the power Christians have to make a difference in American society when their perspective focuses on who they are in Christ. He retold the story of David and the giant Goliath from 1 Samuel 17 saying that while the army of Israel and

King Saul feared the giant, David had a different perspective on the situation and was able to defeat Goliath.

Committing to a personal relationship with Jesus Christ was specifically emphasized Sunday morning. Soaries asked the students to consider whether or not they were really alive. "If the only thing we have on our mind is feeling good and having stuff—you may be walking and talking and breathing but you are carnally minded and to be carnally minded is to be dead already," said Soaries, referring to his text of Romans 8. "God wants us to live forever. We settle for things that cause us to be dead already."

After sharing his own conversion story, Soaries used the story of the vampire Dracula to illustrate the call to be alive in Christ. He challenged the students to recognize that sinners are people of darkness and invited all the "vampires" to allow Jesus to "get into your heart."

Several hundred students surrounded the front platform when Soaries gave the invitation. Not only did students come to the front to demonstrate their own commitments but to support their friends who came for prayer. That morn-

ing 75 students renewed their commitment to Christ, 20 made a salvation commitment and another 35 students made a commitment in a variety of areas, said counseling coordinator Dina Gonzalez.

A second opportunity to publicly make faith decisions was given by singer Rebecca St. James during her concert Monday night. Over 150 students made commitments: four for salvation, 79 for a restored commitment and 42 for missions and service.

"Rebecca's concert was a God thing that we decided to spend the money on," says Pederson, explaining that early in 1999 the planning team became aware of the opportunity to schedule St. James and her band. "It was money well spent."

In addition to St. James' public testimony, Estes '99 staff members who hosted her band complimented the group on their behind-the-scenes testimony. In addition to a handful of professionals, St. James travels with her parents, brothers and sister, who are an integral part of the concert both on stage and behind the scenes.

Commitment was also Lori Salier-no's theme and like Soaries, she pep-



Three video screens (top right) made it possible for everyone to see the speakers and worship bands up close during the sessions held in the Longhouse. Conventioneers were encouraged to "move a little" by members of various Hispanic congregations (bottom right) who led the group in singing a Spanish praise song. A choir of young people from a Slavic congregation in Washington also performed (left). Photos by Rich Hawes.

photo contest
winner

Youth spirits remained high as they traveled home from Estes. Here, youth from Dinuba MB Church pose for a photo taken by Sarah Hartley.

The *Leader* sponsored a photo contest, soliciting photos from Estes attendees. Throughout these pages, photos identified as "photo contest winners" were taken by someone attending the youth convention.



pered her talks with stories from her own life.

Sunday evening Salierno challenged the audience to have a vision for applying the Gospel to human need. She asked her audience to do three things: be open to a vision for ministry, grow in Christ and anticipate that God will work in their lives. She then asked the group to kneel at their chairs and in silence to pray asking God, "What are you saying to me?"

In her Monday morning message taken from John 15, Salierno encouraged the students to live "enthusiastically devoted and intensely hot for God" by embracing a lifestyle that abides in God. To abide in God is to know him intimately, said Salierno, and we know God when we spend time in prayer and in his Word.

Salierno challenged the audience to develop a prayer habit by spending at least 15 minutes in prayer and Bible reading for the next 21 days. Using actions, Salierno presented a 12-step prayer sequence that includes praise and thanksgiving components, times of silence, confession, Bible reading and meditation and singing. Salierno encouraged the audience to let the verses they read nurture them all day long—much like cud nurtures a cow.

In almost complete unison, the audience rose to its feet when Salierno invited students and sponsors to stand if they would commit to a daily prayer

time. She told those standing that volunteers within her ministry would pray for each person standing by name for the next 21 days—that prayer would become a daily habit. About 1,000 people gave their name to Salierno.

As Salierno left the stage, the audi-

Slavic Ministries of the Integrated Ministries arm of the U.S. Conference.

General session prayers were said in four languages by various planning team members. A Slavic choir performed and a group representing various congregations led a Spanish praise song. Early

"If you don't know who you are, your personality will change with every group you're around. If you don't know who you are, you need a whole group of people to tell you what to think." —Buster Soaries

"God gave people power to be in charge of themselves. You'd never think it—the way people talk about sex. We've given up on the possibility that we can control our sexual selves. I just checked with the one who made sex—with the manufacturer—we are to flee fornication." —Buster Soaries

"When we insulate ourselves from human need, we insulate ourselves from God because he cares for those needs." —Lori Salierno

"There's an ocean of difference between knowing the words and knowing God." —Lori Salierno

ence gave her a standing ovation, a tribute to their appreciation for her messages.

General sessions were designed not only for worship and instruction but also to nurture the ethnic diversity among U.S. Mennonite Brethren congregations, says Pederson. The planning team included representatives from the Central District, Latin American MB District, North Carolina District, Pacific District and Southern District and from the Korean Ministries (Southern California) and

morning worship times were led by Slavic, Hispanic and Anglo worship teams.

"My vision is that this event be one of the cogs in the machinery that exposes other ethnic groups to who Mennonite Brethren are," said Pederson in an interview after the convention. "God used the planning team in its diversity," says Pederson. "We were a united team focused on prayer and God used it."

Pederson said the planning team made some adjustments this year to



photo contest winner

Youth had free time in the afternoons to take advantage of a number of activities ranging from sports and hiking to shopping in downtown Estes Park. Here, Jo Schrock, Rebecca Trego and Rachel Trego read "letters to God" at Bible Point.

accommodate the record number of participants. A total of 1,796 people participated in Estes '99, an increase of about 300 over the 1995 convention.

In addition to increasing the size of the planning team, Pederson said there was a concerted effort at making a transition in team leadership. Additional recreation opportunities were added, the number of deans went from two to eight and additional funds were directed to video and media services. Clean-up duty in the Longhouse was shared by the youth groups.

Changes were also made in the area of counseling services. Because counseling coordinator Dina Gonzalez wanted to provide a more intentional counseling service than in previous years, a counseling office was staffed by 25 trained volunteers throughout the weekend to provide crisis intervention and individual counseling.

Prayer was an important element in the weekend, says Pederson. Each registrant was prayed for by name prior to the convention at least twice. The day before the convention began, the staff held a prayer walk through the grounds. The six prayer team members prayed individually for the concerns recorded on the 1,000 prayer cards received during Estes '99, said coordinator Randy Reiswig.

Providing opportunities for corporate worship was another goal of the planning team. General session worship

times were led by Gareth Goossen, a worship leader from Canada, and a team of primarily young adults from across the districts. While many of the songs were new, they were well received and many will no doubt find their way into youth group and congregational worship times.

In addition to general sessions, organizers said students and sponsors filled Hyde Chapel for the early morning worship hour as well as an additional late night service that was added to the schedule.

Seminars on a variety of subjects ranging from stewardship to service opportunities to worship were offered twice. A "wave" offering led by Jon Wiebe, president of MB Foundation, raised about \$9,500 for scholarships for students participating in summer mission trips. The convention concluded with a communion service led by Stuart Pederson of Henderson, Neb., and planning team member Nick Delgado of Reedley, Calif.

Late night entertainment was provided by St. James, comedian Scott

Wood and actor Curt Cloninger. While Wood's humor bothered some, Cloninger's comic portrayals of different ways people view God and his "personal" telling of the Prodigal Son parable were generally appreciated.

The two U.S. Mennonite Brethren colleges—Fresno Pacific University in Fresno, Calif., and Tabor College in Hillsboro, Kan.—provided special instrumental music for the weekend. Admissions representatives from the two schools sponsored special giveaways in the exhibit area. A sponsors' lounge was provided by MB Biblical Seminary, Youth Mission International and Kindred Productions.

The afternoons were given to free time. On-site options included swimming, hiking, group snow shoe, roller skating and outdoor volleyball and basketball. Buses shuttled students and sponsors to downtown Estes Park for shopping, biking, indoor basketball and bowling. Transportation was also provided for skiing, vertical wall climbing and horseback riding. —CF



**Estes '99
Video**

To order the Estes '99 video send \$15 to:
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U.S. boards address funding and report ministries strong

■ U.S. Conference boards met in early April, addressing a five-year funding question and celebrating strong ministries.

For many U.S. Conference board members, resolving a long-standing funding question set a positive tone for the annual joint meeting of U.S. Conference boards held April 8-10 in Visalia, Calif.

"The funding solution makes so much sense to us," said Mission USA board chair Chuck Buller in his report at the closing joint session. "We were able to concentrate on our board work. For me personally it was the most fulfilling meeting of the last four years."

Boards find a funding solution

The funding question first surfaced in 1994 when Mission USA was launched and the U.S. Conference faced a budget that almost doubled. In 1997, the MB Foundation provided the U.S. Conference with start-up money for church planting ventures in the form of a \$200,000 line of credit with MBF. Rather than borrow money, the MUSA board decided to spend only the amount of money it could raise and each MUSA board member agreed to raise \$10,000. In 1998, the decision was made to mainstream the MUSA budget into the general conference budget and all board members were asked to share the challenge of fund-raising for this current fiscal year. Though church contributions have been at record levels for the last two years, levels are still short of the per

U.S. Conference executive chair David Reimer was pleased with the three-day board meetings. "I appreciated the way people related to other people and boards related to other boards."

member goal by about 40 percent.

While guaranteeing each board a portion of income from church contributions, the new funding plan encourages each board to raise additional funds for existing or new ministries.

The funding plan was developed by the Board of Church Ministries, the board which serves as the conference in interim, and presented at the first joint session by Ken Neufeld, Board of Trustees chair. Following a lengthy discussion, the board members adopted the funding plan and agreed that each board would bring back to the closing joint session its budget proposal.

Individual boards met late Thursday afternoon through Friday afternoon to discuss budget issues and other agenda items before reconvening Friday evening for a final joint meeting. In short order, each board reported their budget and briefly touched on other issues.



Boards report on ministries

■ Members of the Board of Communications, which publishes the *Christian Leader*, reviewed its historical efforts to reduce expenses in support of other conference ministries; shared the readership support and professional recognition the *Leader* enjoys; outlined projects that would be delayed due to financial constraints; spoke in favor of a united fund-raising strategy and presented a reduced and balanced budget for 1999-2000.

■ The Board of Trustees announced the receipt of a grant from the MB Foundation. In joint meetings the day before, conference treasurer Dale Regier had reported that as of early April, the conference needed an additional \$120,000 above church contributions to balance the 1998-99 budget. Plans were approved to generate additional income through a general fund appeal and board members were asked to make personal financial pledges and to help solicit additional funds. Remaining expenses would then be covered by a loan from the MB Foundation and in fiscal year 1999-2000 the conference would assume debt repayment expenses. The grant of \$60,000 significantly reduced the shortfall and with the additional fund-raising appeals, Neufeld said, "It's doable to finish the year in the black."

■ Loretta Jost, chair of the MUSA church renewal committee, reported MUSA has funded interns in two congre-



The board meetings were a positive experience for most board members. Pictured are Ed Boschman, Nancy Laverty, and Loretta Jost of Mission USA. Clint Grenz, Central District Minister, is at far right.

gations this past year and that MUSA target church Memorial Road MB Church in Edmond, Okla., will be adding a minister of music and youth. Steve Reimer, chair of the MUSA church planting committee, said that the committee met with MB Biblical Seminary student Tom Cartney and his wife Amy. The Cartneys have accepted the call to plant a new church in Minneapolis, Minn., in a cooperative venture with MUSA and the Central District Conference. Reimer said MUSA is also working with the Southern District Conference to plant a church in Broken Arrow, Okla., and with the Pacific District Conference to possibly plant a church in the Pacific Northwest.

BCM meets with new members

A new addition to this year's meetings was an all day meeting of a newly structured Board of Church Ministries on Saturday. In the past, BCM met during the joint meetings and also reported to the larger group. This past summer at the U.S. Conference convention in La Mirada, Calif., delegates accepted a motion from the floor to add all board chairs and selected conference staff to BCM. To accommodate the new members, this year BCM met following the joint meeting.

The expanded Board covered topics ranging from evaluating conference core values to strategic planning for staff positions and funding. Highlights of the all-day meeting included:

■ In light of administrative secretary Lynford Becker's retirement effective at the end of this year, the board commissioned several of its members to put together a report exploring the possibility of expanding the scope of the half-time position.

"The board sensed a full time staff member was needed to do what Lynford does now as well as additional duties," says conference executive chair David Reimer, after the meeting. "The report will reflect what this person's duties would be—what they would be doing."

The report will be reviewed during the next BCM meeting, scheduled for early October.

■ The board affirmed the belief of the earlier joint meeting that this year's budget will be balanced without the need for a loan from the MB Foundation. Reimer announced that members from U.S. Conference boards pledged an additional \$10,000 as well as offered to make additional solicitations by phone.

"I firmly believe God is doing wonderful things through his people," says Reimer. "People's hearts are generous and God has been working."

The board also explored additional ideas for future funding, including asking trustees to visit churches to encourage stewardship. BCM will revisit funding strategies in October in order to plan for 2000-2001.

■ Conference minister Loyal Funk reported on the activities of Integrated

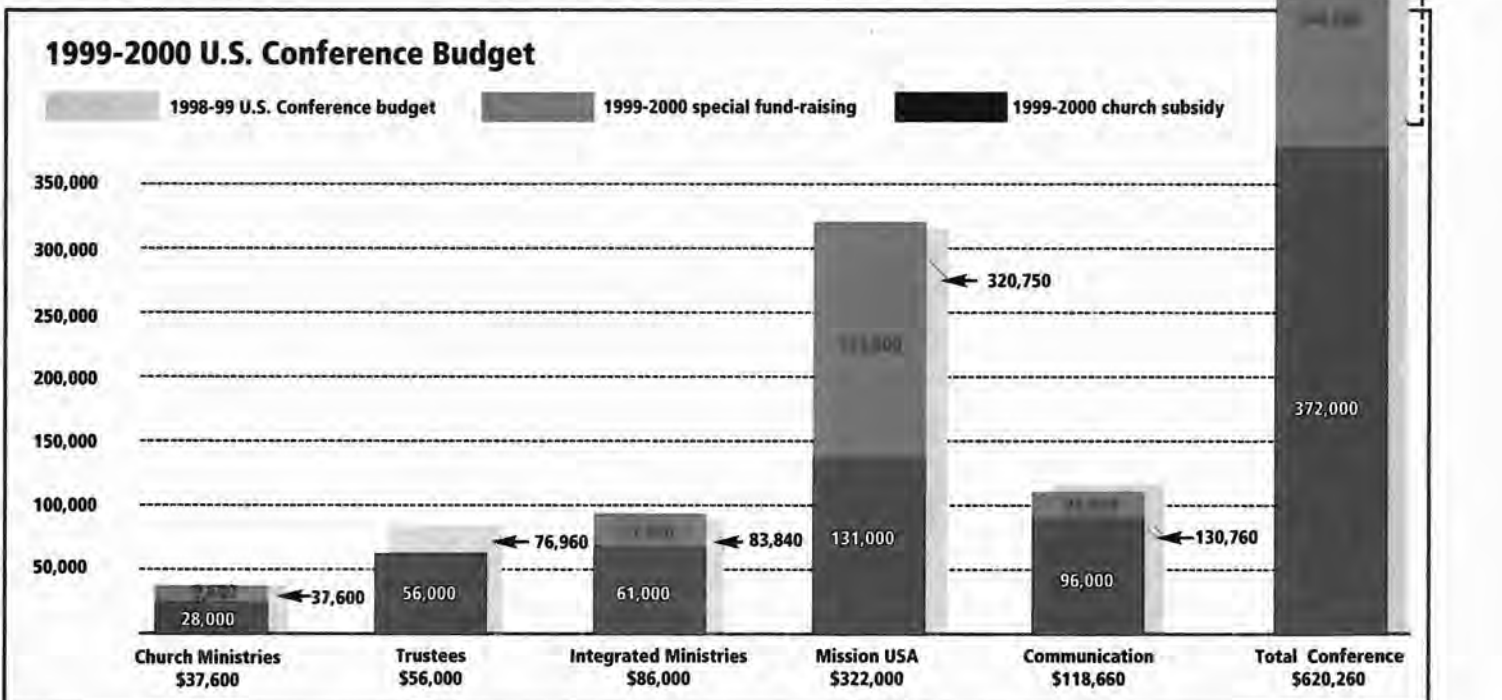
Ministries, a program offering financial and leadership consultation to immigrant and ethnic churches. Funk reported that there are now 32 IM churches in the U.S. Conference, including Slavic, Ukrainian, Russian, Asian, Korean, Hispanic, Indian and Ethiopian congregations. In addition there are 15 more churches in which we have invested funds and time.

■ The board voted to do additional fundraising to support a North Carolina District pastoral position serving area youth. Several congregations are partnering with the U.S. Conference to fund the position.

Reimer expressed satisfaction about the three-day board meetings.

"I was pleased that so many people had a sense of ownership of denominational ministries," he says of Thursday's joint meetings. "On Friday, I felt it an honor to be a part of a group that could not only administer current ministries but also have a vision for next year. I appreciated the way people related to other people and boards related to other boards. There was a lot of affirmation given."

"I believe we have the opportunity to focus our ministries," he concludes. "I believe God will continue to do good things through his people."—*Leader staff*



MCC requests prayer and refugee kits for Yugoslavia

■ Mennonite Central Committee, a global relief organization, needs at least 5,000 refugee kits.

As the Balkans refugee crisis intensified in early April, Mennonite Central Committee sent relief aid and requested prayer, funds and refugee kits for Yugoslav war victims.

By mid-April, six containers filled with flour, oil, sugar and lentils were bound for the country of Montenegro where the food will go to refugees from Kosovo. "It will be a challenge to determine routing, given the destroyed roads and/or closed borders," predicts Hansuli Gerber, MCC's Europe program director. MCC is providing the 114 metric tons of food valued at \$100,000 through the Canadian Foodgrains Bank.

MCC has been encouraging churches to set aside time for prayer for Yugoslav war victims. In the past MCC has partnered with Bread of Life, a social service organization of Belgrade's evangelical churches. Bread of Life codirector Jasmina Tosic reports, "We can feel the power of your prayers. God is surround-

A four-person MCC team arrived in Albania in April to find out how MCC can best assist with the refugee crisis.

ing us in this situation. We can see the protection."

When NATO began bombing Serbia on March 24, MCC established a "Yugoslav War Victims" fund. The money will go to ship supplies to Europe and to assist refugees and other war victims. Some money will be used for longer term healing work in the region as well.

"Beyond the immediate needs for food and housing, people are suffering at a deep level," said Gerber. "The war has opened old scars and created fresh wounds that will be around for a long time."

MCC also needs at least 5,000 refugee kits; the exact number is not yet clear. A list of contents and drop off points are available from MCC-West Coast at (559) 638-6911 and MCC-Central States at (316) 283-2720.

MCC team arrives in Albania in April

A four-person MCC team arrived in Albania during April to assess the needs of Kosovar refugees and to discover how MCC can best assist. The team consists of Gerber, MCC workers Dan and Evanna Hess of Lancast-



er, Pa., and William Reimer, director of MCC's Food, Disaster and Material Resources department.

Before he left, Hess said he expected "disbursed refugees, those being sheltered by local families throughout Albania, may be most in need. Thousands of Albanians have generously opened their homes to refugees, despite their own poverty. Those refugees gathered in centers are being aided by large international agencies."

Hess emphasized the team will explore ways MCC can support local groups already working in Albania, rather than setting up separate MCC structures. (Previously in Albania, MCC has provided aid to earlier Kosovar refugees and some financial support for Eastern Mennonite Missions workers Glenn and Martha Zimmerly, but has not had a program there.)

The Hesses also expected to assist refugees. Evanna, a nurse with a specialty in geriatrics, observed, "Elderly people are always at risk in times of crisis." Dan, a trauma counselor, saw "a tremendous need for psychological counseling as people torn from their homes will be in shock."

Regular updates on the Kosovo situation are posted on MCC's Web site at <http://www.mennonitecc.ca/mcc/>, which now has a special section called "Update: Kosovo Conflict." —from MCC news service reports

REFUGEE KIT

- 4 bars soap, family size
- 1 plastic bottle of shampoo, 13 oz.
- 1 box laundry detergent, min. 40 oz.
- 2 rolls toilet paper
- 1 large family size tube toothpaste
- 4 toothbrushes, adult size preferred
- 1 bath towel, hair brush, comb and nail file (one each)
- 1 multivitamin with iron, min. 100 tablets
- 1 box 4 in. x 4 in. or 3 in. x 4 in. sterile gauze pads, min. 10 to 15
- 1 roll 1/2 in. adhesive tape, 10 yards or more
- 1 bottle antacid tablets, 100 tablets or more
- 1 pkg. sanitary napkins (Maxi pads), 1 pkg. of 24
- 53 (MCC staff will purchase 1 bottle Acetaminophen)

Place items in a grocery box and phone your nearest MCC office for a collection location. The value of each kit is about \$40 U.S. MCC West Coast Office: (559) 638-6911; MCC Central States Office: (316) 283-2720

Formal recommendation to dissolve General Conference announced

■ *The GC Executive Board formally announces recommendation to dissolve the General Conference and transfer ministries to North American national conferences*

The General Conference Executive Board formally announces its recommendation to dissolve the General Conference in the 1999 General Conference Board Reports inserted in this month's *Christian Leader*.

The Board proposes that the existing ministries—MBMS International, Board of Faith and Life, Board of Resource Ministries, the MB Biblical Seminary, and the Historical Commission—be transferred to the national conferences by 2002. They also recommend that the national conferences be responsible for initiating, negotiating and managing existing and new ministries.

The General Conference was organized in 1899, including both U.S. and Canadian MB churches. Eventually, both Canada and the U.S. also formed their own national conferences, leaving a three-tier conference structure: the binational General or North American Conference, the national Canadian and U.S. conferences, and the provincial or district conferences within each country. (The U.S. Conference now has five districts: Central, Latin American (Texas), North Carolina, Southern and Pacific.)

Almost 100 years later, delegates at the July 1997 General Conference Convention in Waterloo, in response to a general feeling that the system was not

working as well as it could be, called for a "no holds barred" review of all levels of the North American conference structures.

The task force released a 45-page report late last year proposing a radical reorganization of conference structures. The report recommended dissolving the General Conference and running programs—both current General Conference as well as nationally run ministries—through binational boards.

The executive council recommendations differ most from those of the task force in that no structure is being recommended—national conferences would be free to determine how best to manage the ministries.

The recommendation will be brought to the delegates at the July 1999 General Conference Convention in Wichita, Kan. If the delegates pass the executive council recommendation, the U.S. Conference will work with Canada and the individual ministries to figure out how best to manage each ministry, says U.S. Conference executive chair David Reimer.

"We support the ministries of the General Conference and our decision is to assist in continuing them in meaningful ways," says Reimer. —CA

GENERAL CONFERENCE MINISTRIES

Board of Faith and Life

Deals with issues of faith and life, maintains the Confession of Faith

MBMS International

The global mission arm of North American MB churches

MB Biblical Seminary

Located in Fresno, Calif. with a center in British Columbia

Board of Resource Ministries

Home of Kindred Productions, the Board publishes books, study materials and music that reflect the MB Confession of Faith and distinctives

Historical Commission

Collects and preserves the documents and archives of the North American conference

IN BRIEF

CALLED: Tom and Amy Cartney have accepted a call from the Central District Conference to serve as church planters in the Twin Cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul, Minn. Cartney is currently completing his studies at MB Biblical Seminary in Fresno, Calif. This next year, the Cartneys will spend nine months as interns with Brad Klassen at Copper Hills Church in Phoenix, Ariz., and will begin their ministry in the Twin Cities in early June 2000. The Central District has partnered with Mission USA, the church planting and renewal ministry of the U.S. Conference, in this church planting effort. The Twin Cities area is currently home to one other MB congregation, New Hope MB Church.

HONORED: The administration building at Tabor College was named for H.W. Lohrenz, the College's founding president, at a dinner and naming ceremony May 1. Lohrenz, president from 1908 to 1931, is called a "Renaissance man" by current president Larry Nikkel because he convinced people that TC should be more than a Bible college. While serving as president, Lohrenz also taught Bible and Tabor's first biology courses. After his presidency, he continued to teach at Tabor from 1934 to 1942. (TC)

CONCERNS: In her role as executive chair of the World Evangelical Fellowship Commission on Women's Concerns, Winnie Bartel of the Shafter (Calif.) MB Church is launching an international task force to survey 600 women about abuse. "We want to bring this problem before the church," Bartel is quoted as saying in the April 26 issue of *Christianity Today*. Bartel was quoted in an article about evangelical organizations that have recently begun resisting the abuse of women and children worldwide.

CELEBRATION: The M.B. Conference of India is planning a centennial celebration of North American mission in India. The celebration Nov. 11-14 will take place at Jadcherla in the Mahabubnagar District of Andhra Pradesh. Former missionaries and their descendants, MBMS International board members and staff as well as "all other brothers and sisters who are involved in mission to India in any manner" are invited to attend, says Rev. P. Menno Joel, chair of the invitation committee.

Arabic language radio ministry reaches around the world

■ Program broadcasts into more than 18 countries



Since the fall of 1998, Samir and Lewiza Youssef have been racing at top speed to keep up with the demands of Arabic International Ministries. The Youssefs work jointly for MBMS International and MB Communications/Family Life Network, a ministry of the Manitoba Conference.

Samir is the producer of a radio program called "Good News," a fifteen minute gospel program produced in Winnipeg and broadcast into more than 18 countries. In the past months, the program has received 33 letters from Muslims requesting a copy of the Bible. Previously harsh opinions about Christianity are softened as people write, "Please count me as one of your friends."

The Youssefs' work takes them to a variety of settings. One day they're swinging to the beat of congas in an African worship service. Later that week they dress in sober dark clothing to speak at a Hutterite colony. This summer Samir plans to visit the Middle East.

The Youssefs will spend six weeks in April and May "down under" in Sydney, Australia. Two radio stations air Samir's "Good News" program for the more than 700,000 Arabic-speaking people in the city of Sydney. Since Islam requires its faithful to read their scriptures and pray in Arabic, this language is a common denominator for Muslims all over the world.

Now Australia is asking to not only hear Samir's voice but also to see his face as well. So in addition to speaking at public meetings and producing radio programs, he will tape 40 weekly television programs during his short stay there. This is Samir's second annual trek to Sydney for taping sessions.

In early March, Samir, a native Egyptian, preached at an all-African evangelistic service at Calvary Temple in Winnipeg, Man. Although many of the audience spoke Arabic, a Sudanese pastor translated the dramatic Arabic messages into English, the only common language

of the audience which immigrated from 13 countries on the African continent.

"Thirty-eight people made decisions at this crusade. I've just taught the first Bible study for new converts," says Pastor James Okot of the interdenominational African church. "We're so encouraged!"

Lewiza partners with Samir in producing an Arabic evangelistic magazine. "I'm writing to you from behind bars," wrote one reader from Europe who is serving a life sentence. "I'm a Muslim, but I read your magazine." Thanks to a prison visit by an individual converted through Samir's ministry 15 years ago, the prisoner received a Bible. In the tradition of Muslims taking on Christian names at their conversion, the prisoner wrote in gratitude to the Youssefs, "Now I have a new name, I call myself Captive John."

The Youssefs have lived in Canada for 8 years and have two sons, ages 19 and 18. —MBC news release

MBBS appoints two to BC Centre

■ Seminary appoints assistant professor and half-time BC program director and associate dean

Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary has announced its first two appointments to the new MBBS-BC at Associated Canadian Theological Schools (ACTS).

Bruce L. Guenther of Hepburn, Sask., has been appointed as assistant professor of church history, beginning in the fall semester of 1999, and Peter Enns has been appointed to a half-time position as BC program director and associate dean, starting in July of 1999.

Since last fall, MBBS' B.C. Centre has been negotiating to become a full partner in the ACTS consortium. ACTS is the graduate theological school of Trinity Western University. MBBS president Henry Schmidt reports MBBS-BC is in the final stages of joining the ACTS consortium. Final approval was expected by the MBBS board at its spring meeting April 22-24 and the B.C. Conference at meetings held April 30-May 1.

Guenther is currently a Ph.D. candidate at McGill University in Montreal, Quebec, with only his dissertation to

complete. For the past two years, Guenther has been a lecturer at the University of Saskatchewan and an adjunct professor at Briercrest Biblical Seminary and Briercrest Bible College in Carleton Place, Ont. He has also taught at Regent, McGill, St. Andrew's College in Saskatoon, and Bethany Bible Institute in Hepburn.

Enns, of Abbotsford, B.C., is currently teaching at Lithuania Christian College in Klaipeda, where he previously served as interim president (1994-95) and instructor (1995-96). Enns has a long history in education, having served Abbotsford Senior Secondary School (1993-94), Columbia Bible Camp (1992), and as an elementary school principal and teacher from 1954 to 1990 in British Columbia. He has also served Bakerview Mennonite Brethren Church, where he was a charter member in 1953, in several capacities, and was secretary of the British Columbia conference and the Canadian conference. —MBBS press release

Alberta congregation loses MB membership

■ *Inter-Mennonite congregation's decision to welcome practicing homosexuals into membership leads to expulsion from MB Conference*

The Alberta Conference of MB Churches has revoked the membership of South Calgary Inter-Mennonite Church due to the congregation's decision to welcome practicing homosexuals into membership. The vote was taken during the conference's convention March 19 and 20 in Calgary, Alt., and was effective immediately.

South Calgary decided to accept practicing homosexuals as members and to join the pro-homosexual Supportive Congregations Network in fall 1997. Since the congregation belongs to three denominations, the Alberta MB Conference, the Conference of Mennonites in Alberta and the Northwest Mennonite Conference decided to deal with the congregation jointly.

At their third meeting held in September, all three conferences gave South Calgary three options: repent of its position, voluntarily withdraw from the conferences or be expelled from the conferences. MB Conference representatives met separately with South Calgary's leaders again in November and January and the deadline for compliance was set at March 15. Since South Calgary has declined the first two options, this led to the recommendation to expel. The other two conferences have extended their deadlines in order to allow more time for dialogue.

In introducing the recommendation, Alberta conference moderator Harry Heidebrecht reported that while meetings between the conference and the congregation had been emotional and intense, they had always been respectful and cordial. He commended the South Calgary congregation for the spirit in which it had addressed the issue and acknowledged that expulsion was difficult for South Calgary. In the end, however, he said, "we wept and hugged but disagreed." He noted that the North American and Canadian MB Conferences were fully supportive of the Alberta Conference.

South Calgary leaders then read a letter to the delegates in which the congregation's position was explained. The letter acknowledged that its position was not held by the conference, but expressed the hope that South Calgary could remain part of the conference and one day be reconciled.

Convention delegates voted by secret ballot by over 90 percent to expel the South Calgary church. Heidebrecht expressed sympathies to the South Calgary congregation, and expressed willingness to meet once more with South Calgary leaders. Abe Konrad, Alberta Conference minister, then said a prayer for South Calgary. —*from a report by the MB Herald*

MB couple heads to Boliva

It's a family affair. Amy and Andres Zorrilla of Fresno, Calif., recently began a service assignment with Mennonite Central Committee in Santa Cruz, Bolivia. The couple will work at PRONATS, a program for Santa Cruz's street children. Andrés' younger sister, Ana Zorrilla and her husband Carlos Díaz, started the PRONATS program during their service term in Bolivia from 1993 to 1996.

The Programa con Niños/Niñas Adolescentes Trabajadores (Program for young working boys/girls) is a drop-in

program providing a safe haven for street children. Prevention is a primary focus of the program. PRONATS hosts programs on drug and alcohol prevention as well as sex education. There are approximately 100 youth, between 10 and 14, regularly visiting the MCC program.

Amy and Andrés, who have a 9-month-old daughter Beatrice, will be in Bolivia for three years. Andrés recently served as an associate pastor for an MB church in Clovis, Calif. Ana is currently the coordinator of MCC's International Visitor Exchange Program. —*MCC news service*

IN BRIEF

HONORS: During the 1998 fall semester six Fresno Pacific University student athletes earned National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics All-America honors. For only the second time in university history three volleyball players were named to the NAIA's first team: Kelly Watney of Fresno, Calif., Qin Wen of Shen Zhen, China, and Ge Xin of Shen Yang, China. Edgardo Contreras, Mexicali, Mexico, was named to the all-America soccer second team. Cecil Litiema, Nakun, Kenya, was named to the All-America scholar athlete cross country team. Eliseo Lopez, Coalinga, California, earned All-America honorable mention in soccer despite missing seven games.

MERGER: Youth Mission International and MBMS International have agreed to merge their ministries effective Sept 1, 1999, conditional upon ratification at the General Conference Convention this summer in Wichita, Kan. YMI will retain its name and identity while linking a new generation of missionaries with longer term ministry options. At the heart of the merger is a common desire to see the call for evangelism and mission capture the vision and energy of a new generation for the glory of God. In 1998, YMI worked with over 700 youth and young adults and has a staff/associate team of 11 in four regional offices in the U.S. and Canada. MBMSI is involved in church planting, leadership training and development assistance in 40 countries with regional offices in Congo, Austria, Colombia as well as the U.S. and Canada. (YMI)

REBUILDING: The Colombian city of Armenia, once a city of 200,000 known for a bustling downtown and charming streets lined with colorfully painted homes, was devastated by a January 25 earthquake that reduced its infrastructure and destroyed most of its homes. Two Mennonite Central Committee workers visited Colombia in late February. They saw the quake's damage firsthand and worked with MCC partner agency, MENCOLDES, to determine how MCC could best support long-term reconstruction. Following the visit, MCC decided to assist MENCOLDES with \$250,000 for a long-term reconstruction effort. MCC is also purchasing materials for 200 kitchen kits at a cost of \$16,000. The kits include a small stove and fuel, dishes and pots and pans. The cost of one kit is \$80. The materials will be purchased in Colombia. (MCC)

Church News & Notes

NEWS FROM OUR BROTHERS AND SISTERS
ACROSS THE UNITED STATES

Baptism/membership

HENDERSON, Neb.—Alaunda Scott, Joel Kliewer, Kerrie Shepherd, Casey Jost, Kasey Buller, Thomas Yoder and Jeanne Ratzlaff were baptized April 18.

MINOT, N.D. (Bible Fellowship)—Cyndi Crawford was accepted as a new member March 21.

ENID, Okla.—Andrea Mendel, Chelsey Janzen, Brett Meier, Lauren Hamm, Heidi Schmidt, Blake Nightingale, Wendy Siemens, Jennifer Buller and Brian Niswander were baptized March 28.

FAIRVIEW, Okla.—Craig Bartel, Scott Bartel, Kyler Baum, Grant Bell, Erin Eitzen, Keesha Ewald, Daniel Hurst, Tyler Hurst, Jordan Kliewer, Carrie Martens, Jake Martens, Kyle Reimer, Jessi Rush, Aaron Bell, Micah Regier and Austin Hurst were baptized and welcomed as new members Feb. 28. Dave and Thelma Schaffer were welcomed as new members.

Celebrations

VISALIA, Calif. (Neighborhood)—March 28 the congregation celebrated its one year anniversary in their new church facilities. The two worship services were followed by an all-church lunch. Special activities for children were also planned.

REEDLEY, Calif.—Two bouquets of flowers were placed in the sanctuary March 14 to honor the 50th wedding anniversary of Irvin and Rosie Regier and the 60th anniversary of Herb and Margie Nikkel.

Proclamation

FERNDAL, Wash. (Good News)—The congregation hosted a joint service with the Slavic Baptist Church April 10.

CORDELL, Okla. (Bible)—Pastor Leonard Reiss preached at the community Easter service March 28.

DENVER, Colo. (Garden Park)—Stan Grenz, internationally known evangelical author and theologian, spoke March 28. Earlier that week, Grenz gave the Templeton Lecture on Science and Religion at Colorado Christian College.

HESSTON, Kan.—Brent Warkentin, pastor of the Buhler (Kan.) MB Church, was the speaker for a Bible conference March 13-15. The focus of the conference was building healthy family relationships.

Teaching/Nurture

DALLAS, Ore.—A stewardship seminar endorsed by the MB Foundation will be presented May 14-16 by MBF president Jon Wiebe.

NEW HOPE, Minn.—Jon Wiebe, president of the MB Foundation, led a Giving Project Diagnostic Weekend April 30-May 2.

FERNDAL, Wash. (Good News)—A special worship celebration April 25 with Birch Bay Bible Church and Community Bible Church featured Gareth Goossen as the worship leader. Goossen, a Canadian, is a frequent worship leader and led several workshops for leaders from the area MB congregations.

ENID, Okla.—MB historian Clarence Hiebert of Hillsboro, Kan., was the resource speaker for a weekend seminar April 17-18 as part of the Mennonite heritage Sunday school series. The Saturday evening lecture by Hiebert included a German meal. Sunday morning he spoke during the Sunday school hour.

OLATHE, Kan. (Community Bible)—A one-evening parenting seminar April 6 was presented by Cal and Carolyn Richert, child care specialists from the congregation.

FRESNO, Calif. (North)—A forum on Christian marriage was held March 21. The congregation's Board of Spiritual Ministries has written a statement regarding the building of a strong marriage and the response to marital failure which was used as a basis for the evening.

Fellowship

DINUBA, Calif.—For the fifth year, a roller hockey tournament was organized for children 14 and under and 15 and up. The teams competed April 17-18.

WICHITA, Kan. (First)—At the men's fellowship breakfast April 17, church member Bill Loewen told the story of his and his mother's experiences as refugees from Russia after World War 2.

CLOVIS, Calif. (College Community)—As part of their Maundy Thursday observance, the congregation had a Middle-Eastern meal, communion and a tenebrae service.

EUGENE, Ore. (North Park)—A Messianic

Sedar Passover meal was led by pastor Randy and wife Stacy Reiswig and Michael and Abigail Turner April 3.

Ministry

CLOVIS, Calif. (College Community)—Pastor Bill Braun and others representing Mennonite Central Committee-West Coast participated in the Damascus Road Project, a weekend seminar that addresses and hopes to eliminate racism within the structures of MCC and its supporting constituencies. The seminar was held in Portland, Ore., March 19-23. ■

Pontius' Puddle



BY THE TIME FRANK'S KIDS FIGURED OUT THAT THEY DIDN'T, IN FACT, LIVE IN A TOTALITARIAN STATE, AND THAT READING THE BIBLE WASN'T FORBIDDEN, THEIR KNOWLEDGE OF SCRIPTURE FAR SURPASSED THAT OF THEIR FRIENDS.

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June 14-28, 1999

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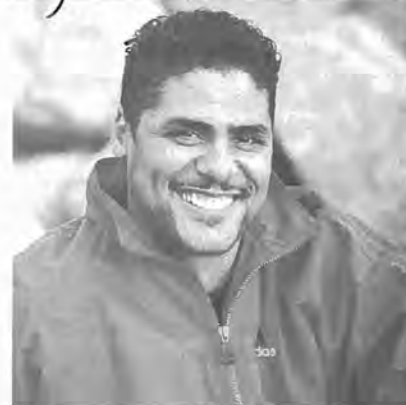
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An MMA commitment to helping
people become better stewards

Clearinghouse

Have a position to fill? Looking for a new employment or ministry opportunity? Have a gathering or celebration to promote? Reach U.S. Mennonite Brethren through a Clearinghouse classified ad. The charge is 40 cents per word, with a \$15 minimum. Withhold payment until an invoice is received. MB institutions advertising vacancies or position announcements may be eligible for a no-cost ad. Contact the editor for more information.

EMPLOYMENT—CHURCH

Associate Pastor

Vinewood Community Church in Lodi, CA, is seeking a full-time Associate Pastor. The position will be tailored according to the gifting of the individual who has a deep love for Jesus, a passion for ministry, a heart for people, and a willingness to function in a team environment. A negotiable combination of some of the following ministry needs would complete the job description: Music, Christian Education, Assimilation of Newcomers, Discipleship/Small Groups. Submit resume and reference to: Pastor Search, 1900 W Vine Street, Lodi CA 95242; e-mail gwall@vinewoodchurch.com.

Director of Church Family Ministries

First Mennonite Brethren Church in Wichita, Kan., seeks full-time staff to develop and lead caregiving ministries and provide personal pastoral care in a growing church of over 700, rooted in Anabaptist tradition. Responsibilities: 1) assessing needs; 2) developing responses through deacon ministry, support systems, family enrichment events, assimilation and hospitality; 3) leading and equipping lay caregivers ministry team. Experience: 5 years related field, church ministry, group dynamics and family systems, assessment skills. Requires master's degree and seminary training or equivalent. Submit resume and references to: DCFM Search Committee, FMBC, 8000 W. 21st Street, Wichita, Kansas 67205-1744, fax (316) 722-5931. Complete job description available upon request.

Director of Music and Worship

Director of Music and Worship sought by First Mennonite Brethren Church in Wichita, Kan. A full-time position to direct multiple music ministries and lead blended worship. This visionary, growing, suburban church of 700 attenders of all age groups is rooted in Anabaptist theology and committed to relevant ministry. Master's degree or equivalent experience preferred. Submit resume and references to: Music Search, 8000 W. 21st St., Wichita, KS 67205-1744; fax (316) 722-5931; e-mail fmbsc@feist.com.

Senior Pastor

The Hillsboro (Kan.) Mennonite Brethren Church is in search of candidates for the position of senior pastor. Candidates gifted in providing leadership for a congregation with an average attendance of over 500 and experienced in directing a multiple pastoral staff are invited to send a resume to: Pastoral Search Committee, Daryle Baltzer (Chm.), 104 S. Washington, Hillsboro, KS 67063.

Pastor of Student Ministries

Vinewood Community Church in Lodi, CA, is seeking a full-time Pastor of Student Ministries. This person will provide leadership for Jr. High, High School and College student ministries. Submit resume and reference to: Pastor Search, 1900 W Vine Street, Lodi CA 95242; e-mail gwall@vinewoodchurch.com.

Youth Minister

Buhler (Kan.) Mennonite Brethren Church is accepting applications for the full time position of youth minister. We are a progressive and growing church of 350 with an established youth program. Our family life center that will complement the youth program is near completion. The successful applicant will continue the program to encourage the spiritual growth and Christian fellowship of youth and young adults of our congregation and community. Send resume to Buhler Mennonite Brethren Church, Youth Minister Search Committee, P.O. Box 126, Buhler, KS 67522.

Youth ministry summer mission/internship

Interested in serving the Lord in home missions this summer in Fresno, CA and having \$\$ in the bank when you go back to school? Come serve with Bethany Church Youth Ministries. We are looking for two people (preferably a male and female) to serve as full-time interns. Applications are now being processed. Must be at least one year out of high school. Contact Pastor Tim Franz at (559) 434-250 or timfranz@fresno.edu for details.

EMPLOYMENT—EDUCATION

Ministry Arts Instructor

Bethany Bible Institute invites applications for the position of Ministry Arts Instructor effective August 1, 1999. Qualifications are as follows: commitment to Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour, the ministry of biblical education/discipleship, and an Anabaptist/evangelical theological perspective; effective teaching skills in the area of music and/or drama; capability in vocal instruction; relational and administrative strengths and experience; ability to provide leadership for a touring music and/or drama ministry team; experience and ability in contemporary worship leadership an asset; interest in mentorship of worship teams and contemporary bands an asset; experience in sound reinforcement, electronic media, recording and producing an asset; master's degree preferred. Submit resumes by May 25, 1999 to: Dean of Faculty, Bethany Bible Institute, Box 160, Hepburn, SK SOK 1Z0; (306) 947-2175; fax (306) 947-4229; e-mail bethany@ski.sympatico.ca.

MISCELLANEOUS

Collectibles for Sale

Celebrate the history of our denomination in North America. Ebenfeld MB Church was the first congregation established by Mennonite Brethren in North America and our facility is the second-oldest house of worship to be used continually by U.S. Mennonite Brethren. Collectible wooden cut-outs of the Ebenfeld MB Church, as facilities appeared in 1975, are currently available. Each collectible is numbered and signed by the artist, which adds to its value. To order, send \$25, which includes shipping and handling, to Brad Wiens, Ebenfeld MB Church, PO Box 152, Hillsboro, KS 67063. ■

Pontius' Puddle



Pontius' Puddle



LET'S TALK ABOUT IT

A GUIDE FOR GROUP INTERACTION

SESSION 1: Generations

Based on "Generations: Q&A," page 4

GET READY – Getting started

■ Which of the 4 generations do you think you understand the best?

GET SET – Examining the issues

1. For each response, underline the key word or phrase that answers the question.
2. What common thread or ideas do you see in the various responses?
3. To what extent do you think we can realistically see the needs of our own generation?
4. How would you summarize the key strengths and challenges of each generation?

GO – Applying ideas to the way we live

1. What questions would you like to add?
2. Which person do you most closely identify with?
3. What do you think are ways in which generations can positively influence one another?
4. Is it important to think through the issues presented in the article? If so, why?

SESSION 2: Families fight

Based on "When families fight," page 8

GET READY – Getting started

■ Is the following statement true or false:
"The family that prays together, stays together?"

GET SET – Examining the issues

1. Make a list of at least five intense family relationships found in scripture.
2. What are changes that contribute to family conflict? Are there other factors you would add?
3. What examples have you seen of the conflict that results when there is little agreement on the "standards of behavior"?
4. How can the church be involved in helping to resolve conflict?

GO – Applying ideas to the way we live

1. What do families need to do before calling for professional help?
2. Why is the extended family's role so significant and what should one do if a natural extended family doesn't exist?
3. If you are experiencing family conflict, which of the suggestions given is most helpful for you?

SESSION 3: What do youth believe?

Based on "What do youth believe?" page 10

GET READY – Getting started

■ Before reading the article, how would you answer the question asked in the title?

GET SET – Examining the issues

1. Identify ways MB youth have changed and stayed the same in each of the areas surveyed.
2. In which area is the greatest change?
3. What does Thiesen suggest our response should be?
4. What does it mean to "love the world" (John 3:16) but not "be of the world" (John 15:19)? How can adults model this for youth?

GO – Applying ideas to the way we live

1. What surprises you most about the survey results? What concerns you most?
2. To what do you attribute the more conservative and biblical values?
3. Identify an example of a positive model of biblical critical thinking.
4. How can individuals, families and congregations work together to encourage right behavior and not only right belief?

SESSION 4: Matter of Perspective

Based on "It's a matter of perspective," page 20

GET READY – Getting started

■ What is the last loud crash you've heard?

GET SET – Examining the issues

1. What impacted Buschman's perspective of the sound she heard? What caused her to see the broken vase as a symbol of relief rather than waste?
2. What does Buschman suggest impacts our perspectives of life in general?
3. How can the fruit of the spirit and Philippians 4:8 affect our perspective?

GO – Applying ideas to the way we live

1. How have you found varying perspectives to be beneficial?
2. How can we mature in sharing varying perspectives without belittling people?
3. Why are some people quick to see hopeless problems while others see challenges to be conquered?

The light that shines against the darkness

It's just three days after the Columbine High School shootings in Littleton, Colo. My web browser automatically pulls up the CNN web site every time I activate it. Hourly, pictures of Kosovo refugees and Columbine high school students switch places on the "top story."

"A blood-dimmed tide," I mutter, echoing the words of William Butler Yeats' poem, "The Second Coming," in which he describes how the world around him seems to have lost its center and a "blood dimmed tide" is loosed upon the world. He was responding somewhat to World War I and the violence in Ireland at the beginning of this century.

But I suppose most generations in the United States have felt the way I do at one time or another throughout this century—World War II, Korea, Viet Nam, Jim Jones, David Koresh, Jonesboro, and now Columbine High School and Kosovo. Even as I list these, I have to fight to whittle the list down.

At times like these, the darkness seems great. I feel as if I stand on a beach, tiny and frail, watching a tidal wave crest skyscraper high above me. What can I, one person, do to survive—much less stop—that?

In the last few days, conversations among my friends have been searching. The deaths and horror of Columbine have hit a nerve. And I've heard my politically conservative friends—usually supportive of military action—question NATO actions in Kosovo. Their questioning is genuine. They wonder if perhaps war is not the answer. The violence seems to have made things worse.

"Why does this happen? What do we do?" we all end up asking.

We search for a reason so that we can have control over this violence—so that we can prevent it from happening again.

I have no answers to specific problems. Everything from video games to parental control is being named as an explanation for Columbine. As for NATO and Serbia? As my professor-husband would say, the political solution to Kosovo is "complicated."

We are not the only ones who have faced the darkness. Those in Scripture and our Anabaptist forebears walked through a history littered with violence and war. What we face is nothing new. Though we don't have the specific answers to specific problems, we do have the one Answer that will make a difference. We have the Light that shines against the darkness—Jesus.

Jesus is the Life that is the light of men, the "true light that gives light to every man" (John 1:9). He is the Savior, the Reconciler, and the Prince of Peace. It is through Jesus that we are reconciled to God and brought into his family.

This Light is meant for every man, "for God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16).

Every person we come into contact with is of inconceivable importance to God. I recently heard a pastor describe his insights into Luke 15, the parables of the lost sheep, lost coin and lost son. These parables, he said, illustrate God's intense longing for each soul that does not know him.

When the shepherd realizes one of his 100 sheep are missing, he leaves his flock in the open country and searches every hill and valley until he finds the lost sheep. The woman painstakingly searches her entire house—as long as it takes—until she finds the coin she lost, which probably represented a tenth of her money. When the son returns home in the last parable, the father's joy is so intense that it speaks of a deep and painful longing that has finally been fulfilled.

It dawned on me that God's heart must hurt like the parents of a missing child. Being a new mother, imagining that kind of pain and longing takes my breath away. Yet that must be only an inkling of how God

feels about lost souls—how he felt about me before I accepted the gift of his Son.

It is with that same intense longing that we must share the Good News. To those in the darkness around us, we shine the Light. God deeply loves them and wants them to be a part of his family. How can we not search and long after them as the shepherd and woman—and rejoice like the father of the lost son when someone accepts Jesus?

But it is not enough to only share the Gospel. We must also walk as Jesus walked. In contrast to the violence around us, we shine a Light that calls us to live together in peace. "Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace" (Col. 3:15). We must abide in Christ and allow him to transform us.

A community of believers is powerful. Together, we can show others a different way to live. Together, we can be a light that shines against the darkness. —CA

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