



ZING!

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RAWtools – MCUSA Partnership

RAWtools is excited to announce a new partnership with Mennonite Church USA as we #BringThePeace by turning guns into garden tools and beautiful art.

When a gun-owner donates a gun through an MC USA congregation, RAWtools makes the gun barrel into a garden tool and returns it to the donor. The rest of the gun is made into art that's sold to support MC USA's Peace and Justice initiatives. We encourage congregations to invite local artists in their community to participate in this gun-to-art-making process!

We encourage MC USA congregations who wish to be a part of this partnership to be vocal in their communities about being a place where swords are turned into plowshares. This is one way to respond to MC USA's leadership and their call to #BringThePeace and no longer be the "quiet in the land" when it comes to costly peacemaking and justice issues.

In January, two gun donations were processed at Portland Mennonite Church and First Mennonite Church of Denver. RAWtools has a national network of volunteers that help disable donated guns. When a gun donor connects with us, we connect them to our volunteers - who often meet to disable guns in church parking lots across the country.

[Click here](#) to see photos from these recent events.

To sign up and find out more, visit rawtools.org/mcusa-partnership/.

Starting a Third Life: Pastor Dave Darling on his journey from the Catholic priesthood to pastoring Emmanuel Mennonite

By Dave Darling, Emmanuel Mennonite Church Pastor



"You sound like a Mennonite to me," Bob Thelin told me. Bob, a Mennonite development worker who had served in Africa for 30 years, repeated that I sounded like a Mennonite every time we discussed theology, the nature of the Church, or social justice. I, Catholic reared, educated, and ordained, found our hours in the La Junta County community garden a wonderful bonding experience. Bob became an admired and treasured friend. "You know our founder [Menno Simons] was a Catholic priest," Bob would tell me, which, as we gardened, planted a small seed in my mind.

During the 25 years after leaving Catholic ministry to the present, I have had a varied and interesting career. I was a social services coordinator for a Migrant Head Start program in South Central and Southeastern Colorado; I was a regional coordinator for missionary education and development for a Catholic missionary group; I was a worker at Costco. At different times, I volunteered as a hospice visitor, took a unit of pastoral education, prepared food for the homeless, delivered groceries to seniors near downtown Denver, and, most importantly, became friends with a homeless man who had a great impact on my life, Darren. And I continued reading books on social issues, scripture, spirituality, as well as popular authors like John Sanford, John Grisham, and Nelson De Mille.

Then last April, I phoned a friend and member of Emmanuel Mennonite to see how she was doing. Toward the end of the conversation, I asked, "How is that little Mennonite church doing?" Sara sighed, "Oh, it's been over 16 months without a pastor."

The Scriptural quote, "And they were like sheep without a shepherd" crossed my mind . . . then Bob's prescient words, "You sound like a Mennonite to me." Recalling Bob's words about Menno Simmons, I asked Sara, "Do you think they would take a retreaded* Catholic priest?" They did. So, in my 70's I start a third life--as a Mennonite.

The first, was in a family of seven: 4 boys, one girl. Typical of the 1940's and 50's: dad worked at an auto plant, then as owner of a family-sponsored service station, where all the boys worked as soon as we were old enough.

My second life began when I entered seminary and ended 40 years later when I left priestly ministry. During that period, I served in rural and urban parishes, taught high school, and recruited candidates for my Catholic religious order. A long-time friend and a Catholic priest for nearly 60 years responded to my news about becoming a Mennonite pastor. "The Mennonites are peace-oriented and stress holiness. I'm sure it will be life-giving for you and for them."

I pray his words are true for me and Emmanuel Mennonite. Thank you, Bob Thelin. Thank you, Menno Simmons, for leading generations to a simpler church, a peace church, and thank you, Emmanuel Mennonite members for accepting my call and providing a spiritual home.

Mountain Community Mennonite Church Welcomes Vern Rempel

By Mary Gardner, a member at Mountain Community Mennonite Church



Mountain Community Mennonite Church is very happy to make the announcement that Vern Rempel has been selected to serve as the new pastor. Vern's education includes Hesston College AA in Music, Goshen College BA in Religion and Philosophy, Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary Master of Divinity Academic Theology, and Iliff School of Theology Doctorate in Ministry. His continuing education includes Healthy Boundaries, Intercultural Development, Anti-Racism and Courage and Renewal Facilitation training.

Vern's Ministry history includes Pastor at Community Mennonite Church of Lancaster PA from 1986 to 1996, Senior Pastor at First Mennonite Church of Denver from 1996 to 2015 and current church plant part time Pastor at Beloved Community Mennonite Church in Littleton.

Other careers include Religious Activities Director and Instructor Hesston College from 1983 to 1986, Goshen College Instructor 1985 for three months, Adjunct Professor at Iliff School of Theology for three months in 2016. Vern currently serves as Chaplain for Denver Hospice and Consults with Mountain Sky Conference for the United Methodist Church. Starting in February, Vern will be serving both the Beloved Community and Mountain Community congregations, but will be ending his chaplaincy work.

Vern is well known for the musical talents he brings to worship. His voice as well as skills in musical instruments including the piano, tuba and guitar will be an added blessing to the church. We welcome you Vern with great enthusiasm!

SAVE THE DATE!

Virtual Faith & Life Forum 2021

Peace of Mind: Trauma and Mental Health in the Pandemic and Beyond

Join practical theology professor Rev. Dr. Heidi Miller and practicing psychiatrist Dr. Rachel Wilkenson for a discussion on how this pandemic has affected our brains and souls, and what the path of healing might look like. Moderated by Conference Minister Amy Zimbelman.

Saturday, April 10, 9:30 AM

More details to come.

Amy Zimbelman installed as Mountain States Conference Minister

By Ken Gingerich, member of Albuquerque Mennonite

Amy Zimbelman was shaped and formed by her experience as the daughter of evangelical parents in Colorado Springs, Colo., the cradle of modern American evangelical institutions like Focus on the Family, Navigators and Compassion International—and the home of several large military installations, including the United States Air Force Academy. Like other military-base towns, Colorado Springs has created unique challenges for peace-minded Mennonites who have had a presence there for about 100 years. Nevertheless, Amy recently found herself being installed as the Conference Minister for Mountain States Mennonite Conference (MSMC), which consists of 17 Anabaptist faith communities from rural towns like La Junta, and Glenwood Springs, Colo. and Carlsbad, N.M. to the more densely populated urban enclaves of Denver and Lakewood, Colo. and Albuquerque, N.M.

Amy didn't encounter Mennonites while growing up in Colorado Springs. It wasn't until she was spending a year in the Middle East in a Gordon College (Wenham, Mass.) international studies program that she met Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) volunteers in Lebanon. She was impressed that they didn't seem to be preoccupied with "saving souls" but were simply serving people's needs *in the name of Christ*. Something clicked. "Discovering 'missionaries' who cared about human need but weren't hyper-focused on proselytizing non-believers was refreshing and intriguing to me. I had to learn more," she said.

The following year Amy sought out the MCC representative at a college missions conference in Michigan and learned one didn't have to be Mennonite to volunteer. She spent her first year out of college as a SALT volunteer in Zambia. After she returned to the U.S., she eventually sought out Mennonites again—this time with Mennonite Voluntary Service in Sioux Falls, S.D.—where she volunteered in a refugee resettlement program. She continued in the position with the refugee program following her MVS term and became the Sioux Falls MVS Director.

It was during her work with the refugees that Amy met another volunteer, Matt Zimbelman, son of an evangelical pastor who hails from a small community in rural S.D. Amy and Matt found that they had similar backgrounds and interests. They married in 2010 and have been together ever since. After four years in Sioux Falls, Amy and Matt moved to North Carolina where Amy earned a Master of Divinity degree at Duke Divinity School in Durham. Duke regularly attracts a cohort of Mennonites and is surrounded by three Mennonite churches. "We worshipped with all of the churches and learned that each congregation had a unique character," says Amy. "It's a lot like the diversity I see in Mountain States."

[Click here](#) to read the full article online.

Conference Minister Amy Zimbelman's Installation Reflection is available for viewing online [here](#). Beginning with scripture reading by Marilyn Miller, Amy's reflection begins at 2:49. [Click here](#) to watch Amy's full installation service (for Amy's Reflection, advance to 8:17).

Conference Minister's Corner

Strangers Welcome Here:

VACANCY signs lit up throughout the conference (part 1 of 2)

Compiled by Amy Zimbelman, Conference Minister



"As Mennonite Christians, We renounce the indifference to and mistreatment of undocumented and documented immigrants that has occurred and continues to occur in our congregations, our communities, and this country. We are committed to joining God's reconciling mission (Isa. 58:6-9, 2 Cor. 5:16-19) and to live and act as sisters and brothers in Christ to regardless of our legal status."

—From [MC USA Churchwide Statement on Immigration](#)

Mountain States Mennonite Conference is a leader in standing with immigrants, refugees, and asylees. Folks in our conference work with these populations in many ways and we have helped incubate multiple immigration nonprofits. This month we'll feature reports from ministries in Colorado Springs, Fort Collins, and Alamosa. Next month we'll look at what's going on in Aurora, Albuquerque, and elsewhere in Colorado Springs.

The **Colorado Springs Sanctuary Coalition** was conceived and birthed by Vicki Witte and other concerned community members in 2017 to stand with immigrants who have a legal pathway to fight their deportation orders. "They just need more time in the U.S. to fight their legal case to stay," says Vicki Witte. Since 2017 dozens of immigrants have taken sanctuary—living solely within the walls of churches—across the US, including three in Colorado Springs. The Coalition is comprised of three churches (First Congregational UCC, All Souls Unitarian Universalists, and Quaker Friends) plus other community members.

In 2019 the Coalition began to ask what they could do for the local undocumented community beyond offering sanctuary. Coalition members asked the simple question: *How can we help?*

"We found that the needs were astronomical," says Hannah Martin. So, in 2019 the Coalition expanded their mission to include Accompaniment, led by Hannah Martin. They began helping the undocumented community with everything from how to register children for kindergarten to how to use the bus system to how to pay for rent, utilities, and food. The Coalition also changed their name to reflect their expanded mission; they are now ASC COS, **Accompaniment and Sanctuary Coalition Colorado Springs**.

Their clients easily fall through the cracks; out of 2,200 nonprofit organizations in the Springs area, ASC COS is one of only 12 that work with the undocumented population.

ASC COS relies completely on volunteers. A dispatcher connects clients' requests for services with about 80 volunteers ready to offer support.

"There's nothing too small and nothing too big we can do for our neighbor," Hannah says.

For more info, to donate clothes or funds, or to volunteer to walk alongside immigrants to doctor's appointments, school registration, court hearings, social services appointments, and more,

email: csaccompaniment@gmail.com and follow the group on Facebook: [Accompaniment and Sanctuary Coalition Colorado Springs - ASC COS](#).

Sojourn Mennonite of Fort Collins is active in two immigration justice ministries in Fort Collins. In the first ministry, Sojourn created and supports the **Community Dreamer Fund**.

[Click here](#) to learn more about immigration work in Fort Collins and Alamosa.

Sanctuary Church declared in Alamosa

By Alice M. Price, member of the Anabaptist Fellowship of Alamosa



The Alamosa Presbyterian Church, where the Anabaptist Fellowship of Alamosa (AFA) has had its worship space for the past decade, voted unanimously in January to declare itself a Sanctuary church. The Presbyterian congregation, along with AFA and another building mate, the UU Fellowship of Alamosa, have been partners with others in an ecumenical Immigrant Rights Coalition formed just after the 2016 election. Among other efforts, the declaration of a Sanctuary Church in the San Luis Valley has been an on-going goal. AFA recently adopted a resolution in full support of the Sanctuary declaration Presbyterian and looks forward to being actively engaged with anyone who may take refuge in our shared building. In good Mennonite networking style, AFA first learned in October through Vicki Witte, a Beth-El member active with Colorado Springs' Accompaniment and Sanctuary Coalition, of a possible need for refuge by

someone in Alamosa's immigrant community. Though that immediate need has passed, it spurred renewed discussion among local churches and led - with very helpful encouragement from our Colorado Springs counterparts - to the Presbyterian congregation's recent decision. While we hope pending reforms may lessen the need for refuge, it nonetheless feels timely for Alamosa's faith communities to stand in solidarity with our immigrant communities.



Prayerstream Meditation Events

Tuesday Prayerstream Meditations: A Time for Reflection and Renovation

A simple, informal contemplative space to deepen our connections to self, others, the Divine and the world in which we live.

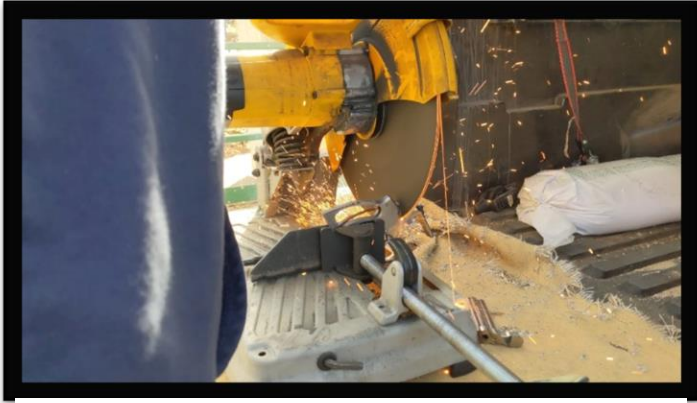
7AM Mountain Time // Ongoing, through March 23 // [Zoom link](#), Meeting ID: 868 8170 3992

First Friday of the Month Happy Hour!

This gathering is designed to bring ceremony, celebration, and prayer together from a variety of perspectives so we can experience new thoughts and ways to be together.

4:00-5:30pm Mountain Time

Go to mountainstatesmc.org/conference-life/prayerstream/ for the monthly Zoom details.



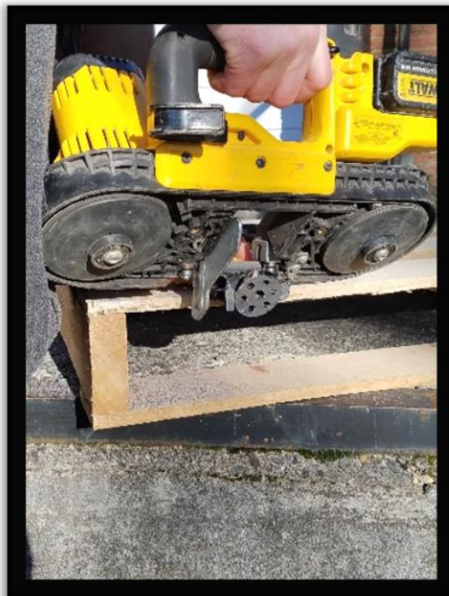
Disabling a revolver at First Mennonite Denver



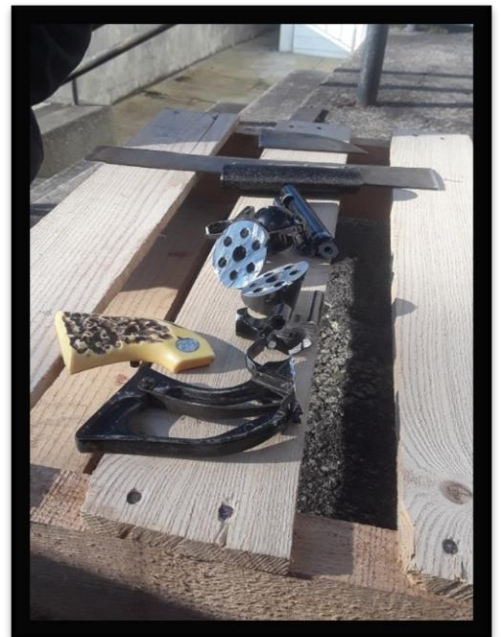
Disabled revolver donated at First Mennonite Denver



*Preparing to cut the revolver at
Portland Mennonite*



*Cutting up the revolver at
Portland Mennonite*



*Disabled revolver at Portland
Mennonite*

News from:

ROCKY MOUNTAIN MENNONITE CAMP



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ROCKY MOUNTAIN OFFERS FIRST VIRTUAL PROGRAM

Roots Winter Weekend successfully became the first online program for the Rocky Mountain ministry. The idea from our Colorado Roots Music Camp co-directors Cosy Sheridan & Raul Reynoso, was to invite the instructors from 2020's June Roots Music Camp I (coronavirusly cancelled) and offer 75-minute online versions of the classes they would have offered. Class offerings included but was not limited to guitar, mandolin, banjo, fiddle, bass, vocal, music theory and song writing. At the end of the weekend, 93 students chose from 18 classes and filled 207 classroom "chairs". The weekend concluded with a delightful instructor concert with a gathering of 70 instructors and students (see screenshot). Student reflections from the weekend say it well:

"I'm still basking in the glow. Thank you, everyone, for your warm presence and heartfelt musical contributions. What a lovely, supportive community. This weekend has lifted my spirits."

"I took three classes and loved them. The concert was tremendous! The love of music connects us all though we are far apart. The warmth of the teachers and love of teaching their craft really shines through our screens."



Because of this good experience, the instructors from 2020's August Roots Music Camp II (coronavirusly cancelled) have been invited to offer a Spring edition of an online weekend gathering. More details to come!

PROJECTS ABOUND AT SCRAPBOOK RETREAT



Rocky Mountain was delighted to have 12 participants able to gather in fellowship, worship and working on a variety of projects. Despite the spacing and mask wearing, participants responded to the inquiry "Thing I appreciated about the weekend" with:

"I enjoyed being with other guests, talking, going for a walk, time to work on digital album and knit."

"Experience and generosity of those crafters that have done this before"

"Comfortable [accommodations] as always. Great food from a great cook!"

Special thanks to Lisa Longacher for serving as our volunteer program director for the weekend and coordinating the weekend schedule. The group concluded the weekend with a meaningful Sunday morning worship.

VISION 2020 CAPITAL CAMPAIGN CELEBRATION

Rocky Mountain facilitated its 2nd ever online gathering to recognize the achievements of the VISION 2020 Capital Campaign. Just over 30 people took part (as best we counted screens and people within). It was a delightful time to look back and see all that was accomplished via a slideshow with included stories of joys and challenges along the way.

It was also a time to recognize the contributions of those that were key in making it possible including but not limited to Tom Unruh, Capital Campaign Coordinator, and 10th year (year around) serving RMMC, Ardell Swartzendruber, General Contractor for buildings, Lyonell Unruh, Architect, and so, SO many other faithful volunteers and donors.

Rod Stutzman, Camp Board President shared about the coming VISION campaign projects in the years to come. These include:

- Complete Bern Dining Hall renovation (interrupted by coronavirus pandemic)
- Replace septic system on chapel side of camp
- Improvements to facilities with kitchens for family use (i.e. Aspen, etc.) when large groups unable to gather.
- Incorporate solar energy as we make improvements (i.e. Bern Dining Hall improvements will include mounts and conduit for future panels).

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



PICTURED: Thanks to Gary Martin (Chugiak, AK) for sharing this screenshot while joining the online gathering himself. It was a treat to have participants from all over creation (Portland, OR, Harrisonburg, VA, and beyond) be able to join in. Will an online option to include those from afar be a vision of things to come for Rocky Mountain?

Assembly 2021

Are you wanting to find joy but feeling fatigued with the current options? Interested in renewal with other Mennonites but not sure how to go it? Wanting to celebrate after this pandemic is over? [Fill out this short survey](#) to help shape Assembly 2021. Questions? Please contact Katrina Toews and Beuford Aeschliman, Assembly Planning Chairs, at assembly@mountainstatesmc.org

MSMC Communication Updates

Zing! Please note the 2021 deadlines and schedule:

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 online 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

April 10	Virtual Faith & Life Forum
June 25-27,	Gun Violence Round Table, Denver, CO
July 30-Aug 1	Annual Assembly
Fall 2021	Anti-Racism Round Table, Boulder Mennonite Church

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