

## A God 'bigger than our differences'

### Reflections by delegates at VMC Assembly, MC USA Convention and World Conference

By MARY JO LEHMAN

Planners for the Mennonite Church USA Convention in Kansas City carefully assigned delegates to tables of eight or nine persons to reflect both geographical and viewpoint diversity.

None of us at Table 22 knew each other beforehand, but the preliminary conversations around the table went at ping-pong speed as we quickly established commonalities and relationships.

The tables bonded well, which led to respectful, fruitful sharing. Our table, like many others, occasionally leaned in after the close of a business meeting to continue a discussion.

We took turns replenishing our table's chocolate, which we found so necessary to complete seven hours of table work each day. And when,

before a discussion leading to a particularly difficult vote, the delegates were invited to sing "Oh Lord, hear my prayer." Our table sang communally, "When we call, answer us."

Whereas before I might have been more sanguine regarding current events, it is now painful to contemplate that some at



Worship at Mennonite World Conference is led by an international team. Photo: Mary Jo Lehman

our table may no longer, in the near future, be part of the Mennonite Church USA body.

While Kansas City had felt very weighty, the Mennonite World Conference gathering several weeks later in Harrisburg, Pa., was a delicious mix of reveling in the fellowship of the worldwide Anabaptist body and celebrating our oneness through world music and worship.

Every day at meals and worship, we met Anabaptists from different countries. Reunions abounded: several in our 1970 Brussels/Zaire MCC unit caught up. We met the children of friends whose wedding shower we had planned. I witnessed a joyous reunion as a delegate pulled aside a woman passing by whom he recognized as one of the missionaries of his African youth. Once while on an afternoon excursion, a Canadian teenager whom I had last seen when she was six, recognized me!

At the Mennonite Church USA Convention, there were twice as many youth as adults. They seemed to me to be intent on bridging the differences roiling the adults. We were admonished at a combined worship session that a church needs to play together and that community exists because we love each other.

At Mennonite World Conference, the young Anabaptists reminded us that not only are the children listening, but they are often the ones who are trapped in the middle of church conflict. I see great hope as God works through these, our youth, whom we have raised, trained and who are now giving back to us a theology of one fellowship.



Mary Jo Lehman is a member of Chapel Hill Mennonite Fellowship, Chapel Hill, N.C.

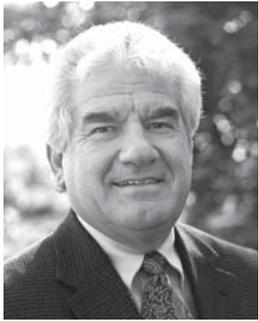


A quilt created by Mennonite World Conference participants on display.

Photo: Mary Jo Lehman

# Intrigued and challenged by our 'Jerusalem' events

By ELROY MILLER, CONFERENCE MODERATOR



I left both Virginia Mennonite Conference (VMC) Assembly and Mennonite Church USA Convention in Kansas City feeling deeply moved

by the worship experiences with emphasis on what it means to live like Jesus during challenging times.

I was intrigued by the notion that holiness and unity aren't just two dynamic concepts on a continuum, but rather "two sides of the same coin." Both must be experienced in context of the other to fully appreciate their meaning.

As moderator of VMC I asked the following questions: "What in the world can the church of Jesus Christ, including VMC, do in the face of the sea-change going on in our society and church?"

"How are we, traditionalists and progressives—for lack of better terms—going to "forebear" with each other? How can we restrain ourselves from the temptation of judging each other's motives and behavior over the society's changing legal definition of marriage?"

## Pastoral transitions

**Bill Eberly**, Eastern District, approved for licensing (LTO) as pastor of Powhatan Mennonite Church.

**Brad Kolb**, Northern District, approved for a change from licensed (LTO) to ordained (OAC), as associate pastor at Grace Mennonite Fellowship.

**Aaron Kauffman**, Administrative/Leadership Cluster, approved for a change from licensed for special ministry (LSM) to ordained (OSM), as president of Virginia Mennonite Missions.

**Mark Landis**, Northern District, approved for a change in status from active (OAC) to retired (ORE).

**Richard Keeler**, Harrisonburg District, approved for a change from ordained overseas (Trinidad & Tobago) to inactive (OIN).

**The outcome may not be what we personally would like to see, but I can't imagine just walking away and avoiding the hard work of being church to each other.**

"How can we live incarnationally when our differences go so deep?"

In the face of these differences, it seems to me we are foremost called to pray about the sea-change we are facing. This change will impact us all in the future one way or another.

The church is also called to discern how best to respond to the inevitable changes that are coming from society's changing definition of marriage. In his book *The Way of Transition* (2001, p.2), William Bridges writes that "most people don't resist change." We change jobs, adjust to a new boss, accommodate a new baby, lose a loved one or move from one country to another.

However, he notes, "we resist transition, the process of letting go of the way things used to be and then taking hold of the way they will subsequently become." In coming to terms with transition, we face the truth about our differences; we engage in prayerful conversation and discernment of scripture and culture, and come to some understanding about finding our way forward.

The outcome may not be what we personally would like to see, but I can't imagine just walking away and avoiding the hard work of being church to each other.

We do what the Apostle Paul admonishes us to do, amongst other things, in Romans 12:1-18—

- "Offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God" (v.1)
- Be transformed by the renewing of your mind" (v.2)
- "Test and approve what God's will is" (v.2)
- "Think of yourself with sober judgment" (v.3)
- "Be devoted to one another in brotherly (sisterly) love" (v.10)
- "Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer" (v.12)
- "Practice hospitality," (v.13)
- "Be willing to associate with people of low position," (v.16)
- "As far as it is possible, live at peace with everyone." (v.18)

## Financial report

Reporting: September 1, 2014 to August 31, 2015

<b>budget</b>	<b>\$246,000</b>
<b>expenses</b>	<b>\$251,562</b>
<b>income</b>	<b>\$243,594</b>
<b>net</b>	<b>(\$7,969)</b>

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Editor & Designer: Jon Trotter  
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# Convention: facilitating difficult table conversations

By LOREN SWARTZENDRUBER

With the exception of two Mennonite Church USA Conventions, I have been present as a pastor or as an employee of a denominational agency or institution for the last 40 years. Kansas City 2015 was the first time I served as a delegate, in this case appointed by Virginia Mennonite Conference.

I also served as a table group leader in the delegate sessions. Because of my role as a delegate and other responsibilities on behalf of EMU, I did not attend as many of the worship services as usual, nor did I attend any seminars.

As has been reported extensively by others, this was one of the more challenging delegate sessions in my memory, largely because of the two resolutions related to LGBT individuals and how the church will “welcome” them or not. My perspective as an institutional president was different from that of most other delegates in that I had in mind our students, faculty, and staff, the majority of whom are in favor of greater inclusion.

I was grateful for the orientation session provided for table group leaders. The process outlined for voting, a combination

of consensus testing and Robert’s Rules of Order, seemed straightforward and helpful, but the implementation of the process was not smooth and created considerable confusion. Because we have used the consensus testing process at EMU in recent years, it was not difficult for me to explain to our table group what was expected, but I doubt that was the case at many tables.

It was not surprising to me that Pink Mennos would be very visible and active at the convention and I was not surprised when a small group interrupted the delegate session. In my mind, the church has to find ways to invite folks to the table who want to participate. We have to find better ways to hear their stories.

The two primary resolutions relative to same-sex questions were viewed by many as contradictory and confusing, depending on the potential outcomes of the votes. I think we will continue to see that confusion play itself out going forward as congregations and conferences make decisions regarding future participation in the denomination. All sides will tend to point to one resolution or the other as the foundation for their positions. I was personally gratified that the “forbearance” resolution

passed, and did so by a substantial margin.

My table group was diverse but not extremely so, and it was a good group to lead. No one threatened to leave the table discussions. One delegate did not participate on the first afternoon and excused himself early from one session to attend a seminar.

I know from conversations that a few delegates at other tables participated only when the votes were taken on the controversial issues but chose not to be present for the conversations. I wish there was a way to prevent that from happening.

Some delegates were present and representing congregations that had already decided they would be leaving Mennonite Church USA. In my mind, that lacks integrity and should not have been the case. That said, I doubt those votes were material in the total scheme of things.

Overall, I enjoyed the Convention and my role in it, perhaps more than I might have expected.



Loren Swartzendruber is President of Eastern Mennonite University, Harrisonburg, Va.

## God met us at Table 80

By PHIL KNISS

The work we had to do weighed heavily on those of us around Table 80 at Mennonite Church USA Convention in Kansas City.

We were carefully prepared for our work of “spiritual discernment,” and were reminded often throughout the delegate assembly to work in a spirit of prayerful openness to each other and to the Holy Spirit. God met us there at Table 80.

We had deep differences between us, but the Spirit enabled us to listen and learn from each other as we honestly shared our hearts and our convictions. In the end, we did not come to agreement. But we did grow in our mutual understanding.

In between the hard conversations, we did other things together. We joined our voices in song. We prayed for each other.

We heard inspiring stories of the church engaged in God’s mission.

There was also pain, anxiety, and sometimes chaos in our gathered deliberations (especially when the entire delegate body tried to work collectively with one moderator doing her best to lead 80 delegates toward points of decision on contested issues).

Decisions did not always unfold in a neat and orderly manner. No doubt some things would be done differently, if given another chance.

But even in the chaos of the moment, I saw God present and at work. Prayer companions stayed at the perimeter of the hall throughout, praying for us all. They visibly attended to what was happening, and offered it to God in prayer. At some of the

**“I’m grateful to be part of a church that expects God to be present and at work, even in chaos...”**

more tense moments, I saw their hands raised in fervent prayer. And when some people were so pained by the proceedings that they had to walk away from the tables, I saw them being met by these praying companions and holding impromptu prayer circles at the edges of the hall.

I’m grateful to be part of a church that expects God to be present and at work, even in chaos, even when we fumble and don’t get everything right the first time (or the second, or third times). May we keep opening ourselves to the God of abundant grace.



Phil Kniss is lead pastor of Park View Mennonite Church, Harrisonburg, Va.



James and Aldine Musser with Bishop John Nyagwegwe and his son, Alberto Othuon. Courtesy of author

## Mennonite World Conference connects father and son

By ALDINE MUSSER

Alberto Othuon, a third generational Mennonite from Tanzania, currently worships at Stephens City Mennonite Church. The 16th Global Assembly of Anabaptists brought his father to Harrisburg, Pa., from Tanzania for international worship and fellowship with 7,500 Mennonites from 65 countries.

His father, Bishop John Nyagwegwe, has been walking with God (the Mennonite World Conference theme) for a long time. He serves in the town of Shirati, Rorya District of the North Mara region. He operates in 28 villages, in seven wards.

Lancaster County missionaries started the Mennonite Church in East Africa in Shirati in 1934. The church is more than 80 years old now and has more than 19,350 members. They currently have partnerships with Eastern Mennonite Missions, Mennonite Central Committee and MEDA, the Mennonite Economic Development Agency. Bishop John recognized that we do more together than any of us can do alone.

Bishop John Nyagwegwe preached using the text of John 17 at Stephens City Mennonite Church, where 25% of the congregation attended MWC and one member, Melody Musser, is currently living in Burundi. She led a workshop.

Nyagwegwe titled his sermon “Unity and Love,” emphasizing the unity that was visible through the love for our global sisters and brothers at MWC. The church’s unity is important to its mission. He said he wants and needs to be in relationship with Christians from other countries.

MWC was an experience where we felt “all are one” in Christ. We are part of the body of Jesus together. The “Fresh Eating” class prepared a lunch from the vegetables in the Musser garden for all to enjoy after the worship service.



Aldine Musser is co-pastor of Stephens City Mennonite Church, Stephens City, Va.

## A Kingdom large enough for all

By DAVID KING

I had the privilege of serving as a delegate from Virginia Conference at the Mennonite Church USA convention in Kansas City. I have been attending conventions for 22 years, but this was the first time I was a delegate. It was also probably the first time I engaged more in the adult convention than in the youth part.

While the work of the delegates was very taxing and at times frustrating, I experienced an expanded view and perspective on God’s work among his people. I can become insular and focused only on the silo around me including my congregation, employment and community. And too often in the silo, I only invite those with whom I am familiar or have the most in common.

Sitting with, listening to and praying for the diverse group of individuals people around my table opened my eyes in new ways to the rich and colorful diversity of members of Christ’s Kingdom here on earth.

In the moments of frustration that sometimes reached fever pitch in our efforts to mix church discernment and business, the richness of our table reminded me that God is bigger than our differences.

In reflecting on my table experience, I realized that we focused more on what we had in common than the areas of our differences.

It also caused me to realize that my focus should be on my relationship to Christ and those in my congregation and community. I should worry less about what people are doing in other contexts and areas of the country and world.

They are seeking to be followers of Christ in their own context, and I am doing the same in my context. They might be quite different. The kingdom of God is large enough for all of us.



David King is a member of Conference Council representing Northern District.

### VMC EVENTS

Credentialed leaders: a **VMC Pastoral Leadership Consultation** on “Same-Gender Attraction, Relationship, Lifestyle,” will be November 9-11 at Lindale Mennonite Church, Harrisonburg, Va. Cost is \$40. RSVP at (540) 434-9727 or [anieta.mccracken@virginiaconference.org](mailto:anieta.mccracken@virginiaconference.org)

The **VMC Ministry Retreat** will be February 26-28 at Williamsburg Christian Retreat Center. The speaker will be Dr. John Roth, professor of history at Goshen College. More details and a registration form will be forthcoming.

# Leaving room for the Holy Spirit in our deliberations

By AARON KAUFFMAN

It was a privilege to attend Kansas City 2015 and serve as a delegate for Virginia Mennonite Conference. Convention was an invigorating learning experience and a welcome opportunity to renew relationships and build new ones with people from across the church. Nearly all of my time and energy revolved around serving as a delegate, with little left for seminars or worship services. Nevertheless, I found the delegate experience to be worshipful work.

I deeply appreciated the facilitation of the delegate sessions. The discernment process for each resolution was prayerful, discussion around table groups was respectful, and leadership was patient and clear. And the results were not always predictable. For example, the resolution on Israel-Palestine was met with a few key objections during the open microphone time, enough to sway the delegates and table the resolution. Obviously, well-chosen comments both in table groups and from the microphones have the power to influence the delegate body.

Is that fancy politicking or the work of the Holy Spirit? It's not always easy to tell. But I agree with my colleague, Nelson Okanya, President of Eastern Mennonite Missions, who said to me, "You have to

**I wholeheartedly trust that over time, God's truth will win out.**

leave room for the Holy Spirit to show up in our deliberations."

The passage of the Membership Guidelines also came as a surprise. After the resolution on Forbearance passed, I sensed that a great deal was riding on the Membership Guidelines resolution, including the continued fellowship of many congregations, or even entire conferences and constituent groups. Earlier that day, Nicolas Angustia, a senior leader of Iglesia Menonita Hispana, had represented the views of the majority of Hispanic pastors, sharing their strong convictions regarding both Scripture's standards for sexuality and God's transforming grace. "We cannot be more tolerant than God," he said. Other delegates spoke with equal passion about their desire for full LGBT inclusion.

Despite this heightened tension at the microphones, I can attest to the deference and care with which we treated one another in my table group. That atmosphere allowed me to feel comfortable conveying both my sympathy for different perspectives, as well as my commitment to the church's traditional understanding of sexual ethics. At

both my table and at the microphones, however, so many questions were raised about the meaning of the Membership Guidelines resolution that I doubted it would pass. When they announced that 60% of the delegates had affirmed it, I wept with relief.

We are left with the careful and challenging work of interpreting and applying the resolutions on Forbearance and the Membership Guidelines. For at least the next four years, I believe the results have kept many of us at the table who affirm our historic understanding of sexuality. My prayer is that leaders who stand with our Confession on these matters can winsomely represent what we understand to be God's good news about sexuality, respectfully engage those who differ, and foster an atmosphere in which all of us in our sexual brokenness can experience God's compassion and redemption.

Some object that these two resolutions on sexuality stand in mutual contradiction. I agree that there is tension. The best I can do is point to Ervin Stutzman's own interpretation: "Taken together, the two resolutions articulate the polarities of freedom and mutual accountability which help us live out our deeply-held convictions in a spirit of humility. Forbearance need not mean that our previous theological agreements are nullified nor that we will bless everything that local congregations and conferences decide to do."

How this will play out remains uncertain. Yet I wholeheartedly trust that over time, God's truth will win out. To use the imagery Ervin Stutzman suggested during one delegate session, I believe God, like a masterful chess player, will be able to work out for ultimate good whatever blundering moves we might make as his people. In the meantime, my commitment as President of Virginia Mennonite Missions is to continue to devote the majority of our time, effort and attention to the generative task of making disciples in the way of Christ.



Aaron Kauffman is President of Virginia Mennonite Missions and a member of Zion Mennonite Church, Broadway, Va.



Delegates stand for an invocation by Elizabeth Albrecht Soto, Moderator of Mennonite Church USA. Photo by Aaron Kauffman

# What will the Anabaptist Mennonite witness in 2030 look like?

By JENNIFER DAVIS SENSENIG

What will the Anabaptist Mennonite witness in the United States look like in 15 years? This was a question that arrived unbidden as I considered the events of the Mennonite Church USA Convention in Kansas City this summer.

As a congregational delegate and table leader to the assembly, I prepared by meeting with the two other delegates from our congregation, Brian Martin Burkholder and Jennifer Murch. We read the resolutions, participated in a webinar led by the Executive Director of Mennonite Church USA Ervin Stutzman, and prayed.

A gift of the Holy Spirit in the time of preparation was that I was also helping a Ministry Inquiry Program student from Goshen College, Jenae Longenecker, become better acquainted with the broader church as well.

I was moved by the way in which the delegates were asked to work. There was a prayerful, focused intentionality about our discussions. Mennonite Church USA has truly begun to incorporate some of the dimensions of “worshipful work” in the way our delegates serve.

Our congregation, Community Mennonite Church, had discussed and endorsed

two of the resolutions prior to the assembly, so we were familiar with both the *Faithful Witness Amidst Endless War* and the Israel-Palestine resolutions. The resolutions related to same-gender relationships and sexual abuse prevention were also topics that our congregation had engaged intentionally in recent years—with a congregational discernment process and the Safe Church program.

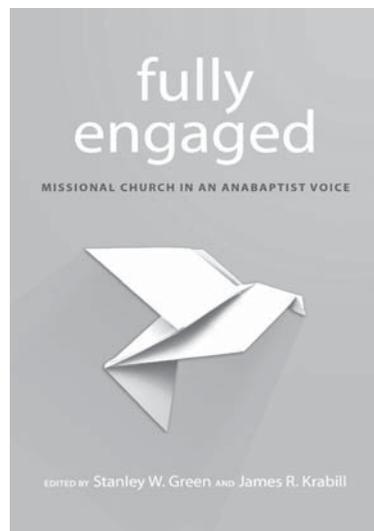
I found, however, that this primary delegate agenda was not necessarily familiar ground for all our MC USA congregations. I wondered how many delegates were engaging these issues for the first time in a focused way only because they were denominational resolutions.

In 2030, I don't think we will tell the story of the Anabaptist-Mennonite witness in North America in relationship to

the resolutions passed or tabled in 2015. My hope is that we will remember that in 2015 all our MC USA delegates received a copy of *Fully Engaged: Missional Church in an Anabaptist Voice* and began to re-engage the opportunities before us as congregations.

If you haven't read this book, order a copy and commit to reading it with at least one other person from your congregation. Each chapter is by a member of MC USA who is helping us live the gospel of Jesus Christ in our society.

We won't all do this in the same way, but we have the same inspiration, namely the Spirit of Jesus Christ our Lord, and can encourage one another in this calling.



Jennifer Davis Sensenig is pastor of Community Mennonite Church, Harrisonburg, Va.

## Meaningful conversations and connections

By PATSY SEITZ

As I had never been to a Mennonite Church USA Convention before, I was positively impacted by the strong sense of connection to the broader church at Kansas City. Serving as a delegate on behalf of Eastern Mennonite School, even as heavy as it was, allowed me to identify with my “siblings” all over the country.

I purposely sat at meal tables by myself and waited to see who would sit down. This arrangement allowed me to have meaningful conversations with a number of persons. One conversation in particular will remain with me. I ate with a man in his thirties who was from a North Carolina church. He had been drawn to an Anabaptist church because he desired to belong to a church that recognizes the call Jesus gives us to love

our enemies through peace and justice. I know that I will also have a stronger connection to other Mennonite institutions as I serve a particular one here in Virginia.

I also value having had a “front row seat” to the tumultuous week, in which the delegate assembly and many others wrestled with our church polity. Yes, it was heavy, and yes, it's abundantly clear that we are divided as a church not only in how we view same-sex attraction but also in how we should move forward. As the conversation and discernment continues, I am glad to have been part of this process.



Patsy Seitz is Director of Academics at Eastern Mennonite School, Harrisonburg, Va.



Alex Awad speaks during a delegate session in Kansas City. Photo by Aaron Kauffman

# More church records requested by the Conference Archives

By HAROLD HUBER

In my article in the last issue of *Pathways*, I listed nine categories of materials that the Conference Archives deems valuable for preservation. They are the most important and of the most value for historians. But there are eight more kinds of materials that we would also like:

- **Significant correspondence.** The congregational historian should decide which pieces are the most important. (If some are sensitive, the Archives will handle them with restrictions.)
- **Brochures and promotional materials,** including programs and special events, such as an ordination or building dedication.
- **Newspaper clippings of members' activities.** These can include obituaries of members, attenders and leaders. Please pencil the name of the newspaper and date of clipping in the margin.
- **Photographs.** Include documentation of who appears in them.
- **Records of anniversaries,** especially significant ones such as 50th, 100th, etc. Please include related programs and papers of historical value.
- **Legal papers,** contracts, real estate records and other official documents no longer needed in the church office.
- **An occasional CD/cassette** of a Sunday morning or a special service.
- **Records of non-church activities,** such as child care programs, food pantries, or others.

If you have any questions, please contact me at the Archives. My office hours are usually Mondays and Thursdays, 9 a.m. to noon and 1 to 3 p.m.

Call me at (540) 432-4169 or email at [harold.huber@virginiaconference.org](mailto:harold.huber@virginiaconference.org)



Harold Huber is the Virginia Mennonite Conference Archivist.

# EMU's Sustainable Food Initiative expands beyond borders

By DAVID BRENNAN

When Tyler Eshleman took the helm of Eastern Mennonite University's sputtering student-led Sustainable Food Initiative (SFI) last year, his goals were modest: to return the weed-choked campus gardens to their former glory.

Now Eshleman and six work-study students not only have the gardens brimming with produce, but are sharing the group's mission beyond campus borders.

One of SFI's key relationships has been with the Farm at Willow Run just minutes from campus. The farm is owned by the Virginia Mennonite Retirement Community (VMRC), and was once the property of former EMU president Myron Augsburg and his wife, Esther.

Tom Brenneman, the market garden coordinator at VMRC, has been working with VMRC's dining services director Tobbie Bow on a farm-to-table renaissance with the help of SFI students. Produce gathered by SFI workers from 1.5 acres of cultivated land is delivered directly to VMRC kitchens.

"Without the labor from SFI, this really couldn't have happened," said VMRC resident Cal Redekop, who often works side by side with the students. "The Farm at



As the early summer sun begins to rise over The Farm at Willow Run, students involved in Eastern Mennonite University's Sustainable Food Initiative club pick green beans. The farm is owned by Virginia Mennonite Retirement Community, and the vegetables help feed the residents.

Photo by Michael Sheeler/EMU

Willow Run really provides almost unlimited opportunity to bring different generations together around common concerns, like how we raise our food or how we might show better reverence toward the earth."

"The farm-to-table initiative makes good sense for VMRC," said Judith Trumbo, VMRC president and CEO. "As an advocate for aging well, VMRC continues to identify

ways to help people live healthier lifestyles. We are pleased to have the support of EMU students to make the farm a success."



David Brennan is a freelance writer, working with Eastern Mennonite University.

# Tethered to Jesus

By KENT KAUFFMAN

Highland Summer Camps are not the only youth camps held at Highland Retreat. In fact, we host nine week-long summer youth camps which are not run by Highland staff.

Camp Pearl, a ministry of New Life Russian Baptist Church, takes place at Highland twice each summer. Pastor Victor Visotsky had a vision for a camp that would reach beyond his own church family. He began advertising in stores with ties to ethnic Russians. Now, 85% of the children who attend Victor's camp have no affiliation with his church.

Chris Seiders runs a camp for children from regional Church of God congregations, which involves Christian teaching and worship, Bible quizzing, and a lot of fun. This year's theme was being resurrected with Christ, with balloons as a major object lesson.

Each year, the Mid-Atlantic Kachin Christian Fellowship draws families and children together from across the eastern



A highlight of this year's Church of God camp was a ride in a tethered hot air balloon. Courtesy of author

and central US. In addition to Christian discipleship, there is a strong cultural and language component: the children worship, speak, and study their native Kachin language. Kachin is the northernmost state in Myanmar (Burma), and hosts the largest Christian minority in the country.

We are delight that these camps and six others make good use of Highland's facilities each summer.



Kent Kauffman is Executive Director of Highland Retreat.



Lauren Morris, director of dining services at Mennowood, shows how to prepare some fresh, seasonal fruit during a Fun with Food cooking demonstration. Courtesy of author

## Feeling fresh in Mennowood's kitchen

By JON ALDRIDGE

One appliance in the kitchen at Mennowood Retirement Community gets a lot less use than the rest: the freezer. That's because Mennowood boasts a truly fresh, scratch kitchen.

A fresh, scratch kitchen means that all veggies come in fresh, all baked goods are made in house with flour and sugar, and all soups are made from scratch; no frozen lasagnas or desserts are allowed.

Mennowood's fresh kitchen is brain-child of Lauren Morris, director of dining services. Lauren has been cooking for over 30 years. She honed her culinary skills at Johnson & Wales University, where she received a Bachelor of Science in culinary arts and restaurant management. Lauren is also a ServSafe certified instructor, so all of our cooks received the most up-to-date training in food handling.

Lauren's passion for fresh food extends beyond the kitchen. Every month she hosts a "Fun with Food" fresh-cooking demonstration for our residents and families.

She also offers a seasonal farmer's market with fresh picked fruits and veggies available to residents. To involve Mennowood's other cooks, Lauren has "bake offs" where the cooks put the best dishes up to a panel of resident judges who award bragging rights to Mennowood's "top cook."

For our residents a homemade meal time is family time; at Mennowood we want our residents to have as much family time as possible!



Jon Aldridge is Director of Marketing and Admissions for Mennowood Retirement Community, Newport News, Va.



Eastern Mennonite School's faculty and staff for the 2015-2016 school year. Courtesy of author

## Eastern Mennonite School welcomes new faculty and staff

By MARY GOLDEN-HUGHES

Eastern Mennonite School is pleased to announce the following faculty and staff changes effective this academic school year:

**Choral Music:** Jared Stutzman, who previously taught strings and English 8 at EMS has been hired as Music Director. In this role Jared will direct Chamber Choir, Touring Choir, Senior Choir and Junior Choirs and will direct the high school orchestral program.

**Strings:** Maria Lorcias has been hired to teach 6th & 7th grade strings. An accomplished and acclaimed violinist, Maria comes to us most recently from the EMU Preparatory Music Program and the Shenandoah Valley Youth Orchestra, where she remains as Conductor.

**English 8:** Jodi Hertzler, EMS College & Career Counselor, has been hired to teach English 8 in addition to her counseling duties. Jodi will teach approximately 5/6th of English 8 with Director of Academics Patsy Seitz serving as a guest instructor for special units.

**Mathematics:** Laura Hershey has been hired to teach high school

mathematics. She formerly taught mathematics at Elkton Middle School and anticipates the opportunity to teach at the high school level.

**Admissions Counselor:** Marsha Thomas has been hired as K-12 Admissions Counselor. Marsha comes to EMS with an extensive sales, marketing, customer service and programming background, having worked most recently as a broker for Kline May Realty.

**Community Relations Coordinator:** Mary Kaye Slonaker has been hired part-time to plan K-12 special events and community outreach through the Advancement department. Mary Kaye has a degree in marketing and broad experience in sales and program management and implementation.

**Associate Director of Development:** Diana Berkshire will remain in this role in the Advancement department, but has chosen to reduce her hours to focus on Alumni Board support and outreach. She will work with Mary Kaye Slonaker on initiatives such as Homecoming and Centennial event planning.

**Dining Hall Manager:** Katrina Didot was hired last winter as our Dining Hall Manager. In her role, Katrina plans and organizes our school lunch program as well as catering for special events. As owner of A Bowl of Good restaurant, Katrina brings extensive experience to EMS as well as creative and innovative ideas for cuisine and building community.

**Front Office Manager:** Christine Fairfield was hired last spring as the Main Campus Front Office Manager. The first "face and voice" of the school, Christine is integral in parent and faculty communication and facilitating organizational needs.

Please join us in welcoming these employees to their new roles. More information about EMS is at [easternmennonite-school.org](http://easternmennonite-school.org) or call (540) 236-6000.



Mary Golden-Hughes is Director of Advancement for Eastern Mennonite School, Harrisonburg, Va.

# Waynesboro Mennonite Church's new visions for mission

By HOWARD MILLER

Carrie (not her real name) was incarcerated in Middle River jail when her daughter was tragically killed in an accident. She came to *Celebrate Recovery*, hosted at Waynesboro Mennonite Church (WMC), broken from years of self-indulgence and reckless living.

Over the next several months, she found support, strength and healing as she began a new walk in Christ. Carrie has been a growing Christian for several years now. Her life has been an encouragement to our church, speaking to the power of Christ's redemption for all of us.



## Celebrate Recovery

Responding to a need in the congregation, a small group began meeting in 2007 to pray and become familiar with *Celebrate Recovery* materials. This small beginning has led to a faithful meeting that worships, prays together and works through the 12 steps of Alcoholics Anonymous each week. We have now opened our lives to dozens of persons who have found a safe place to face their hurts, habits and hang-ups.

Carrie and others have helped us at WMC to gain a new vision for mission in our own community.

We seek to see the people who come to us through grace-filled eyes and are experiencing a growing understanding of

God's heart. We seek to lovingly invite everyone to receive deliverance, healing and salvation. This motivates us more and more, and this conviction is leading us to believe that the mission of God is the heart of our call as a church.

Over the past decade, we have been seeking a clearer vision based on the incarnation of Jesus. We gather to be sustained by worship, to nurture a warm, growing, daily spiritual walk together and to give ourselves for God's purposes of bringing healing and hope to those who are alienated from him.

The growing desire of Waynesboro Mennonite Church is to be an embodied, incarnational presence, knowing that we are in a community where many persons do not yet know the wonderful love of Jesus.

Our prayer is that God's love would help us to see beyond any arbitrary labels assigned to people, and instead to see each person through the eyes of God.

Every Sunday morning, we close our gathered time together with this benediction: "In the power of the Holy Spirit, we now go into the world, our mission field, to fulfill our calling as the people of God, the body of Christ."



Seth and Theresa Crissman are helping the Waynesboro church share the Good News with children through Kids Club. Courtesy photo



Joyce Crissman has recently begun serving at Waynesboro Mennonite Church as a ministry intern for one year, through the tranSend program of VMissions. Courtesy photo

## Launching a neighborhood Kids Club

As Waynesboro Mennonite Church is learning to be shaped by God's mission locally, another new ministry has emerged. Near end of August, WMC church members went door to door to give a personal invitation to a block party on their church property. Neighbors were invited together to share food and talk about the coming children's opportunity.

Children and parents living nearby are hearing the news; a weekly Kids Club will soon be hosted in their Waynesboro neighborhood.

Waynesboro's steps forward in mission are a partnership with Virginia Mennonite Missions in two new ways. Local mission workers Seth and Theresa Crissman are helping to equip WMC to share the Good News with children through Kids Club and Seth's sister, Joyce Crissman has begun serving WMC as a one year, ministry intern through VMissions local tranSend program. Joyce's particular focus is on children's ministry.

USA Ministries is a shared program of Virginia Mennonite Conference and VMissions, with Director Skip Tobin serving with both agencies.



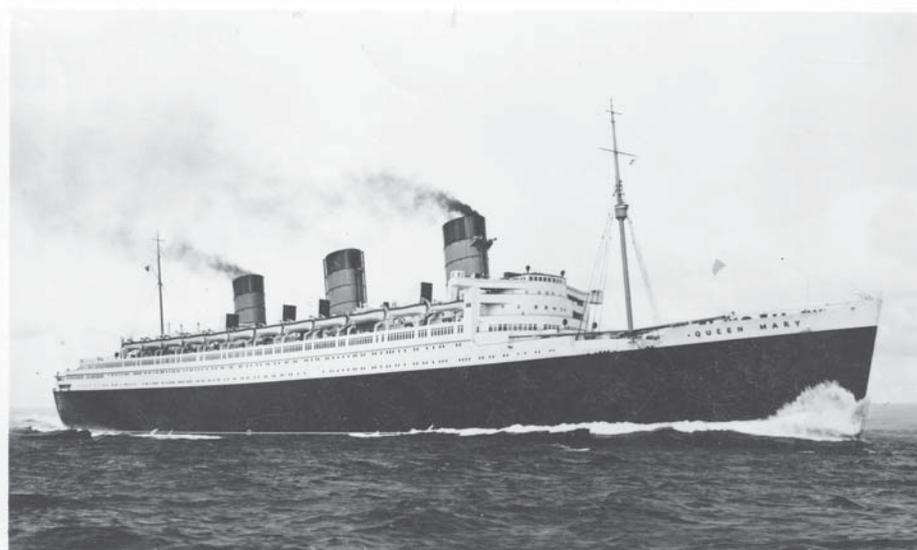
Howard Miller is pastor of Waynesboro Mennonite Church.

# Traveling to Mennonite World Conference, 1952 and today

By ELWOOD YODER

In the summer of 1952, Deacon John H. Alger and his wife Anna traveled from their farm in Broadway, Virginia, to Mennonite World Conference in Basel, Switzerland. They sailed to Europe on the Queen Mary, an ocean going ship with approximately six hundred passengers. The Algers traveled with Bishop Timothy Showalter and his wife Susie, also from Broadway, Va. The couples had joined a tour group led by Harold S. Bender, chairman of Mennonite World Conference. The Showalters and Algers paid \$225 each for the three week trip, which included the Conference, August 10-15, 1952.

About six hundred Mennonites attended the 1952 World Conference in Basel, a third who were delegates, with 55 delegates from the Mennonite Church in the United States. John H. Alger and Timothy Showalter were two of seven delegates representing Virginia Mennonite Conference, along with Truman H. Brunk, Joseph R. Driver, Chester K. Lehman, Daniel W. Lehman, and John R. Mumaw. Half of the attendees were from North America, and



CUNARD STEAMSHIP COMPANY. R.M.S. "QUEEN MARY."

A postcard from Timothy Showalter's collection in the Virginia Mennonite Conference Archives that shows the ship that he and other Mennonites sailed to Europe on in 1952. Courtesy of author

the other half from European countries. A few Mennonite missionaries from Africa, China, and India attended, but only two indigenous Mennonites from outside Europe and North America attended, representing Paraguay and Indonesia.

In 1952, there were less than thirty countries with a Mennonite congregation; in 2015 there are over sixty countries with Mennonite congregations. The main language at the 1952 Mennonite World Conference was German; the main languages of the 2015 Pennsylvania meeting were Spanish, English, and French. The only singing group at the 1952 World Conference from outside Europe was a college choir from Kansas, while at Pennsylvania 2015, two African choirs performed, and the musical ensemble that led worship on stage came from nine countries. Between 1952 and 2015, attendance at World Conference increased fourteen-fold, from around 600 to 8,454 attendees.

Traveling to Mennonite World Conference is more than a decision about whether to go by ship, plane, or car. It's a journey into the inspiring international mosaic of a growing global Anabaptist world community. It's traveling into a global communion that includes more Mennonites from Africa

than North America. While one Indonesian attended the 1952 Conference, an Indonesian woman sang with the 2015 praise team, and the next World Conference in six years will be held among Mennonite mega churches in Indonesia, with church buildings large enough to host thousands.

In contrast to the 1952 conference in Switzerland, the 2015 World Conference was an international event. This speaks to how God is working in the world today. The powerful message of Pastor Nzuzi Mukawa, from the Democratic Republic of Congo, and the equally thrilling English translation of his French sermon deeply moved the attendees. Speeches by young Anabaptists from the global south encouraged listeners to walk with God.

Future World Conferences will never be like the one the Algers and Showalters attended in 1952, though World Conference in twelve years will likely return to Switzerland, where the Anabaptist movement began nearly five hundred years ago. By God's help, it's a journey I want to make.



Debora Agustinus, from Indonesia, sang *O Prince of Peace*, in Javanese, from HWB #15, at Pennsylvania 2015. Photo by Elwood Yoder



Elwood Yoder teaches Bible and Social Studies at Eastern Mennonite School, Harrisonburg, Va.

# Engaging possibilities and walking together in love

By **CLYDE G. KRATZ**

Summer 2015 will be remembered for the gatherings of the body of Christ within our Anabaptist-Mennonite faith family. In mid-June Virginia Mennonite Conference held their annual Assembly on the theme “Built into a Spiritual House” (1 Peter 2) at Harrisonburg Mennonite Church.

The first week of July, Mennonite Church USA held their biennial Convention in Kansas City, Mo., with the theme “On the Way” (Luke 24). Mennonite World Conference met in Harrisburg, Pa., at the end of July with the theme “Walking with God.” The opening worship service focused on Luke 24.

These gatherings of Jesus followers are formative activities of the body of Christ, informed by scripture, guided by the Spirit, and embraced with fellowship.

Each one of us will have particular memories, stories, and renewed friendships that contribute to our being present and shaped some way by the experiences.

The experience that I will always remember coming out of MC USA Kansas City is the Thursday delegate sessions where many of us were uncertain of the outcomes associated with the key resolutions on “Forbearance” and “Membership.”

While there were various events that occurred on this day, the formative experience was at the delegate table. At each table a leader guided participants in a conversation about their hopes and concerns around each resolution.

I observed the tenderness of the participants as individuals expressed sadness and teary moments as stories were told of pain and anguish associated with needing to make a decision that holds implications

for their congregation and them. I observed openness to hear and be heard as people of sincere faith disclose their convictions.

I will note that, for me, the Spirit of God was present in distinctive ways that contributed to my own sense of peace about the outcomes.

Today as a leader seeking to discover how to live with integrity within the resolutions approved by the delegates of MC USA, I am learning about the way in which forbearance might be applied to individuals and congregations.

As we cautiously walk this pathway together, I am reminded that others have traveled similar paths in other generations through such issues as divorce and remarriage, women in ministry, and military participation and church membership. I am not walking this pathway alone.

In Virginia Mennonite Conference, the Conference Council (governing body) and the Faith and Life Commission (oversight leaders) will review the two key resolutions “On the Status of Membership Guidelines” and “Forbearance in the Midst of Difference.” It is my desire that each of these groups lay the foundation for the way in which we begin to navigate our future while living within the spirit of these two resolutions.

As the Executive Conference Minister, it is my desire to contribute to the overall health of Virginia Mennonite Conference and Mennonite Church USA. We live in a time of turbulence even as we give witness to our commitments and engage in possibilities. I value the statements that the MC USA and/or VMC have passed as their statements of belief.



**Clyde G. Kratz**  
Executive Conference Minister  
Virginia Mennonite Conference

It is with this in mind that I restate to you my commitment to the *Confession of Faith in Mennonite a Perspective* as the teaching position of MC USA, and subsequently Virginia Mennonite Conference, as well as my own personal comfort with the framework stated in it.

As we continue to navigate the challenges of same-gender attraction, relationships, and/or lifestyle issues, I want to remain a clear voice that upholds what we together have determined to be true.

In this sense, my advocacy remains for the health of the group which occurs best in face to face conversation with others, where the teaching position is acknowledged and not undermined. This contemporary challenge allows for us to engage in possibility, but with the knowledge that the body of Christ has not determined a new way on this matter.

As the Spirit of Christ guides us in these uncertain times, may we be driven to show love to all God’s people regardless of our differences.