

The Mennonite

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February 6, 2007

a look in the mirror

New profile of Mennonite Church USA

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Protecting our children from the church



Anne Stuckey is associate pastor at Zion Mennonite Church in Archbold, Ohio.

I remember when we carried our daughter to the front of the church at West Union Mennonite Church in Parnell, Iowa, and promised to be loving parents to her and to bring her up in the way of Christ, teaching her to love her neighbor as herself, just as Christ taught us. I was moved by the promises the congregation made to this infant, that they would love her and be Christ's light to her as she grew into the woman God called her to be. It was a comfort to know that as parents we were not the only ones responsible to teach her, that the community of faith also bore the responsibility of molding this child. In the years that followed, this congregation showed her Christ's love through Sunday school teachers and "aunts and uncles" in Christ who reveled in her unique gifts. And how she blossomed under such warmth!

I realize not all children are given the blessing of safety in the church that our daughter experienced. Some are violated in ways we don't even want to admit could occur in Christ's body. So we put congregational sexual safety policies in place, hoping to keep our children from that kind of harm. And now that this child of mine is an adult, I am thankful the church has been a warm, welcoming place for her to grow. That is the kind of experience that we want for all our children throughout their lifetime in the broader church we love.

However, now that our daughter is serving in a Mennonite church office, it hurts me when I hear that a person in the broader Mennonite church has been able to say hurtful things to her. At what point did it become accepted in the church for us to attack each other personally?

And I know this isn't an isolated incident. When I was Director of Ministerial Services and maintained the list of current available pastoral candidates for congregations, I also had a Mennonite


pastor threaten me and my children with harm if I didn't publish his availability. Somehow, it is not so hard for me to accept that kind of hurt for myself because I know it will not jeopardize my love of the church. But that is not a guarantee I can make for my children.

What happens to the Christ light that we are to shine for others when we become adults?

The local congregation is called to be the hospital where God's healing can flow to his children. That identifies most of us as broken and in need of healing. But that does not give us permission to act in ways that are decidedly not Christlike.

We harm each other with judgmental decisions and cutting words. Exclusivity and a refusal to listen to alternative viewpoints narrow the circle of people to which we are willing to give our love. Our individual needs often take precedence over the good of the whole community and certainly over the good of any single brother or sister in the church. So if we can't trust the church to care about and love our children, whom can we trust?

Laban and Jacob knew they had the power to hurt each other as well. God led them to erect a pillar and heap of stones as a boundary between them. Laban said to Jacob, "This heap is a witness, and the pillar is a witness, that I will not pass beyond this heap to you, and you will not pass beyond this heap and this pillar to me, for harm" (Genesis 31:52). Today the model of Christ's love is the barrier we cannot cross to harm another.

A Mennonite Central Committee poster reads, "A modest proposal for peace: let the Christians of the world agree that they will not kill each other." May we amend this to say, "A modest proposal for health in the church: let the Christians of the Mennonite Church agree that they will not harm each other with words." 

TheMennonite

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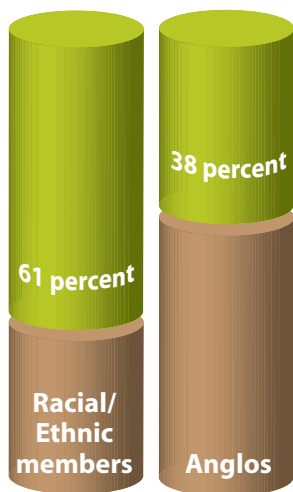


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Two routes to pacifism

Thank you for the thought-provoking articles on pacifism and politics in the Jan. 2 issue. James Halteman's "Two Routes to a Pacifist Position" especially stimulated my thinking. I greatly appreciate his affirmation of pacifism as a "radical calling." However, I fear he caricatures what he calls the "dominant gene" view. He seems to reduce it to a naive hope that if we are nice to others, then everyone will in turn be nice back.

However, there is another way to articulate a belief in "pacifism as a serious option for everyone to follow." Jesus as God's Son reveals the true nature of the universe and the normative expectation of God for all human beings when he taught and embodied love for all people, including enemies. God's will is for the pacifist witness of God's people to bless all the families of the earth (Genesis 12) and to foster healing for the nations (Revelation 21-22). The human calling to nonviolence comes directly from our Creator and reflects how we each have been created to live. In light of this calling, it is fully consistent with "Christ's way of peace" to seek an end to violence wherever it happens.—*Ted Grimsrud, Harrisonburg, Va.*

In the Jan. 2 issue, the treatment of our attitude and witness to the political order was commendable indeed. Amid its excellent points, two themes especially stand out. The first is especially refreshing because it is so often lost in current Mennonite discussions. That theme is that, in the end, we do have to choose, as James Halteman put it well, between "the way of the cross and the ways of the world [because] there are really two kingdoms that are relevant in this world." The second was that such a "two-kingdom" understanding of Jesus' teachings does not imply a gospel with any less of

a message for human politics and systems or, worse, one that says Jesus' followers should bless violence, injustice and arrogance perpetrated by governments on grounds that such evils are necessary or even God-ordained in the worldly realm.

Surely there is a close connection between Anabaptists' and Mennonites' historic "two-kingdom" understanding and their desire to follow Jesus thoroughly. But "two-kingdom" thought comes in various versions.

If the four main articles of your January issue have one overriding message, it is that we who know we must choose between "the way of the cross and the ways of the world" can indeed proclaim a gospel that calls secular authorities to pursue humility, nonretaliation, justice and freedom from fear and violence. Thank you and your authors for making that message clear.—*Theron F. Schlabach, Goshen, Ind.*

In his article "Two Routes to a Pacifist Position," Jim Halteman suggests Christian pacifists use the states' own laws and guidelines on just war to push for some measure of justice in a time of war. Here is a concrete example of how to do that. I was training with Christian Peacemaker Teams in July 2006, during which time the Lebanon-Israeli war and the Israeli military offensive on Palestine was well under way. Our training group decided on a public action: marching from the Israeli consulate to the Dirksen Federal building in downtown Chicago singing, praying and handing out leaflets along the way.

At the federal building, six of us proceeded into the building to speak with Senator Dick Durbin, who sat on the Senate Appropriations Committee, having access to U.S. funds distributed to Israel in a time of war. Our group wanted to press him on the fact that the Arms Export Control Act restricts the use of U.S. weapons to legitimate self-defense and internal policing. Durbin was out of the office, and his staff turned down our request to stay until we received notice from Durbin acknowledging our request. Because lives were hanging in the balance, we chose to stay in the senator's office praying and reading the names of civilians killed since the start of the war. Homeland Security arrested us and handed us over to the Chicago police, who then charged us with trespassing on federal property.

This example shows how to use the states' own just war guidelines to make an appeal on their own moral grounds to spare civilians the evils of war. However, I do not believe Halteman is advocating that Mennonites take up the just-war theory and adopt it in our churches.—*Jason Arndt, Gary, Ind.*

This publication welcomes your letters, either about our content or about issues facing the Mennonite Church USA. Please keep your letters brief—one or two paragraphs—and about one subject only. We reserve the right to edit for length and clarity. Publication is also subject to space limitations. Send to Letters@TheMennonite.org or mail to Readers Say, The Mennonite, 1700 S. Main St., Goshen, IN 46526-4794. Please include your name and address. We will not print letters sent anonymously, though we may withhold names at our discretion.—*Editors*

IN THIS ISSUE

Conrad Kanagy (page 8) asks what it means to be a Mennonite Church USA member. In three exclusive articles he reports on findings from the Mennonite Member Profile 2006. This scientific study gives a better grasp of who we are and how we practice our beliefs. Conrad gives particular attention to findings about Mennonite ministers (page 12) and racial/ethnic Mennonites (page 15). He draws important lessons about what shapes pastors. He also looks at the opportunities and challenges we face from the growing number of racial/ethnic members and congregations in Mennonite Church USA. In his editorial (page 32), Everett J. Thomas addresses the finding that we are not highly committed to area conferences. He also reports (page 20) that this is a concern of Mennonite Church USA's Executive Board.—*Associate Editor*

Articles model loving conversation

I welcomed the quartet of articles in the Jan. 2 issue on the theme of pacifism and political involvement. At a time when the political discourse in many of our congregations mimics the polarization and hostility of our larger culture, we need to connect with the best reasoning in our tradition and practice healthy patterns of communication. The various shades of opinion on an Anabaptist approach to politics are fairly and articulately stated in these essays. By giving voice to the variety of reasoned approaches among us, you have modeled the first stages of loving conversation.—*David Greiser, Hesston, Kan.*

Christian Zionism

In the Dec. 19, 2006, editorial (“Shattering the Silent Night”), Everett Thomas’ brush was too wide in painting Christian Zionism as extremism that wants to hasten Armageddon. Armageddon will come before we are ready for it. True Christian Zionism is not a threat to anybody but seeks to be a blessing. Christian Zionists have given millions of dollars of aid and care to all the population groups in the land, not only to Jews. And the support of these Zionist organizations in Israel comes from believers in many nations, not just the United States. Why not ask the denominational leaders in Jerusalem to focus on developing relationships between believers—including the Zionist organizations they object to—rather than trying to get rid of them? If they want to get rid of Zionism, let them begin with Moses, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Daniel for starters.—*William Wickey, Burr Oak, Mich.*

Everett Thomas’ editorial “Shattering the Silent Night” was wonderfully said. But Thomas might feel the pain for taking on the “Christian Zionists” in our midst. He will hear from our fundamentalists in response to this editorial.—*Jim Compton-Schmidt, Fresno, Calif.*

Church helps Mennonite school students

In “Strengthening the Church” (Jan. 16), Loren Swartzendruber points out that many students from our Mennonite churches attend non-Mennonite colleges and universities. He says the church needs graduates of Mennonite schools.

While the Mennonite church and Mennonite institutions of higher learning lament this fact, there are positive means by which this student drain can be mitigated. A number of years ago, the Mennonite Church of Normal (Ill.) embarked on a program called Student Mutual Aid Program—a nonbudgeted item in the church. Each college-bound student is offered expenses of full tuition, minus scholarships and grants, for four years at a Mennonite college. The cost for the 2006-2007 school year is \$94,274, contributed by church members concerned about our students entering Mennonite schools. This year eight students are in Mennonite colleges and two at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Elkhart, Ind. Over the years this program has served nearly 115 students.—*John C. Stutzman, Normal, Ill.*

Contributing to education fund

Thanks for Anna Groff’s ongoing contributions to *The Mennonite*. I noticed the article she wrote in the Jan. 16 issue (“The Strength of Diversity Is Needed”). Thanks for raising awareness about the need for contributions to the Racial/Ethnic Leadership Education (RELE) fund. After reading the article, I was wondering to whom I would direct funds? To which organization would our giving be of the most help, as it now stands? Or do we need to wait for a restructuring?—*Rodney Nafziger, Lancaster, Pa.*

Editor’s note: Contributions can be sent to Mennonite Education Agency, 63846 C.R. 35, Goshen, IN 46528-9621. Checks should designate that the contribution is for the RELE fund.

ONLINE POLL RESULTS

Compared with 10 years ago, Mennonite Church USA members are: (92 votes)

- More conservative (24%)
- More liberal (46%)
- I wasn’t a member 10 years ago (13%)
- Not sure (17%)

Check out the new poll question at www.TheMennonite.org



Pontius’ Puddle



WHY THE CHURCH AIN'T GROWING

Joel Kauffmann

IN BRIEF



Angustia new MVS director

Moises Angustia, a volunteer co-pastor and youth leader, assumed leadership of Mennonite Voluntary Service Feb. 1, when Scott Siemens, who served as MVS director for five years, transitioned to other work. He is a member of United Revival Mennonite Church, Brooklyn, N.Y., and serves as youth representative to Iglesia Menonita Hispana (Hispanic Mennonite Church). MVS provides opportunities for adults of all ages to serve Christ in more than 20 communities across the United States.
—Mennonite Mission Network

Choice Books sells 5 million in 2006

Choice Books, an inter-Anabaptist book evangelism ministry, reached another million book milestone and set a new annual sales record by purchasing/selling 5,071,579 books in 2006, making 2006 the 21st consecutive year of sales growth. For more information, visit www.choice-books.org.—Choice Books

Danisa Ndlovu pleads for help in Zimbabwe

STRASBOURG, France—"The challenges facing our nation do not seem to want to go away," Danisa Ndlovu, Bishop of the Brethren in Christ Church in Zimbabwe, told Mennonite World Conference (MWC) officers and executive staff at a California meeting last month. "Each day seems to bring more hardships."

Ndlovu is asking the MWC global family to continue to pray for his country and his church and to make solidarity visits to Zimbabwe. He also requested financial assistance for the BICC Peace Committee and MWC's help in creating a peace, social justice and ethics desk to serve Zimbabwe and other African countries.

MWC officers at the California meeting agreed to send a "koinonia team" to visit Zimbabwe in 2007 to build community through presence, prayer and encouragement. Volunteers for the team will be considered along with selected participants.

Ndlovu, vice president and president-elect of MWC, described increasingly devastating political, economic and social conditions. To address the situation, three major Christian church groups in Zimbabwe—the Evangelical Fellowship of Zimbabwe, of which the BICC is a member, the Zimbabwe Council of Churches and the Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops' Conference—are calling for dialogue among all sectors of Zimbabweans inside and outside the country to construct a national vision for future governance in the country.

The church groups have jointly produced a discussion document, "The Zimbabwe We Want: Towards a National Vision for Zimbabwe," which the church groups presented to President Robert Mugabe. They are hoping all stakeholders, not

only churches, will take ownership of the process.

Under Mugabe's leadership the country has spun into sharp decline. Professional people continue to leave. The economic situation fuels corruption, unemployment is still at 80 percent, inflation continues at 1,200 percent, the highest in the world, and life expectancy is now about 38 years.

Health delivery is compromised. Hospitals have few if any drugs. The sick are sometimes being asked to hunt for medical prescriptions in the market, then take the medicine to the hospital for their treatment. Although the rate of HIV/AIDS infections is decreasing, the pandemic continues, with an increasing number of orphans as a result.

Many of the thousands of people made homeless by the 2005 "Restore Order/Clean Up" still have no homes. The promised new homes have mostly gone to government employees and friends. New "clean-up" operations have left more people homeless. Ndlovu said that on a December 2006 trip to Harare, the capital city, he saw people "who had piled their belongings, some along the road, praying for transport," their huts smoldering or in flames. "We are praying that this cup of suffering will go away," he said.—Ferne Burkhardt

Music, worship program celebrates 20 years

MT. PLEASANT, Pa.—More than 200 people gathered Jan. 5-7 to celebrate the 20th annual Music and Worship Leaders retreat at Laurelville Mennonite Church Center, Mt. Pleasant. Ysaye Maria Barnwell, composer, teacher and performer in the renowned music ensemble Sweet Honey in the Rock, led participants in spirituals and gospel music from the African American tradition.

"Gospel music did not begin until the 20th century," said Barnwell. While influenced by spirituals, gospel music is a unique musical form. Spirituals are an expression of a community rooted in African religious tradition, while "gospel music is about Jesus." According to Barnwell, spirituals were reclaimed during the Civil Rights movement.

Pastor Leonard Dow of Oxford Circle Mennonite Church in Philadelphia, spoke to participants on the importance of church unity and multicultural worship. Dow's congregation is a racially and ethnically diverse congregation.

Participants, Laurelville staff and program leadership team members honored Ken Nafziger for his 20 years of service to the Mennonite church through the Music and Worship Leaders program.

Workshops on music, drama, multicultural worship and 20-year memories were led by Marilyn Houser Hamm and Michael Bishop, Jeff Raught, Leonard Dow and Anne Hess, and Nafziger and Marlene Kropf, respectively.



Pioneer women broadcasters honored

Eastern Mennonite Seminary, Harrisonburg, Va., honored Ella May Miller (left) and Ruth Brunk Stoltzfus, who were likely the first in the Mennonite Church to have their own syndicated radio broadcast, called "Heart to Heart."—Eastern Mennonite Seminary



Mark Wasser

A little extra love

Service Adventure participant Liz Nussbaum gives children at Growing Together Preschool in Raleigh, N.C., a little extra love. Most of the preschoolers come from low-income families who live in Raleigh's Walnut Terrace housing project. Nussbaum, of College Mennonite Church, Goshen, Ind., assists teacher Kathy Boos in helping preschoolers build the skills they need to be ready for kindergarten.—*Mennonite Mission Network*

Rosemary Bray McNatt, a preacher from New York City, will be the featured guest for the 2008 program, focusing on preaching through music and worship to be held Jan. 4-6, 2008.—*Laurelville Mennonite Church Center*

Iraqi peace worker killed in Baghdad

HARRISONBURG, Va.—An Iraqi-Muslim advocate for peace and reconciliation who received support from Christian organizations for his work in trauma-healing has been killed.

Alharith Abdulhameed Hassan, 56-year-old professor of psychiatry at the University of Baghdad, was shot while traveling to work on Dec. 6, 2006, according to an email sent last month by his bereaved widow, Maysa Hussam Jaber, to friends at Eastern Mennonite University (EMU).

Both Alharith and Maysa attended trainings under EMU's Center for Justice and Peacebuilding in Harrisonburg in the summer of 2004. They were selected and sponsored by Mennonite Central Committee, with additional support from Church World Service.—*EMU*

Hannah Taylor, 11, fights homelessness

WINNIPEG—Antihomelessness activist Hannah Taylor, 11, told students and staff at a Canadian Mennonite University (CMU) chapel Jan. 22: "If we never give up and care enough for each other, we can do anything."

When you see a homeless person, "don't be afraid of them, be kind to them," she said.

The young Winnipegger's journey of helping homeless people across Canada began when she was 5 years old and saw someone eating out of garbage can.



Hannah Taylor

"I was very sad and felt sick about it," she said. "I asked my mom why he had to do that. She said it was because he was homeless."

Hannah turned that experience into a classroom project, then later made "Ladybug" jars—glass jars spray painted red with black dots—to collect spare change. That was the start of the Ladybug Foundation, which has raised over \$500,000 for Canadian charities that help homeless people.

Members of the CMU community are doing their part to help Hannah help homeless people; Ladybug jars have been placed around the campus so students, staff and visitors can donate their spare change.—*Canadian Mennonite University*

Pastor organizes class on pastoral ministry

ELKHART, Ind.—A miniterm class at Central Christian High School, Kidron, Ohio, created an opportunity for four high school students to explore pastoral ministry during the first two weeks of January.

Four students at Central Christian—Andrew Eades, Jonathan Hershberger, Dustin Linder and Annali Murray—participated in a nine-day class designed by Terry Shue, pastor of Kidron Mennonite Church.

On four mornings, local pastors taught on spiritual gifts, preaching, pastoral care and discerning a call to ministry. In the afternoons, each student worked alongside one of the pastors. Later the group visited Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Elkhart.—*AMBS*

—compiled by Gordon Houser

The wages of war

No one can predict the long-term consequences of the Iraq War, but only last summer did the U.S. government stop collecting a 3 percent tax on long-distance telephone calls that was begun in 1898 to help pay for the Spanish-American War—a war that lasted only several months.—*The Christian Century*

Fever chart

U.S. government climate experts reported Jan. 9 that 2006 was the warmest year on record for the 48 contiguous states, pairing a summer heat wave with a mild winter—in some places daffodils bloomed out of season and bears forgot to hibernate. The average annual temperature in the 48 states last year was 2.2 degrees warmer than the mean temperature for the 20th century.—*Wichita Eagle*

Mercenaries in Iraq

Private military contractors have reportedly fired indiscriminately on Iraqi civilians hundreds of times throughout the U.S. occupation, yet none has been prosecuted, according to "Corporate Mercenaries," a report released last October by the U.K.-based organization War on Want. The report says that lack of government accountability has led employees of private military contractors—the second largest occupying force in Iraq—to ignore human rights.—*Sojourners*

A landscape of change

A look at members of Mennonite Church USA

by Conrad L. Kanagy

What does it mean to be Mennonite in the 21st century? How have perceptions of Anabaptist identity changed over time? The frequency with which these questions arise among Mennonites suggests anxiety and uncertainty about possible answers. But addressing these questions is more challenging than in the past. Among other factors, the transformation of two Mennonite denominations with different cultural and historical identities, the continued assimilation of Mennonites into the larger American culture and the growth of racial/ethnic Mennonite congregations challenge efforts that offer quick and easy answers.

In 1972, J. Howard Kauffman and Leland Harder launched Church Member Profile I, a comprehensive survey of five Anabaptist denominations in North America. Joined by Leo Driedger, they conducted a follow-up study in 1989. In 2006, the Young Center of Elizabethtown College conducted a third denominational profile. The most comprehensive survey ever of Mennonites in the United States, this study included a representative sample of members in 120 congregations of Mennonite Church USA, a special sample of racial/ethnic members, a sample of Mennonite ministers and a congregational profile of participating congregations.

This article offers a summary of findings from Mennonite Member Profile 2006. It provides a “20,000-foot” view of the current Mennonite landscape in the United States as well as shifts in that landscape over the past three decades.

Mennonite identity: When Mennonites were asked to identify the two religious words that best described them, two-thirds chose “Mennonite” or “Anabaptist.” The remaining third chose other terms, including spiritual, evangelical, charismatic and Pentecostal. Pastors were more likely than members to identify themselves as Anabaptist or Mennonite, with 84 percent of them doing so. Among racial/ethnic members, 41 percent described themselves by these words.

Congregational and denominational loyalty: The findings of Mennonite Member Profile 2006 generally support what sociologists know about American Christians as a whole—congregations are more important to members than are denominations and area conferences. Among members of Mennonite Church USA, 34 percent say they are “very strongly” committed to the denomination and 12 percent to their area conference. In comparison, 58 percent are “very strongly” committed to their local congregation.

At the same time, more members today (48 percent) than in 1972 (25 percent) say they will always want to remain a member of their denomination. While the current level of denominational loyalty today is slightly lower than for Conservative Protestants (52 percent) in the United States, it is higher than among Mainline Protestants (37 percent), according to *The Truth About Conservative Christians* by Andrew Greeley and Michael Hout (University of Chicago Press, 2006).

A major shift among Mennonites over the past three decades has been the increase in members from other denominations.

More new members: A major shift among Mennonites over the past three decades has been the increase in members from other denominations. We see this at several different levels:

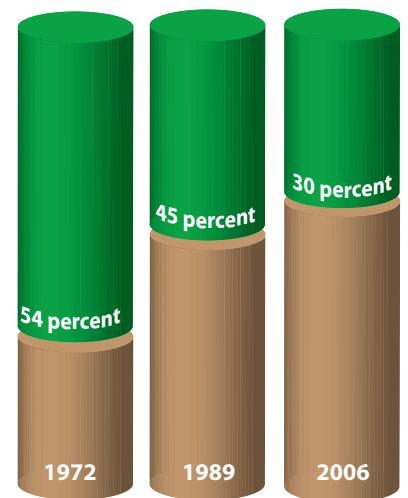
- The percent of “noncradle” Mennonites—neither parent being Mennonite—has risen since 1972 from 17 percent to 26 percent.
- The percent of Mennonites who have been members in other denominations

(including noncradle Mennonites) has increased from 14 percent in 1972 to 30 percent today.

- The percent of Mennonite members who married a spouse from another denomination has risen from 25 percent in 1972 to 39 percent in 2006.

Without a major influx of younger people, questions of Anabaptist identity will take a lower profile to the question of mere survival.

Rapidly aging membership: The average age of Mennonites today is 54 years, five years older than in 1989. More important, however, is the rapidly shifting age distribution of Mennonites. In 1972, 54 percent of Mennonites were under age 45—within childbearing age. This number declined to 45 percent in 1989 and is only 30 percent today. This change has been more extreme for Mennonites than even for Mainline Protestant denominations, which Greeley and Hout describe as “literally dying out” because of similar changes in their age distribution. Among Mainline Protestant denominations, 42 percent of members

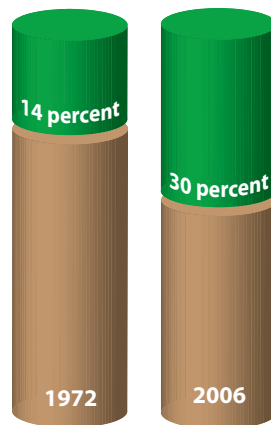


Decrease in Mennonites under age 45

are under 45 years of age, compared with 52 percent of Conservative Protestants.

Growing racial/ethnic congregations:

The growth of racial/ethnic congregations is changing the face of Mennonite Church USA. The term racial/ethnic is a self-designation by Mennonite Church USA groups with members that include those who are



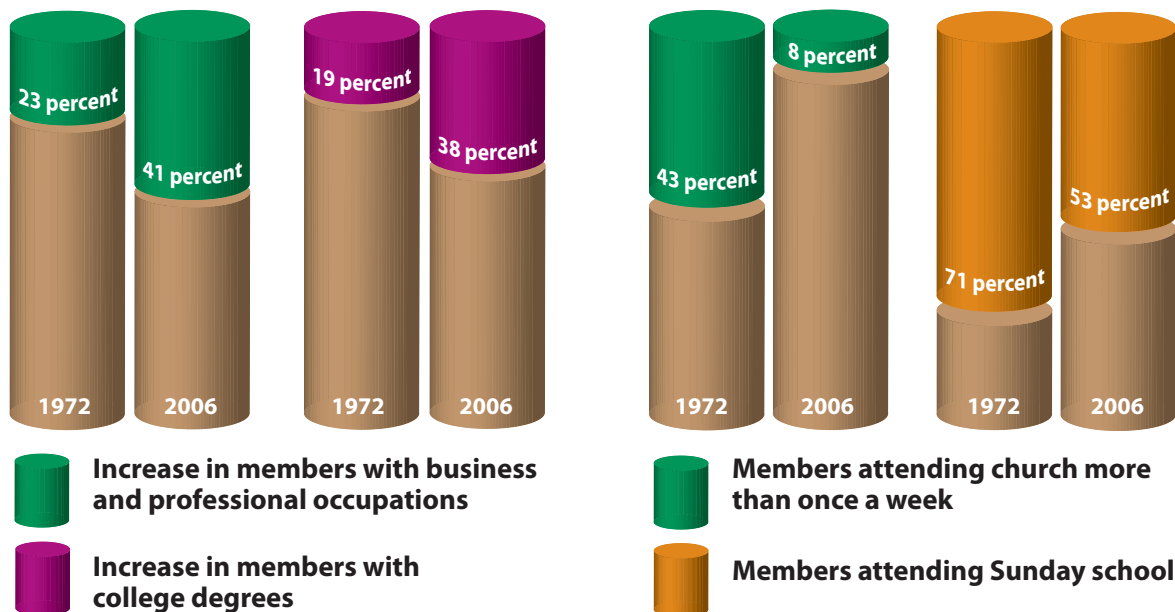
Increase in members from “other than Mennonite” backgrounds

Continued on page 10

The growth of racial/ethnic congregations is changing the face of Mennonite Church USA.

African-American, Latino/Hispanic, Native American, Asian and “other than Anglo.” In the past five years, 25 percent of the denomination’s new members have been racial/ethnic, compared with just 6 percent among those members who entered the denomination more than five years ago.

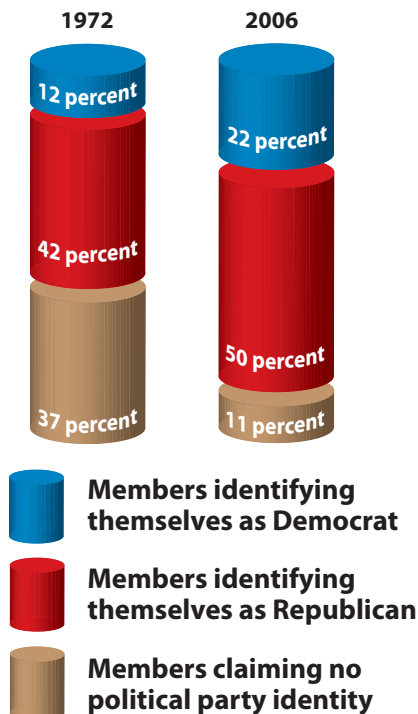
themselves as Republicans, compared with 50 percent in 2006. During this same period the proportion of Democrats has nearly doubled, from 12 percent to 22 percent. But in the last presidential election, two-thirds of Mennonites who voted did so for George W. Bush.



Increased assimilation: In 1972, 36 percent of Mennonites lived on a farm, compared with 12 percent today. While almost twice as many Mennonites reside in large cities (250,000 or more residents) today as in 1972, this number still accounts for less than 10 percent of all Mennonites.

In their work, more Mennonites hold business and professional occupations compared with three decades ago—41 percent today and 23 percent in 1972. At the same time, twice as many Mennonites have college degrees today (38 percent) as in 1972 (19 percent).

Greater political identification: In 1972, 37 percent of Mennonites claimed no political party identity, compared with only 11 percent today. Increases have occurred for both Republicans and Democrats. In 1972, 42 percent of Mennonites identified



Changing church attendance: While the percent of Mennonites who regularly attend church has remained about the same since 1972, church attendance for Mennonites has become largely a “once a week” event, with the percent who attend more than once a week dropping from 43 percent in 1972 to 8 percent today. In addition, the proportion who attend Sunday school has declined from 71 percent in 1972 to 53 percent today.

Conclusion: These early findings of Mennonite Member Profile 2006 have important implications for Mennonite identity as well as the future of Mennonite Church USA. Among these implications are both challenges and opportunities:

- The growth of members from other than Mennonite backgrounds is good news for a denomination interested in becoming more missional—calling all people to a primary allegiance to Jesus Christ. Integrating these members into the denomination remains a challenge, however, since they are more ambivalent about an Anabaptist identity than are other members.

- The rapid demographic shift in age among Mennonites is a critical issue for the denomination. Without a major influx of younger people, questions of Anabaptist identity will take a lower profile to the question of mere survival.

- The findings about racial/ethnic members are among the most encouraging of this study. Not only are these members younger on average, they also bring a rich spiritual diversity to Mennonite Church USA.

- The shift to Sunday morning worship as the only religious service of the week along with the decline in Sunday school attendance, pose challenges for pastors and congregations seeking to influence members who are less engaged in church and increasingly more assimilated in the broader culture.

- The forces of modern and postmodern culture—professionalism, education, individualism and suburbanization—continue to shape Mennonites, who are more assimilated in the broader culture than ever before.

- The increased political identification of Mennonites threatens to polarize members around controversial issues.

Conrad L. Kanagy is associate professor of sociology at Elizabethtown (Pa.) College and an ordained minister in Lancaster Mennonite Conference. He is author of the forthcoming Road Signs and Guideposts, which provides an in-depth look at many of the issues addressed in this article. The book will be accompanied by a set of congregational resources on DVD and CD. The following graciously reviewed and provided helpful feedback for the three essays: Ron Byler, Leonard Dow, Gilberto Flores, Keith Harder, Rodolfo Jimenez, Donald Kraybill, Marty Lehman, Iris de León-Hartshorn, Freeman Miller, Yvonne Platts, Marathana Prothro, Valentina Satvedi, Jim Schrag, Jorge Vallejos and Roy Williams. Many thanks also to the other two members of the three-denominational research team (Carl D. Bowman of Bridgewater

(Va.) College and Donald Kraybill of Elizabethtown College) and to the many congregations, members and pastors who participated in Mennonite Member Profile 2006. Without their participation the study would not have been possible. Mennonite Member Profile 2006 was funded by grants from Mennonite Church USA Executive Leadership and churchwide agencies, including a major grant from MMA. Other financial support came from Schowalter Foundation, Mennonite Central Committee, Mennonite Disaster Service, Mennonite Financial Services, Eastern Mennonite Missions, Goodville Mutual Casualty Company and private contributors.

Note: The percentages for loyalty (page 9) do not add to 100, since each category (congregation, denomination, area conference, broader church) is a separate variable, with four categories—very strong, strong, somewhat weak and very weak. The percentages are for those who indicate “very strong” for variable—congregation, denomination, area conference, broader church.—CK

Designing the study

In the summer of 2005, 124 Mennonite Church USA congregations were selected from the denominational database of 965. A scientific selection process insured that members of these congregations represented all members in Mennonite Church USA. Pastors received a letter of invitation for their congregation to participate in the study. Nearly 85 percent of these congregations submitted a membership directory. Those who declined or failed to respond were replaced, resulting in a final sample of 120 participating congregations.

Using membership directories from participating congregations, members 18 and older were randomly selected to receive a survey. This process yielded a database of 3,080 members and their addresses. Mennonite Member Profile 2006 was mailed on Feb. 14. By early summer, 76 percent of respondents had returned a usable questionnaire for a total of 2,216 surveys.

Racial/ethnic people are usually underrepresented in social science research. This was true of the 1972 and 1989 Church Member Profiles, which included too few racial/ethnic members for any meaningful analysis. Because of this historic underrepresentation, Mennonite Member Profile 2006 included a special sample of racial/ethnic members from 22 congregations in three urban areas—Philadelphia, Chicago and Los Angeles. Combining racial/ethnic members who were part of the representative member sample with those in the urban sample yielded a sample size of 475 racial/ethnic members in Mennonite Member Profile 2006. The racial/ethnic distribution of these combined samples was 26 percent African American, 25 percent Latino/Hispanic, 25 percent Asian, 4 percent Native American, 6 percent African immigrant, 9 percent mixed and 7 percent other.

Project Partners in each urban area invited congregational participation. Partners were Yvonne Platts and Freeman Miller, who represented the Philadelphia Urban Ministries Partnership, Rodolfo Jimenez, who serves with Mennonite Central Committee in Chicago, and Valentina Satvedi, who represented the Center for Anabaptist Leadership in Los Angeles. The work of these partners was critical to the participation and overall response of congregations in these urban areas.

In addition, 500 active and active-without-charge Mennonite ministers also received a full-length member profile. Of these, 319 returned a completed profile for a response rate of 65 percent.—Conrad L. Kanagy



Profiles in

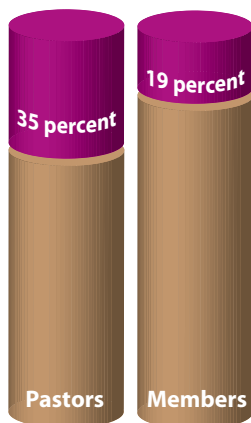
A look at Mennonite Church USA ministers and members

by Conrad L. Kanagy

Mennonite Member Profile 2006 was sent to a sample of 500 active and active-without-charge ministers in Mennonite Church USA. Sixty-five percent of these ministers responded to the survey. What have we learned about Mennonite pastors and how they compare to lay members?

Childhood socialization: Differences between pastors and lay members show up early in life. Pastors attended church more regularly as children than members—96 percent attended weekly, compared with 87 percent of members. Pastors (59 percent) are more likely to identify a “specific moment” when they accepted Christ as Lord and Savior compared with members (49 percent). And pastors were baptized earlier in their lives—at 12.5 years of age on average, compared with 13.9 for members.

Demographics: The average age of pastors and members is the same (54 years), and pastors are as likely as members to have “other than Mennonite” backgrounds. But pastors differ substantially in educational levels, with 75 percent having a college education, compared with 38 percent of members. Pastors are much more likely to have had a

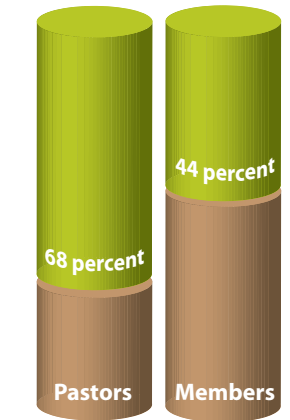


Graduate of a four-year Mennonite college or university

Mennonite education than members, with 30 percent attending a Mennonite high school (17 percent of members), 35 percent graduating from a four-year Mennonite college or university (19 percent of members) and 40 percent graduating from a Mennonite seminary (2 percent of members).

Spirituality: Indicators of spirituality among ministers are higher than among

members. Sixty-eight percent of pastors report that their religious beliefs are the “most important thing in their life,” compared with 44 percent of members. Eighty-one percent of pastors describe their relationship with God as “close” or “very close,” compared with 67 percent of members. And 87 percent of pastors identify themselves as “born again,” compared with 78 percent of members.



Religious beliefs are the “most important thing in their life”

Theology: Pastors tend to select “middle” responses when asked about theological beliefs, likely reflecting their understanding of the complexity of theological issues. While a majority of members (51 percent) believe that “God controls most events in my daily life,” more pastors (64 percent) chose a different response—“God guides me but does not control the events of my daily life.”

When asked why Jesus died on the cross, members (84 percent) were more likely than pastors (64 percent) to say that “Jesus had to die to complete God’s plan of salvation.” Responding to the same question, pastors (24 percent) were more likely than members (9 percent) to say that “Jesus willingly died to show the power of nonviolent love.”

The Holy Spirit: Pastors are more like racial/ethnic members in their experiences of the Holy Spirit than are other members. Seventy-seven percent of pastors believe the charismatic gifts of the Holy Spirit are “genuine gifts of God’s Spirit to some Christians,” compared with 61 percent of members. And 66 percent of pastors (compared with 44 percent of members) have personally experienced charismatic gifts, including casting out demons, speaking in tongues, prophesying, the baptism of the Holy Spirit and healing. Forty-six percent of pastors state that these experiences have been within the past year.

contrast

Pastors are more aware of issues of racism in the church and more supportive of efforts to overcome these.

Politics: Pastors are often more politically liberal than members and more concerned about issues of social justice. Pastors are evenly divided between political parties (29 percent identifying with each party) compared with members, who are far more likely to be Republican than Democrat. More pastors choose “Independent” (27 percent) than do members (15 percent).

Pastors are more aware of issues of racism in the church and more supportive of efforts to overcome these, with 41 percent saying it is “very important” that church leaders discuss and address issues of racism, compared with 28 percent of members.

Mennonite Church USA: The commitment to and connections within Mennonite Church USA are stronger. Fifty-six percent of pastors said they will “always want to be a member” of Mennonite Church USA, compared with 48 percent of members. Twice as many pastors (35 percent) served in voluntary service, as did members (17 percent); while three times as many pastors (21 percent compared with 7 percent of members) served in an overseas assignment for three months or more.

Anabaptist identity: In their religious identity, pastors are more likely to define themselves as Mennonite or Anabaptist—84 percent of pastors

compared with 66 percent of members.

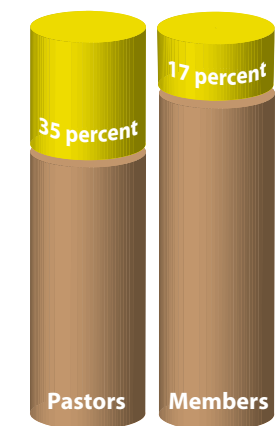
Sixty-one percent of ministers “completely agree” that “nonviolence as a way of living is very important to me,” compared with 40 percent of members, and 51 percent of pastors completely agree that it is “wrong for Christians to fight in any war” compared with 32 percent of members.

Seventy-two percent of pastors “completely disagree” that “the U.S. did the right thing by going to war against Iraq” compared with 46 percent of members who disagree.

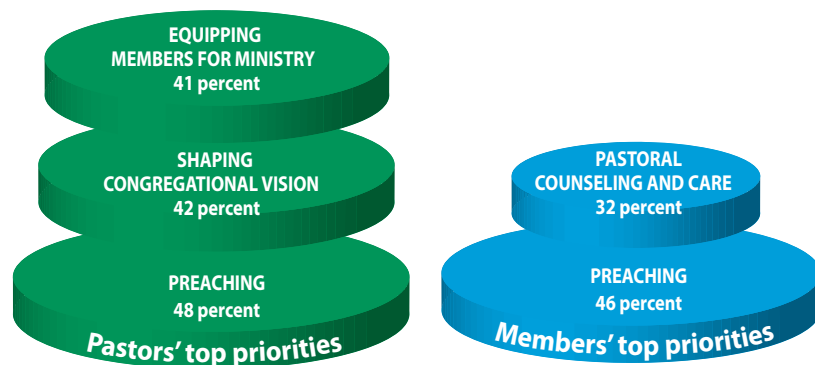
Pastoral priorities: Pastors and members differ in their understanding of what should be the priorities of pastors. When asked to check the three highest priorities, members most often affirmed preaching sermons (46 percent) and providing pastoral counseling and care (32 percent). While pastors also affirm preaching as the highest priority, they also see “shaping the congregation’s vision” (42 percent) and “equipping members for ministry” (41 percent) as other top priorities.

Continued on page 14

Pastors and members differ in their understanding of what should be the priorities of pastors.



Served in voluntary service



*Continued
from page 13*

Racial/ethnic pastors: Mennonite Member Profile 2006 included a small sample of 37 racial/ethnic pastors (24 percent African American, 5 percent Asian, 5 percent Native American, 57 percent Latino/Hispanic, and 5 percent other). Some of the findings among these pastors include the following:

- 72 percent said their religious beliefs are the most important thing in their life;
- 44 percent were baptized in an “other than Mennonite” church;
- 89 percent call themselves “born again”;
- 89 percent believe that the charismatic gifts are genuine gifts of God’s Spirit;
- 64 percent say they will always want to be a part of their denomination;
- 71 percent believe it is very important that leaders and staff of church-related agencies reflect racial/ethnic diversity.

Conclusion: While these differences between Mennonite ministers and members may come as a surprise to some, they are confirmed by other sociological studies of clergy and members. Undoubtedly these differences play out in congregational conflicts and in the challenges of providing effective pastoral leadership. However, the differences may be vital and even necessary for effective ministry

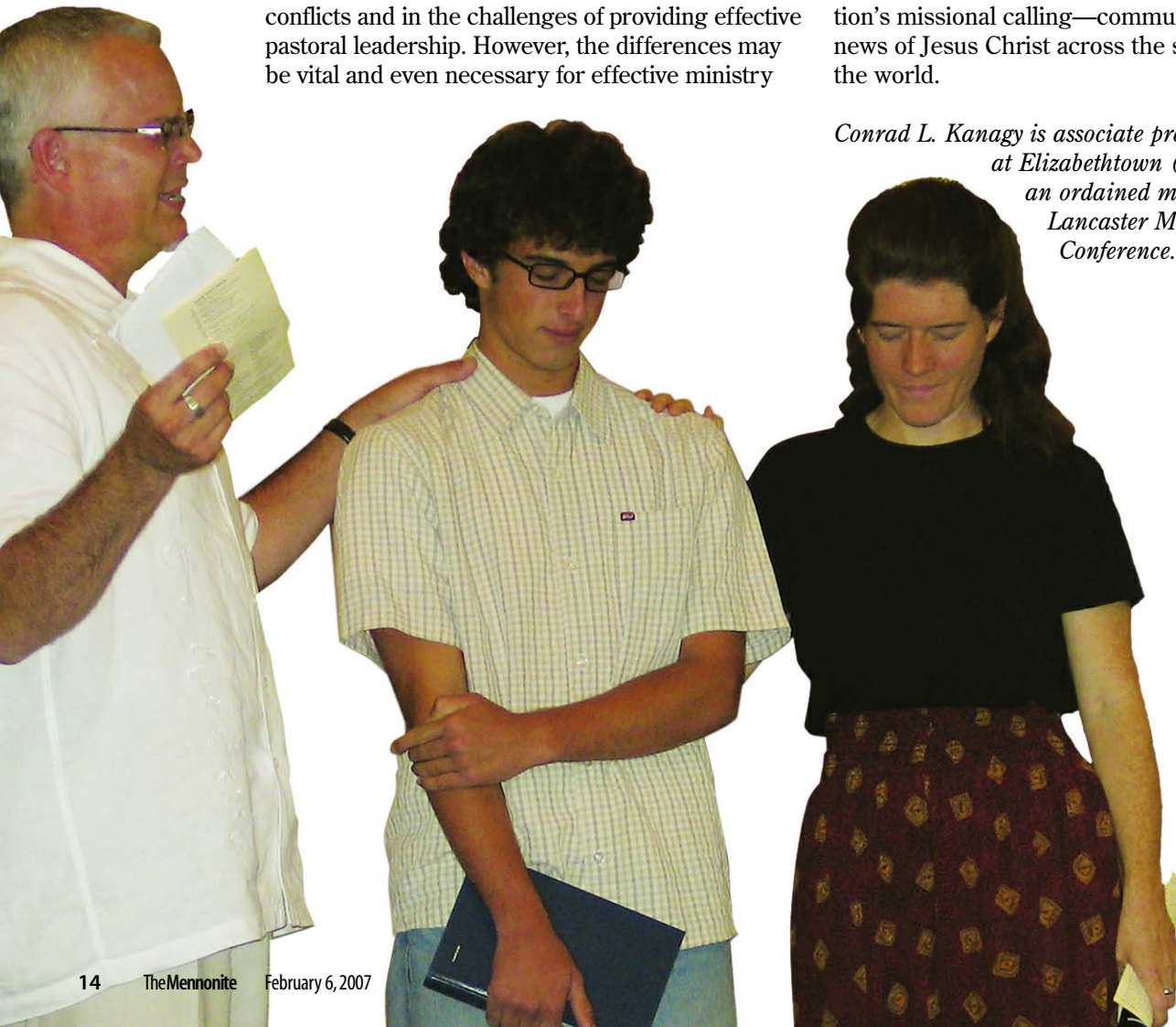
and congregational growth. Where ministers and members are too much alike, congregations may have difficulty moving beyond the status quo.

While I do not analyze the root causes of the differences between pastors and members here, several factors may play a part in the shaping of pastors:

- Earlier childhood religious and church experiences within which God’s call is felt more deeply.
- More education, particularly higher levels of Mennonite education.
- Stronger connections in the denomination and the broader Mennonite church.
- More service experiences, particularly abroad.
- Deeper encounters with human need and spiritual realities in the context of pastoral care.

Understanding the differences between pastors and members is important. For pastors, clarity about these differences may provide a helpful perspective when working through congregational conflicts and misunderstandings. For members, recognizing and validating their pastor’s distinctives could lead to greater empowerment of pastoral leadership and fulfillment of the congregation’s missional calling—communicating the good news of Jesus Christ across the street and around the world.

Conrad L. Kanagy is associate professor of sociology at Elizabethtown (Pa.) College and an ordained minister in Lancaster Mennonite Conference.



Pasadena Mennonite Church

Opportunities and challenges

Racial/ethnic Mennonites in the United States

by Conrad L. Kanagy

In contrast to other denominations with historic European roots, Mennonite Church USA includes a large and rapidly growing number of racial/ethnic members and congregations. Racial/ethnic is a self-designation by groups with members who are African-American, Latino/Hispanic, Native American, Asian and “other than Anglo.”

There are 169 racial/ethnic congregations (18 percent of the denomination) and more than 12,000 members (11 percent of the denomination) in these congregations. Based on Mennonite Member Profile 2006 findings, I estimate that another 3-4 percent of racial/ethnic members attend predominantly white congregations.

The largest number of racial/ethnic congregations are Latino/Hispanic (46 percent), followed by African-American (35 percent), Asian (11 percent) and Native American (8 percent). African-American congregations have the largest membership block, with 52 percent of racial/ethnic members in the denomination (one-third of these attend a single congregation—Calvary Community Church in Hampton, Va.). Latino/Hispanic congregations are next with 35 percent, followed by Asian congregations (9 percent) and Native American congregations (4 percent).

Demographics: By and large, racial/ethnic members are more urban, younger and less affluent than white or Anglo Mennonites:

- More racial/ethnic members live in large urban areas, with 39 percent residing in cities with populations greater than 250,000 compared with just 8 percent of other Mennonites.

- Racial/ethnic members are nine years younger (46 years of age) on average than Anglo Mennonites (55 years of age). While the percent of white Mennonites between 18 and 45 years of age is quite low (29 percent), more than 50 percent of racial/ethnic members are between 18 and 45 years old.

The combination of a charismatic spirituality, an active evangelical witness and support for social justice may represent a new kind of Anabaptist identity that all Mennonites can learn from.

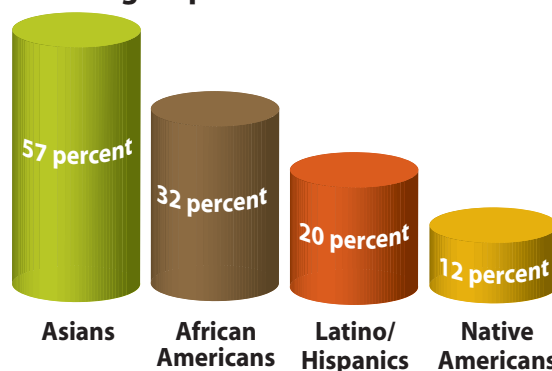
- Racial/ethnic members are less affluent. In 2005, 18 percent of racial/ethnic households had incomes under \$15,000, compared with only 6 percent of other Mennonites. One-third of racial/ethnic households earned under \$25,000, compared with 15 percent of other Mennonites.

- Sixteen percent of racial/ethnic members lack health insurance, compared with just 4 percent of white Mennonites without coverage. In the United States as a whole, 16 percent of Americans are not covered by health insurance.

- There are substantial differences in education among racial/ethnic groups. Asians are the most highly educated, with 57 percent having a college

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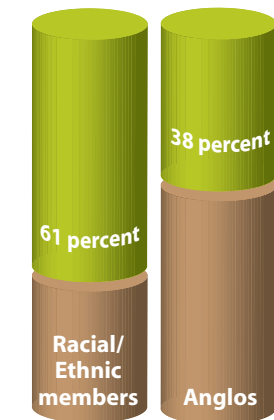
Educational differences among racial/ethnic groups



degree, compared with 32 percent of African-Americans, 20 percent of Latino/Hispanics and 12 percent of Native Americans. Native Americans are most likely not to have completed high school, at 41 percent, followed by Latino/Hispanics at 23 percent, Asians at 13 percent and African-Americans at 6 percent.

Political identity: Racial/ethnic members are less likely to identify with a political party than other Mennonites, with 27 percent claiming no political party, in contrast to just 11 percent of Anglos. This difference is in large part due to the immigrant status of many racial/ethnic members—38 percent of immigrants do not identify with a political party, compared with 16 percent among racial/ethnic members born in the United States.

Racial/ethnic members who do identify with a political party are slightly more likely to be Democrat (32 percent) than Republican (30 percent), compared with Anglo Mennonites, who are more likely to be Republican (52 percent) than Democrat (21 percent).



Percent who speak about their faith several times a month or more

Witness and outreach: Racial/ethnic members are more evangelistic in their witness to the gospel than are Anglo Mennonites. Sixty-one percent of racial/ethnic members speak about their faith to people outside their church several times a month or more, compared with 38 percent of other Mennonites. And 29 percent of racial/ethnic members regularly (several times a month or more) invite non-Christians to their church, compared with 7 percent of Anglo Mennonites.

The Holy Spirit: Racial/ethnic members' understanding of the Holy Spirit as well as experiences with the charismatic gifts of the Spirit distinguish them from other Mennonites. Racial/ethnic members are more likely to say the charismatic gifts of healing, prophesying and speaking in tongues are "genuine gifts of God's Spirit," with 83 percent of them agreeing, compared with 59 percent of other Mennonites. Seventy percent of racial/ethnic members have had personal experience with the charismatic gifts of the Holy Spirit (casting out demons, speaking in tongues, prophesying, healing), compared with 42 percent of other Mennonites.

Racism: Eighteen percent of racial/ethnic members acknowledge they have been unfairly treated because of their race and/or ethnicity by other Mennonites. Not surprisingly, racial/ethnic members are more likely than other Mennonites to express concern about racism and to support anti-racism efforts in both the church and society to overcome barriers to equal access and opportunity.

- Fifty percent of racial/ethnic members believe it is "very important" that leaders and staff of church-related agencies reflect the racial/ethnic diversity of Mennonite congregations. This compares with 26 percent of Anglo Mennonites.

- Twenty-eight percent of racial/ethnic members "strongly support" intentional efforts to hire and promote racial/ethnic minorities in the larger society, compared with 4 percent of white Mennonites.

- Thirty-nine percent of racial/ethnic members believe it is "very important" that church leaders address issues of race and racism, compared with 27 percent of white Mennonites.

Social, economic, cultural, geographic, historical, residential and language differences between Anglo and racial/ethnic members are too often maintained rather than challenged.

Conclusion: The growing number of racial/ethnic members and congregations is perhaps the greatest opportunity and greatest challenge for Mennonite Church USA. The opportunities are related to the following:

- Racial/ethnic members are more urban than other Mennonites and offer a model for how to be "Anabaptist in the city"—something few Mennonites in North America have experienced.
- The younger age of racial/ethnic members offers vitality to an aging denomination.
- The experience of the Holy Spirit among racial/ethnic members represents a spiritual stream that other Mennonites can benefit from, some who have been hesitant or resistant to diverse expressions of the Spirit.
- The greater evangelical witness of racial/ethnic Mennonites is a much needed example of faithfulness in a denomination that has recognized its



missional calling but whose members too often lack courage or passion to express in word and deed the good news of Jesus Christ.

- The poverty of some racial/ethnic Mennonites should convict more affluent and materially comfortable Anglo Mennonites to share their resources with racial/ethnic congregations and to support the efforts of racial/ethnic constituency groups.

- Racial/ethnic Mennonites reveal that evangelical Christianity is not solely the possession of the political right. The combination of a charismatic spirituality, an active evangelical witness and support for social justice may represent a new kind of Anabaptist identity that all Mennonites can learn from.

Unfortunately, there are substantial challenges alongside these opportunities. Several include:

- Many Anglo Mennonites are not aware of the rich racial and ethnic diversity of their denomination.

- It is not clear that Anglo Mennonites fully appreciate the gifts that racial/ethnic members and congregations bring to the denomination.

- Anglo Mennonites are less interested in anti-racism efforts than are racial/ethnic Mennonites, perhaps because racism has become politicized in the United States, and anti-racism efforts are more often identified with the political left than the right.

- Social, economic, cultural, geographic, historical, residential and language differences between Anglo and racial/ethnic members are too often maintained rather than challenged and in the process become barriers to the development of meaningful relationships and collaboration across race and ethnicity.

Fully overcoming, in the name of Christ, both the intended and unintended sins of racism in Mennonite Church USA will be necessary if the opportunities I have described are to be realized. It is also possible that the future of the denomination may hang on the commitment of all its members to complete this reconciling work of our Lord.

Conrad L. Kanagy is associate professor of sociology at Elizabethtown (Pa.) College and an ordained minister in Lancaster Mennonite Conference.

The realities of our church life



James Schrag is executive director of Mennonite Church USA.

In both of my lifetime roles of church leadership—23 years as a pastor and 10 years as a denominational executive—the foundation for leadership has been a mix of spiritual and sociological knowledge and perspective. This combination of human and divine—my knowledge of Scripture, with the application of human observation—has formed my intuition. It brings a balance to understanding how the realities of our church life and witness are created and carried forward.

This is why I am delighted with the initial reports of the Church Member Profile organized by Donald B. Kraybill and assisted by Conrad L. Kanagy, who specializes in the Mennonite Church USA data and compares it to studies in 1972 and 1989.

Receiving this information is like peering through a recently washed window that was smudged by many fingerprints. I reflect on Paul's lament that "now we see in a mirror, dimly . . ." (1 Corinthians 13:12), hoping for added insight this side of the "face to face" clarity we anticipate in heaven. Sociological research is like acquiring a valued companion—as my father once told me, "A real friend is one who will tell you exactly how it is."

Lyle Schaller, a practical-minded pundit of "what works," popular in the 1970s, gave me a piece of churchly sociological wisdom when he said, "Congregations almost always vote no before they vote yes." Knowing that made me a better pastor. How congregations make decisions or committees function is not always "spiritual" stuff; it is about our human natures.

In the early 1970s, when I began as a pastor in a rural congregation, we made copies on a purple-print mimeograph machine. A few years later the trustees agonized whether we could justify buying a copier. In the second congregation I served, the office secretary told me we ought to buy a computer. "Why?" I asked. Soon the advance of technol-


ogy gave me the obvious answer to my question. These days perhaps 90 percent of my desk work involves staring at a screen and pressing keys on a keyboard. Typewriters and dictaphones are no more. The transformation process that resulted in our new denomination might not have happened without the rapid exchange of data and ideas made possible by email.

It is a truism to say that things have changed since 1972. Thirty years later, in 2002, we became a new church with a new name—Mennonite Church USA. This new reality is the result of other changes; it is less the cause of change, only five years later. We simply live and behave differently

now—we are generally more affluent, more highly educated and less rural. We have a membership of growing racial/ethnic diversity that reflects the sociological realities around us. We are more open to participation in secular politics and perhaps have allowed that human passion to color our spiritual perceptions more than in the past.

What does this data about change mean for us in our calling as Christians who view Christ's teachings and example through the lens of Anabaptist reform and Mennonite culture? Mennonites have often found our differences with others as our reason to exist—our game was to make comparisons, both to other Christians and "the world." What if the data now informs us that we are now more like other Christians than we thought? Or what if what we once considered worldly is now commonplace among us? If we find our spiritual diversity increasing, or that pastors and congregations view things differently, what will we make of the proof offered to us in this current data?

Our view of ourselves and our reality changes slowly but continuously, moving like the hands of a clock. The answer to What time is it? often comes only when an alarm rings—when something happens, such as the creation of Mennonite Church USA, or when 9/11 awakens us from our slumber to see things that were happening before our eyes but that we had not taken care to notice.

Thank God for the sociologist/theologians among us. May God bless their work of offering us lenses to see ourselves and God more clearly so that we know how to pray with both gratitude and supplication. 

Our view of ourselves and our reality changes slowly but continuously.

This article is available as an audio file at www.TheMennonite.org



IN THE NEXT ISSUE

- **Defeating the temptation of violence**—Susan Mark Landis
- **The temptation to compromise**—Randy Good

Recommendation to ordain women fails

Lancaster Mennonite Conference vote falls short by less than 1 percent.

Lancaster (Pa.) Mennonite Conference ministers did not sufficiently affirm a recommendation from the LMC Board of Bishops that would have allowed for the ordination of women. The decision emerged from a ballot count on Jan. 19; all active ordained and licensed ministerial leaders in the conference were eligible to vote.

There are 455 active credentialed leaders in LMC. Of the 359 credentialed leaders who voted, 65.74 percent affirmed the recommendation and 34.26 percent did not affirm the recommendation. LMC's constitution requires 66.67 percent for approval.

The vote followed a lengthy process of spiritual discernment. In March 2006, the Board of Bishops introduced a process of spiritual discernment to consider a policy that would enable congregations to follow their convictions in discerning the gifts and calling of people—regardless of gender—into ordained leadership roles in the congregation.

Following 10 regional cluster meetings for credentialed leaders and three forums for lay people in April and May 2006, the 23-member Board of Bishops reviewed the diverse feedback from across the conference.

This feedback—along with dwelling in God's Word, prayer, fasting, listening, searching and study—moved the Board of Bishops to approve a recommendation in August 2006. The recommendation was then sent to leaders with ministerial credentials for their discernment and affirmation.

The bishops' recommendation said

- that Lancaster Mennonite Conference respect each member congregation in its discernment of Scripture, as led by the Holy Spirit, to call and affirm people to serve in ministry and pastoral leadership and

- that the LMC Board of Bishops license and/or ordain, regardless of gender, those who have responded to God's call, who have been affirmed by their respective congregation and who meet LMC qualifications for credentialing.

The recommendation also includes the following understandings:

- To most fully respect the differing scriptural understandings, beliefs and practices of our congregations, the role of bishop and similar conference oversight roles, will be reserved for men.

- The Board of Bishops will assist in defining protocol for healthy, God-honoring male and female relationships in ministry teams.

Within Lancaster Mennonite Conference there are a variety of beliefs and practices regarding roles of men and women in ministry and pastoral leadership. Contrary to the either/or clarity that

some people wished to bring to this discussion, the practice of LMC congregations is more accurately described as a continuum in which women are involved to lesser or greater degrees in congregations.

Through the process of spiritual discernment, it was clear that equally sincere and faithful people understand Scripture differently and come to differing conclusions regarding the practice of women in leadership and ordination.

Because this recommendation was not affirmed, the policy affirmed by credentialed leaders in 1999 will remain in effect. The 1999 recommendation approved granting a license for specific ministry to women serving on church-planting teams, pastoral teams or other specific ministries.

While this license grants all the privileges and responsibilities of an ordained person, this credential does not lead toward ordination for women. The 1999 policy states that men will serve as lead pastors in LMC congregations and any exceptions require the approval of the bishop board.—*from a release by Lancaster Mennonite Conference*

Executive Board gets news

Results from the Lancaster (Pa.) Mennonite Conference leaders' vote on ordination for women reached the Mennonite Church USA Executive Board while it was meeting in Meridian, Miss., Jan. 18-20 (see page 20).

Before gathering to pray for the members of Lancaster Conference in the room, three women who are waiting for ordination in Lancaster Conference were invited to share their responses.

"I really appreciate the support of the bishop board," said Addie Banks, from the King of Glory Tabernacle, Bronx, N.Y. "I and my sisters will continue in our pastoral ministries as called by God."

"I hope we can get really creative in walking on from here," said Jane Hooper Peifer, pastor at Blossom Hill Mennonite Church in Lancaster, and "find a third way."

Iris de León-Hartshorn, Lancaster, was in her first meeting as a new member of Mennonite Church USA's Executive Leadership; she is director of the intercultural relations office.

"I ask for prayers for all young women in seminary," said de León-Hartshorn. "Some are already leaving for other denominations."

Executive Board member Samuel Lopez is also a bishop in Lancaster Mennonite Conference.

"I feel the pain of the women," Lopez said, "and I know many bishops will be feeling the pain."

—*Everett J. Thomas*

Contrary to the either/or clarity that some people wished to bring to this discussion, the practice of Lancaster Mennonite Conference congregations is more accurately described as a continuum in which women are involved to lesser or greater degrees. —Board of Bishops

Mennonite Church USA Executive Board meets in Mississippi to show solidarity

Everett Thomas



Nelson Roth, pastor of the Gulfhaven Mennonite Church in Gulfport, Miss., tells the Executive Board that his congregation has received 25 new community members as a result of the recovery process after Hurricane Katrina. Other leaders from Gulf States Mennonite Conference and their spouses are behind Roth.

Mennonite Church USA Executive Board wanted to show solidarity with Mennonite victims of Hurricane Katrina by holding its meeting at the Jubilee Mennonite Church in Meridian, Miss., Jan. 18-20.

What board members learned from leaders of Gulf States Mennonite Conference was that the response from the broader Mennonite church did not demonstrate mutual aid.

“MDS [Mennonite Disaster Service] is a big piece of my heart,” said Jubilee’s co-pastor Duane Maust. “They and MCC [Mennonite Central Committee] are doing a lot of good along the coast. But [Mennonites in the Gulf States] slipped through the cracks.”

Approximately \$10 million was funneled through MDS for relief efforts in the stricken area. But only \$189,000 was given to help Mennonite Church USA members in the region.

“What shook me,” said Robert Zehr, Gulf States conference moderator, “was that my church would go help my Catholic neighbors and not me. ... You don’t have to be poor, and the poorest of the poor, to hurt.”

Jim Schrag, executive director for Mennonite Church USA, agreed that the church needs to develop new ways to respond to catastrophes besides what MDS can do.

“Somewhere it is going to happen again,” Schrag said, “and we are going to need to learn how to better channel mutual aid money to other members of the church.”

New church member profile released

Who Mennonite Church USA is today was a major feature of the Executive Board’s meeting. Socio-

logist Conrad Kanagy unveiled some of his findings from the 2006 church member profile (see page 8). Herald Press will release Kanagy’s book on the findings at the San José 2007 convention.

Some of Kanagy’s findings surprised Executive Board members. Drawing the most attention was the level of commitment to various parts of the church. When asked whether they had “very strong personal commitment” to congregations, area conferences, Mennonite Church USA and the broader Christian church, respondents placed “area conference” last. In addition to data about how all members answered the question, the survey also includes responses from new members, underrepresented racial/ethnic members and pastors (see box).

The plight of area conferences has been the focus of the Constituency Leaders Council’s work for the past year. A CLC task force was created to address issues surrounding area conference positioning in the new denomination (see “Leaders Look at Role of Area Conferences,” Nov. 7, 2006). But when the Executive Board received the CLC report, some members were unsure whether the task force adequately addressed the needs of area conferences.

“When I read the [CLC task force] report,” said Janeen Bertsche Johnson, “it didn’t go in the direction I thought it would. I expected more about the role of conferences, but it went more to the role of CLC.”

The board approved the task force report, but the vote was not unanimous.

“What this [report] is really doing is institutionalizing the CLC,” said Merrill Moyer, who did not vote to accept the report. “It doesn’t create better organization and communication with conferences.”

The CLC and Executive Board will meet together March 22-23 and review the report together.

Very strong personal commitment to:

Commitment to	2006	New Member	Racial/Ethnic	Pastor
Congregation	58	56	62	81
Area conference	12	9	20	37
Denomination	34	27	34	42
Broader church	30	40	35	41

Source: 2006 Mennonite Church USA member profile

Leaders in Gulf States Mennonite Conference say they 'fell through the cracks' after Hurricane Katrina; new profile of MC USA members released.

Antiracism

Work to dismantle racism in Mennonite Church USA was a third major theme of the board's meeting. Before the meeting, the board's antiracism team surveyed all denominational agencies about their efforts at antiracism and brought a compilation of the results. Much of the data focused on how many underrepresented racial/ethnic members were on boards and staff and how much each agency was spending on antiracism work.

"We're beginning a baseline here," said Susan Mark Landis, staff person for the antiracism team. "We've not asked for these things before."

Executive Board members were generally appreciative of the efforts across the system.

"We're very encouraged," said Addie Banks, a member of the antiracism team. "Awareness is increasing, and that is progress."

Carlos Romero, executive director for Mennonite Education Agency, agreed.

"If I have one critique [of antiracism work]," Romero said, "it is that we have not taken adequate time to stop and celebrate progress. We have come a long way since the early 1990s."

Mennonite Publishing Network reviewed

The board was also ready to celebrate good news from Mennonite Publishing Network. MPN board chair Phil Bontrager was present to participate in a special review process and noted that by July the remainder of MPN's \$5.1 million debt will be paid off. Proceeds from the 2006 sale of the Provident Bookstore chain are being used to repay loans made to MPN by Mennonite Church Canada and Mennonite Church USA five years ago.

"We need to celebrate [when we have] success in the church," said moderator-elect Sharon Waltner. "How wonderful things have turned out! You've brought a reason for celebrating."

Jim Harder, chair of the Executive Board's resources committee, attributed MPN's success to Bontrager's leadership.

"Phil is a hero for Mennonite Church USA," said Harder. "He was there when we needed him."

Bontrager listed five challenges for MPN as it moves into the future, including improving market share within Mennonite congregations in Canada and the United States.

"We don't do well in congregations that are *laissez faire* about choosing [curriculum] resources and let their Sunday school teachers choose their materials," Bontrager said. MPN does much better in congregations where leadership makes the decision about what resources to buy, he said.

In other matters, the Executive Board

- agreed to recommend to delegates at San José 2007 that Mennonite Church USA join Christian Churches Together, a coalition of Protestant, Catholic, Evangelical, Orthodox and Pentecostal churches in the United States;
- approved a statement of appreciation for Evangelical Lutheran Church of America. That part of the Lutheran church recently repudiated the condemnations of Anabaptists in the 16th-century Augsburg Confession (see "Lutherans Repudiate Condemnations," Dec. 5, 2006);
- approved continuing dialogue with the Church of God (Cleveland, Tenn.);
- approved an agreement with Mennonite Church Canada that includes commitment to hold a joint meeting in Canada (see "JEC Recommends 2008 Canada-U.S. Gathering," Dec. 5, 2006);
- established a balanced budget of \$2,082,009 for Executive Board's fiscal year 2007-2008;
- established a grievance policy for use by agencies and churchwide programs in dispute situations.—*Everett J. Thomas*

Diller nominated as MC USA moderator-elect for 2007-09

Mennonite Church USA Executive Board received Ed Diller as the Leadership Discernment Committee's nomination for the next moderator-elect for Mennonite Church USA at the board's Jan. 18-20 meeting in Meridian, Miss. The Delegate Assembly will be presented with the nomination at the San José 2007 convention in July.

With the delegates' affirmation, Diller will be elected to a four-year term beginning after the 2007 convention. He would spend the first two years as moderator-elect and chair of the Constituency Leaders Council, then succeed current moderator-elect Sharon Waltner, Parker, S.D., as moderator for Mennonite Church USA after Columbus 2009.

Roy Williams, Land O'Lakes, Fla., will continue as moderator for Mennonite Church USA through San José 2007. The moderator chairs the Mennonite Church USA Executive Board.

"This seemed like an interesting opportunity to serve Mennonite



Church USA, and life is about pursuing the interesting," Diller said.

"Transformation has been a terrific process. It's lifted our sights to where we need to be working and where we need to align our efforts. Now we need to keep moving forward."

Diller is an attorney in Cincinnati and a member of Cincinnati Mennonite Fellowship. He currently serves as vice chair of the Mennonite Education Agency board of directors.—*Marathana Prothro of Mennonite Church USA*

Mission agencies work at mutuality

China and India becoming more secular every day, speaker says.

Representatives from 11 mission agencies (see box) at Jan. 15-20 Council of International Anabaptist Ministries conference reviewed the benefits, as well as the risks, of forming partnerships in international missions. The CIM conference was held at the Gilmary Diocesan Center near Pittsburgh. This year's gathering featured Phill Butler and Leaderwell Pohsgnap.

Butler, former journalist with *ABC News* and founder of *Interchristo* and *Interdev*, heads *vision-Synergy*, an initiative focused on international network development for strategic ministry.

Pohsgnap, who lives in India, served as the former principal at Union Biblical Seminary in Pune, India, and as a missionary in Kenya for several years. He is a board member of World Vision International and the international director of the Global LEAD Alliance with Global Disciples.

Regional meetings provided places for administrative staff to talk about programming in specific regions: Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America and the Middle East.

CIM members elected Ron Flaming, director of international programs at Mennonite Central Committee (MCC), as chairperson for the next two years. Galen Burkholder, current chairperson and director of Global Disciples, moderated the meetings throughout the week.

At the Association of Anabaptist Missiologists banquet on Jan. 18, James Kraybill, senior executive with Mennonite Mission Network, presented two awards in recognition of the work of John A. and Alice Lapp and Fred and Grace Holland.

John A. Lapp served as executive director of MCC from 1985 to 1996. The Hollands served with Brethren in Christ World Missions in Zimbabwe and Zambia for 23 years, and Grace chairs the board for Brethren in Christ World Missions.

CIM emerged out of the Council of Mission Board Secretaries (COMBS), formed in 1958 to engage MCC with other mission boards, said Lapp. CIM represents all international Anabaptist agencies and MCC, and it includes overseas people from newly formed churches.

According to Lapp, the name changed from COMBS to CIM in the late 1970s in order to engage Anabaptist education institutions with international programs and because "international" is a more neutral term than "mission board."

Since its name change, CIM has held regular meetings with special themes, topics and speakers. Lapp said he views CIM as important in developing friendships and mutual respect among the agencies and to help the agencies understand each other's work as mutually enriching.

According to Lapp, COMBS provided the opportunity for agencies to talk with one another about "comity concerns." When COMBS existed, the locations in which the agencies worked remained separated. But when the agencies became more specialized, overlap in many overseas locations occurred. CIM, a fraternal organization, no longer recognizes comity, he said, because there is so much work that overlaps between agencies.

In one session, Butler shared about leading, following and partnering within today's social, technical and cultural contexts. He illustrated his points with stories and statistics from all over the world.

The following evening he shared the importance of "understanding creativity" as a leader in international ministry. Butler said leaders must have a "kingdom mentality," take responsibility for identifying the past, present and future of their agency—as well as continually working on internal and external alignment with constituencies.

In another session he described the "CNN syndrome," a belief that because people watch the world, they think they know and understand the world. He encouraged agencies to move beyond this limiting mindset.

Pohsgnap provided a perspective from Asia and reported on religious trends in many Asian countries. For example, most people are either extremely religious or secularist. Few are lukewarm, he said, with China and India becoming more secular each day.

"Money is a new god in India," he said.

Pohsgnap encouraged the audience to "strive for collaboration and partnership even if it's never achieved in its perfect form ... in partnership we have a common purpose and we will make sure every person in the world has the opportunity to hear Jesus Christ."—*Anna Groff*

"CNN syndrome" is a belief that because people watch the world, they think they ... understand the world.—Phill Butler

Mission and service agencies present

- Africa Inter-Mennonite Mission
- Brethren in Christ World Missions
- Mennonite Partners in China
- Eastern Mennonite Missions
- Global Disciples Network
- Mennonite Brethren Mission and Service International
- Mennonite Central Committee
- Mennonite Church Canada Witness
- Mennonite Mission Network
- Rosedale Mennonite Missions
- Virginia Mennonite Board of Missions

Darfur region war continues to escalate

Mennonite Central Committee spent \$122,700 for peacemaking in 2006.

Peacemakers are helping communities resolve differences and recover from violence in Sudan's Darfur region. But the devastating four-year-old war that has killed hundreds of thousands of civilians continues to escalate.

The situation in Darfur has deteriorated badly over the last year, says Joseph Akwoc, Darfur project officer for the Sudan Council of Churches. Both sides of the conflict are committing human rights violations, relief workers are being attacked and the Sudanese government is preventing the deployment of international peacekeepers.

Akwoc says many people are afraid that relief workers will soon need to be evacuated from Darfur and chaos will reign.

According to Akwoc, the only way to bring about peace in Darfur is to involve all the region's communities in a dialogue about coexistence.

"This is the key to all the solutions," he says. "Because the Darfurians, unless they ... express their opinion, their ideas about the solution of this problem, nothing good can be achieved."

To that end, the Sudan Council of Churches, a partner organization of Mennonite Central Committee (MCC), is organizing workshops on peacemaking to bring together communities that often view each other as enemies.

Akwoc recently led joint peacemaking workshops for five villages in southern Darfur. The villages included members of Arab and non-Arab ethnic groups that have been divided by the conflict between Sudan's predominantly Arab government and Darfur's rebels.

"All are playing a part, are part and parcel, of

the whole conflict, so we are training all of them," Akwoc says.

The groups met several times—first in the nearby town of Nyala and later in each participating village. During the sessions which lasted several days, participants bonded by attending workshops and eating and sleeping in the same facilities.

"It was very effective," Akwoc says. "They said, 'Thank you, SCC, because we were not able to come together (before). ... We did not know how to talk to one another.'"

MCC provided \$122,700 to a partner, the Darfur Emergency Response Organization, for peacemaking projects in Darfur last year. The Sudan Council of Churches works in Darfur with funding from Darfur Emergency Response Organization. The Sudan Council of Churches is also working with

Unless they express their opinion, their ideas about the solution of this problem, nothing good can be achieved.—Joseph Akwoc

school teachers, women's groups and community leaders in Darfur to identify and care for traumatized children.

One method, Akwoc says, is to give children materials to draw and paint about their experiences then use their artwork as a basis for conversation.

"We meant by doing that to create a kind of atmosphere where we can plant into their hearts the seeds of peace," Akwoc says.—*Tim Shenk of Mennonite Central Committee*

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CALENDAR

The Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society will hold **Pennsylvania German language classes** March 7-10. Classes will be held at The Society, 2215 Millstream Road, Lancaster, Pa. For more information or to register please contact the **Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society** at 717-393-9745 or at lmhs@lmhs.org.

Anabaptist Peace Center, Washington, DC, presents **Hymn Sing for Peace 2007**, Sat., April 14, 2 p.m. at the northeast corner of Lafayette Park (across from the White House). Come to sing and enjoy the cherry blossoms! Email keith@apcfdc.mennonite.net for more information.

Puerto Rico Reunion in **Archbold, Ohio**, on July 21-22 for all who have served in Puerto Rico and other interested people. For a registration form, send a stamped, self-addressed envelope to Juan and Odette Rolón, 107 Park St., Archbold, OH 43502-1339 or send a message to chpn@metalink.net.

Anniversary celebration for 20 years of ministry at **Raleigh (N.C.) Mennonite Church** and 10 years of ministry through Raleigh Mennonite Church's **Service Adventure Program**, March 17-18. All past members and participants are invited to celebrate these milestones. Contact Anne Cooper for more information at anne.r.cooper@gmail.com.

WORKERS

Adams, Sam, was licensed as pastor of The River Mennonite Church, a new church plant in Bend, Ore., on Dec. 10, 2006.

Gerlach, Jason, was ordained as youth pastor at Community Mennonite Church, Harrisonburg, Va., on Jan. 14.

Mann, Barbara, was licensed as hospice chaplain at Cedar Falls Mennonite Church, Cedar Falls, Iowa, on Dec. 17, 2006.

Ruffin, Jimmie, ended his term as pastor at Fairhaven Mennonite Church, Fort Wayne, Ind., on Dec. 31, 2006.

Wittrig, Jerry, ended his term as pastor at North Goshen Mennonite Church, Goshen, Ind., on Dec. 31, 2006.

BIRTHS & ADOPTIONS

Aeschliman, Jacob Allen, Jan. 9, to Kevin and Kristy Liechty Aeschliman, Wauseon, Ohio.

Boshart, Elizabeth Jean and Nathaniel Dewayne (twins), Nov. 11, 2006, to Chad and Kathy Constien Boshart, Lincoln, Neb. (see accompanying death notice).

Dawe, Abigail Felicity, Jan. 8, to Dustin and Twila Kanagy Dawe, Chambersburg, Pa.

Fickert, Lillian Nicole, Dec. 14, 2006, to Michael and Kelly McDonough Fickert, Souderton, Pa.

Hochstetler, Noah James, Dec. 23, 2006, to Darin and Kris Swantz Hochstetler, Tiffin, Iowa.

Hofer, Claire Isabel, Dec. 8, 2006, to Colin and Michelle Langeland Hofer, Freeman, S.D.

Koontz, Anne Marie, Jan. 1, to Nathan and Esther Kratzer Koontz, North Newton, Kan.

Leininger, Caden James, Jan. 15, to Nick and Ruby Short Leininger, Wauseon, Ohio.

Lobe, Elias Gregory, Dec. 25, 2006, to Greg and Tamara Awad Lobe, Kitchener, Ont.

Miller, Isabelle Elizabeth, Nov. 28, 2006, to Les and Marina Miller, North English, Iowa.

Miller, Mara Elizabeth, Nov. 27, 2006, to Jeff and Beth Kanagy Miller, Goshen, Ind.

Miller, Zandra Hope, Dec. 28, 2006, to Bryan and Jolene Steiner Miller, Apple Creek, Ohio.

Newswanger, Dillon Christopher, Nov. 2, 2006, to Jon and Shawn Brady Newswanger, Salem, Ore.

Nickell, Carly Fae, Sept. 9, 2006, to James and Candra Kinsinger Nickell, Wellman Iowa.

Older Adults Living with Spirit

Mennonite Association of Retired Persons is seeking new members to become part of the growing community of older adults wanting to remain connected and vital. MARP members currently number over 4,000 from 40+ states! The current MARP board members hail from Ohio, Kansas, Michigan, Illinois, Virginia, and Pennsylvania.



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RATES	LIFE	3 Years	1 Year
One Person	\$300	\$40	\$20
Two Persons (at one address)	\$400	\$60	\$30

MARP promises to donate to MCC ten percent of new membership fees received through April 2007.



Mennonite Association of Retired Persons

Helen L. Lapp, Executive Director: 771 Route 113, Souderton, PA 18964
(215/866) 721-7730 ~ marp-soop@juno.com ~ <http://marp.mennonite.net>

Richardson, William Lucas, Nov. 16, 2006, to Sam and Leah Steinmetz Richardson, Indianapolis, Ind.

Sachs, Isaac Emory, Dec. 31, 2006, to Greg and April Gonzol Sachs, Harrisonburg, Va.

Shenk, Jacob Howard, Dec. 28, 2006, to Jeff and Jen Helmuth Shenk, Elkhart, Ind.

Swartzentruber, Emmett Phillip, Jan. 12, to Andy and Jane Miller Swartzentruber, Kalona, Iowa.

Swinger, Brandon Zachary, Dec. 7, 2006, to Dennis Jr. and Arin Thompson Swinger, Lind, Wash.

Waegli, Samuel Frederick, Nov. 17, 2006, to Jay and Becky Schlegel Waegli, Lincoln, Neb.

Weaver, Nathan Jay, Jan. 3, to Michael and Leslie King Weaver, Valparaiso, Ind.

Wenger, Reuben John Ramer, Dec. 20, 2006, to Jonathan and Tonya Ramer Wenger, Madison, Wis.

Witmer, Ruben Thut, Dec. 29, 2006, to Douglas and Rebecca Thut Witmer, Philadelphia, Pa.

Yoder, Jayse Dalton, Dec. 27, 2006, to Brent and Tara Miller Yoder, Wellman, Iowa.

Yoder, Malia Ann, Nov. 1, 2006, to Marlow and Jenny Greiner Yoder, Kalona, Iowa.

Zerger, Garrison William, Dec. 20, 2006, to Todd and Krisha Keimig Zerger, Norton, Kan.

MARRIAGES

Conrad/Ritter: Camron Conrad, Wayland, Iowa, and Leah Ritter, Harrisonburg, Va., Dec. 30, 2006, at Park View Mennonite Church, Harrisonburg.

Coughlan/O'Connor: Aidan Coughlan, Middleton, Va., and Rochelle O'Connor, Salem, Ore., Dec. 30, 2006, at Salem Mennonite Church.

Dayton/Gahman: Jeremy Dayton, Harrisonburg, Va., and Andrea Gahman, Souderton, Pa., Dec. 16, 2006, at Park View Mennonite Church, Harrisonburg.

Hostetler/Stoltenberg: Aron Hostetler, Cairo, Neb., and Patricia Stoltenberg, Cairo, Dec. 30, 2006, at St. Mary's Cathedral, Grand Island, Neb.

Kaufman/Ulis: Ashley Kaufman, Strasburg, Pa., and Justin Ulis, New Philadelphia, Ohio, Dec. 9, 2006, at East Chestnut St. Mennonite Church, Lancaster, Pa.

Lehman/Yoder: Kara Lehman, Bridgewater, Va., and Eric Yoder, Harrisonburg, Va., Dec. 30, 2006, at Hopewell United Methodist Church, Downingtown, Pa.

Showalter/Souder: Clay Showalter, Linville, Va., and Joanna Souder, Harrisonburg, Va., Dec. 30, 2006, at Lindale Mennonite Church, Linville.

Stangland/Troyer: Erik Stangland, Brownstown, Ind., and Rachel Troyer, Albion, Ind., Dec. 23, 2006, at Topeka Mennonite Church, Topeka, Ind.

DEATHS

Billman, Howard R., 68, Pipersville, Pa., died Dec. 1, 2006. Spouse: Carol V. Koch Billman. Parents: Walter and Mabel Beegle Billman. Children: Paul E., Susan D., Karen B. Moose; seven grandchildren. Funeral: Dec. 8 at Blooming Glen Mennonite Church, Blooming Glen, Pa.

Boshart, Nathaniel Dewayne, infant, Lincoln, Neb., died Nov. 16, 2006, of premature birth. Parents: Chad and Kathy Constien Boshart. Funeral: Nov. 22 at Wood River Mennonite Church, Wood River, Neb.

Burkholder, Gladys Schertz, 91, Goshen, Ind., died Dec. 17, 2006. Spouse: J. Harold Burkholder (deceased). Parents: Edwin and Emma Schertz. Children: John; two grandchildren; four great-grandchildren. Funeral: Dec. 20 at College Mennonite Church, Goshen.

Buckwalter, J. Harold, 85, Manheim, Pa., died Nov. 13, 2006, of a stroke. Spouse: Helen F. Stauffer Buckwalter. Parents: John and Gertrude Groff Buckwalter. Children: Nancy L., Janet L. Lengacher, Allan; three grandchildren; two great-grandchildren. Funeral: Nov. 20 at Lititz Mennonite Church, Lititz, Pa.

Buckwalter, Lester R., 95, Millersburg, Pa., died Jan. 12. Spouse: Anna E. Book Buckwalter (deceased). Parents: Jason and Frances M. Hershey Buckwalter. Children: Kenneth B., Lois L. Burkholder, Doris A. Gochbauer, Eileen F. Stone, Darlene M. Sharp, Margaret Miller, Mary Hess; 19 grandchildren; 26 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Jan. 18 at Masonville Mennonite Church, Washington Boro, Pa.

Carr, Minnie Rhodes, 90, Harrisonburg, Va., died Nov. 22, 2006. Spouse: Raymond Carr Sr. (deceased). Parents: Emmer and Stella Heatwole Rhodes. Children: Leroy, Raymond Jr., Everette, Carolyn Huffman; 15 grandchildren; 22 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Nov. 25 at Harrisonburg Mennonite Church.

"For the Record" lists obituaries for Mennonite Church USA members who died during the past three months. Additional information about the deceased may be submitted to www.TheMennonite.org. We will forward all information to MennObits, the research Web site sponsored by the Historical Committee of Mennonite Church USA.



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“For the Record” lists obituaries for Mennonite Church USA members who died during the past three months. Additional information about the deceased may be submitted to *The Mennonite* at www.TheMennonite.org. We will forward all information to MennObits, the research Web site sponsored by the Historical Committee of Mennonite Church USA. To receive a paper copy of the obituary form, call 574-535-6052. To receive the obituary form as an MS Word document, email Editor@themenonite.org.

Derstine, David F., 82, Lansdale, Pa., died Dec. 15, 2006. Spouse: Maxine Troyer Derstine. Parents: David D. and Araminta Fuss Derstine. Children: Anne D. Ehst, Daryl, Barbara Weirich, John; 11 grandchildren; one great-grandchild. Funeral: Dec. 19 at Blooming Glen Mennonite Church, Blooming Glen, Pa.

Derstine, S. Esther Myers, 95, Doylestown, Pa., died Nov. 26, 2006. Spouse: Clarence F. Derstine (deceased). Parents: John C. and Bertha Godshalk Myers. Children: E. Lois Myers, Freida Myers, Gerald A.; two grandchildren. Funeral: Dec. 2 at Doylestown Mennonite Church.

Ediger, Albert M., 91, Buhler, Kan., died Jan. 12. Spouse: Lydia Schmidt Ediger. Parents: David J. and Annie Martens Ediger. Children: LaVon, Byron, Glen; six grandchildren; six great-grandchildren. Funeral: Jan. 15 at Hoffnungsau Mennonite Church, Inman, Kan.

Freed, Allen B., 80, Telford, Pa., died Jan. 11. Spouse: Hanna Landis Freed. Parents: Allen and Alverda Brunner Freed. Children: Shirley A. Geiser, Elaine Burns, Nancy E. Beachy, Robert; 13 grandchildren; nine great-grandchildren. Funeral: Jan. 15 at Franconia Mennonite Church, Franconia, Pa.

Frey, Martin, 93, Elmira, Ont., died Dec. 16, 2006. Spouse: Selina Frey (deceased). Parents: Christian and Lydia Brubacher Frey. Children: David, Seleda, Clare, Marv, Aden, Miriam, Barb Draper, Mary Frey Martin; 21 grandchildren; 27 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Dec. 19 at Floradale Mennonite Church, Floradale, Ont.

Frey, Mattie Helmuth, 82, Goshen, Ind., died Jan. 2. Spouse: Harvey S. Chupp (deceased). Parents: Isaac and Lydia Anne Miller Helmuth. Children: Edwin H., Richard Allen, Donald Ray, Dorothy Ellen Reed, Ruby Darlene Duvall, Caroline Elaine Crowl, Edna Marie Brennehan; 26 grandchildren; 49 great-grandchildren; one great-great-grandchild. Funeral: Jan. 6 at Clinton Frame Mennonite Church, Goshen.

Frounfelker, Grace Moyer, 86, Bluffton Ohio, died Dec. 9, 2006. Spouse: George Frounfelker (deceased). Parents: Tobias and Ella Moyer. Funeral: Jan. 6 at First Mennonite Church, Bluffton.

Gundy, Frances Ramseyer, 87, Goshen, Ind., died Dec. 28, 2006. Spouse: Donald G. Gundy (deceased). Parents: Alvin and Mary Ellen Schrock Ramseyer. Children: Larry, George, Ralph, Duane; 12 grandchildren; nine great-grandchildren. Memorial service: Jan. 14 at Eighth Street Mennonite Church, Goshen.

Haddle, Henry, 88, Columbiana, Ohio, died Dec. 28, 2006. Spouse: Genevieve Haddle. Parents: John and Matilda Haddle. Children: Cheryl Lee, Karen Craig, Helen Walker, Richard Craig, Robert Craig; 12 grandchildren, numerous great-grandchildren. Funeral: Jan. 1 at North Lima Mennonite Church, North Lima, Ohio.

Hieser, Marie Lucille, 89, Bloomington, Ill., died Nov. 26, 2006, of cancer. Spouse: Morris C. Hieser (deceased). Parents: I.S. and Hattie Metger Mishler. Children: Harlan, Gary, Hazel Lautzenheiser, Nancy Herron; six grandchildren; five great-grandchildren. Funeral: Dec. 1 at Mennonite Church of Normal, Normal, Ill.

Hershey, Mary Shelley, 95, Cochranville, Pa., died Dec. 25, 2006, of heart failure. Spouse: Leroy B. Hershey (deceased). Parents: E.P. and Mary Wert Shelley. Children: Deborah Waterson Schrock, Larry W; five grandchildren; 10 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Dec. 28 at Hershey Mennonite, Kinzers, Pa.

Hess, Evelyn L. Huber, 87, Lancaster, Pa., died Dec. 24, 2006. Spouse: Melvin E. Hess (deceased). Parents: Enos and Grace Leaman Huber. Children: Kenneth, Melvin, Donald, Richard; 10 grandchildren; one great-grandchild. Funeral: Dec. 28 at Landis Valley Mennonite Church, Lancaster.

Hoffstetter, Elsie M., 84, Columbus, Ohio, died Dec. 30, 2006. Spouse: Ward C. Hofstetter. Parents: John and Dawn Shaffter Smith. Children: John, Jim, Diane Phelps; three grandchildren; one great-grandchild. Funeral: Jan. 7 at Orrville Mennonite Church, Orrville, Ohio.

Hostetler, Clarence A., 98, Kalona, Iowa, died Dec. 21. Spouse: Edna Gascho Hostetler. Spouse: Mary Esh (deceased). Parents: Almon and Ida Troyer Hostetler. Children: Mary Yordy, John, Charlene Marner, Eugene Gascho, Gale Gascho; 15 grandchildren; 29 great-grandchildren; two great-great-grandchildren. Funeral: Dec. 28 at East Union Mennonite, Kalona.

Hostetler, Norma E., 84, West Liberty, Ohio, died Dec. 14, 2006. Parents: Stephen and Mamie Byler Hostetler. Funeral: Dec. 18 at Bethel Mennonite Church, West Liberty.

Jantz, Leota Kay, 62, Ritzville, Wash., died Dec. 7, 2006, of complications from pneumonia. Spouse: Gary Jantz. Parents: Charles and Juanita Clinesmith. Children: Dione, Jeffrey. Funeral: Dec. 13 at Menno Mennonite Church, Ritzville.

Kanagy, Regina Marner, 57, Centre Hall, Pa., died Jan. 6 of a bacterial infection. Spouse: Ronald Ross Kanagy. Parents: Vaughn and Thelma Smith Shoemaker. Children: Teretha, Vaughn; four grandchildren. Funeral: Jan. 13 at Christ Community College, State College, Pa.

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Lehman, Betty J. Rice, 85, Topeka, Ind., died Sept. 11, 2006. Spouse: LaVoid Lehman (deceased). Spouse: Myron Don Wiley (deceased). Parents: Charlie and Cora Belle Inles Rice. Children: Gerry Wiley, Marlene Gohl, Greg, Dexter; seven grandchildren; four great-grandchildren. Funeral: Sept. 19 at Topeka Mennonite Church.

Miller, Margaret, 83, Wellman, Iowa, died Jan. 4. Parents: George and Katie E. Miller. Funeral: Jan. 8 at Powell Funeral Home, Wellman.

Moyer, Alice Meyers, 81, Sellersville, Pa., died Dec. 5, 2006. Spouse: Lloyd Y. Moyer (deceased). Parents: Clayton and Mabel M. Meyers. Children: Judith, Daniel, Bradley, Stephen, Jennifer; five grandchildren; one great-grandchild. Funeral: Dec. 8 at Blooming Glen Mennonite Church, Blooming Glen, Pa.

Penner, Anna Lichti, 95, Beatrice, Neb., died Dec. 17, 2006. Spouse: Gerhard H. Penner (deceased). Parents: John and Mary Schroeder Lichti. Children: Judy White, Alan; four grandchildren; six great-grandchildren. Funeral: Dec. 20 at First Mennonite Church, Beatrice.

Reeser, L. Kenneth, 74, LeRoy, Ill., died Dec. 8, 2006. Spouse: Anna Beasley Reeser. Parents: Jake and Lorene Stahly Reeser. Children: Connie Hall, Rhonda Friedrich, Kevin; three grandchildren. Funeral: Dec. 12 in Normal, Ill.

Reimer, John A., 98, Chenoa, Ill., died Dec. 8, 2006. Spouse: Lorene Heiser Reimer. Parents: Johann and Katherine R. Reimer. Children: Robert, Jack, John, James, Linda Clemmons, Janice Kiper; 19 grandchildren; 28 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Dec 12 at Meadows Mennonite Church, Chenoa.

Schmidt, Melva Ries, 88, Marion, S.D., died Jan. 4. Spouse: Alfred G. Schmidt (deceased). Parents: Daniel and Emma Preheim Ries. Children: Marlys Sheriff, Erna, Merton, Kenny; eight grandchildren. Funeral: Jan. 8 at Salem-Zion Mennonite Church, Freeman, S.D.

Schroeder, Marlene, 79, Newton, Kan., died Jan. 15. Spouse: Lloyd Schroeder. Parents: Jacob and Justina Regier Schroeder. Children: Rhonda Ramsey, Jana, Ardie Goering; three grandchildren. Funeral: Jan. 20 at Bethel College Mennonite Church, North Newton, Kan.

Schulz, Carl G., 88, Swink, Colo., died Jan. 15. Spouse: Marie Schulz. Parents: Henry and Elsie Roeder Schulz. Children: Alvin, David, Jean Hadaway; seven grandchildren; six great-grandchildren. Funeral: Jan. 20 at Peacock-Larsen Funeral Home, La Junta, Colo.

Senner, Robert William, 94, Lawrence, Kan., died Dec. 17, 2006. Spouse: Rachel Epp Senner. Parents: William and Elizabeth Graber Senner. Children: John, Rachel VanWingen, Roberta Hofer, Stan; eight grandchildren. Funeral: Jan. 6 at Salem Mennonite, Freeman, S.D.

Styer, Abraham S., 84, Souderton, Pa., died Nov. 30, 2006. Spouse: Anna Marie Detweiler Styer (deceased). Parents: Alvin and Martha Swartley Styer. Children: Jack A., Barry L., A. Darlene Boyle, Donna L. Thomas; four grandchildren. Funeral: Dec. 6 Blooming Glen Mennonite Church, Blooming Glen, Pa.

Suter, Daniel B., 86, Harrisonburg, Va., died Dec. 24, 2006. Spouse: Grace Fisher Suter (deceased). Parents: J. Early and Pearl Blosser Suter. Children: Jan Showalter, David R., Mary Louise Tierney, Daniel Bernard; six grandchildren; five great-grandchildren. Funeral: Dec. 26 at Strite Auditorium, Virginia Mennonite Retirement Center, Harrisonburg.

Umble, Blanche Buckwalter, 87, Atglen, Pa., died Jan. 2 of coronary artery disease. Spouse: Willis D. Umble (deceased). Parents: Park and Malinda Smoker Buckwalter. Children: Robert, Susan Eby, Patricia Townsend; 15 grandchildren; 13 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Jan. 5 at Maple Grove Mennonite Church, Atglen.

Weaver, Velma B. Bomberger, 72, Manheim, Pa., died Jan. 3. Spouse: Paul M. Weaver. Parents: Homer and Naomi Bomberger. Children: Tina M. Wenger, Jeffery L., Jay Robert; 10 grandchildren; five great-grandchildren. Funeral: Jan. 8 at Erb Mennonite Church, Lititz, Pa.

Widmer, Gladys Catherine, 91, Goshen, Ind., died Dec. 3, 2006. Parents: Daniel and Mary Graber Widmer. Funeral: Dec. 7 at College Mennonite Church, Goshen.

Yoder, Marion Tex, 75, Kalona, Iowa, died Jan. 14. Spouse: Doris Reber Yoder. Parents: Willis G. and Elizabeth Ann Bender Yoder. Children: Marla, Mary, June, Julie, Morgan. Funeral: Jan. 18 at Lower Deer Creek Mennonite Church, Kalona.

Zehr, Anna I. Birky, 86, Fort Dodge, Iowa, died Nov. 7, 2006, of cancer. Spouse: Leland Zehr. Parents: Simon and Lena Greiser Birky. Children: Hal, Carolyn Uhlenbrock, Judy Heinze; 10 grandchildren; six great-grandchildren. Funeral: Nov. 10 at Evangelical Mennonite Church, Fort Dodge.

Zehr, Bertha M. Reedy, 100, Eureka, Ill., died Dec. 25, 2006. Spouse: Albert R. Zehr (deceased). Parents: Peter and Susan Christophel Reedy. Children: Norma Schrock, Carl, Loren, David; 18 grandchildren; 41 great-grandchildren; seven great-great-grandchildren. Funeral: Dec. 28 at East Bend Mennonite Church, Fisher, Ill.

Zoll, B. Beatrice, 74, Ephrata, Pa., died Dec. 30, 2006. Parents: Harvey and Lena Weber Zoll. Funeral: Jan. 3 at Groffdale Mennonite Church, Leola, Pa.

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Full-time pastoral team leader: Milverton Mennonite Fellowship is a rural congregation on the edge of Milverton, approximately 40 minutes west of Kitchener/Waterloo. We are a congregation of varying ages, with an average attendance of 120 people. Our congregation places high value on worship, being Spirit led, prayer, missions (local and foreign). We seek a pastor who has gifts in the areas of team leadership, preaching, developing lay ministry, mission/evangelism, church growth. Position is available early summer. Reply in confidence by March 1 to: Muriel Bechtel, Conference Minister, Mennonite Church Eastern Canada, 4489 King St. E., Kitchener, ON N2P 2G2.

Dean of students—Rosedale Bible College, an accredited two-year college in central Ohio operated by the Conservative Mennonite Conference (CMC), is seeking candidates for the position of dean of students, to begin in August 2007. The dean of students oversees the nonacademic elements of the student experience, including student activities, dorm life, community service, chapel programs, student nurture and spiritual development. The dean is also a member of the college's Administrative Council and will be expected to teach part-time. The ideal candidate will be a Christian who is in agreement with the CMC statements of faith, has proven leadership and ministry experience and possesses (or is willing to complete within two years) at least a master's degree in a field relevant to the college's curriculum. Inquiries, resumés and nominations should be sent by March 15 to: President Dan Ziegler, Rosedale Bible College, 2270 Rosedale Rd, Irwin, OH 43029 or to dziegler@rosedale.edu (740-857-1311).

Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary seeks four **event pastors**, two male and two female, for !Explore: A Theological Program for High School Youth. The position is full-time for one of two time periods: June 7-June 30 or July 6-July 28, with several additional days of preparation. Pastors accompany the high school participants for the 18-day group experience. Qualifications include experience as a congregational pastor and working with youth; ability to nurture youth through times of spiritual, intellectual and emotional growth; creativity in styles of worship, prayer and spiritual disciplines; knowledge of and commitment to the Anabaptist/Mennonite faith; and an undergraduate degree with additional seminary education preferred. Responsibilities include assisting in preparations, leading and directing worship and discussions, and being physically, emotionally and mentally present with youth. To apply, send resumé and letter of application by Feb. 28 to Andy Brubacher Kaethler, !Explore Director, AMBS, 3003 Benham Ave., Elkhart, IN 46517, andybk@ambs.edu. A complete job description is available on the AMBS Web site: www.ambs.edu/employment/event-pastor.

Hesston College seeks a **resident director** for men's residence hall. A member of the student life team, the resident director provides leadership and oversight for operation of Hesston College's primary men's dormitory, which houses up to 138 students. Resident director is a full-time position during the school year, with summers off. The successful candidate will be a role model and mentor for students; select, train and supervise student staff and assist in enforcement of campus lifestyle standards. Qualifications include strong Christian faith, commitment to the Mennonite church and to the mission of Hesston College, leadership ability, and listening and relational skills. Bachelor's degree or higher preferred. Apply by resumé to Lamar Roth, Dean of Students, Box 3000, Hesston, KS 67062; email lamarr@hesston.edu or call 620-327-8235 for information. Review of applicants will begin March 1 and continue until the position is filled. EOE.

Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary seeks a **registrar**, beginning May 1. The position is 80 percent FTE. This person will maintain all academic records for the seminary, monitor student progress, manage class schedules, provide statistical reports and assist students with registration. Qualifications include skills in administration, ability to work with people, familiarity with higher education systems, knowledge of relational database management, strong computer skills and a bachelor's degree (master's degree preferred). Women, members of racial and ethnic groups, and members of other underrepresented groups are encouraged to apply. To apply, send a letter of application, curriculum vitae and three references by Feb. 16 to Loren L. Johns, academic dean, AMBS, 3003 Benham Ave., Elkhart, IN 46517, or ljohns@ambs.edu. See the job description at www.ambs.edu/employment/registrar.

Grief, Spirituality and Sexuality: Life After Losing a Spouse, March 9-11, **Laurelville Mennonite Church Center**, Mt. Pleasant, Pa. A retreat for widowed people, their friends, caregivers, pastors and counselors. Rachel Nafziger Hartzler, pastor and author, keynote presenter. Sessions will focus on loss, personal and corporate lament, spirituality and sexuality. Contact: Erin Clymer, erin@laurelville.org, 800-839-1021, Laurelville.org.

Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary seeks a **full-time director of admissions**, beginning July 1 or when available. This person will develop, implement and monitor an overall strategy for recruitment of students for AMBS programs and oversee the director of financial aid. Qualifications include Christian commitment and passion for the mission of the Mennonite church, ability to communicate well and relate well to others, strong attention to details, proven supervisory and organizational skills, ability to think strategically and availability to travel 40-50 percent. Women and members of underrepresented groups are encouraged to apply. To apply, send a resumé, three references and letter of application by April 1, 2007, to Ron Ringenberg, vice president, AMBS, 3003 Benham Ave., Elkhart, IN 46517, or rringenb@ambs.edu. See the job description at www.ambs.edu/employment/director-admissions.

Employment opportunity for Christian couple: **Lakewood Retreat**, Brooksville, Fla., seeks **full-time camp administrator** to provide leadership for overall operation. The successful candidates will have the following skills: Christian, Mennonite or related Anabaptist camp administration experience desired, appreciation for outdoors, people skills, business and financial knowledge, marketing and public relations skills, computer skills. The job includes relating to sponsoring Mennonite churches and marketing the 114-acre camp/retreat with overnight facilities for families and special interest groups up to 250 people. Lakewood's purpose is "sharing God's love through service by providing a setting to experience Jesus Christ." Interested people may send their resumé to search committee chair, Arthur Wise, 5520 Antoinette St., Sarasota, FL 34232, email ArthurCWise@aol.com, phone 941-377-3104.

English conversation teachers needed. **Connexus**, a Korea Anabaptist Center ministry, needs university grads for 12-month terms. Variable start dates. Round-trip fare, salary, housing, training, etc. provided. Visit www.connexus.co.kr/english for more information.

Advertising space in *The Mennonite* is available to congregations, conferences, businesses and churchwide boards and agencies of Mennonite Church USA. Cost for one-time classified placement is \$1.20 per word, minimum of \$30. Display space is also available.

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MCC urgent opening: East Coast director, Akron, Pa. Needed May 1. Must possess strong organizational and leadership skills. Must embrace Anabaptist faith acceptable to the diverse MCC constituency; be able to build and coordinate a staff team of 30-40 individuals and relate to urban and suburban/rural constituency. Contact Becky Stahly, rsm@mcc.org, or call 717-859-1151 for job description and further information. Letter of interest and resumé should be sent by Feb. 15.

Laurelville Mennonite Church Center, Mt. Pleasant, Pa., is looking for a **program coordinator** to plan, market and run youth through adult programs with program director. Full-time plus some weekends. Successful candidate will be effective communicator, have eye for detail and be committed to sustainability, Christian living and community building. Information: Laurelville.org, erin@laurelville.org.

Farming with Values that Last 2007: Standing on Common Ground, Feb 23-25, **Laurelville Mennonite Church Center**, Mt. Pleasant, Pa. Join people of faith gathering to share experiences and celebrate the opportunities within community-based sustainable agriculture. Workshops, worship, commercial exhibits, music, storytelling. Frederick Kirschenmann, Distinguished Fellow of the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture at Iowa State University, keynote speaker. Workshops on dairy farming, new farming initiatives, farming practices and community. Contact: Erin Clymer, erin@laurelville.org, 800-839-1021, www.laurelville.org.

Goshen College is inviting applications for a **full-time tenure-track position** in the biology department. For more information and to apply, visit the specific position announcement on the Goshen College Web page www.goshen.edu/employment/.

Bethel College seeks an **associate director of development**. Responsibilities include identification and cultivation of donor prospects and assistance with the college's annual and capital funds. Qualifications: interpersonal, public presentation, organizational and technology skills; self-direction; willingness and ability to travel; familiarity with Bethel constituency; strong advocacy for Bethel College; experience in or closely related to development or advancement. Submit resumé and cover letter to Sondra Koontz, Vice President of Advancement, Bethel College, 300 E. 27th, North Newton, KS 67117 or email skoontz@bethelks.edu. Equal Opportunity, Affirmative Action Employer. Women and minorities are particularly encouraged to apply.

Executive director needed for **Black Rock Retreat**, Lancaster, Pa. Position provides organization-wide leadership for 60-room conference center, summer camp, outdoor education and elder hostel programs. Submit resumé to: Dan Hess, LMA Consulting Group, Fax 717-509-8879 or email info@LMAsystems.com.

Lititz Area Mennonite School, a K-8 Christian school in Lititz, Pa., serving 305 students, is looking for a **head administrator** for the 2007-2008 school year. The position requires great organizational and managerial skill as well as academic knowledge and a vision for educational excellence. Candidate must have a passion for Christian education and excellent communication and relational skills. Leadership in Christian school administration is a plus. Bachelor's degree in school administration or education required, preferably a master's degree. Send inquiry or resumé to: Matt Burkholder, Search Committee Coordinator, Lititz Area Mennonite School, 1050 East Newport Road, Lititz, PA 17543; 717-626-9551, email lmssoff@dejazzd.com.

Frazer (Pa.) Mennonite Church, located 25 miles west of Philadelphia, is seeking a **full-time pastor**. Frazer is a suburban congregation of 125 members that desires an experienced pastor who is gifted in preaching and teaching and who shares our vision for community outreach, peace and justice ministries and active lay leadership. Please visit frazermennonite.org or contact Larry Massanari at 610-524-8332 or lmassanari@aol.com.

Pastors' Family Weekend at Spruce Lake Retreat, March 16-18: Dr. Loren E. Swartzenruber, president of Eastern Mennonite University, and Jep Hostetler (who believes humor promotes health!) will lead this special retreat for pastors and their families. Call 800-822-7505. (Located in Pocono Mts., northeast Pennsylvania, www.sprucelake.org.)

Director for Mennonite Church USA Historical Committee: The Historical Committee of Mennonite Church USA is looking for a dynamic leader to serve as full-time director beginning summer 2007. The director should have a passion for history and Mennonite stories, be a good communicator, have the desire and energy to make friends and continue strong relationships among the constituents of the Historical Committee, while communicating its mission. The director's duties include overseeing the work of the archives of Mennonite Church USA in Goshen, Ind., and North Newton, Kan. Some travel is necessary. Director may work out of either Goshen or North Newton office. Contact Shelley Buller, Mennonite Church USA Leadership (ShelleyB@MennoniteUSA.org or 866-866-2872) for an application and job description. Mennonite Church USA Executive Leadership is an equal opportunity employer and encourages women and racial/ethnic people to apply for employment.

Eastern Mennonite School (K-12), located in the heart of the Shenandoah Valley in Harrisonburg, Va., is in the search process for two key positions: **high school teacher—U.S. history and government**—beginning in Fall 2007 and **director of development**. This person will nurture community relationships and provide supervisory leadership for the fund-raising, admissions, communications and marketing staff. Desirable candidates will value church relationships, are successful fund-raisers, enjoy youth, create positive first impressions, are energetic, optimistic, encouraging and articulate in spoken and written language. Candidates should be available to begin employment between January and July 2007. Successful candidates will share a passion for Anabaptist-Mennonite education in a Christ-centered academic environment. Please express interest to Paul Leaman, Principal, 801 Parkwood Drive, Harrisonburg, VA 22802; email leamanp@emhs.net; phone 540-432-4502; www.emhs.net. Eastern Mennonite School offers a competitive salary and benefits package commensurate with experience and is an equal opportunity employer.

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Things are getting complicated in this nest



Michael A. King is pastor of Spring Mount (Pa.) Mennonite Church, editor of *DreamSeeker* and dad bird to three birds who appear likely to flit in and out for a while.

Mourn we did, Joan and I, when Oldest, Middle and Youngest Birds left our nest, as I reported in my last column (Oct. 3, 2006). Integrity, however, forces this confession: It's good I wrote that column when I did; I couldn't write it now. Once we got used to the empty nest, we found out (don't read this, Departed Birds) we sometimes liked it. For the first time in 25 years the house was quiet, things stayed mostly clean and scheduling supper was a piece of cake: just consult with one other person or some nights even—amazing—with only yourself.

The bliss of the empty nest was highlighted over the holidays, when we lost it temporarily. The bird overseas couldn't come home, but the other birds, plus varieties of in-law birds, spent whole weeks here. The nest suddenly seemed loud, drowning in dirty dishes and full of birds who wanted worms—or at least Christmas ham.

Around this time Joan pointed out something I'd not focused on, between either mourning or at times sneakily (until now) liking the empty nest: Some birds fly back in. One has this odd notion she'll still live here during holidays and summers when not at college; another suspects she'll spend time here getting her head together after service abroad. And who knows what other dreams of the home nest are in those dear birds' brains. Bottom line: They'll be back. This is frightening.

It's also exciting. After they adjust to the first shock of being used again, our birds-back-in-nest muscles recover. Then we do love having the nest filled with their zest. As the birds report on their lives beyond the nest, we delight in the emerging clarity of their flight plans and the growing strength of their wings. Then when again they leave, the nest feels far too quiet.

Frightening, exciting and unpredictable. When are they really gone? This is getting complicated. And that's the complexity so many families now navigate. Much of this is not new; children have always left nests and at times returned. Yet the oft-remarked fuzziness emerging in our culture regarding when the birds are fully flown seems a newer phenomenon.

Repeatedly Joan and I hear from other Baby

Boomers that it wasn't like this for us. To oversimplify, we turned 18, our parents pushed us out of the nest into college or jobs, often not long after 21 we were married, our adult lives had started—and that, very nearly, was that.


Now you never know. They fly away. You think they're gone. Maybe they do, too. Then they want to save money, readjust a flight plan, let parents do wash and change oil a few more years or spend that last stretch at home before their age 30 wedding day. Back in they fly. For a week or two. A month or two. Or years.

Complicated. Bad? Good? Maybe partly bad. Is our culture losing ways of marking what it means

to grow up? I wondered this while preparing a sermon on 1 Samuel 2:26 and Luke 2:52. Using almost the same words, they report that Samuel or Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, in favor with God and people. The focus on growth caught my attention. Like Samuel or Jesus we are all created, if not as memorably, to grow. And one aspect of growth has traditionally been to grow up, to become an adult. But what does that look like today? When are we grown up? When can we claim our adult wisdom and stature? As birds flit in and out of nests often

throughout their 20s and later, many of us, whether children or parents, are not entirely sure.

But maybe this is partly a good development. I suspect that at least for now we need life in the nest to be flexible. Life spans are lengthening. I forget what 50 has become—the new 30? Or did I see somewhere that now it's the new 20? We aging ones are in our own time of trying to understand what it means to grow up when we may or may not retire at 65 and are told we can have a third or seventh or 15th career starting at 75. Or is it 85?

If even their parents and grandparents are rethinking what life phases they must navigate and how, 18- to 30-somethings deserve space to do the same. I look forward to our exploring together this strange new world of evolving life stages. Just release me to be sad when you leave and sad when you come back, and to laugh when you leave and to sweep you into my arms when you return—here in this unsettling and wonderful future we're creating together. 

**When are we grown up?
When can we claim our adult wisdom and stature?**

This article is available as an audio file at www.TheMennonite.org



RESOURCES

Jesus Today: A Spirituality of Radical Freedom by Albert Nolan (Orbis Books, 2006, \$16) focuses on Jesus' own spirituality and how that is relevant today. It looks at the signs of our times, Jesus' spirituality, personal transformation and oneness with God and all creation.

Mystical Journey: An Autobiography by William Johnston (Orbis Books, 2006, \$20) moves from a staunch Catholic upbringing in Belfast to the last 50 years in Tokyo, where Johnston, author of *Christian Zen*, *The Inner Eye of Love* and *Mystical Theology*, is director of Oriental Religions at Sophia University.

Anabaptist Songs in African Hearts: A Global Mennonite History: Africa, edited by John A. Lapp and C. Arnold Snyder (Good Books, 2006, \$11.95), is written by Africans, each a church leader or pastor, who write about the emergence and development of the Mennonite and Brethren in Christ churches in the countries from which they come.

Testing Faith and Tradition: A Global Mennonite History: Europe, edited by John A. Lapp and C. Arnold Snyder (Good Books, 2006, \$11.95), is written by European

Mennonite historians and church leaders, who recount the beginning of the Anabaptist movement during the 16th century and how frequent wars since then have strained Mennonite churches, especially when their governments have battled each other. Today the churches are declining in membership but are not without reinvigorated faith and hope.

Through Conflict to Reconciliation, edited by Augustine Meier and Martin Rovers (Novalis, 2006, \$39.95), provides expertise for front-line professionals working in the area of conflict resolution. The collection of essays makes the point that conflict resolution takes many shapes and involves different experiences and situations.

Living in New Ways (Mennonite Central Committee, 2006, \$6.99) is an 11-minute DVD that shows how MCC has brought hope in relief for victims of Hurricane Katrina, trauma healing and rebuilding in South India, HIV/AIDS education in Uganda and El Salvador and job training in Canada. Purchase at mccstore.org, borrow at mcc.org/catalog.

Mennonites in Texas: The Quiet in the Land by Laura L. Camden and Susan Gaetz

Duarte (Texas A&M University Press, 2006, \$35) is not exhaustive but a photographic tour of two Texas Mennonite communities: Beachy Amish in Lott and Mennonites in Seminole. It includes 48 duotone photos, plus a map, an index and a bibliography.

My Very First Christmas by Lois Rock, illustrated by Alex Ayliffe (Good Books, 2006, \$14.99), includes both a retelling of the traditional Christmas story and folk tales about the Christmas season, for the youngest of readers.

Kabbalah: A Brief Introduction for Christians by Tamar Frankiel (Jewish Lights, 2006, \$16.99) demystifies the intricate world of Kabbalah and shows that it is not only for Jewish scholars but for anyone interested in finding the connections between our everyday lives and the spiritual oneness of the universe.

A Field of Voices: Hymns for Worship by James E. Clemens and David Wright (Table Round Press, 2007, \$9.95) is available at www.tableroundpress.com. Mary Oyer writes, "The poetry and music work together to create a pace that allows congregations to think as well as feel while they sing."

**BLESSED ARE THE PEACEMAKERS
FOR THEY WILL BE CALLED
THE CHILDREN OF
GOD.** — MATTHEW 5:9

Notes for the journey...

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Everett J. Thomas

The middle church

Members of Mennonite Church USA connect with our denomination first through congregations and then through the area conferences of which their congregations are a part. But apparently we are not highly committed to area conferences. That is a major problem. Without strong links between congregations and denomination, Mennonite Church USA will have trouble functioning as well as it could. There will be even fewer bonds between congregations and, ultimately, between members across the church.

This problem is revealed in a new profile of Mennonite Church USA members (see page 8). The survey included questions about four elements of the church: congregation, area conference, denomination and the broader Christian church. When asked to which part of the church they were the most highly committed, respondents ranked area conferences last.

Mennonite Church USA leaders have been focused on the plight of area conferences for at least two years. Constituency Leaders Council created a task force last year to look at the role of area conferences in our new denomination. CLC and Executive Board will meet together in March

congregations in their conferences.

Beyond these two powers, conference activity is not uniform. We have 21 area conferences, and no two are alike. Each has its own culture and structure. But it is through these differences that much of our diversity is managed.

To look at it from another side: One of the ways we manage diversity in Mennonite Church USA is through the area conference structure. This happens in several ways.

First, within the area conference, any differences from congregation to congregation are worked out in ways that may be unique to that part of the church. For example, how Western District Conference works out the diversity among its member congregations may be different from how Virginia Mennonite Conference works out its differences.

Second, there is diversity from one conference to another within Mennonite Church USA. In some parts of the church, congregations are located in the same county or city but belong to different conferences. This is not the situation for all congregations, but in many major Mennonite population centers it is a way that diversity from congregation to congregation can be accommodated.

If area conferences—what might be called “the middle church”—carry such critical roles for denominational strength, why is our commitment to them so low?

Mennonite Church USA leaders are moving into what they call a “Six-Year Review” (a process mandated by the Transformation Team and membership guidelines of 2001). This review of our ecclesial structures may provide an opportunity to change some things to help area conferences. What those things are has not been determined, but the review may answer the question.

In the meantime, have a conversation with other members in your congregation and learn whether the findings also represent your congregation’s commitment to your area conference. If so, also consider what this low commitment to the middle part of our church will mean long-term for our unity and strength as a young denomination in this country.—*ejt*

If area conferences carry such critical roles for denominational strength, why is our commitment to them so low?

to review the findings and recommendations from the task force (see page 20).

When congregational members think about an area conference—if they consider it at all—they probably know of at least one function vested there: the pastor-placement system. This is a critical task because the choice of ministers usually determines how Anabaptist a congregation will be.

Another function vested in area conferences is the power to establish membership guidelines for congregations wanting to be a part of the denomination. This is also a critical task, especially for those areas of the church that want doctrinal or teaching positions to be consistent among the

This article is available as an audio file at www.TheMennonite.org

