



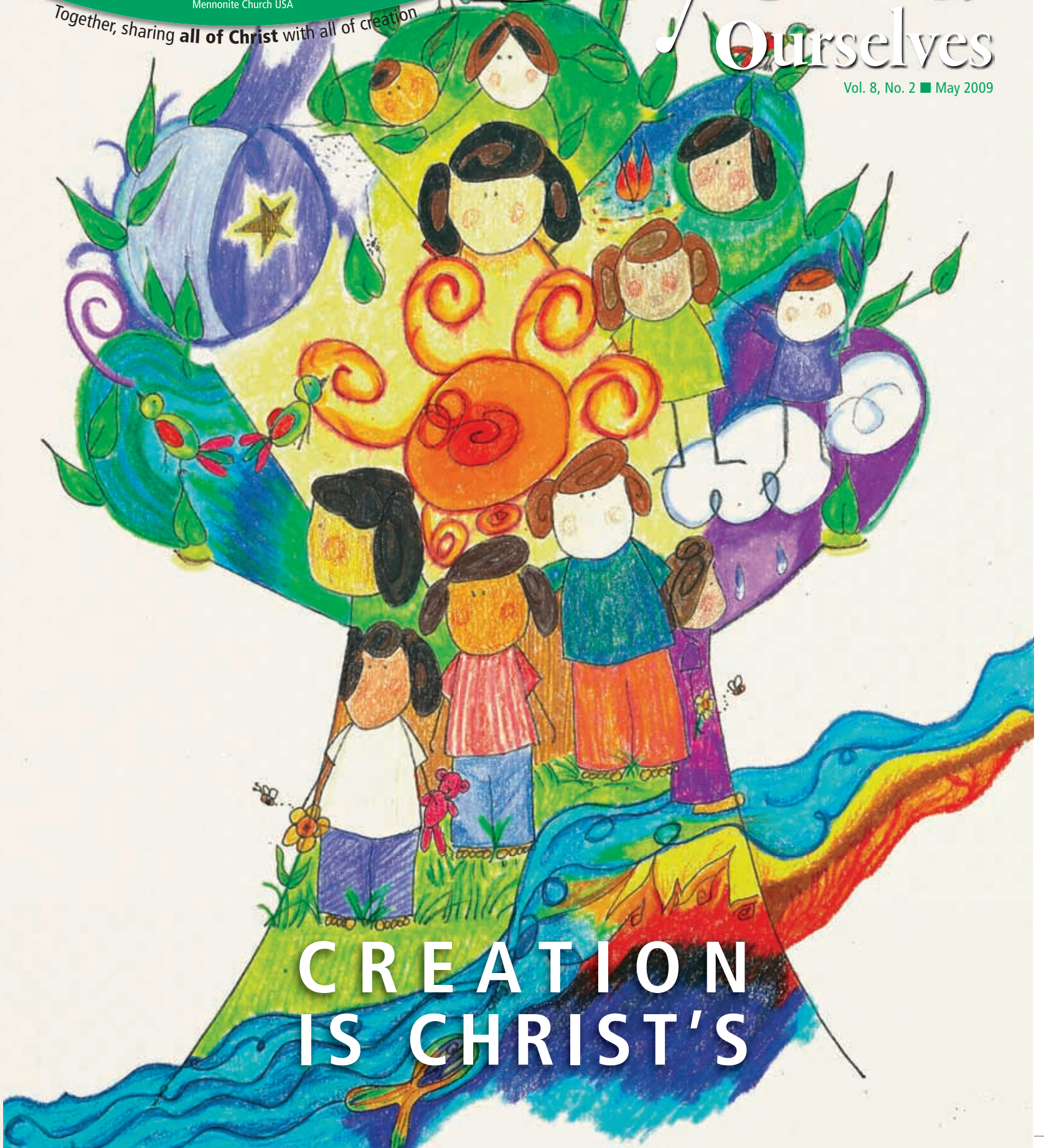
Mennonite
Mission
Network

The mission agency of
Mennonite Church USA

Together, sharing **all of Christ** with all of creation

Beyond Ourselves

Vol. 8, No. 2 ■ May 2009



CREATION
IS CHRIST'S

Beyond Ourselves

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Beyond Ourselves is published by Mennonite Mission Network, which envisions every congregation and all parts of the church being fully engaged in mission—across the street, all through the marketplaces, and around the world. Contact us for a free subscription.

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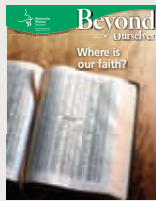
Cover photo: "En el, Vida" (colored pencil) by Fabiola Flores, Mennonite Mission Network.

www.MennoniteMission.net

Together, sharing **all of Christ** with all of creation



Letters



Thanks for your responses to our February issue, "Where is our faith?"

To read more reflections on the sacrificial giving calendar exercises printed in the issue, visit [LentenGiving.wordpress.com](#).

Let us know what you think of this issue. What inspires you? Engages you? Changes your ideas? Visit [BeyondOurselves@MennoniteMission.net](#)

Kudos to you and your staff on the February *Beyond Ourselves*! The cover leapt off the rack—timely and pointed. The article visuals popped AND enhanced the content. I really liked how the "Meal team" article infographic hit home the extraordinary volume of shared meals hosted by the unit. As a pastor to youth and families, the news item on bullying was most helpful in its suggested responses. Overall, the magazine was an important call to align to the hope we have in Christ, and gave tangible handles for offering that hope to the world.

Matthew D. Hickman, Normal, Ill.

As one who has experienced some major readjustments in the last year, I was moved in a painful, yet positive, way by the cover picture of the "bible."

This is the picture of a 21st-century prophetic utterance. This would make a great poster.

Dan Lais, Lebanon, Ore.

Your February issue of *Beyond Ourselves* was outstanding. Having traveled with Stanley and Ursula Green to their home country of South Africa last summer, his editorial was like seeing his childhood situation fresh again. The Lenten giving idea is one I hope our small group will consider. Thanks to the creative person who planned it.

Finally, it's heartening to read how the Mennonite Voluntary Service unit in Elkhart is making a team effort to provide meals and fellowship with such a variety of people. That's what Christian hospitality is all about!

Phyllis Miller, Goshen, Ind.

I'm writing to thank [Stanley Green] for sharing that poignant and powerful story in *Beyond Ourselves* called "I will make you a blessing." It is a story with so much strength and a future, especially in times like these when fear menaces.

As my husband, Robby, and I have spent nearly 10 years in Africa, it was especially poignant for me to picture the bone soup cooking in the backyard and feel your mother's quandary about whether to share such a humble meal. You have an amazing way of expressing the details so that they work for the story and leave an indelible impression.

Susan Yoder Ackerman, Newport News, Va.

I have to take this opportunity to let you know how moved Len and I were with [Stanley Green's] February editorial in *Beyond Ourselves*. Keep telling stories—your own and those of Mission Network workers. They put flesh on the gospel in ways that theological discussions never can.

Linea Geiser, Goshen, Ind.

Online—MennoniteMission.net

Prosperity through community



One person called me recently and said, "I've recently stopped being homeless and I want to give back. How should I do it?"

I replied, "When you were on the street, what did you want most?"

She thought and responded, "I really wanted a place to go to the bathroom and some hot coffee in the morning."

I smiled and said, "Then maybe you should buy \$5 gift cards to Starbucks and give them to people on the street, so they can have some coffee and a place to go to the bathroom, if only for a morning."

Mutual aid is as much knowing what the poor need as it is giving.

Steve Kimes, pastor of Anawim Christian Community, reflecting on the national economy for Urban Connections, an online Mission Network

publication. Read more from Kimes and other contributors, including Regina Shands Stoltzfus and Ron Copeland, plus find ministry resources at [Urban.MennoniteMission.net](#).

What is an Anabaptist Christian?



What are the "sacred" core values of Anabaptists? In the latest *Missio Dei* booklet, "What is an Anabaptist Christian?" (*Que es un Cristiano Anabautista?*), Palmer Becker expounds on three key statements that profoundly affect our believing,

belonging and behaving:

1. Jesus is the center of our faith.
2. Community is the center of our lives.
3. Reconciliation is the center of our work.

Download the full issue for free at [MissioDei.MennoniteMission.net](#).

Good news to the whole creation

Repeatedly since I was ordained in 1977, I have returned to the words of the hymn written by George Rawson (1807-1889). Rawson based the lyrics on pastor John Robinson's address to the early Pilgrims in 1620, just before they sailed from Holland to New England. The text, penned in the 1850s, had these words in the first stanza:

*We limit not the truth of God to our
poor reach of mind—
By notions of our day and sect—
crude, partial and confined.
No, let a new and better hope within
our hearts be stirred
For God hath yet more light and
truth to break forth from the word.*

I have returned to the last line of that stanza many times in my journey. Sometimes I have turned to it for comfort and encouragement, and sometimes to allow myself to be challenged. Am I limiting God to my current understanding? Is there yet more of God's plan and purposes to be discovered?

We humans have a hard time admitting that we do not have the whole truth. Both the Nazi regime during World War II in Germany and the Christian Nationalist Party in South Africa during the apartheid era were convinced that there was warrant in the Bible for their policies and practices that inflicted unspeakable atrocities. Those who defended the institution of slavery in North America believed similarly that the Bible supported their practice. Many in the churches in each of these situations supported the convictions of those who implemented these policies and practices, never questioning whether the Bible may have other light and truth. I am grateful, however, that in time most believers became open to more light and truth from God's word, and the abhorrent practices of slavery, anti-Semitism and apartheid were disavowed.

During the medieval era, humans seemed so small and vulnerable. Within the created order, there were malevolent forces that seemed threatening and even terrifying. The goal was to subdue creation, to gain control. The creation was often seen as the enemy.

During the industrial era, our potential to feed our greed grew, and again the creation suffered. No thought was given to the destruction of biospheres and the forced extinction of many life forms. It was only toward the end of the 20th century that we discovered that through our fear and our greed we were hurting ourselves and hurtling toward self-destruction. In that desert of destructiveness, some began to read



“ God loves the created order and intends for its restoration. ”

God's word with fresh eyes. When we were ready to pay attention, we came to understand anew that God loves the created order and intends for its restoration (Romans 8:21). We learned that our destiny is intimately bound up with that of the created order—we groan with creation as we wait in hope for the restoration of God's good purposes in the created order (Romans 8).

Jesus told his disciples in Mark 16:15 to “go into all the world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation.” The effect of God's reconciling and restoring work in Jesus is upon the whole created order and not just limited to human beings. This is a con-

firmation of our common destiny with all of creation. In recent years, we followers of Jesus have been discovering a transformed relationship with the created order.

Illumined by the new light and truth from God's word, we are overcoming our fear and blind greed. We are learning to repent our wanton destruction of God's creation. We are hearing the call to become more loving and caring and more appreciative of creation. Moreover, we are learning that our transformation requires that we embrace the good news of God's purposes in all of creation. This transformation demands that we commit to live with greater care for that which God has created.

This change is not just for God's sake, but also for our own. Our destiny is entwined with that of God's creation—in its ruin, we are ruined; in its healing, we are healed. Through Jesus, we are together made whole.

My slowness in learning, and our failure together to be open to God's whole gospel, forces me to return again to pray with George Rawson the words of his final stanza:

*O Father, Son, and Spirit,
Send us increase from above;
Enlarge, expand all Christian souls
To comprehend thy love.
And make us to go on, to know
With nobler powers conferred:
The Lord hath yet more light and truth
To break forth from his word.*

Stanley W. Green
Executive Director/CEO

CREATION IS CHRIST'S

Seeking to share all of Christ with all of creation means more than simply caring for the land.

Connecting to creation means acknowledging the divine in all things on this earth. It means seeing all people as God's creations, and respecting them as carrying parts of God on their sojourns. It means entering situations with the understanding that while we carry Christ with us, we also go to where Christ already is.

In Romans 8, Paul tells us that creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God. That revelation can come in many ways, including:

- Efforts to bring justice to all of God's people.
- Connecting with the glory and wonder of existence.
- Recognizing God's presence in others as well as in ourselves.
- The destruction of the structures of racism, sexism and other "isms" that keep powerful groups in control.
- Empowering the faithful toward actively joining God's work in the world.
- Communicating across languages, or sometimes with very little language—as in this issue of *Beyond Ourselves*.

Sharing Christ with all of creation is not only a call toward evangelism. Sharing Christ is not just offering what I have with others. It is a call to acknowledge that Christ does not belong to us or to them, to me or to you. In John 17, Jesus thanks God: "I have made your name known to those whom you gave me from the world. They were yours, and you gave them to me."

Christ does not belong to the world; the world, and all that is in it, belongs to Christ. In that, all of us share.



“ Often called “the ministry of presence,” this counter-cultural strategy challenges values idolized in the West: efficiency, productivity, and the idea that bigger is always better. Instead, a **ministry based on presence is committed to listening before speaking** and to observing before taking action. A ministry of presence asks that we toss our to-do lists over our shoulders, throw the door open ... and wait. ”

—Jackie Wyse

Quote: From 2002–2007, Wyse served at the *Inloophuis de Ruimte*, a drop-in center in Almere, The Netherlands—a place in a culture of isolation for neighbors to connect. **Read more about the drop-in center** with a free download of *Digging for treasure in your own backyard*, volume 15 of Mennonite Mission Network’s *Missio Dei* series, at BeyondOurselves.MennoniteMission.net. ↗

Illustration: “*El Viento*” (watercolor and colored pencil on paper) by Fabiola Flores. Flores is assistant for Latin America and East Asia for Mennonite Mission Network.

“‘El Viento’ reminds me of the inevitable and soothing miracle of life that moves me to breathe in, allowing him to hold me, surround me, and I know I am his child.”
—Fabiola Flores

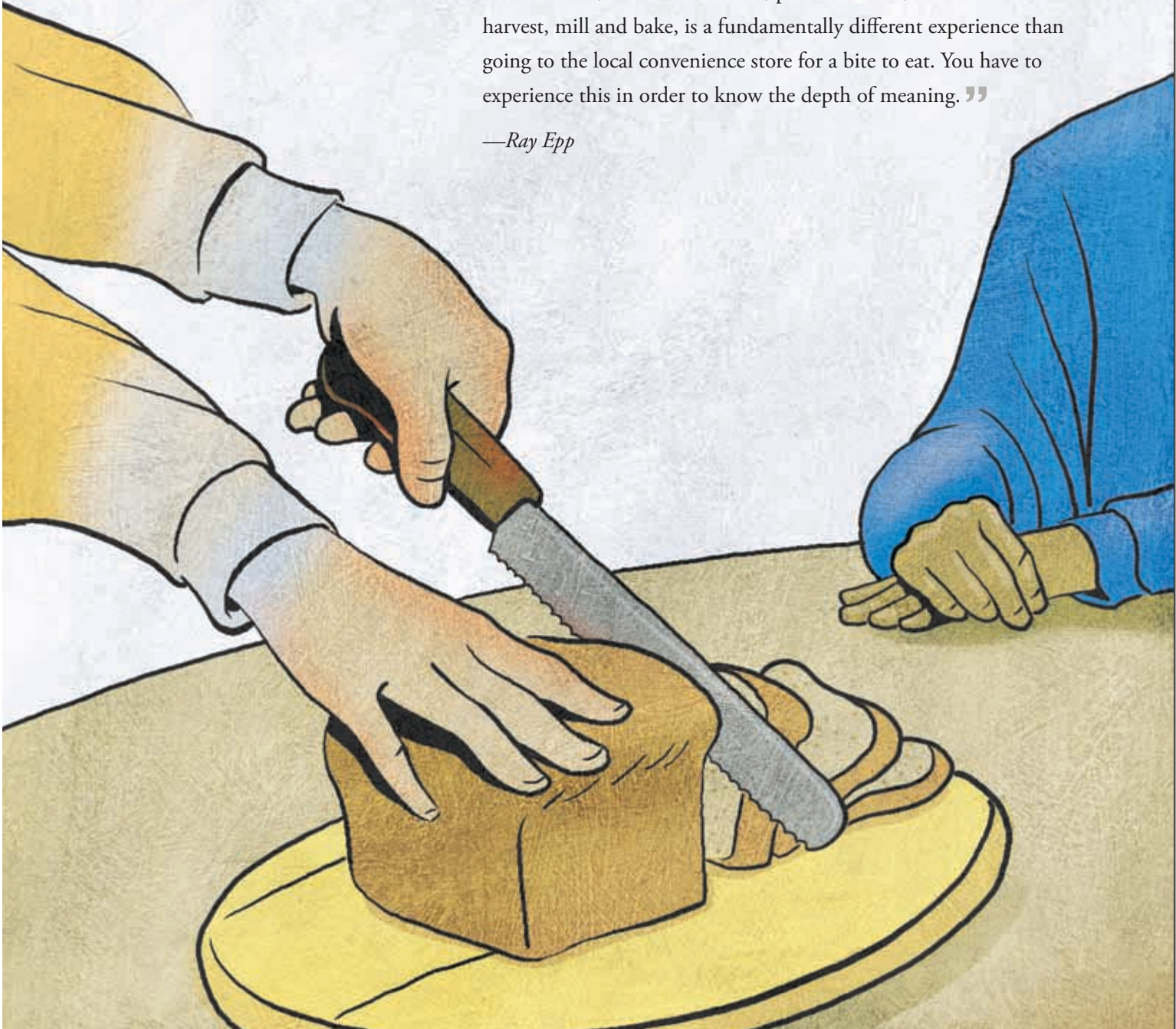
See more of Flores’ artwork at BeyondOurselves.MennoniteMission.net. ↗

CREATION IS CHRIST'S **Community**



“ How can we as a church and how can we as members of the body lay down our lives for the salvation of the Christian community and the neighbors who surround us? We can begin to think about acquiring the skills to grow our own food, growing it for the sake of the community, and inviting neighbors to table fellowship, sharing the food that we have grown on the soil that God has so graciously provided. **Sharing bread with a friend** when you have taken the time to till the soil, make the fertilizer, plant the seeds, wait 10 months to harvest, mill and bake, is a fundamentally different experience than going to the local convenience store for a bite to eat. You have to experience this in order to know the depth of meaning. ”

—Ray Epp



Quote: Ray Epp and his wife, Akiko Aratani, are directors of Menno Village, a cooperative, urban/rural, intentional, agriculture community in Hokkaido, Japan.

Epp expands on the importance of community and the theological and ethical dangers of biotechnology at BeyondOurselves.MennoniteMission.net. ↗

Illustration: “Wheat” (Photoshop) by Jesse Graber, artist and former Mennonite Voluntary Service participant.

See more of Graber’s artwork at BeyondOurselves.MennoniteMission.net. ↗

CREATION IS CHRIST'S **Everywhere**

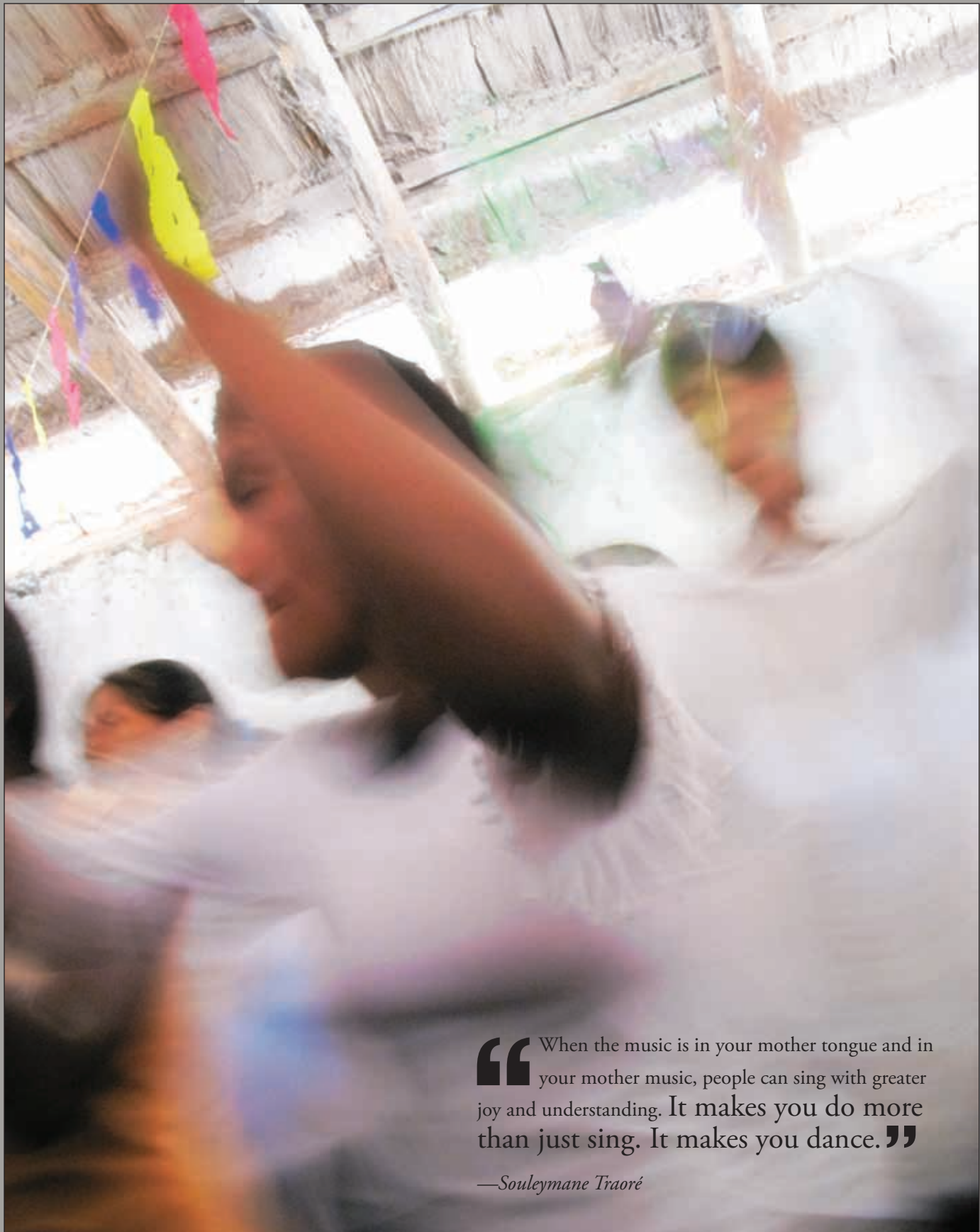
“ My hope is that groups are able to make the connection that **God is working in the city,** and that they can connect that to God working at home and in their lives. ”

—*Vanessa Silverman*



Quote: Silverman is DOOR (Discovering Opportunities for Outreach and Reflection) city director in Miami.

Photo by Cara Rufenacht. See more **stories and photos from service locations** at BeyondOurselves.MennoniteMission.net.



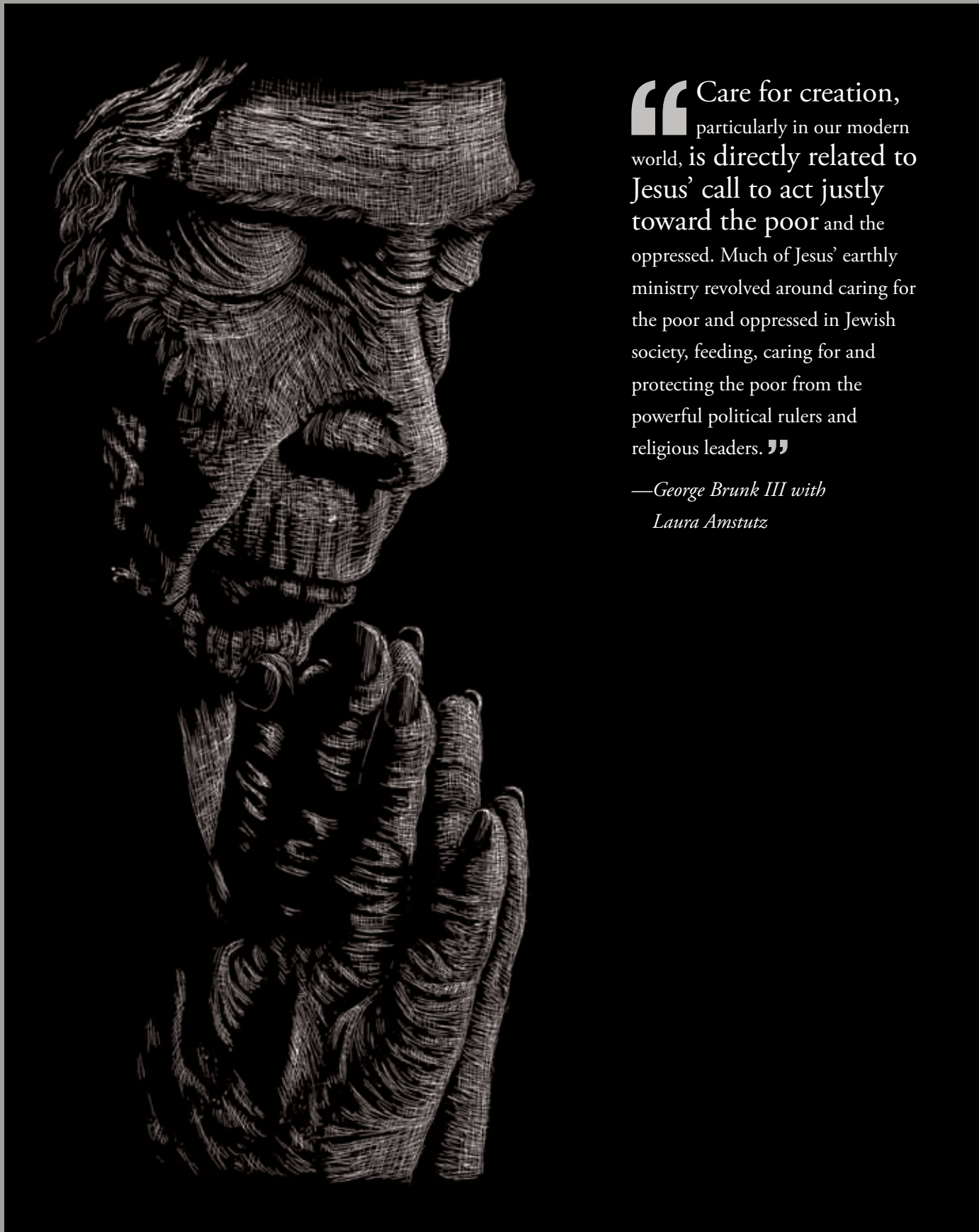
“When the music is in your mother tongue and in your mother music, people can sing with greater joy and understanding. It makes you do more than just sing. It makes you dance.”

—Souleymane Traoré

Quote: Traoré, Orodara, Burkina Faso, arranged for the recording of the first known Christian music in the Siamou tongue, using their own Bible translations and original music. He works closely with Mennonite Mission Network representatives in Orodara.

Read the full news story and listen to clips from the Siamou recording session at BeyondOurselves.MennoniteMission.net.

Photograph: “Dance” by Ryan Miller, Mennonite Mission Network editorial director. Taken in a congregation in Mala’ Lapel in the Chaco region of Argentina.



“ Care for creation, particularly in our modern world, is directly related to Jesus’ call to act justly toward the poor and the oppressed. Much of Jesus’ earthly ministry revolved around caring for the poor and oppressed in Jewish society, feeding, caring for and protecting the poor from the powerful political rulers and religious leaders. ”

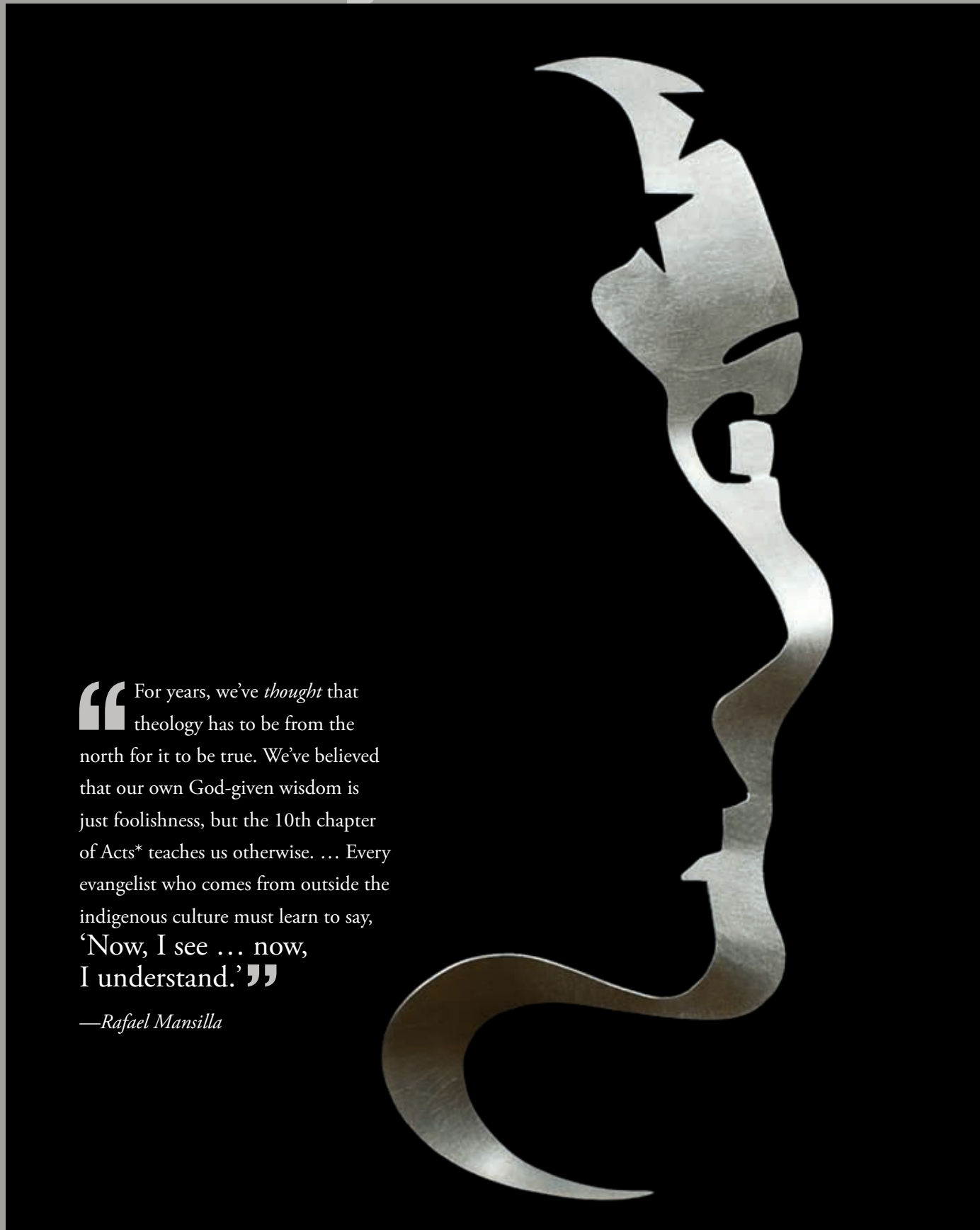
—George Brunk III with
Laura Amstutz

Quote: From the forthcoming book, *Jesus Matters: Good News for the 21st Century*, edited by James R. Krabill (senior executive for global ministries at Mennonite Mission Network) and David W. Shenk. Copyright © 2009 by Herald Press, Scottsdale, PA 15683. Used by permission (www.MPN.net). **Read the full chapter** excerpt at BeyondOurselves.MennoniteMission.net. ▶

Illustration: “Praying for Justice” (scratchboard) by Leo Hartshorn, minister of peace and justice for Mennonite Mission Network.

“This drawing is based on Jesus’ parable of the persistent widow, a poor, vulnerable woman who prayed and acted for justice against her oppressors.” —Leo Hartshorn

See more of Hartshorn’s artwork at BeyondOurselves.MennoniteMission.net. ▶



“ For years, we’ve *thought* that theology has to be from the north for it to be true. We’ve believed that our own God-given wisdom is just foolishness, but the 10th chapter of Acts* teaches us otherwise. ... Every evangelist who comes from outside the indigenous culture must learn to say, ‘Now, I see ... now, I understand.’ ”

—Rafael Mansilla

Quote: Mansilla is a Toba community chief and pastor working with the Mennonite team in the Argentine Chaco on Toba Bible translations. **Read his full reflections** at BeyondOurselves.MennoniteMission.net. ▶

*[Then Peter began to speak to them: ‘I truly understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation, anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him.’—Acts 10:34–35]

Sculpture: “Now I See” (aluminum) by David Fast, art director for Mennonite Mission Network.

“The journey toward understanding and anti-racism begins with claiming the power and brokenness of my nation and culture—the stars—and continues as I try to see myself through the eyes of another.” —David Fast

See more of Fast’s artwork at BeyondOurselves.MennoniteMission.net. ▶



Paraguay

Mennonite Mission Network representatives in South America join Anabaptists worldwide in preparing for Mennonite World Conference Assembly Gathered in July in Asunción, Paraguay.

Both in the Paraguay-Argentina region and across Latin America, Mennonite Mission Network helps congregations, area conferences, agencies and denominational ministries in Latin America and Mennonite Church USA form partnerships that encourage, inspire and challenge each other in missional outreach and development. All partnerships include praying for each other and developing relationships. Most also include joint programs and ways to adapt at home what is learned in another cultural context.

Mennonite World Conference

Prepare the way

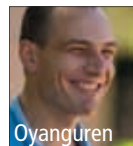
Paraguay to host indigenous exchange

Nearly 30 members of First Nations congregations in the United States and Canada will visit the homes and churches of their indigenous brothers and sisters following Assembly Gathered. In addition to their Paraguayan hosts, they will be joined by other Latin American indigenous Mennonite leaders. The group also will travel together to the Argentine Chaco where they will be hosted by the Mennonite team that works with indigenous evangelical churches.

“Our spirits are still intertwined,” said Norman Meade, one of the leaders of the tour. “This meeting will bring together indigenous hearts and spirits. We may come from different countries, but we share the experience of being indigenous to the land. We are never to be separated in God,” Meade said.

A grant from the Stella Devenpeck fund through Mennonite Mission Network (with Native Mennonite Ministries and Native Ministry Canada leaders) will help support the travel and gathering.

Spirit speaks and sings in tongues



By *Alfonsina and José Luis Oyanguren*

This year, as a part of the course in the New Testament, we made a

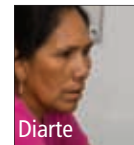
recording of the scriptures in Toba. Each participant selected a passage that they liked, and studied it for reading. Student musicians composed eight songs based on the biblical texts. Then we went to a recording studio and each one read their text.

Unlike ours, the Toba culture is a culture in a transition, from oral to written. That’s why many Toba people prefer to hear scriptures read rather than reading them themselves. We hope that these recordings will be a blessing for those who listen, and that the Holy Spirit will move through them.

We go forward totally in faith. May God give us wisdom as we live in our two worlds: the Spanish-speaking world and the Toba-speaking world.

The Oyangurens are part of the Mennonite team practicing accompaniment ministry with indigenous groups in the Argentine Chaco.

Workers push leaders, then follow



By *Richard and Ruth Anne Friesen*

Gretchen [Kingsley] and Ruth Anne saw Rosenda [Diarte], the president of the national *Unida* women, leading two Bible study times during the women’s gathering in July at her church.

In August, Rosenda led the main study so that indigenous language would be encouraged. Then Gretchen



Linda Shelly

and I [Ruth Anne] decided to not be present for the next studies to allow the women to be more free to share together and to freely converse in Toba, which seemed to be Rosenda's suggestion.

Recently, Rosenda has said that the women would appreciate if the two of us were again present for the Bible studies as a resource for questions that arise. We hope to be attentive to the Spirit's leading.

The Friesens are part of the Mennonite team in the Chaco.

A presence in Paraguay

Until this year, Mennonite Mission Network associates C. Paul and Hildi Amstutz were the founding co-pastors of a Spanish-speaking church plant in Asunción, Paraguay, as an outgrowth of their German home congregation. The Amstutzes will continue to serve as mentors in the *Convención Evangélica Menonita Paraguaya* (CONEMPAR) pastoral leadership training program, but C. Paul is returning to the business chaplaincy program where he worked previously, and will teach courses in business chaplaincy. Hildi feels called

to develop a spiritual formation program, including spiritual retreats.

Mission Network and Mennonite Church Canada Witness grants to CONEMPAR help support a variety of ministry, communication and training opportunities.

What is mission?



Kingsley

Excerpts from Keith Kingsley

In some manner and measure, God is present to and reveals God's self in every people, through their particular history and culture. There are no peoples unreached or untouched by the God of all creation.

In our accompaniment style of mission among indigenous peoples, we begin as *guests* and *learners*, and become, when invited, *accompaniers*, *interlocutors*, *witnesses*, and even *brothers and sisters*. We work this way because it respects the prior presence of God among the people with whom we walk. It recognizes that elements of God's truth were here long before we came, and that this wisdom is for our liberation and wholeness as much as our "truth" is for their restoration.

As Toba zonal pastor Hugo Diaz said, "We don't want you to come and teach us the Bible. We want you to come so that we can read the Bible together."

One might propose that the evidence of the "success" of our style would be that *no one* would identify either us or our style as the reason for their transformation. Success would rather be measured by the discipleship that happens largely by and among indigenous people, churches and efforts, without adverting to accompaniers who might have encouraged such indigenization. I believe this is, in fact, largely the reality.

Gretchen and Keith Kingsley are part of the Mennonite team in the Chaco. For Kingsley's full reflection on how he answers a variety of questions, visit BeyondOurselves.MennoniteMission.net.

Join us

Anyone in relationship with Mennonite Mission Network may meet, share and pray together at a special workshop July 15 at Mennonite World Conference Assembly Gathered in Paraguay. More details to come.

The church in Paraguay is waiting.

Service



Mennonite Voluntary Service participant **Antonia Kam** works at Play for Peace in Chicago with her co-worker **Langston Maynor**.

New workers begin service

Dec. 1, 2008–Feb. 28, 2009

Mennonite Voluntary Service

Tara Hershberger, Hesston, Kan., is a theater intern at Magic Children's Theatre in San Antonio, Texas.

Justin Petkau, Carman, Manitoba, is a community gardening assistant with Kansas City (Kan.) Community Gardens.

Jared Wenger, Wayland, Iowa, is an intern with the Green Branches program at the Horticulture Society of New York in New York City.

SOOP*

Althea and Irv Detwiler, Lansdale, Pa., served one month in San Antonio.

Lowell and Ruth Detweiler, Akron, Pa., served two weeks in Tucson, Ariz.

Elfrieda and Peter Funk, Jordon Station, Ontario, served two weeks in San Antonio.

Robert and Shirley Glenn, Wakarusa, Ind., served one month in Carlsbad, N.M.

Cecil and Susan Graber, Eureka, Ill., served two months in San Antonio.

Thomas Grogan, Bath, Ohio, served one month in Americus, Ga.

LeAnne and Norman Gross, Oneida, Ill., served two months in Phoenix.

Heather Haines, Burnt Hills, N.Y., served one month in Americus, Ga.

Charles and Lorraine Harms, Fishers, Ind., served one month in Phoenix.

Byron and Barbara Kauffman, West Liberty, Ohio, served one month in Bloomfield, N.M.

Kay and Norbert Laubach, Keithsburg, Ill., served one month in Whitesburg, Ky.

Phil and Anita Lindberg, Stayton, Ore., served two months in Reedley, Calif.

Al and Lois Longenecker, Elkhart, Ind., served two months in Washington, D.C.

Loretta Martinson, Kalona, Iowa, served one week in El Dorado, Ark.

David and Joyce McCreary, Goshen, Ind., served one month in Miami.

Dale and Linda Miller, Kalona, Iowa, served one month in Brownsville, Texas.

Phyllis and William Miller, Goshen, Ind., served one month in Brooksville, Fla.

Roy and Sarah Miller, Orrville, Ohio, served one month in San Antonio and one month in Brownsville, Texas.

Abram and Ruth Rittenhouse, Harrisonburg, Va., served one month in Phoenix.

Ericka and Myron Schrag, Goshen, Ind., served two weeks in San Antonio.

Loren and Miriam Stauffer, Goshen, Ind., served one week in Americus, Ga.

Duane and Marlys Tieszen, Marion, S.D., served one month in El Dorado, Ark.

Grace Von Tobel, Waterville, Maine, served three weeks in Americus, Ga.

International workers

Amelia Brandt began a seven-month term in Quito, Ecuador, working with Colombian refugees.

Paul Kniss served for two months in Ranchi, India, as a continuing education teacher and consultant for Bihar Mennonite Mandli and Mennonite Christian Service Fellowship of India.

J. Stanley and Delores Friesen spent January at Union Biblical Seminary, Pune, India, as teachers and conference speakers.

Stephen Steiner served three weeks in January in Southeast Asia as a business and agricultural consultant.

Mennonite Church USA

Our world: God so loves it



I remember the moment in the sermon. (I have only a few such memorable moments of sermons.) The text was John 3:16, “For God so loved the *world*...” The preacher said the Greek word for *world* was *cosmos*, according to Webster, “an orderly, harmonious, systematic universe.” Suddenly, this most-well-known scripture verse exploded with new meaning. God sent God’s son for something more than the salvation of humans—God intended salvation for the entire creation!

The dictionary suggests we look at the opposite of *cosmos*, i.e., *chaos*, to illuminate the meaning. At creation, “the earth was without form and void, with darkness over the face of the abyss ...” (Genesis 1:1). From *chaos* to *cosmos*—that is our *world*.

The Mennonite Church USA vision statement: *God calls us to be followers of Jesus Christ and, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to grow as communities of grace, joy and peace, so that God’s healing and hope flow through us to the world.* There it is again—a reference to the *world*—a place of order and purpose, according to God’s plan.

Our vision statement, taken in the meaning of John 3:16, means the world is more than other people or the culture and society around us. The world is not the antithesis of what is good and pure as “the things of this world.” The world is what God made and we are part of that creation. God loves the world through God’s son, Jesus. Our part in this world is to bring healing and hope to the whole of creation.

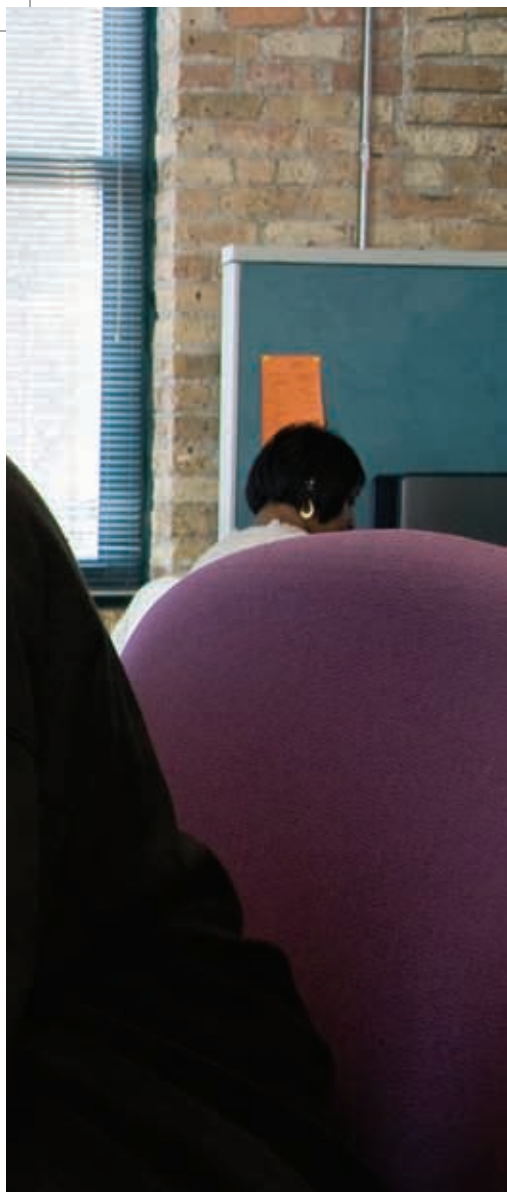
If God is in the world working for its restoration and order, we ought to be in the world working with God for the same objective. God’s mission is to the world, not to the church. The church is simply a means to the end of engagement with the world.

“God intended salvation for the entire creation.”

These days, we may sometimes worry about what will become of the church. I suggest we will not have to worry about the church if we shift our concern to what will become of the world. Yes, I am speaking of what we now call “creation care”—the care of the environment—but I am speaking of something larger than that. Yes, global warming is on our spiritual radar, just as is environmental abuse through pollution. All this is viewed through the missional purposes of God’s love for the cosmos.

We are God’s ordained stewards of the cosmos, at least all that which is within our reach. That may focus on extending God’s salvation to fellow humans, but it does not stop there. We are to increase the number of God-fearing people for the sake of stewardship of the cosmos. May we truly be God’s agents of healing and hope to the cosmos around us.

Jim Schrag is executive director of Mennonite Church USA.



Cara Rufenacht

Thank you

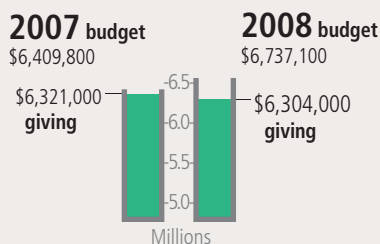
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Mennonite Mission Network

The mission agency of Mennonite Church USA

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