

Michelle E. Armster
MCC CS Executive Director Report
February 2019

Relief, development and peace in the name of Christ is not the call of the uncertain, hesitant or fearful. Now, that is not to say that some of us have come to MCC a little uncertain, a little hesitant about the mission and what it entails or with a little fear of what God is getting us into. But I have come to believe and realize that God makes Christ real as we live out the mission of MCC.

Recently, I have been contemplating “what does it mean to bear witness?” When we say that we “walk along side of people and communities” are we bearing witness? How does “bearing witness” deepen/strengthen our call/witness?

There are many ways that MCC Central States bore our witness this past year, however I will focus on three.

Ana Alicia Hinojosa, Immigration Education Coordinator for MCC Central States, was able to bear witness with and for Oscar Sanchez and Irma Quiñones in Brownsville, Texas. Threatened with deportation and being separated from their three children, Ana was able to mobilize and rally pastors, such as our new board member Gracie Tijerina, and organizations such as the National Immigrant Justice Center, to advocate and fight for their right to stay. As a result, Irma, Oscar and their children are now citizens. Demonstrating to us that bearing witness can’t be done alone.

Second, was the opportunity to financially support Susan and Jim Jantzen’s return to Chad, Africa where they were MCC service workers over 30 years ago. Their term was cut short when MCC made them leave Chad due to rising violence. Soon after they left, most of the men in the local villages were killed in the violence. Susan and Jim approached MCC with their desire to return to Chad to reconnect with survivors of the war and give them photos and recordings of their deceased family members. The Jantzen’s were able to travel to Chad in January 2018. After returning to Kansas, Susan and Jim have spoken about what it meant for them to reconnect with people in Chad and what it meant for their families. Their journey towards healing and reconciliation, is a way of bearing witness that deepens and strengthens our faith and mission. It suggests that seeking mutually beneficial healing and reconciliation is how we bear witness.

Last, is bearing witness by providing space and opportunity for people to tell their stories. Since the murder of Michael “MJ” Sharp a UN worker who had previously served with MCC in DR Congo, we have been in contact with his parents- John and

Michelle in Hesston, Kansas. We assured them that when they were ready we would host a Lunch and Learn event at MCC in North Newton. Recently, John blessed us by sharing his story. The meeting room was packed with more than 100 people who heard the story through John's tears. Afterwards, a woman whose son was murdered in Wichita, twenty years ago, approached him and offered to be willing to be there for him and Michelle. She said, "I know it is not easy to lose a child- especially to murder. Twenty years later, the pain is still there, you just learn to live with it." Bearing witness includes providing brave and holy places for people to be human and connect.

There are many more examples, I assure you, of MCC Central States bearing witness to our mission.

As we enter our 100th anniversary, my prayer is that we honor, lament and celebrate because relief, development and peace, in the name of Christ is not for the faint of heart.

Asante Sana,
Michelle



Resources for faith formation and leadership development

Academic programs

AMBS serves the church as a learning community with an Anabaptist vision, educating followers of Jesus Christ to be leaders for God's reconciling mission in the world. Our programs integrate academics, spiritual formation and practice. Join us — whether in person or at a distance — and deepen your understanding of Scripture, faith and Anabaptist theology!

- **Study at a distance**
 - **Master of Divinity Connect** (online and hybrid courses)
 - **Master of Arts: Theology and Global Anabaptism** (fully online)
 - **Graduate Certificate in Theological Studies** (fully or partially online; customizable)
- **Study on campus**
 - **Master of Divinity Campus**
 - **Master of Arts: Theology and Peace Studies**
 - **Master of Arts in Christian Formation**
 - **Graduate Certificate in Theological Studies**
ambs.edu/academics
- **Financial aid:** AMBS offers generous need-based financial aid, grants and scholarships to help make your education affordable. ambs.edu/financialaid
- **Want to explore seminary study?** Take an online, campus or hybrid class, even if you're not yet admitted to AMBS, and your first class is 50 percent off! Check out our upcoming offerings: ambs.edu/onecourse
- **Experience AMBS:** Visit our campus to learn more about all that AMBS has to offer. ambs.edu/visit

Lifelong learning

AMBS's Church Leadership Center offers various non-degree options for you to continue your education and strengthen your leadership skills:

- **Online short courses (2019–20):** Join the forum discussions in these six-week online courses to deepen your understanding of Anabaptist history, thought and witness. No grades, no papers!
 - Exploring Anabaptist History and Theology: Sept. 11 – Oct. 22, 2019
 - Exploring Peace and Justice in the Bible: Oct. 23 – Dec. 10, 2019
 - Understanding Anabaptist Approaches to Scripture: What's Different and Why?: Feb. 12 – March 24, 2020

AMBS statistics

- In 2018–19, AMBS's graduate student body included 71 U.S. students, six Canadian students and 21 international students.
- The 2019 graduating class comprised 13 men and seven women from nine countries on five continents — including **Suzanne Engle Ford** (Fort Collins). Nine of the graduates completed at least part of their seminary studies at a distance.
- In 2018–19, 11 men and six women from five states and one province were enrolled in the nondegree Journey program.

We thank God for your support and ask for your prayers as we prepare leaders for the church!

- Transforming Congregational Conflict and Communication: April 15 – May 26, 2020
\$995 total for all four courses: register by Aug. 16!
ambs.edu/shortcourses
- **Shaping Faith in a Digital Culture** (March 2–5): A joint conference of **Deep Faith** and **Pastors and Leaders 2020** on recognizing the gospel in our digitally saturated culture
- **Leadership Clinics** (March 2, 2020)
ambs.edu/pastorsandleaders
- **Journey: A Missional Leadership Development Program:** This nondegree program offers mentor-mentee partnerships, distance-learning opportunities and community support. Open to all who are exploring ministry! ambs.edu/journey
- **Host a speaker!** Bible teacher **Bryan Moyer Suderman**, MTS, leads "**Reading the Bible with Jesus**" workshops in English or Spanish. **David B. Miller**, DMin, speaks on holistic witness, healthy boundaries and more. ambs.edu/workshops
- **Spiritual Direction Seminars:** Cultivate your ministry of spiritual direction through this supervised program. ambs.edu/seminars
- **!Explore: A Theological Program for High School Youth:** Students can explore ministry and develop their leadership gifts. ambs.edu/explore

Embracing new horizons

Everence 2019 report

Mountain States Mennonite Conference
Annual Assembly
August 2-4, 2019

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!

– 2 Corinthians 5:17

Strong church partnerships remain vital to Everence

Everence® works closely with churches and their members, as we have since our organization started as Mennonite Mutual Aid in 1945.

Our goal is to help our brothers and sisters in Christ “build up the common life” through decisions about their money and other resources.

We value these connections and look forward to many more years of focusing on the best interests of your church members – helping them create and implement plans tailored to their needs and goals to share with others.

As we have for nearly 75 years, we will continue to serve the faith community as partners in stewardship throughout 2019 and beyond.

Everence church loans make a difference



5540 WEST 25TH STREET, CICERO, IL.

Sonido de Alabanza, a suburban Chicago church, financed a major construction project with help from an Everence church loan.

The church needed a new building for worship and related activities after using a former American Legion hall for many years.

Everence has years of experience in helping churches find solutions to fit their needs, with customized loan options.

Our annuity program funds our church loans. The annuity program aligns the priorities of like-minded believers from the Everence community who want to help churches and their ministries grow through their investments.

Learn more at everence.com/church-loans.

Pastoral Financial Assistance Program expanding with new Lilly grant

Lilly Endowment approved Everence in November 2018 for another \$1 million grant to help improve the financial lives of pastors.

Everence was one of the first grant recipients in 2015 as part of Lilly's National Initiative to Address Economic Challenges Facing Pastoral Leaders.

The new grant allows Everence to expand our Pastoral Financial Assistance Program. Assistance now is available for credentialed and active pastors from



other denominations and church networks that share our Anabaptist faith tradition and/or values – in addition to Mennonite Church USA and Conservative Mennonite Conference.

The program includes:

- Direct grants to help pastors with debt burdens.
- Financial education events for pastors and spouses.
- Subsidies toward the cost of a first-year Everence comprehensive financial plan.

See everence.com/pastor-financial-planning for more details.

MyNeighbor card users are supporting nonprofits

The MyNeighbor credit card from Everence generated more than \$300,000 for nearly 400 nonprofits in 2018.

The MyNeighbor MasterCard is available for personal or business use. Everence donates 1.5 percent of each transaction total to the charity the cardholder chooses from thousands of possibilities, including churches.

“The MyNeighbor card gives people a simple and effective way to support the charities dear to their hearts,” said Kent Hartzler, President and CEO of Everence Federal Credit Union.

Scholarship amounts increasing for 2019-2020 academic year

Everence college scholarships will be worth more for the 2019-2020 school year.

Regional scholarships will be for \$1,000, compared with the previous level of \$750. The top three national recipients will receive scholarships totaling \$2,000 or \$3,000. More information is available at everence.com/scholarships.

“Everence believes it’s important to support students as they work toward their college degrees,” said Kenda Mishler, Member Benefits Manager. “We want to reward young women and men committed to improving their communities and the world beyond their communities.”

Everence joins Philadelphia financial community

A new office in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania – opening in spring 2019 – is the first in an Everence initiative to serve individuals, nonprofits, churches and small businesses in larger cities.

The office is in an Esperanza Health Center building on Allegheny Avenue – a former bank building that’s been part of the Philadelphia landscape since 1925.

Everence services there include banking, financial coaching, insurance and other resources for individuals and families.



Safe Church Grant is available from Everence

Everence supports churches in protecting children and others with the Safe Church Grant.

One-time grants of up to \$350 can reimburse churches for program expenses within the last 12 months to protect children, teens or others from sexual, physical, emotional/psychological or other forms of abuse.

Grants can be used to develop policies, train people or implement programs. Churches with an Everence stewardship advocate may apply for a Safe Church Grant. Visit everence.com/safe-church-grant for more information.





2019 Annual Report to Conference

Mennonite Men is the men's organization of Mennonite Church USA and Mennonite Church Canada. Our mission: *Engaging men to grow, give and serve as followers of Jesus*. Our two programs, *JoinHands* and *JoinMen*, served this mission in several ways in the last year.

JoinHands: Grants for New Churches

Through your donations to JoinHands, Mennonite Men has granted over 2 million dollars to assist new congregations to acquire their first church building.



The most recent grants went to two church projects in Africa. One went to this church in Dodoma, Tanzania (pictured above). This building will serve as a meeting house for a congregation and peace center in the Tanzania Mennonite Church. The second grant went to a church with Africa Inter-Mennonite Mission in Cradock, South Africa for a meeting house and community center.

Eden Life Church in Kansas City, Missouri (pictured below), a member of South Central Conference will



receive the next grant. This new church plant is serving immigrant populations from Ethiopia and South Sudan.

These congregations are scheduled to receive grants:

- A Congolese Mennonite church in Oregon.
- A Hispanic Mennonite church in Pennsylvania.
- A Haitian Mennonite church in Florida.

The church is growing rapidly in these racial-ethnic congregations. We join God's work among them and share with these immigrant populations.

JoinMen: Retreats and Resources for Men

Responding to men behaving badly in our culture, we focused this year's retreats on healthy masculinity. This is also the subject of our new book, *Peaceful at Heart: Embracing Healthy Masculinity*. This in-depth exploration of masculinity is written from an Anabaptist perspective and published by Institute of Mennonite Studies and Wipf & Stock.

Another new development was the first annual immersion experience. During a week-long wilderness adventure in Taos, New Mexico men explored ways to live as followers of Jesus in a world where our lifestyles impact people and the planet.



Join Us: Individual and Congregational Support

Mennonite Men needs \$150,000 to fund grants for the church building projects described above and share with these growing immigrant congregations. Please consider how you and your congregations can partner with us.

To learn more, support our work, download resources, or schedule a retreat, visit MennoniteMen.org.

Together in Christ,
Steve Thomas, U.S. Coordinator

REPORT TO MOUNTAIN STATES MENNONITE CONFERENCE

Summer 2019

At MennoMedia we publish highly readable, thoughtful curricula and books that call readers follow Jesus in word and deed. We publish resources about Christian discipleship, spirituality, reconciliation, justice, and theology from an Anabaptist perspective, and our products reach a broad spectrum of evangelical, mainline, and Anabaptist readers. Our MennoMedia curricula, periodicals, and hymnals reach congregations that share these same affinities, cultivating passion for faith formation and an active life of discipleship rooted in trusting God and following Jesus. Our Herald Press books support the spiritual life of Christians and inform thoughtful faith and action.

NEW RESOURCES FOR THE ENTIRE CHURCH, FROM HERALD PRESS



Fire by Night

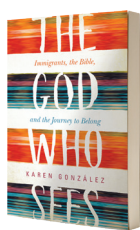
Finding God in the Pages of the Old Testament

by Melissa Florer-Bixler

What do we do with the Old Testament? How do we read words written in a world so different from ours, stories so ruthless and so filled with grace? In *Fire by Night*, Melissa Florer-Bixler invites readers to marvel at the Old Testament. The Hebrew Scripture

introduces us to a God who is unwieldy and uncontrollable, common and extraordinary, and who brings both life and death.

Paperback. \$16.99 USD



The God Who Sees

Immigrants, the Bible, and the Journey to Belong

by Karen González

Karen González weaves the sweeping epic of immigrants and refugees in Scripture into her family's story of fleeing instability in Guatemala. As witnesses to God's power, Abraham, Hagar, Joseph, and Ruth become grafted onto God's family

tree. Grounded in her own experience and work with World Relief, González empowers readers to welcome immigrants and speak out about an outdated immigration system.

Paperback. \$16.99 USD



By the Way

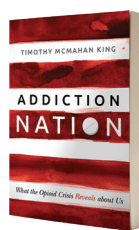
Getting Serious about Following Jesus

by Derek Vreeland

What if asking Jesus into our hearts is not the heart of the gospel? What if salvation looks different than we thought? In *By the Way*, pastor Derek Vreeland reframes what it means to follow Jesus. Reclaiming discipleship as the heart of the Christian faith

means seeing anew the gospel, the cross, the resurrection, transformation, and the community of faith.

Paperback. \$16.99 USD



Addiction Nation

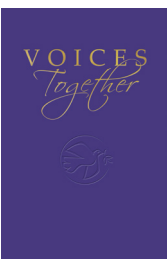
What the Opioid Crisis Reveals about Us

by Timothy McMahan King

When a near-fatal illness led to a narcotics prescription, Timothy McMahan King ended up where millions of others have: addicted. King eventually learned to manage pain without opioids but not before asking questions about the spiritual and

moral nature of addiction and the paths toward healing and recovery. *Addiction Nation* investigates the ways that addiction robs us of freedom and holds us back from being fully human.

Paperback. \$17.99 USD



VOICES TOGETHER

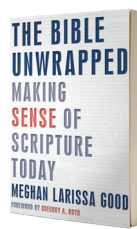
Voices Together is a new worship and song collection for the Mennonite church to deepen our lives of faith. This robust collection will be available for congregations in Fall 2020. Representing a variety of musical styles and patterns of worship, *Voices Together* contains many new songs, alongside old favorites, as well as comprehensive indexes by topic, tune, title,

Scripture, first line, and more. *Voices Together* will be available in the following editions:

- Pew edition (\$23.99)
- Large print edition (\$43.99)
- Accompaniment edition (\$89.99)
- Worship leader edition (\$19.99)
- Projection edition (\$499.99)
- App edition

Prices listed in USD.

More information at VoicesTogetherHymnal.org



JOIN THE #COMMONREAD

MennoMedia and Mennonite Church USA are partnering to encourage all Mennonites to read *The Bible Unwrapped: Making Sense of Scripture Today*, by Meghan Larissa Good, between July 2019 and May 2020.

Many people have questions about Scripture they are too afraid to ask. Drawing from the best of contemporary biblical scholarship and the ancient well of Christian tradition, Good provides answers to those questions—demonstrating why the Bible matters and how it can be understood by people today. *The Bible Unwrapped* invites readers to faithful reading, communal discernment, and deep and transformative wonder about Scripture.

Go to www.MennoMedia.org for a free study guide, blog posts by other readers, and more. Order through MennoMedia and mention **#CommonRead** to receive a special discount.

Be local. Be global. Be the Gospel.



Incredibly, God chooses to make the progress of the mission for which Jesus came, closely tied to human engagement! Thank

you so much for your partnership and the support you've given to advance God's mission in the world. Through your kind sharing, and the generous support of congregations within your conference, we were

able to extend the reach of God's healing and hope in so many places around the globe. Thank you for being such an important part of our common witness to the good news of Jesus in word and deed. Our

hearts are filled with gratitude and hope by your sharing in the gospel. Blessings!

Stanley W. Green

Stanley W. Green
Executive Director

Mountain States Conference + Mennonite Mission Network

Worker support around the world



Sent 2019 conference

Beloved Community Mennonite Church hosted Sent 2019, Mennonite Mission Network's annual event for church planters and other missional entrepreneurs. Eighty persons attended from across Mennonite Church USA, representing eleven area conferences. More than twenty persons attended from MSMC.

Worker support

Bruce and Nancy Frey Yoder—Teach and support local ministry within Burkina Faso and West Africa. In Ougadougou, they work with the Mennonite university student hostel and church leaders.

- » Carlsbad Mennonite Church

Service participants



Christian Service sites

Mennonite Voluntary Service unit

- » Alamosa, Colorado
- Service Adventure units**
- » Albuquerque, New Mexico
- » Colorado Springs, Colorado

SOOP sites

- » Carlsbad, New Mexico
- » Rocky Mountain Mennonite Camp, Divide, Colorado

SOOP

Gerald Hunsberger, Glendale, Arizona

Robert King, Washington, Iowa, and Meridian, Mississippi

Youth Venture

Izzy Mijares, serving in Ecuador

Congregational giving to Mission Network



During Mission Network's fiscal year, Aug. 1, 2017, through July 31, 2018, 10 of 18 Mountain States Conference congregations (56 percent) gave **\$36,557**, or an average of **\$3,656**. **Thank you!**

Prayer partners



14 people have committed to pray daily for Mission Network ministries.



As you have blessed many others through mission—international ministry support, Christian service programs, and church planting initiatives—may you receive the blessings of God.

Joseph Sawatzky
Joseph Sawatzky
Church Relations Representative

Thank you for your continued partnership in God's mission!

www.MennoniteMission.net Toll-free: 1-866-866-2872