



ZING!

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Sidney Nunez: Preaching, Painting, and Peacemaking

Welcome to our summer intern, Sidney Nuñez!

Sidney will be Preaching, Painting, and Peacemaking in an internship this summer supported by her home congregation East Holbrook in Cheraw, Pastor Brian Hanneken, and Conference Minister Amy Zimbelman. She'll be having holy conversations with church and nonprofit leaders, guest preaching at Beth-El and Sojourn, sharing some of her artistic skills via workshops, participating in events like the RAWtools roundtable and MSMC Assembly, exploring her sense of call to ministry, and more. Look for more of her story in the next Zing, and if you see her popping up around the conference, say hi!

Blessed Unproductivity

Consider how the wild flowers grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you, not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. —Luke 12:27 (NIV)

July 30 - August 1, The Abbey, Cañon City, Colo.

—Virtual and In-Person



Registration is OPEN!

Step 1: REGISTER... For in-person participation at Assembly, [please register here](#). OR if you will be connecting remotely, [please register here](#).

Step 2: DELEGATES... Are you a delegate representing your church? Please sign up [here](#).

Step 3: LEARN MORE... Follow our website for updates as more details become available: mountainstatesmc.org/assembly-2021/ Look for the July “Assembly Edition” of Zing! Join our [Facebook event](#).

Step 4: EMAIL... Keep an eye out for email communications with any additional details, as Assembly approaches.

Step 5: COME!

Meet MSMC Leadership Board

Zach Martinez: An unexpected journey to Mennonite leadership (complete with kicking, screaming, and a hot fudge sundae)

By Rev. Amy S. Zimbelman



Zach Martinez was not expecting to be a pastor. Or a Mennonite. The MSMC Leadership Board member and pastor of Sojourn Mennonite Church (Greeley and Fort Collins) says of his call: “I was kind of dragged to ministry kicking and screaming.”

In his growing up years there had, however, been some promising signs in Zach’s life pointing towards Mennonite pastoring. He felt a call to ministry when he was in middle school. And, though raised in a family of military veterans spanning back to the Civil War, he found his pacifist voice early. “By the time I was in high school, I was pretty convinced that US military intervention in Iraq was a bad idea,” he says. In fact, he became quite the activist: “I got in trouble for writing anti-war papers in school and going around my house and chanting, ‘1-2-3-4 We don’t want your daddy’s war!’ to my family.”

But when it came time for college at University of Northern Colorado in Greeley, Zach studied philosophy, not theology. By the end of college, he and his girlfriend Megan got married—they had known each other since third grade—and they stayed at UNC for Zach to get a Masters in English Literature.

Unfortunately, UNC’s grad program was not a good fit, due to some drama and misconduct present in the department at the time.

Knowing they needed to head a different direction, Zach and Megan found North Park Seminary in Chicago. “We kind of decided to go to seminary instead,” Zach says. “But I still thought I’d pursue writing and academia, so my Master of Divinity degree was the academic track. I studied theology and languages more than practical ministry classes.” Megan, who is a high school teacher, got a Masters in Nonprofit Administration at the same time.

During seminary, Zach and Megan became increasingly aware of Mennonites. Zach’s respected and well-loved theology professor was Mennonite. He studied food and faith for his thesis and found himself in spaces populated by Mennonites, like AMBS’ Rooted and Grounded conference. The church Zach and Megan attended had close ties to Chicago Community Mennonite, and the Reba Place intentional community was near where they lived.

So when Zach and Megan graduated and he took a job as a pastor at a nondenominational church, Megan kept encouraging him to keep an eye out for any Mennonite positions.

It just so happened that within a year, a position opened up at Sojourn Mennonite Church in Fort Collins, close to where Zach and Megan were living at the time.

“When I met with the search committee at IHOP, it became obvious that Sojourn was a good fit. That first conversation was 2 and a half hours. They were looking for ways to grow and new ways of being church and so was I.” [Click here](#) to read the full article.

GUN VIOLENCE PREVENTION

ROUNDTABLE

June 25-27 at Boulder Mennonite Church

Friday June 25th 6:30pm Beating Guns Documentary Screening

Saturday June 26th: Workshops and Panel Discussions

Sunday June 27 9:30am

PeaceMaker service with live gun-to-garden tool transformation

Featuring live gun to garden tools demonstrations &

Shane Claiborne—Author, activist, Co-author of *Beating Guns*

Claudia Aguilar R.—Pastor at First Mennonite Church Denver

Krista Dutt—MCC Program Coordinator

Mike Martin—RAWtools Executive Director

Colorado Faith Communities United to End Gun Violence

[REGISTER HERE](#)



**Mennonite
Central
Committee**

[REGISTER HERE](#)



Shane Claiborne is a prominent speaker, activist, and best-selling author. Shane worked with Mother Teresa in Calcutta, and founded The Simple Way in Philadelphia. He heads up Red Letter Christians, a movement of folks who are committed to living "as if Jesus meant the things he said." Shane is a champion for grace which has led him to jail advocating for the homeless, and to places like Iraq and Afghanistan to stand against war. Now grace fuels his passion to end the death penalty and help stop gun violence.

Shane's books include *Jesus for President*, *Red Letter Revolution*, *Common Prayer*, *Follow Me to Freedom*, *Jesus, Bombs and Ice Cream*, *Becoming the Answer to Our Prayers*, *Executing Grace*, his classic *The Irresistible*

Revolution, and his newest book, *Beating Guns*. He has been featured in a number of films including "Another World Is Possible" and "Ordinary Radicals." His books have been translated into more than a dozen languages. Shane speaks over one hundred times a year, nationally and internationally. His work has appeared in *Esquire*, *SPIN*, *Christianity Today*, *TIME*, and *The Wall Street Journal*, and he has been on everything from Fox News and Al Jazeera to CNN and NPR. He's given academic lectures at Harvard, Princeton, Liberty, Duke, and Notre Dame.

Shane speaks regularly at denominational gatherings, festivals, and conferences around the globe.

Celebrating Tory Bonners' ministry at Glennon Heights

By Ryan Koch, MSMC Moderator and Pastor, Glennon Heights MC



Let me share a bit of unsolicited advice: having an intern during the middle of a pandemic is hard; being an intern in the middle of a pandemic is even more impossibly difficult. How do you learn how to do ministry, how do you build community without the sacrament of presence? How do you explore your gifts and wrestle with the chaos of seminary with your community when anxiety is high, energy is low and most everyone retreats into survival mode?

Never could we have imagined when we created an internship for Tory Bonners at Glennon Heights in 2020 that the majority of it would be done in the middle of the pandemic. Never could we have imagined that this internship would mean learning how to preach to a screen, filling your life with zoom meetings, trying to build relationships with people you don't know well without actually spending time together, without breaking bread or enjoying a cup of tea. Never could we have imagined that this internship would mean not getting to see many of the blessings that come alongside ministry, the unexpected friendships, the blossoming of relationships with colleagues, the lingering conversations following worship about your sermon or a prayer that you prayed, the chance to journey with those you

love by simply being bodily present through life's seasons of uncertainty and confusion.

It was definitely not the internship which we desired nor the internship that Tory deserved. Sadly, this is the reality of most of life over the past 16 months. And yet, I am so thankful for Tory's gifts, for her joyful spirit, for the way she adjusted to the unknown and made the best out of an impossible situation. I'm so grateful for Tory's ability to find a way to relate to anyone and how she was able to build relationships at a distance. And I'm thankful that Tory pushed herself to work on preaching, worship leading, creating innovative worship services - like leading outdoor Bible Studies and prayer times. Tory has deep gifts for preaching, for spiritual development, for mentoring and her vulnerable spirit instantly breaks down boundaries and pushes people to be vulnerable, genuine and honest too.

This May, Tory Bonners graduated with a M. Div. from Denver Seminary. After completing her internship at Glennon Heights, this spring she spent most of the semester exploring chaplaincy work at Denver Health. Here, finally, she was able to explore her gifts of compassion and care by being able to be present with people during some of life's darkest moments. I'm not surprised that she flourished during this time and that this experience enabled everyone to witness Tory's God-given gifts of building relationships of love and peace. This fall, Tory will be heading down to Colorado Springs to complete a second chaplaincy internship at Memorial Central. After this, she will be exploring chaplaincy residency programs.

While we will miss Tory Bonners very much at Glennon Heights, we wish her the best and we are thankful that our paths crossed and that Tory was able to share her wisdom, her passions for peace and justice, her gifts of preaching, and just herself with our congregation these past three years. I'm going to miss all the walks we were able to take, the chances to talk theology together, her friendship and the chance of working alongside a colleague. We pray that one day she finds herself again in the Denver Metroplex; but we also know that wherever she ends up she will be a blessing to the communities there. For she just naturally brings beauty and life into whatever community she is part of. Tory does have a deep love and giftedness for preaching; if any of our churches are ever looking for a guest preacher, Tory's great.

Thanks again Tory for all the gifts that you brought to both Glennon Heights and Mountain States Mennonite Conference these past three years. We can't wait to see how God uses you in the months and years ahead.



Tory leading communion at her CPE graduation

Conference Minister's Corner

What happens when a congregation's boundaries aren't healthy? (And some ideas for a vaccine)

By Rev. Amy S. Zimbelman, Conference Minister



As I write this, I got my second Covid vaccination today, one step ahead of the general public as a credentialed faith leader. (Yay for connecting in person again FINALLY!)

Well before vaccinations, physicians knew that people who had an infection one time recovered more quickly if infected again—and these people were said to have “wise blood.” The Covid vaccine is, of course, giving me “wise blood” without the disease—it’s training my body to recognize Covid so that if the real thing comes, my cells will have the information they need to neutralize its threat it before it takes over.

As Peter Steinke writes in his book *Healthy Congregations: A Systems Approach*, congregational bodies are very similar to human bodies. Anxious and destructive forces are constantly a threat to our congregations. And just like in our individual bodies, the church community needs to be clear about what *is* self and what *is not* self. Is that new ministry idea in line with our mission and vision? Who should become a leader? Is that negative behavior something we want to tolerate? In other words, our church organism needs a healthy immune system. We need wise blood.

But what happens when a threat starts taking root in our congregation: a wave of gossip and hurtful criticism finds its way into the mouths of many congregants, or a church treasurer singlehandedly makes financial decisions to punish a pastor he doesn’t like, or a leader sexually harasses a congregant? (All real-world examples unfortunately.) How does a congregation function like a good immune system and say, “We love you—but no, that’s not who we are”?

In some denominations, the “immune response” would come primarily from external entities, like a vaccine. In the Methodist Church, for instance, if a pastor committed misconduct, the bishop and district superintendent would be responsible to deal with it.

But Mennonite polity (polity: form of government, a.k.a. how power works) is much more grassroots, in the anti-authority tradition of the Radical Reformation. Unlike Catholics, Methodists, or Episcopalians, Mennonite Conference Ministers and MC USA staff can influence congregations but hold minimal power of accountability. In Mountain States Mennonite Conference, conference-level leaders can grant or remove credentials but they cannot hire or fire anyone, or remove any leader (elder, church chair, treasurer, etc.) no matter how serious the offense—rape and murder included.

So who keeps the church healthy when general anxiety or a real threat take hold?

The answer comes from within the body: leaders in the congregation are tasked with this work.

Because of these power dynamics, I’ve seen that **mature, courageous church leaders who are in tune with the congregation make all the difference in the health of Mennonite churches**—both formal leaders like pastors and elders, and informal leaders like church matriarchs and patriarchs who may have no official title but are often extremely influential. [Click here](#) for ideas of how to strengthen our churches’ immune systems.

News from:

ROCKY MOUNTAIN MENNONITE CAMP



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SUMMER CAMP IS BACK

After a year of drought without campers, Rocky Mountain is looking to provide singing, recreation, hiking, arts & crafts, morning devotion, BBQ chicken, polar plunge, campfire worship, trading post, nature study, animal survival, rock climbing/rappelling, boat races, cinnamon rolls, backpacking, and many more camp experiences. We are filled with gratitude for the campers, families, guest groups, donors, conferences, churches, volunteers and staff who joined together to sustain RMMC through this coronavirus storm.

Here's to a fun and meaningful summer!



PICTURED: Pastor Dave Foncannon is right at home leading music for campers in the camp chapel.

NEW TO ROCKY MOUNTAIN THIS SUMMER

The phrase "Never waste a good crisis" has been received in a positive light to re-think and re-imagine how camp offers hospitality to the many campers and guests that enjoy retreat while they are here. The unique beauty of God's creation at RMMC has always been a special part of the experience. With the coronavirus pandemic encouraging all of us to be outside and enjoy the outdoors more, the following ideas were inspired.



Pictured: Octagonal picnic tables have been located on the patio where BBQ chicken or popcorn over a fire has been served. The new tables will offer additional and comfortable outside dining options. The sail shades are still coming but require engineering and 12 foot deep holes to erect the poles that will support them and provide an open air pavilion experience.

Pictured: From octagonal tables to hexagonal swings, a circle of 6 porch swings was added last fall to the space/place near the stream and the chapel bridge where many boat races and baptisms take place. With a borrowed design from our Eastern Mennonite camps, Ed Shirk was invited to plan and build (with numerous volunteers and camp staff) another gathering space for all who come.



Click [here](#) to read the full June 2021 Newsletter.

Check it out! Anabaptist World Magazine published a really nice [article](#) about Fort Collins Mennonite Fellowship, written by member Denise Steffenhagen. If you get the paper copy, you'll know they even made the cover!



MSMC Communication Updates

Zing! Please note the 2021 deadlines and schedule:

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

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

Conference Calendar

June 25-27, Gun Violence Round Table, Boulder, CO

July 30-Aug 1 Annual Assembly, Canon City, CO / Virtual

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