



ZING!

Christmas Eve at Mountain Community Mennonite Church

By Mary Gardner



Congregants enjoying a warm sunny Christmas Eve day

December 24, 2020 turned into a beautiful, almost warm sunny day. The congregation at Mountain Community Mennonite Church met to celebrate their annual Christmas Eve service. This year it

was different. Congregants met at noon, in the sunshine with cookies, wassail and masks. It was the first time they had met together in person since the last outdoor service in

October. This was special. It was celebrating Christ's birth!

There was a short sermon, hymn singing and a celebration of love with Pastor Paul Johnson and his wife Mary. This would be the last in-person sermon from Pastor Johnson who is retiring January 24. The nine years of Paul Johnson's service was celebrated with a going away gift and words of gratitude. [Read more](#) about Pastor Paul Johnson's Retirement on Zing page 5.

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Emmanuel's New Pastor

Pastor David Darling accepted Emmanuel Mennonite Church's call to begin serving as their pastor. His first Sunday is January 10th, when he will receive a warm welcome, but a full installation service will occur when it is safer to do so in person. Watch for an article in February's Zing about who Pastor Dave is and how his life journey led him to Emmanuel Mennonite.

“With Care...”

Letting Go of Control

Jill Schmidt is a member of the conference [Dialogue Resource Team](#) and is active in First Mennonite Church.



I have always loved New Year’s Day. There is something about a fresh start that feels so inspiring and hopeful. Hope – I have heard this mentioned repeatedly as this new year rolls in. Hope for a return to normalcy. Hope for change and human connection again. On January 1, I watched a Today Show re-cap of 2020 including a clip from early January 2020 when everyone was excited for a new year, ready to take it on with excitement. Then 2020 actually happened. This highlighted the reality that we simply cannot predict our future. Try as we might, we are not fully in control of what the world sends our way. So where is the hope in that? The new year can still be a time to reset our outlook on life.

In the past 10 months, you have likely had fewer in-person communications with folks than ever before in your lives. Everyone’s life is different and depending on your job, you may have encountered more angry people than ever before. Or, you may have been able to take a long pause from office politics and water cooler gossip. You might have been in a home all alone which may have been very peaceful or very lonely. You may have been in a home with family members and learned that after hour 2,007 of being together...always together...you found things to get mad about that you never had considered before. It is safe to say that you felt more angst in 2020 than the average year, and this can wreak havoc on whatever large or small interactions you were presented.

We do not know what 2021 will bring or any year after that. But one thing that I have learned over the past few months, is that the only thing I have control over is my reaction to whatever comes my way. And in a way, that can be freeing to accept. It frees you from trying to control your world and allows you to focus on what you can control, and that is the way you respond to the world. I am not suggesting that you don’t speak up for justice. You can and should. I am suggesting that you can spend more energy on how you spread a kind and loving message to the world and to those you interact with.

Take a moment to consider just one aspect of life you have been trying to control that you can let go of and one way you can communicate more lovingly where you have not done so well.

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MSMC Dialogue Resource Team

With the relocation this past Fall of Duncan Smith and Charlene Epp, our Conference Dialogue Resource Team (DRT) has space for one or two additional team members. If you have training and experience in mediation and facilitation services, feel free to contact me to learn more about the work of the DRT and to explore our process for confirming new team members.

Alice M. Price, DRT Liaison, aliceprice1950@gmail.com; 719-580-7383

mountainstatesmc.org/conference-life/dialogue-resource-team/

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Conference Minister's Corner

Of Hot Pockets, Pandemics, and Pastoring from Scratch

By Amy Zimbelman, Conference Minister



In the humor section of a recent Beloved Community church newsletter, it read: "I miss precedented times."

I laughed and said to myself, *Wow, amen to that.*

In my first couple months as Conference Minister, I've been focused on immersing myself in the lives of our churches in these unfortunately unprecedented times of global pandemic. I've been meeting with pastors and passion ministry directors, virtually visiting congregations, piecing together how the past and present are interwoven to shape who we are as a people. And while most pastors would say they're some version of exhausted/frustrated/over it when it comes to the pandemic, I am amazed by the creativity and resiliency of both our pastors and congregations, even as we deeply miss precedented times.

It feels a bit like our churches are channeling a *More With Less* mentality right now. We are, collectively, starting from scratch. None of us has done life or church in a global pandemic before. We can't look to precedent; we can't get comfortable in a rut and do things in ways that are easy or convenient—we can't warm up the proverbial liturgical Hot Pocket from last year and call it dinner...or Communion. We're beginning again with the basic elements of our communities: prayer, fellowship, preaching, music, service, celebration, grief, and we're doing *more* with *less*. Less energy, less sense of security, less actual human interaction . . . now ready? Be the church anyway.



And we're doing it. I'm seeing how resourceful and nimble our churches are and it gives me great hope. Take the passing of the peace. Our usual peace-passing activities (i.e., handshake, hug) could pass pathogens which would bring anything but peace to the receiver's life. And so, our churches have gotten creative. At Boulder Mennonite, congregants are invited to unmute their microphones, look into the camera, and speak a word of peace or offer a gesture of hands extended. Beth-El and Mountain Community both have time after the service set aside for congregants to chat and get caught up virtually. My favorite idea? First Mennonite has a pause in their service to allow members watching in their homes to text greetings to one another. [Click here to read the full article.](#)

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Installation by Zoom, all are invited! Conference Minister Amy Zimbelman's installation is scheduled for Saturday, January 16, 9:30 am. Zoom details: Meeting ID: 895 5563 8166, Passcode: 450135, and [direct link](#). Please join us!

Get to Know MSMC Leadership Board

Meet Conference Moderator Ryan Koch: A game-playing, peacemaking, self-described nerd

By Amy Zimbelman



Anyone who knows Ryan Koch knows this: the man enjoys having fun. With a ready laugh, Ryan understands the value of play: playing board games, card games, playing with his family (especially his 4-year-old daughter), playing with his husky, and watching his Ohio sports teams play.

“I think life is meant to be enjoyed; it’s not something you’re supposed to take too seriously,” Ryan says. “There’s a constant push in our culture to always be productive and efficient. But that’s not what gaming is about. It doesn’t matter who you are [when you’re gaming]—there’s no pressure to be anyone other than yourself.”

But don’t misunderstand him; he doesn’t only find joy in gaming. In fact, one of his greatest joys is the serious study of peace theology, which drew his interest in 2011 while at Malone University, a Quaker school.

“Three weeks into my college career, 9/11 happened. The experience of watching the Quakers respond so differently to the aftermath of 9/11 got me interested in peace theology,” he explains. “I saw firsthand the Quaker understanding of nonviolence and loving enemies and reconciliation.”

That interest in peace theology was one thing that led him to study at Duke Divinity and attend Chapel Hill Mennonite Fellowship, where he discerned a call to become a Mennonite pastor. From there, he pastored at Peace Mennonite Church in Dallas for nine years. He served as a leader in other ways as well in Dallas, including as board president of the Dallas Peace and Justice Center and co-teacher of a class on peace theology at Southern Methodist University. [Click here](#) to learn more about Ryan, including his hopes for Mountain States Mennonite Conference in 2021 and beyond.

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Alamosa MVS Recruiting New Volunteers

The MVS unit in Alamosa is recruiting new volunteers to begin 1-2 years of full-time service in summer 2021. With hopes of being past most COVID-19 challenges by summer, we are eager to identify folks who may be interested in joining our community in a wide variety of initiatives such as food security, community health, environmental education and restoration, sustainable agriculture, local food systems, immigrant rights, and restorative justice. Recruitment is underway now for the next cycle of MVS placements, which begin on or around August 1st (though some applicants without other commitments may start earlier in the summer). While many volunteers are recent college grads, we also welcome and have accommodations for individuals and couples looking for a meaningful post-grad school, sabbatical, or retirement opportunity. To see openings currently posted for the Alamosa area, visit the online placement database:

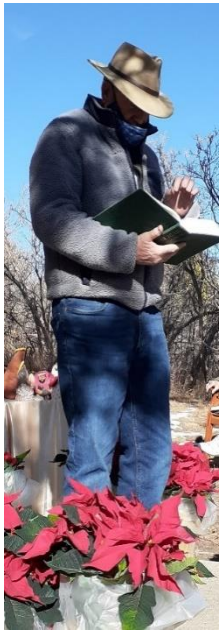
www.mennonitemission.net/serve/placements. On the far left, select Colorado from the State/Province list and Mennonite Voluntary Service from the Program list. Please share this information within your congregations, extended families and any friends who may be interested or know someone with possible interest in any of these options. Also feel free to send folks my way for more information, or to make a personal connection with someone who has recently filled one of these placements.

Alice M. Price, MVS Alamosa Local Program Coordinator, aliceprice1950@gmail.com; 719-580-7383

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Mountain Community Mennonite Church Celebrates Retirement of Pastor Paul Johnson

By Mary Gardner, active in Mountain Community Mennonite Church



Paul Johnson, Pastor at MCMC for the last nine years, is retiring January 24, 2021. His service began as Transitional Pastor. A year and a half later the church congregation called him to be their half-time pastor. Paul has enjoyed his years as Pastor for this small Mennonite Church, located in Palmer Lake Colorado. Prior to becoming a Pastor, he had a long career in education.

When Paul decided to make a career path into ministry and was led to MCMC he, along with church leaders, made a commitment that the church was not “owned” by the people, but they were co-owners of God’s house. The church building was viewed as a place to share God’s work and love.

Many partnerships and outreach programs grew from there. Palmer Lake’s art group began having quarterly art shows which were free and open to the community. The church sanctuary was transformed into an exhibit space with a glorious demonstration of beauty of God’s creations. Partnerships with support networks in the area were also made. Tri-Lakes Cares provided food and housing assistance along with job counseling. Silver Key Senior Nutrition Services served hot nutritious meals to 40-60 seniors five days a week at the church. Paul was instrumental in partnering with an existing ministry called Mountain Community Senior Transportation and Handyman Services. This outreach provided home repairs for seniors living at home along with transportation services to appointments, social events and shopping.

Supporting and resourcing church plants and other congregations has been one of Paul’s passions. During his tenure, Temple Alyiah Messianic Church began worshipping every Saturday Sabbath in the sanctuary. Another church, Cathedral Rock, held youth church Wednesday evenings and recently, MCMC has temporarily welcomed an interdenominational church while they build their new building.

Paul has been deeply involved with Mennonite Disaster Service for many years. MCMC members responded to the Black Forrest fire and Paul helped designate the church as an official Disaster Red Cross Shelter. Most recently he has been involved with the development of a faith initiative referred to as [Prayerstreaming](#) along with Boulder Mennonite. Two airstream trailers have been retrofitted to be spiritual support refuge centers. These trailers are taken to disaster areas to help support victims during very difficult times.

Along with other members of MCMC Paul has helped partner with a Black church in Aurora, Mean Streets Ministries. This church ministers to those experiencing homelessness and others living on the streets. “MCMC chooses to support those most in need as Christ has called us to do”. Members of MCMC help serve food, provide clothing and minister to these folks once a month or as needed.

Although Paul will be retiring, he and his wife Mary, with the support of the church, plan to continue attending Mountain Community. They consider this their home church and want to go forward with the outreach programs that are dear to their hearts.

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News from:

ROCKY MOUNTAIN MENNONITE CAMP



709 County Road 62
Divide, CO 80814

719-687-9506
info@rmmc.org
www.rmmc.org

NEW! COLORADO ROOTS WINTER WEEKEND, JAN. 22-23

With instructors and students from across the state, county (even the oceans), Colorado Roots Music Camp (a program/ministry of Rocky Mountain Mennonite Camp) is offering an option for gathering musicians together online. Instructors from last summer's Camp I, which was cancelled, have been invited to offer 75-minute online classes. Students register online and pick the class or classes of their choosing for \$30 each and receive a Zoom link to attend. A closing instructor concert of individual performances will "gather" everyone together to conclude the weekend.



The impacts of the coronavirus pandemic have been felt by students who welcome the unique opportunity to create a music community as part of Colorado Roots Music Camp here at Rocky Mountain. The impacts on the artists who serve as instructors has been particularly impactful as typical "gigs" were slim to none last year. Camp is grateful to be able to pursue this opportunity as a potential win-win for all who enjoy and are blessed by the Colorado Roots Music Camp program.

If interested, please register online, and pick from classes like the following example offered by Tim May, a long-time artist/instructor:

GUITAR (TIM MAY) – FLATPICKING GUITAR: SOLOING ESSENTIALS OVERVIEW

We'll look at how our heroes (Doc Watson, Tony Rice, Norman Blake, Clarence White and more) approached flatpicking and try stealing their ideas and putting them to use. Pretty much everything we do in flatpicking guitar comes from the Big Four: Scales ('Pitch Collections'), Folded Scales, Cross picking (Arpeggios) and Harmonized Scales (Scale versions of Double Stops): we'll work with these concepts as well as ideas for creating solos and improvisation. Lots of workouts and playing time.



SCRAPBOOK RETREAT COMING JAN. 29-31

Creating paper or digital photo books and sharing ideas and conversation is just another day for scrapbook participants. While coronavirus guidelines have impacted the “day” with mask wearing, spreading out over individual tables, and staying in private rooms, please consider joining in retreat and community in God’s creation here at Rocky Mountain Mennonite Camp. Space unfortunately is limited this year, but please register at www.rmmc.org if you would like to join in.

VISION 2020 CAPITAL CAMPAIGN CELEBRATION, JAN. 31 @ 6:00 PM

Responding to the significant impacts of the coronavirus pandemic understandably impacted the progress and conclusion of the VISION 2020 campaign. Regardless, it is appropriate to recognize with celebration and gratitude all that was accomplished by the power of the Spirit and Spirit led volunteers, donors, and staff. Via a shared online gathering link, we will reflect on how far we’ve come since 2012 which includes a timely Boy’s Bathhouse renovation and the Pleiades facility which represented a leap in facility and infrastructure offering to the camp (i.e., its own spring water source). Submissions of photos or videos are welcome (info@rmmc.org) as part of the celebration.



Click [here](#) to read the full RMMC January newsletter.

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MSMC Communication Updates

Zing! Please note the 2021 deadlines and schedule:

Feb - Release Date: Feb 10; *submission deadline: Jan 31*

Mar – Release Date: Mar 10; *submission deadline: Feb 28*

Apr – Release Date: Mar 10; *submission deadline: Mar 31*

May - Release Date: May 10; *submission deadline: Apr 30*

Jun – Release Date: Jun 10; *submission deadline: May 31*

July – Release Date: July 10; *submission deadline: Jun 30*

Aug/Sept – Release Date: Aug 31; *submission deadline: Aug 15*

Oct – Release Date: Oct 10; *submission deadline: Sept 30*

Nov – Release Date: Nov 10; *submission deadline: Oct 31*

Dec – Release Date: Dec 10; *submission deadline: Nov 30*

Bulletin Announcements – We email MSMC congregations every Wednesday with bulletin announcements. If you have something to share out to our community, please email Jen, [MSMC Administrator](#), by 9am Wednesday morning.

ZING! is published for the congregations of Mountain States Mennonite Conference and can be [viewed on the website](#).

Conference Website: MountainStatesMC.org

*Email contributions as Word files to Jen Dudenhefer at administrator@MountainStatesMC.org
Articles should be 300 words or less in length.*

Conference Calendar

Jan 16	Amy Zimbelman Installation, Zoom
June 25-27,	Gun Violence Round Table, Denver, CO
July 30-Aug 3	Annual Assembly, Location TBD

MSMC Staff and Leadership

Conference Minister, Amy Zimbelman
AmyZ@MountainStatesMC.org

Moderator, Ryan Koch
RyanK@MountainStatesMC.org

Editor/Conference Administrator, Jen Dudenhefer
Administrator@MountainStatesMC.org

Bookkeeper, Rita Balzer
Treasurer@MountainStatesMC.org

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