



**Mennonite
Mission
Network**

The mission agency of
Mennonite Church USA

MARCH 2015

Beyond

Small beginnings

Mutual partnerships in Benin spread ministries of hope.

From a seed to many shoots

Ministries grow from careful cultivation.

By Sara Alvarez



When Steve Wiebe-Johnson, Mennonite Mission Network's director for Africa, talks about the ministries in Benin, he likes to talk about peanuts.

When properly cared for, a peanut plant will multiply through an underground root system that produces new plants.

The Benin Bible Institute is like these plants; professors and instructors at the institute know how to cultivate a good harvest. With this care, students return to their home communities where they sink their roots. And the education and values they learned from Benin Bible Institute spread throughout the nation.

This issue of *Beyond* accompanies *Missio Dei 23: 3-D Gospel in Benin*, which commemorates nearly half a century of partnership. These photos and stories show how these ministries have affected people's lives.

Augustin Ahoga, *Groupes Bibliques Universitaires'* director for French-speaking Africa, shares why he appreciated working with the Mennonites when he helped found Benin Bible Institute.

Paulin Bossou, co-director of *La Casa Grande*, explains how connections made at Benin Bible Institute inspired him to dedicate his life to serve his community through *La Casa Grande*, a ministry for children in difficult situations.

Lynda Hollinger-Janzen describes how her faith was strengthened by the people she worked with when she served as a mission worker from 1985 to 2000 in Benin.

This ministry that Mennonite Mission Network supported from the beginning, when Beninese leaders asked them to come, has educated community leaders for 30 years.

The reach of the original plant goes far beyond where it was first sown.

Feedback

▶ Let us know what you think of this issue.
 What inspires you? Engages you? Infuriates you?
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Image from Mennonite Church USA Archives in Goshen, Indiana

Dr. Véronique Lawson, a Methodist pediatrician and president of the Health Commission, later became Benin's national Minister of Health. Daniel Goldschmidt-Nussbaumer takes notes.

Missio Dei 23: 3-D Gospel in Benin

Beninese churches invite Mennonites to holistic partnership

Don't miss the companion publication of this issue of *Beyond!* *Missio Dei 23: 3-D Gospel in Benin* takes an in-depth look at Mennonite Mission Network's partnership in Benin. Get your copy at www.MennoniteMission.net/MissioDei.



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COVER: Mirabelle and Arielle, students at *La Casa Grande's Les Leaders* (Leaders) School, take a break from studies.
 Photo by Lynda Hollinger-Janzen.



Small beginnings, big impact

Ministries in Benin help create national institutions.

Africa has big problems. Throughout recorded history, Africa has been exploited, woefully misunderstood, and too often misused by the rest of the world. The continent still struggles to dig itself out of a past fraught with injustice and oppression. The struggle is exacerbated by the sad reality that the aftermath of colonialism, corruption, and mismanagement by post-colonial leaders deepened rather than soothed the suffering of the most vulnerable. And yet, there are plenty hopeful trends in today's Africa that defy the characterization of Africa as a continent bereft of hope.

Seeds of hope can be seen in stories like those reported in this issue of ministry developments through a partnership with sisters and brothers in Benin. After

the mid-point of last century, Mennonite mission workers realized that ministry and mission in, with, and from Africa in the 21st century must be built upon a foundation of dialogue and discernment rather than dictate and decree. We saw that if mission is to be successful, sustainable, and mutually beneficial, it must be committed to interdependent partnerships, reciprocity, and complementarity.

The work with Benin Bible Institute (BBI) and ONG Bethesda in Benin confirms how small beginnings, along with accompaniment of local leadership, can build capacity and effect far-reaching social transformation.

In response to an invitation from local church leaders, Mennonite Mission Network (through a predecessor agency, Mennonite Board of Missions) recruited 130 students from more than 40 denominations to begin biblical and theological studies in rented facilities in Cotonou. Over the years, BBI has developed a full-time degree program and a satellite program in another city. BBI has trained more than 1,000 graduates who serve 70 denominations and other institutions throughout Benin.

The healthcare chronicle, born of equally small beginnings, is just as inspiring. The needless death of

a child led Mennonite mission workers to support and encourage the Inter-confessional Council's Health Commission's decision to create Bethesda Health Center. Today, that health center is regarded as one of the premier health providers in Benin.

Healthcare ministries uncovered the need for a community development program. That program grew from a small Mennonite Board of Missions grant of \$40 in 1993. Today, it is a multi-million-dollar enterprise that includes garbage collection and recycling, and has been replicated throughout the West African region. Additionally, a community bank, PEBCo (*Promotion d'Epargne-Crédit à Base Communautaire*), which grew from \$2,000 given by Mennonite Board of Missions as a start-up fund, has helped improve the economic status of many families. Today, it has grown into an institution with assets of more than \$14 million, and operates as a micro-enterprise bank with 23 branches that serve all the provinces of Benin.

The ministries that developed in Benin had small beginnings. On the strength of relationships, partnership arrangements emerged that were respectful of the perspectives of each of the partners and served to advance the dignity and accountability of all involved. The fruit of this engagement has bolstered the faith of all the partners. How could we have imagined the mustard seed we planted together could grow into such a massive tree in whose shade so many would find healing and hope and life? Every relationship along the journey of building authentic partnership can grow to bear fruit that may someday surprise us. No investment we make today, however modest, is insignificant. Thanks for your investments, both large and small, that are making miracles of healing and hope possible across the street and around the world.

Stanley W. Green

Stanley W. Green
Executive Director

“Do not despise these small beginnings, for the LORD rejoices to see the work begin, to see the plumb line in Zerubbabel’s hand.”

—Zechariah 4:10
(New Living Translation)



Strong relationships, strong ministries

Seeds of mutual respect blossom into a thriving partnership.

By Augustin Ahoga, translated by Lynda Hollinger-Janzen

I thank the Mennonites who have served in Benin for a quality that I rarely see in other mission organizations and in my work as director for French-speaking Africa with *Groupes Bibliques Universitaires* (a Bible study group for university students). I rub shoulders with many missions. Mennonites understand that a patronizing stance has no place in a partnership. Partnership is not a relationship between an employer and employees.

Mennonites understand that partners have equal status with one another. Each member brings their contribution and accepts responsibility for nurturing the shared vision toward fulfillment. Thus, good relationships and mutual respect serve as the background canvas on which partners paint their Christian witness for the world around them. It is this element of mutual respect and the biblical understanding of the shared humanity of all people that has permitted our partnership with

Mennonites to evolve into the long and fruitful ministries we enjoy today.

Mennonites share our passion for training leaders to lead wisely and well. They have generously helped to train professors and administrators for Benin Bible Institute, as well as a director for our agro-pastoral training farm. They have helped us build adequate infrastructures that enable us to serve our communities and share Jesus' love.

Not only have four institutions emerged from our partnership—Benin Bible Institute, Bethesda Hospital, an award-winning community development organization, and a flourishing community bank—but these institutions have multiplied throughout the entire country and spilled over to bless neighboring countries, too.

While Benin Bible Institute deepens the spiritual understanding of Beninese churches, Bethesda Hospital takes care of members' physical health,



Photo by John Yoder

Augustin Ahoga preaches as Rod Hollinger-Janzen translates his sermon at Waterford (Indiana) Mennonite Church, as part of the two-way mission partnership between the congregation and Benin Bible Institute.

PEBCo (*Promotion d'Épargne-Crédit à Base Communautaire*—Promotion of Community-based Savings and Loans) helps maximize financial resources, and DCAM (*Développement Communautaire et Assainissement du Milieu*—Community Development and Environmental Hygiene) helps strengthen our social relationships.

This overview shows our collaboration with Mennonites has truly succeeded in becoming holistic mission, a model of biblical partnership that merits being repeated throughout the world. ■



Augustin Ahoga holds a Master's degree in Old Testament Studies from the University of Cheltenham in the United Kingdom, and a Master's in Bible and Theology from Vaux-sur-Seine Evangelical Seminary in France. He is a doctoral candidate at South African Theological Seminary and currently serves as *Groupes Bibliques Universitaires* director for French-speaking Africa. Beginning in 1996, Ahoga led the reflection committee that laid the foundations for Benin Bible Institute, and presided over its first administrative council.

Tending mind, body and spirit



Photos by Lynda Hollinger-Janzen

Adjo Ahobli watches nurse Nadéqe Kodjela chart the weight of her son, Accompli, at a healthy baby checkup at Bethesda Hospital's annex in Tankpè, a suburb of Cotonou, Benin's largest city.



Colombe Dandonougbo came to visit her father, Abraham (right), an employee of Bethesda Hospital, during her school lunch break. Colombe is taken under the wing of Dr. Barthélemy Dossou-Bodjrenou, ophthalmologist and coordinator of the hospital and associated ministries, who tries to convince all young people to become doctors.

Bethesda Hospital

ONG Bethesda is a health-care complex that took its inspiration from the biblical parable of the Good Samaritan who cared for someone deemed unworthy by people with resources and power. The churches of Benin founded the hospital in 1990 in partnership with Mennonite Mission Network. Through this ministry, the churches reached out to the least-served people in their communities and went beyond merely treating the symptoms of illness. Hospital personnel invested in community development initiatives and programs emerged that addressed neighborhood sanitation, job creation, and loans for small businesses.



Photos by Lynda Hollinger-Janzen

Robert Hounkpevi and Bruce Frey teach a church history class at Benin Bible Institute. Since many Beninese are first-generation Christians, like the writers of the New Testament, issues discussed are not obscure historical scenarios, but events they deal with in their daily lives.

Benin Bible Institute

In October 2014, Benin Bible Institute, located in Cotonou, Benin’s largest city, celebrated its 30th anniversary with a four-day gala. Students danced through the streets to the accompaniment of a brass band to invite neighbors to share their joy. Although the school started its systematic degree program in 1994, the board of directors decided the school’s inception came when Mennonite Board of Missions worker David Shank taught the first Bible seminar.



Josué Sonounameto and Henri Keke take notes at Benin Bible Institute.



Dominique Houngnon, farm manager for Benin Bible Institute’s agro-pastoral project, weeds seedlings.

Agro-pastoral program with BBI

An 18-bed dormitory and a classroom have just been completed, enabling BBI students to live on the farm, which is an hour’s drive from the Bible institute. Experience in farming will give pastors in rural congregations a means to feed their families, as many churches are too small to provide a pastor with a living salary. Pastors will also be able to spread concepts in sustainable agriculture to remote parts of the country. Currently, the farm is producing plantains, papayas, vegetables, rabbits, and chickens for local markets.



Photos by Lynda Hollinger-Janzen

Bonaventure Akowanou and Jean-Baptiste Hounmondji discuss new Development in Four Dimensions projects. Hounmondji is the national president of the Universal Evangelical Church and the founder of D4D. Hounmondji's daughter, Schiphira, takes note for her future leadership role.



Camile Houndondji surveys his artisanal bakery with pride. Ovens, bread pans, and shelves are all made with local materials.

Development in Four Dimensions

Development in Four Dimensions started as a response to the high infant mortality rate in the Plateau region of Benin. It provides regular baby weighing and teaches mothers about health. Other projects to improve well-being in the region include an elementary school, a bakery, and a fish pond.

PEBCo, Promotion d'Epargne-Crédit à Base Communautaire

The idea for this community bank was born in 1995 after a child of a community health worker died of malnutrition. Staff of Bethesda Hospital realized that knowledge alone isn't enough for health. Resources to put knowledge into practice are also necessary. A nationwide network of PEBCo offices permit 100 percent of Benin's population to access financial services with a walk of five miles or less. At first the community bank catered to women and helped them establish businesses to make *yovo doko*, a snack similar to doughnut holes, or to buy a stock of soap and kerosene to sell from stands in front of their homes. Now, PEBCo has become one of the nation's most trusted financial institutions and serves all segments of society.



Photos by Lynda Hollinger-Janzen

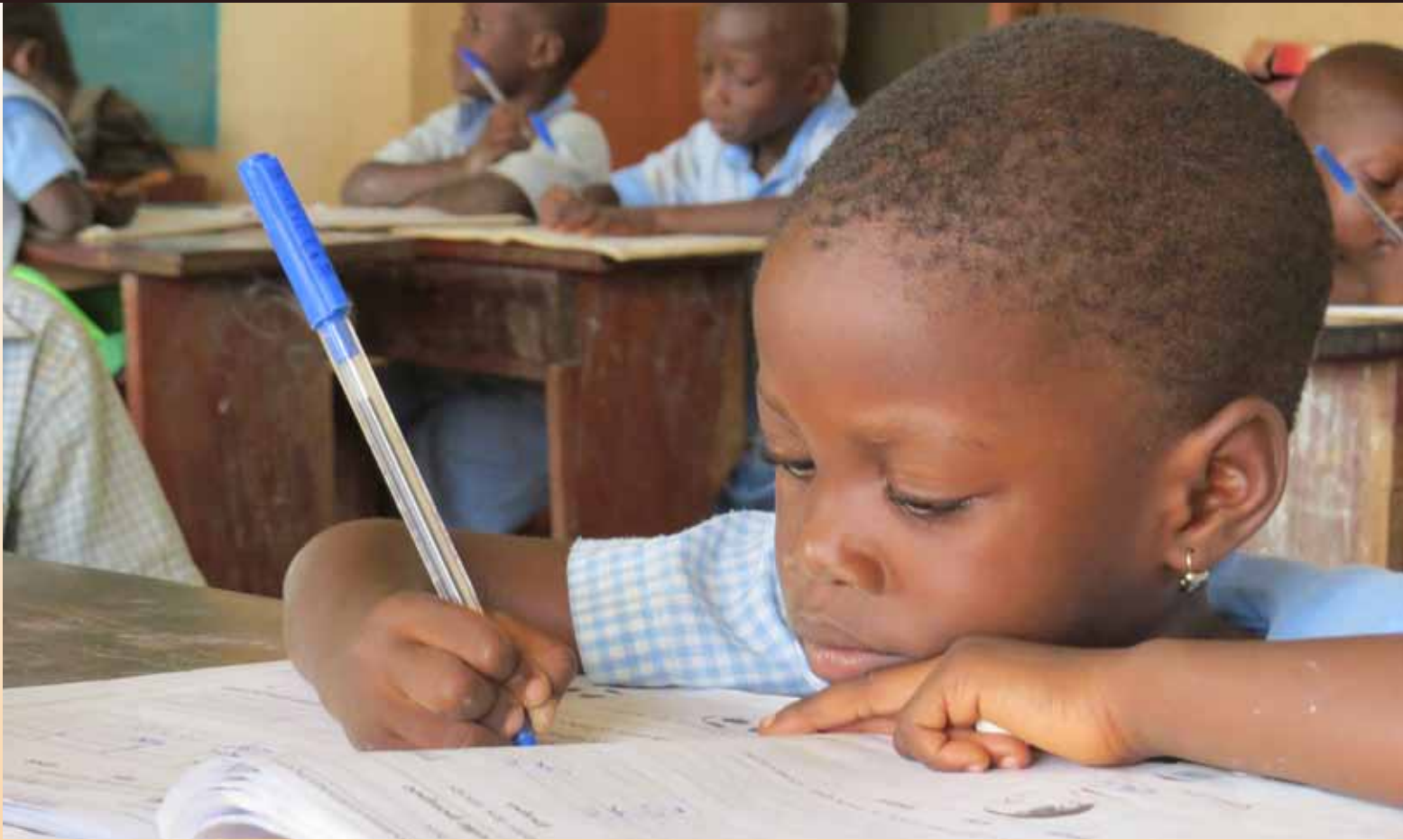
Pascal Tamegnon has been PEBCo's administrator since the community bank's early days.



Liduide Tokoudagba helps a PEBCo client open an account.



Photo by Lynda Hollinger-Janzen



Annoncia fills in her workbook at *La Casa Grande's Les Leaders* (Leaders) School.

Photo by Lynda Hollinger-Janzen



Ferdinand Sounouadé studies his Bible at *La Casa Grande* Children's Village.

Photo by Steve Wiebe-Johnson



A community volunteer uses wood-working equipment sent by the municipal government in Burgos, Spain. Grace Woodworking is part of the *La Casa Grande* enterprise where children will be taught trades through apprenticeships.

La Casa Grande

La Casa Grande is a home for children in difficult circumstances. Often, both parents have died and relatives don't have the resources to feed and educate extra children. At *La Casa Grande*, children become part of an intentional extended family with 50 brothers and sisters. *La Casa Grande's* goal is to surround the children with a loving, Christian environment that prepares them for a bright future through academic studies and technical apprenticeships. They are also extending this hope to the surrounding community through the *Les Leaders* (Leaders) school and literacy programs for adults.



Photo provided

Paulin Bossou, Steve Wiebe-Johnson, Bonaventure Akowanou, and Bienvenu Kadja at *La Casa Grande*.

Time to give back

A ministry inspired by love and support

By Paulin Bossou

Although the number of Mennonites is increasing in different African countries, Benin is still one of them where there aren't any Mennonite churches. Yet the presence of Mennonites is tangible through social and educational projects. I had the privilege to be formed and profoundly impacted by two institutions. Indeed, the Benin Bible Institute (BBI) was inspired by Mennonites from the United States, and *La Casa Grande*, a children's home, was inspired by a small Anabaptist community church in Burgos, Spain. The result of the work of those two institutions in my life leads me to a strong resolution to give back to others what I received.

I come from a small, independent Pentecostal church, *Fraternité des Eglises Pentecôtes en Afrique* (Fraternity of Pentecostal Churches in Africa), and our congregation did not have a biblical seminary. At that time, only the biggest churches had their own seminaries. In my effort to find a place to sharpen my spiritual knowledge, my uncle directed me to BBI.

It was a nice place, because Christians from different denominations could meet and share their faith. During my studies at BBI, I met a missionary couple, Annette and Paco Castillo, from the Anabaptist community church of Burgos. They came to present a new project of a children's home. After the presentation, they encouraged us to visit them, but I was not personally convinced to go.

However, after a while, I decided to visit and learn more about *La Casa Grande's* ministry. That was the beginning of the long journey in which I am still on today.

During the summer of 2001, I visited the couple and saw how they were sharing their lives and helping innocent kids. I was touched to see people who are not from Benin, giving love to Beninese children.

After that day, I tried to answer one question: How am I participating in the transformation of the lives of others? The only answer that came to my heart is that I needed to share my love, too.

It is true that after decades, a lot of discussion is still going on regarding the importance of mission. But from my own experience, I can say that my eyes were widely opened, but I did not always see what was happening all around me. That is why I believe that mission must be encouraged, even if the methods of intervention need to be redefined. This brings up the question of what kind of mission we need today.

During the first two years of my discipleship at *La Casa Grande*, my studies at BBI helped my spouse and me understand the importance of what we were doing with the children.

BBI was a laboratory we entered to prepare formulas and apply them at *La Casa Grande*. The Bible school motivated us to give back what we received and to offer love to others. ■



Paulin and Esther Bossou are co-directors of *La Casa Grande*, a home, school, and apprenticeship program for children. They live in Canada with their three sons, Nathan, Ruben and Ephraim. The family will return to Benin in February 2015 after a three-year break for Paulin and Esther to pursue further education, enjoy extended family time, and share with North Americans about their ministries.

Acts of the Apostles in Benin

Understanding Jesus' call to radical discipleship

By Lynda Hollinger-Janzen

In 1987, I took a leap of faith and landed in the New Testament church, as described in the book of Acts. Over the next 13 years, I received the gift of witnessing first-generation Christians following Jesus with their whole minds, souls and bodies. I was taught and humbled by brothers and sisters from more than 70 denominations who don't just take occasional leaps of faith, but who count on God to guide them step-by-step through every single day. My Beninese friends and colleagues really do wake up with their minds stayed on Jesus; that is, if they haven't spent the whole night at a prayer vigil. Many open their Bibles any time work allows a few minutes of leisure. It is not uncommon to see market women reading Scripture while they wait for the shoppers to come to their stands.

Nonviolence

In Benin, I learned about radical nonviolence from fishermen whose families live in a village built on stilts in the waters of Lac Nokoué. The people of Jesuko (Jesus' village) fled persecution for their faith. Because most of their neighbors are fearful of water, Jesuko's inhabitants find peace by living in the middle of this lake on the northeast edge of Cotonou, Benin's largest city. Several men from Jesuko paddled to the mainland to attend a Benin Bible Institute class on The Beatitudes one evening. Around 10 p.m., they returned to their *pirogue*, a boat made by hollowing out a tree. Their enemies had been lying in wait and leapt from the shadows, attacking the men from Jesuko as they approached their boat. Although the fishermen have impressive upper-body strength from hauling in nets full of fish, they allowed themselves to be pummeled and cut by machetes. My first thought was, "Well, at least you could have used your *pirogue* paddles to ward off the blows!" But the Jesuko men put into practice what they had just studied in Matthew 5:39: "Do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also."

Generosity

Jean and Virginie Yéhouenou were coming home from a Sunday of prayer and fasting. The hour was late.

They had just enough money to break their fast with a meal of cornmeal porridge and okra sauce sold by their neighbor, who had a Beninese version of a fast-food restaurant—a table and bench on the sidewalk. As Jean and Virginie unlocked their door to get the coins for their meal, another neighbor woman came running toward them, sobbing, "My baby has malaria and I have no money to buy medicine." Jean and Virginie didn't even need to talk about their decision. They gave the woman their money and went to bed with empty stomachs.

Seek first God's realm

When Benin Bible Institute approached Bonaventure Akowanou about becoming its administrator, it was a hard decision to make for him and his wife, Clarisse. Bonaventure had a good-paying job with Air Liquide, an industrial gas company, and was quickly climbing the social ladder to become part of Benin's elite class. But, he and Clarisse decided to adapt their lifestyle to a third of the salary they had been used to, and they have continued in the Benin Bible Institute ministry for a dozen years.

Contextualizing my deeper faith in North America

The way my brothers and sisters in Benin live out their faith helps me understand more fully Jesus' call to radical discipleship. Now that I am living in North America, how can I be the gospel each day? How can I point others toward Jesus? ■



Lynda Hollinger-Janzen is a writer for Mennonite Mission Network. She served in Benin from 1985 to 2000. She lives in Goshen, Indiana, with her husband, Rod, and loves reconnecting with their three young-adult children when schedules permit.

Image from Mennonite Church USA Archives in Goshen, Indiana



Rebecca Assani, Lynda Hollinger-Janzen, Daniel Goldschmidt-Nussbaumer, and Saturnin Afaton prepare for a river crossing on a community health trip.

New workers enter service

Mission workers who began assignments December 2014 through February 2015

DOOR Discover

Atlanta unit

Faith Temple, Cochran, Georgia

First Presbyterian Church, Raleigh, North Carolina

Chicago unit

Bethany Christian Schools, Goshen, Indiana

First Presbyterian Church, Libertyville, Illinois

Oakridge Secondary School, London, Ontario

Hollywood unit

First Presbyterian Church, Santa Monica, California

Peace and Justice Academy, Pasadena, California

San Antonio unit

Grand Rapids (Michigan) Christian High School

Protestant Community at Ithaca (New York) College

Southern Methodist University, Dallas

St. Stephen Presbyterian Church, Fort Worth, Texas

SOOP

Kenneth and Mary Amstutz, Kidron, Ohio, Kidron Mennonite

Church, served two weeks in Glendale, Arizona.

Edwin and Ruth Basinger, Catoosa, Oklahoma, Eden Mennonite Church (Inola, Oklahoma), served more than one month in Carlsbad, New Mexico.

Connie and Gerri Beachy, Middlebury, Indiana, First Mennonite Church of Middlebury, served three months in Brooksville, Florida.

Linda and Roger Clemmons, Normal, Illinois, Mennonite Church of Normal, served three months in Gotha, Florida.

Mary Jean Cross and John Hertzler, Harrisonburg, Virginia, Shalom Mennonite Congregation (Harrisonburg), served two weeks in Americus, Georgia.

Carl and Darlene Dintaman, Goshen, Indiana, Belmont Mennonite Church (Elkhart, Indiana), served three weeks in Glendale, Arizona.

Belle Duerksen and Lewis Naylor, Goshen, Indiana, Eighth Street Mennonite Church (Goshen), served two weeks in Glendale, Arizona.

Gene and Judy Gascho, Aurora, Oregon, Zion Mennonite

Church (Hubbard, Oregon), served three weeks in Glendale, Arizona.

Jim and Lila Gascho, Goshen, Indiana, Waterford Mennonite Church (Goshen), served one and a half months in Glendale, Arizona.

Lois Shank Gerber and Lowell Gerber, Lititz, Pennsylvania, Lititz Mennonite Church, served two weeks in Glendale, Arizona.

Janice and LaVerne Graber, Freeman, South Dakota, Salem Mennonite Church (Freeman), served three months in Carlsbad, New Mexico.

Patricia Gross, Madison, South Dakota, Madison United Methodist Church, served one month in Washington, D.C.

Marilyn and Peter Hartman, Hesston, Kansas, Whitestone Mennonite Church (Hesston), served two weeks in Carlsbad, New Mexico.

Dorothy and James Jones, Salina, Kansas, served three weeks in San Antonio.

Lila and Ron King, Harrisonburg, Virginia, Harrisonburg Mennonite Church, served three weeks in Glendale, Arizona.

Robert King, Colorado Springs, Colorado, Beth-El Mennonite Church (Colorado Springs), served one and a half months in Americus, Georgia.

Gayle Gerber Koontz and Ted Koontz, Goshen, Indiana, Assembly Mennonite Church (Goshen), served three weeks in Tucson, Arizona.

Lynn Lehman, Durango, Colorado, First Mennonite Church of Iowa City (Iowa), served more than a week in Tucson, Arizona.

Don Lichti, St. Louis, St. Louis Mennonite Fellowship, served three months in Tucson, Arizona.

Norman and Phyllis Lind, Salem, Oregon, Salem Mennonite Church (Keizer, Oregon), served one and a half months in Petittcodiac, New Brunswick.

Al and Lois Longenecker, Elkhart, Indiana, Prairie Street Mennonite Church (Elkhart), served one month in Tucson, Arizona.

Dale and Linda Miller, Kalona, Iowa, East Union Mennonite Church (Kalona), served two months in Brooksville, Florida.

Burnell and Erma Moyer, Manheim, Pennsylvania, Hernley

Mennonite Church (Manheim), served two weeks in Brooksville, Florida.

Greg Oman, Hernando, Mississippi, served close to two months in Glendale, Arizona, and two months in Washington, D.C.

Kay and John Reimer, Normal, Illinois, Mennonite Church of Normal, served three months in Gotha, Florida.

Sue and Wesley Richard, Goshen, Indiana, West Goshen Church of the Brethren, served three weeks in Gotha, Florida.

Mary Rogan, Salt Lake City, Utah, served three months in Glendale, Arizona.

Duane and Sherylyn Schmidt, Paoli, Indiana, Paoli Mennonite Fellowship, served three weeks in Tucson, Arizona.

Delbert and Linda Schrock, Bristol, Indiana, First Presbyterian Church (Elkhart, Indiana), served two months in Gotha, Florida.

Elinor and Ted Shattuck, Danbury, New Hampshire, Taftsville (Vermont) Chapel Mennonite Fellowship, served three months in Tucson, Arizona.

Lucy and Peter Smith, Cottonwood Falls, Kansas, Pleasant Hill Community Church (Pleasant Hill, Tennessee), served one month in Hickory, North Carolina.

Kathleen and Keith Springer, Saybrook, Illinois, East Bend Mennonite Church (Fisher, Illinois), served more than one month in San Antonio.

Kathy Straub, Buhl, Idaho, Calvary Chapel (Buhl), served one month in Glendale, Arizona.

Patricia and William Strunk, Alden, New York, Alden Mennonite Church, served one month in Hickory, North Carolina.

Duane and Marlyns Tieszen, Marion, South Dakota, Salem-Zion Mennonite Church (Freeman, South Dakota), served one month in El Dorado, Arkansas.

Diane and William Trethewey, Goshen, Indiana, Granger (Indiana) Community Church, served three months in Gotha, Florida.

Lois Rivera Wenger, Staunton, Virginia, Family of Hope (Harrisonburg, Virginia), served two months in Glendale, Arizona.

International

Palmer Becker began a two-year special assignment in partnership with Mennonite Mission Network and Mennonite Church Canada. He is teaching in various countries in both Latin America and Asia. He attends Waterloo North (Ontario) Mennonite Church.

Nelson Kraybill began a two-year special assignment during which he will teach workshops in various locations around the world on Bible, theology, and mission. He is pastor of Prairie Street Mennonite Church in Elkhart, Indiana.

Jane and Jerrell Ross Richer began a two-year assignment as international service workers in Ecuador, where they will serve six months of each year. There they will develop and foster relationships with indigenous peoples. They are members of Waterford Mennonite Church in Goshen, Indiana.

Applying grace in radical ways

Mission Network associates bring restorative justice to college.

Alisha and Joshua Garber infuse two Anabaptist values, hospitality and reconciliation, into the lives of their students at LCC International University in Lithuania.

Alisha is the director of community life and dean of discipline, while Joshua is the spiritual formation coordinator.

“We prefer to lead from behind or beside,” said Joshua. “I try to be a sounding board, and be very transparent. I like to remove myself from a

position of power over a student and instead say, ‘Hey, let’s go on a bike ride,’ or ‘What’s bugging you or going on in your life?’”

This year, Alisha implemented a restorative justice model for the disciplinary process that encourages mentorship. There won’t be fines, and when violations do occur, an adult will walk alongside the offenders

and talk about what their goals are, and how to redirect energy into positive goals.



Ejike Nnamdi Nwosu, left, and Martynas Bučas play Dutch Blitz after a potluck that Nwosu organized.



Lasting legacy

Author of book about former mission agency's legacy dies.

As the 100th anniversary of the General Conference Mennonite Church Commission on Overseas Mission (COM) approached, Tina Block Ediger, “the face” of the agency to churches in the United States and Canada, was the obvious person to produce a book to mark the occasion. That book, *Window to the World: Extraordinary Stories from a Century of Overseas Mission 1900-2000*, is now a lasting testament of Ediger’s significant contribution to God’s mission in the world.

Born Apr. 25, 1931, near Steinbach, Manitoba, in Canada, Ediger worked for COM, predecessor agency of Mennonite Mission Network, in Newton, Kansas, from 1955 to 1981. She worked as secretary of communications.

Tina Block Ediger died Oct. 16, 2014, at the age of 82. Memorial services were held Oct. 25 at Bethel College Mennonite Church in North Newton, Kansas, where she attended.

“Tina gave of herself unstintingly to strengthen ministries that would advance God’s healing and hope globally,” wrote Mennonite Mission Network Executive Director Stanley W. Green in a letter to the family. “It seems that for Tina this was a vocation, a calling, to share the good news of the gospel.”

Photo by Joshua Garber

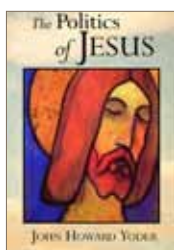
Beyond blog

Peace on the shelf

Book recommendations from Jason Boone, coordinating minister of the Peace and Justice Support Network

I get quite a few requests from folks looking for recommendations for books about peace. I've got a three-page single-spaced list I usually draw from, depending on the specific need.

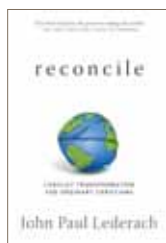
I don't know about "best," but here are three books that have been important for my own understanding of peace.



The Politics of Jesus by John Howard Yoder. It's a classic. A little dense at places, but worth the effort. A friend recom-

mended this book when I asked questions like, "Why don't we

take all of Jesus' teachings seriously?" I found out some people do, and started a meandering road toward becoming Mennonite. (I didn't know then what I know now, that Yoder was a brilliant theologian who engaged in deeply harmful behavior. I'm grateful the discernment group of Mennonite Church USA is helping us hold the theological contribution of Yoder while acknowledging the pain he caused.)



Reconcile by John Paul Lederach is a re-released edition of biblical reflections and peacemaking stories from years

of working for peace in conflict settings around the world.



The Powers that Be by Walter Wink explores how Jesus challenges the domination system. The chapter on "turn-

ing the other cheek" helped me see peacemaking as active engagement for right relationship and justice rather than non-resistant passivity.

Read the full blog post

Beyond.MennoniteMission.net/Pages/peace-on-the-shelf.aspx.

Sacrificial sharing

An urban congregation donates building fund to another congregation.

A joyful shout and applause erupted from the congregation as Pastor François Xavier Compaoré announced that a new church structure had been completed. But Compaoré wasn't talking about the much-anticipated building to accommodate the rapidly growing membership of *Sheckina Wend Ziiri* in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso.

Instead, the Sheckina congregation celebrated because a church they had started three years ago in the village of Gbomblora, was able to meet with a roof

over their heads, thanks to Sheckina's decision to stop progress on their own new building in order to send their funds to their church plant.

On that Sunday in June, Bill Frisbie, a special assignment worker with Mennonite Mission Network and LeaderSource, had been invited to the service at the Assemblies of God congregation by Compaoré, who had been his translator for a seminar on leadership development earlier in the week.

Sheckina's church plant had been meeting under a structure of branches and grasses because no one in the town would rent a building to the congregation. When the Sheckina congregation received the news that their brothers and sisters were unable to gather for worship during heavy rains, they delayed their own building project.

Using Sheckina's gift, the younger congregation built a solid concrete block structure that shelters them from the burning sun and driving rain.

Beyond blog

Recipe: Carrot and greens quiche

MVSeer shares a recipe from her work with a food bank.

by Karina Kreider

One of my tasks for my Mennonite Voluntary Service placement with the farmers market program, supported by the Community Food Bank in Tucson, Arizona, is collecting recipes for our markets. Our markets are consignment-based, so we are often selling vast quantities of whichever item Mother Nature has arbitrarily chosen to favor.

The recipes I choose feature

ingredients of which we have a plethora and of which people often ask questions. The fewer the ingredients in a recipe, but the more of which are available at market, the better.

The goal of my work is to support local produce growers by making local produce available and accessible to everyone, regardless of income.

Read the full blog post

Beyond.MennoniteMission.net/Pages/Recipe-Carrot-and-Greens-Quiche.aspx



Carrot and Greens Quiche

Ingredients

- | | |
|--|-----------------------------------|
| 1 1/2 tsp vegetable oil | 2 eggs, plus 2 more egg yolks |
| 1/2 onion, diced | 2 c milk |
| 1 clove garlic, minced | 1/4 tsp crushed red pepper flakes |
| 3 c sweet potato greens, chopped
(spinach can be substituted) | 1/8 tsp ground nutmeg |
| 1/4 c shredded carrots | 1/4 tsp salt |
| 1 c shredded Monterey Jack cheese | 1/4 tsp pepper |
| | 1 (9-inch) pie crust |

Directions

1. Preheat oven to 375 degrees F.
2. Heat the oil in a skillet over medium heat and cook the onion until tender. Mix in the garlic, greens and carrots, and cook until any liquid has evaporated.
3. Remove skillet from heat, cool slightly, and mix in eggs, milk and cheese. Season with red pepper, nutmeg, salt and pepper. Pour the mixture into the pie shell.
4. Bake 32-38 minutes in the preheated oven, or until a toothpick inserted in the center of the quiche comes out clean.

Sharing hope

Blessing each other with our gifts

By Ervin Stutzman



The story of Mennonite Mission Network's partnership in Benin is a narrative of hope and perseverance. It demonstrates the value of ministry partnerships—an investment in hope. When hope wears thin, the encouragement of small financial investments can yield big spiritual dividends.

If we live in the United States, we tend to see ourselves in the role of the givers—the investors who share in the lives of others. But, as Lynda Hollinger-Janzen shows, when we walk in partnership with others, we are often the primary beneficiaries of the gifts of those with whom we partner. Her story reminds me of the times that people invested in me, watering the seeds of hope in my own soul.

Years ago, when I was a teenager, I received the invitation to attend a Bible institute for a short winter term. I really didn't have the money to pay the tuition, and neither did my widowed mother. But a deacon from my home church heard about my interests, and—without me knowing it at the time—supplied much of the money I needed to go. My experience at the Bible institute set me on a path of discipleship that has shaped the rest of my life. I shall be forever grateful for the gift of that kind deacon.

As I learned about the ministry of the Benin Bible Institute, I imagined students, like me, who were enabled to attend there by the generous giving of others. These sacrificial investments have borne fruit, birthing new ministries of hope both in Benin and far beyond.

I'm so grateful to be part of a "believers' church" that takes discipleship seriously—walking alongside ministry partners around the world. In addition to the partnerships like those in Benin, we do it in our hometowns and around the world through micro-loans for entrepreneurial workers and personal involvement in community development projects. We do it by gathering in "huddles" of two and three in Christ's name to pray for neighborhoods and start new churches. And perhaps most simply, we walk alongside each other with our daily prayers, our vulnerability and our needs, compassionate listening and a helping hand, offering the gift of ourselves in the mission of God. A true investment in hope.

Ervin Stutzman is executive director of Mennonite Church USA.



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New resource!

Do you need children's activities? Cambodia mission bank teaching tools are a great way for children to learn about God's work in the world!

Until March 31, banks are FREE for all children in grades K-6 from Mennonite Church USA congregations who have not yet received a bank of their own. Orders placed after March 31 cost \$4.95 per bank.



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