



**Mennonite  
Mission  
Network**

The mission agency of  
Mennonite Church USA

JUNE 2012

# Beyond OURSELVES

# Listen, God is calling



**PLUS**

DOOR goes local [page 13] From Illinois to Ecuador [page 15]

# Stories of faithfulness

By Andrew Clouse

When a Jewish family sits down to a Seder or Passover meal, they are entering into a feast of stories. The purpose of the meal is to remember the day God saved the Jewish people from the Egyptians, a moment when God's faithfulness was tangible. When each child reads their part of the Seder script, they enter into the story as if it were their own.

For us living in the 21st century, God continues to work in our lives, calling us to serve in the name of Jesus. But we don't always emphasize hearing each other's personal stories of God's call.

In speaking our own testimonies, we give voice to our recognition that God is in control, guiding us as we navigate through life.

In hearing stories, we may be inspired by how our brothers and sisters have sensed God's presence.

In entering into their stories, we understand our own better.

It was one person's testimony that finally convinced me to be baptized into the church.

I was studying in Cuba in 2001 when I met Raymundo Garcia, a Cuban Christian pastor who had spent many years in an internment camp for refusing to reject his faith. He told our group that when Fidel Castro came to power, pastors were given a choice: renounce their faith, or be imprisoned indefinitely. He, and many others, unable to renounce the truth, chose the latter.

If he, who had endured so much suffering for his faith, could remain joyous in following Jesus, I could, too.

This issue of *Beyond Ourselves* focuses on how our mission workers and others associated with Mission Network have experienced God's call. It is my prayer that in reading these stories and the bonus content on our website, you will be challenged and encouraged to take note of how God is calling you. And then, may you feel led to share your own story.



The last issue of *Beyond Ourselves* focused on Mission Network workers in Europe.

## Tag-along missionaries

What a surprise to open the February issue of *Beyond Ourselves* and find the article and picture of Neal and Janie Blough. We had a one-day encounter with them while on a pilgrimage to the Netherlands and Paris in March 2007. We had made contact with them on the Internet before the trip, and they invited us to attend worship with them at one of the Mennonite mission points in Paris. When we arrived that Sunday morning at the mission office where they lived, they found that their auto wasn't in running condition, so they and a visiting missionary piled into our sub-compact rental car and we were on our way to a great day. Janie translated the worship service from French/Creole for us, and when we got back to the mission house, they said, in typical Mennonite fashion, "You're going to stay with us for lunch, aren't you?" What a lunch! A five-course French dinner that went on for most of the afternoon, along with lots of good conversation. It was a day we'll never forget!

James and Letha McKinnell  
Midlothian, Va.

## Mennonite mission groundwork in Paris

As I was reading the article, "This semi-nary has legs," I noted that the couple who were at the very beginning of the Paris work is not mentioned. Jane and Orley Swartzentruber were with Dave and me in Brussels when it was decided that one of us couples should relate to Mennonites in Paris, as well as to the Parisian families whose children went out to the Mennonite Home in Valdoie for the summer. Jane and Orley moved to Paris in January of 1953 and laid the groundwork for the Foyer Fraternel.

Andre Trocme, the author of *Lest Innocent Blood be Shed* and founder of a home for refugees at Le Chambon in France, met Madame Sommermeyer and her husband from Prussia, who took refuge there. They later moved to Paris. Andre Trocme was in contact with Mennonites and was also the pastor and spiritual guide for Madame Sommermeyer, a strong pacifist. He informed her of the presence of Mennonites in Paris. She was a part of a small group of "protestants;" with Orley and Jane's address, she contacted them and asked Orley to lead Bible studies.

Once the group discovered that Orley could lead Bible studies, they asked him to be their pastor. After about a year, the group numbered about a dozen. A few requested baptism and they became the nucleus for the Foyer Fraternel congregation. The Swartzentrubers were present for the beginning of the construction of the Foyer, leaving Paris in 1958. Because Dave and I lived in Brussels during that period, we had periodic contacts with Orley and Jane. We followed those beginnings closely; for me, that early period has historical importance.

Congratulations on the February issue. It is very attractive and an informative publication.

Wilma Shank  
Goshen, Ind.

### Feedback

▶ Let us know what you think of this issue. What inspires you? Engages you? Infuriates you? [BeyondOurselves@MennoniteMission.net](mailto:BeyondOurselves@MennoniteMission.net)



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Cover: Self-portrait of Mark Wasser, former MVSer, taken near La Jara, Colo. Photo by Mark Wasser.





# A life of service to God

**W**hen I was younger, I used to speak about my sense of being called to be a pastor. The events surrounding my sense of call were so extraordinary that I had no doubt about my feeling of being called. That sense continues to sustain me today when things get difficult and I face challenges.

Though nowadays I still feel called, I have begun to question how I think about my call. When I was starting out in ministry, I understood that I was called to be a pastor. Since then, I have also been a missionary, a conference minister, and a mission administrator. I loved being a pastor, and I have enjoyed each of the roles I have engaged since. But if I was called to be a pastor, does that mean that I have stepped outside of my call, despite how I feel about these other roles?

Rather than question my calling, I have adjusted my thinking about how I regard my “call.” In my reframing, I realize that I was not called to be a pastor; I was called, instead, into a life of serving God. I like how Os Guinness, author of *The Call*, puts it. Guinness defines calling as “the truth that God calls us to himself so decisively that everything we are, everything we do, and everything we have is invested with a special devotion and dynamism lived out as a response to his summons and services.” He goes on to say that “we are not primarily called to do something or go somewhere; we are called to Someone.”

This rethinking has led me to a place where I believe discovering one’s calling is so much more than finding a particular role. Through the course of our lives we may have varied occupations and roles. We may choose to speak of these multiple engagements as serial callings, or we might describe these various roles as part of a common fabric of being called into a relationship with God out of which flows the service of our lives.

Every one of us is called into a journey with God.

Aided by missional thinking, and the quest to clarify my own identity in ministry, I have come to the place where I know at least two things: I am called; so, also, is every other believer. Every one of us is called into a journey with God, a relationship with our Creator in which we must discern what serving God requires in the changing vistas and contexts of our lives. This discernment requires of each of us a posture of attentiveness to God and a disposition of making ourselves available to God. We are not locked into a particular role that was specific to the context in which we first responded to God’s invitation. We are summoned into a journey where we grow and change, along with the roles or paths through which we serve God’s purpose with the gifts, experiences and opportunities that are available to us.

In this issue of *Beyond Ourselves*, I hope you will be blessed and inspired by the testimonies of some special people who have responded to God’s invitation into a role during this season of their lives. My prayer is that you will not merely give thanks for their availability to God, but will cultivate an openness to God, so that in your attentiveness you might discover the particulars of God’s call upon your life at this time. Know that just as those we feature in this issue are called, so are you. And it is imperative for your sake, if not for God’s purposes in the world, to discover your calling.

*Stanley W. Green*

Stanley W. Green  
Executive Director  
Mennonite Mission Network



# How



# How do you hear the Lord?

**A**n old hymn text opens with the question: “Christian, do you hear the Lord?”

Dramatic stories of call abound in our sacred Scriptures.

Joseph was taken by his brothers, sold into slavery, and, through a series of seemingly dumb-luck experiences, ended up ruling Egypt as God’s servant.

When Jesus was just beginning his ministry, he saw Matthew, a tax collector, and said, simply, “Follow me.” Matthew obeyed.

Paul was struck blind while on the road to Damascus, and when the scales fell from his eyes, he could see clearly.

The stories of God calling people to specific tasks are remarkable. Some, like Paul’s, are dramatic. Others, like Matthew’s, require great risk. Still others, like Joseph’s, are twisting stories in which the person following God’s call feels disoriented and abandoned.

But what’s really remarkable is that God has a call for everyone—no exceptions. As Phil Lindell Detweiler, a longtime mission worker to Africa, says, “If we are followers of Jesus, we are all called to something. The question then is not, ‘Am I called?’ but ‘To what am I called?’”

These stories are examples of the ways God has called mission workers to service, and their faithful responses.

Youth Venture participant Katie Terry scans the foothills of the Bolivian Andes at El Fuerte near Samaipata, Bolivia. Background photos in this section taken by Youth Venture participant, Annaka Miller.





Photo by Ryan Miller

Thandi Gumbi and Christine Lindell Detweiler were co-workers for a kids' club at Breakthru Church International in Pietermaritzburg, South Africa. Background photo by Ryan Miller.

# I was not struck by lightning

God can use us wherever we are

By Christine Lindell Detweiler

**B**eing a missionary kid and growing up on the mission field contributed to my sense of call. My family lived in Ghana during years of famine, so when we returned to the United States, the Lord gave me an interest in working with malnourished and starving children. That's how I decided that I would study nutrition and then go back overseas. I had a keen sense, at that point, that it wasn't just about physical food. It was also about the spiritual aspect. People need Jesus as much as they need food.

As Phil, my husband, and I tried to discern where God would have us go, we didn't have that sense of call to a country or a particular people group. We really made the decision about where to go by where we were needed.

There isn't anything dramatic about our sense of call, not like Paul getting hit by a bolt of lightning and turning blind. For me, it's about stepping out in obedience with what I hear God calling me to do. I don't have to be so worried about wondering, "Am I in the right place, doing the right thing?" I believe that God uses us wherever we're at, so stressing too much about places and activities is counterproductive sometimes.

A call is important in sustaining people through hard times on the mission field, though. If it wasn't for some sense of call, we wouldn't have continued for 21 years!



Christine and Phil Lindell Detweiler have moved to Minneapolis, Minn., after serving for 21 years with Mennonite Mission Network.

# Did I sin?

## Ability revealed through disability

By Kuaying Teng, as told to Andrew Clouse

I contracted polio in my leg seven months after I was born. In Laos, people believed that if someone has a disability, he or a member of his family had sinned. In some Asian cultures, babies born with disabilities are even killed. This was the context I was born into.

My parents sent me to a rehabilitation center when I was 7 months old. I lived there for the next 10 years. When I was able to walk, I moved in with my family.

Five years later, a classmate introduced me to Jesus and invited me to church to play piano in the worship band. I went to church for more than one year and still knew nothing about Jesus; I just enjoyed playing the music.

One day, an American missionary preached on John 9—the story of the man who was born blind. In this story, the disciples asked Jesus why the man had been born blind—did he or his parents sin? Jesus responded that the man was not blind as a result of sin, but so that God would be glorified through the man's healing.

That message touched me deeply—so deeply I couldn't even focus on playing the music. This was the first time I felt I had worth.

This call changed my life.

I thought to myself, how many people around the world have disabilities? I knew it was time for me to learn more about Jesus and to take his gospel message to them, so they would know that Jesus loves

and values them just as they are. So I enrolled in Bible school.

I later moved to Canada to be a pastor. Through various connections, I ended up working for the Commission on Home Ministries, a predecessor agency of Mennonite Mission Network, supporting Asian ministries. This led to my position as denominational minister for Asian ministries for Mennonite Church USA.

I don't mind when people stare at my leg. I use the opportunity to tell them my story, and, then, about Jesus. I have sat on the street in countries all over the world and talked to people with disabilities, telling them that Jesus loves and cares for them.

I now see that God called me one step at a time. First, he called me out of my family and the society that considered me a sinner, and sent me to Bible school. Then he sent me back into the world to bring this message of hope to others. Even though God did not heal my leg, he used it for his purposes so I could use it to travel around the world and preach the gospel.



Kuaying Teng lives in St. Catharines, Ontario. He works in a partnership ministry with Mennonite Mission Network and Mennonite Church USA Executive Board.

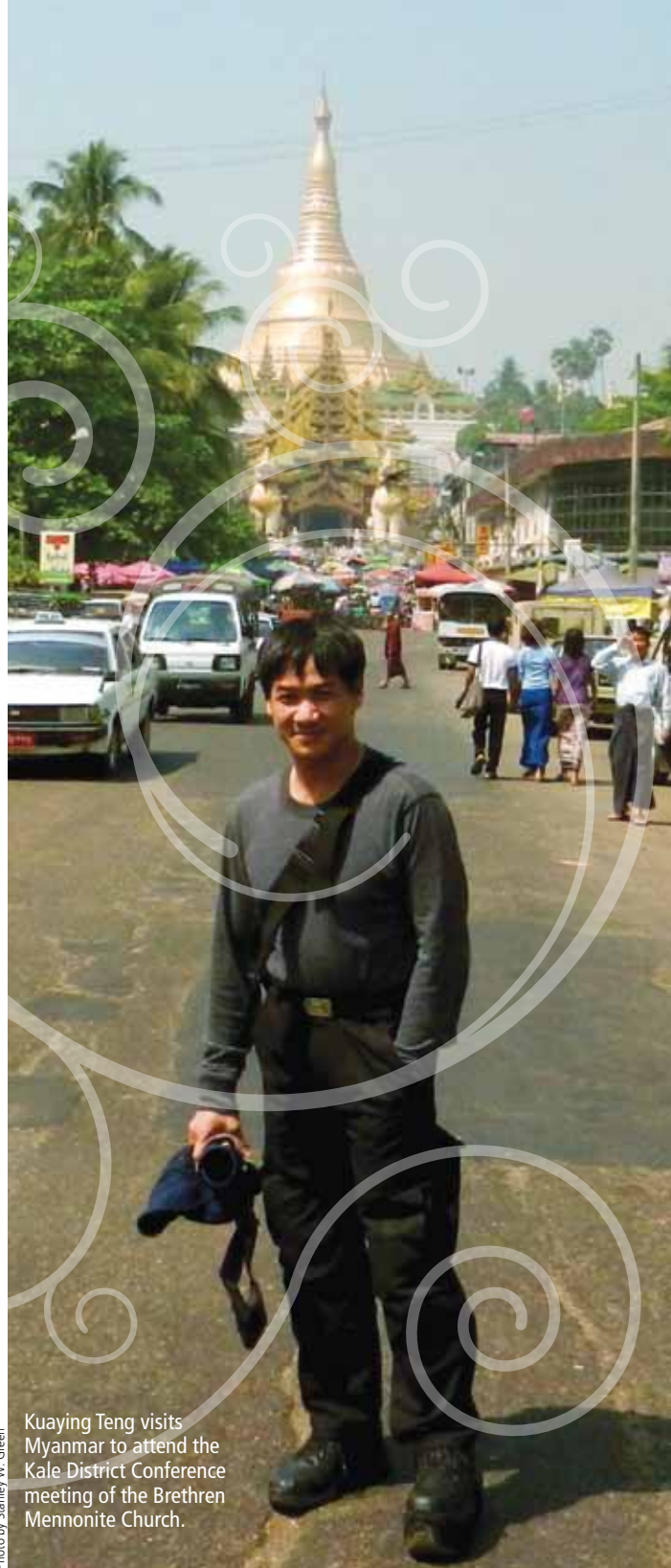
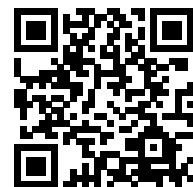


Photo by Stanley W. Green

Kuaying Teng visits Myanmar to attend the Kale District Conference meeting of the Brethren Mennonite Church.



### More on the web!

▶ Check out more inspiring stories, videos and audio on God's call in the lives of mission workers by scanning the QR code or by visiting [www.MennoniteMission.net/Stories/BeyondOurselves/Listen](http://www.MennoniteMission.net/Stories/BeyondOurselves/Listen).



# Accounting for Christ

God calls us all ... not just preachers

By Laura Schlabach

I am often asked, “Why Mongolia?” Now, some people, when they are called to serve in another country, are called to a specific country. This didn’t happen to me.

As many times as I had read or heard that verse I hadn’t sensed any special significance in it for me, until the comment Green made after the verses were read: “If you aren’t specifically called to stay home, that verse calls you to go.” That spoke to my heart that night. That was when I felt called. I didn’t know any specifics. I just knew I was called to go somewhere, someday.

At the time, I was studying accounting at Bluffton. I had trouble reconciling how accounting could possibly be used in mission work. Teachers, doctors, preachers, nurses—these were the people you usually heard about in missions. How could an accountant serve?

I worked with Mennonite Voluntary Service in San Antonio, Texas, finished my accounting degree, and continued to look for opportunities overseas. Nothing opened up until 1993, 10 years after I first sensed my “call.” That year I applied with Mennonite Central Committee. While there were some possibilities, in the end, MCC wanted me to work at the main office in Akron, Pa. It wasn’t quite

what I had in mind when I thought about “going,” but I was willing to go there if God wanted me to.

Then in August 1993, a friend encouraged me to talk to Mennonite Board of Missions, a predecessor agency to Mennonite Mission Network. I called and was told that a partner in Mongolia was in “desperate” need of an accountant. This was the clearest call I had ever received.

Now, after serving with Joint Christian Services in Mongolia for 18 years, I can see that administrators—accountants, directors, managers—are needed on the mission field. Teachers, nurses, doctors, preachers and church planters are still needed, too, as well as youth workers, businesspeople, veterinarians, agriculture workers, and physical education teachers. God can use anyone—even an accountant from Holmes County, Ohio.

When I was a sophomore at Bluffton (Ohio) College, I went to a Keith Green concert. At the close of the concert, Matthew 28:19–20 was read: “Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

Photo from Stock-acting

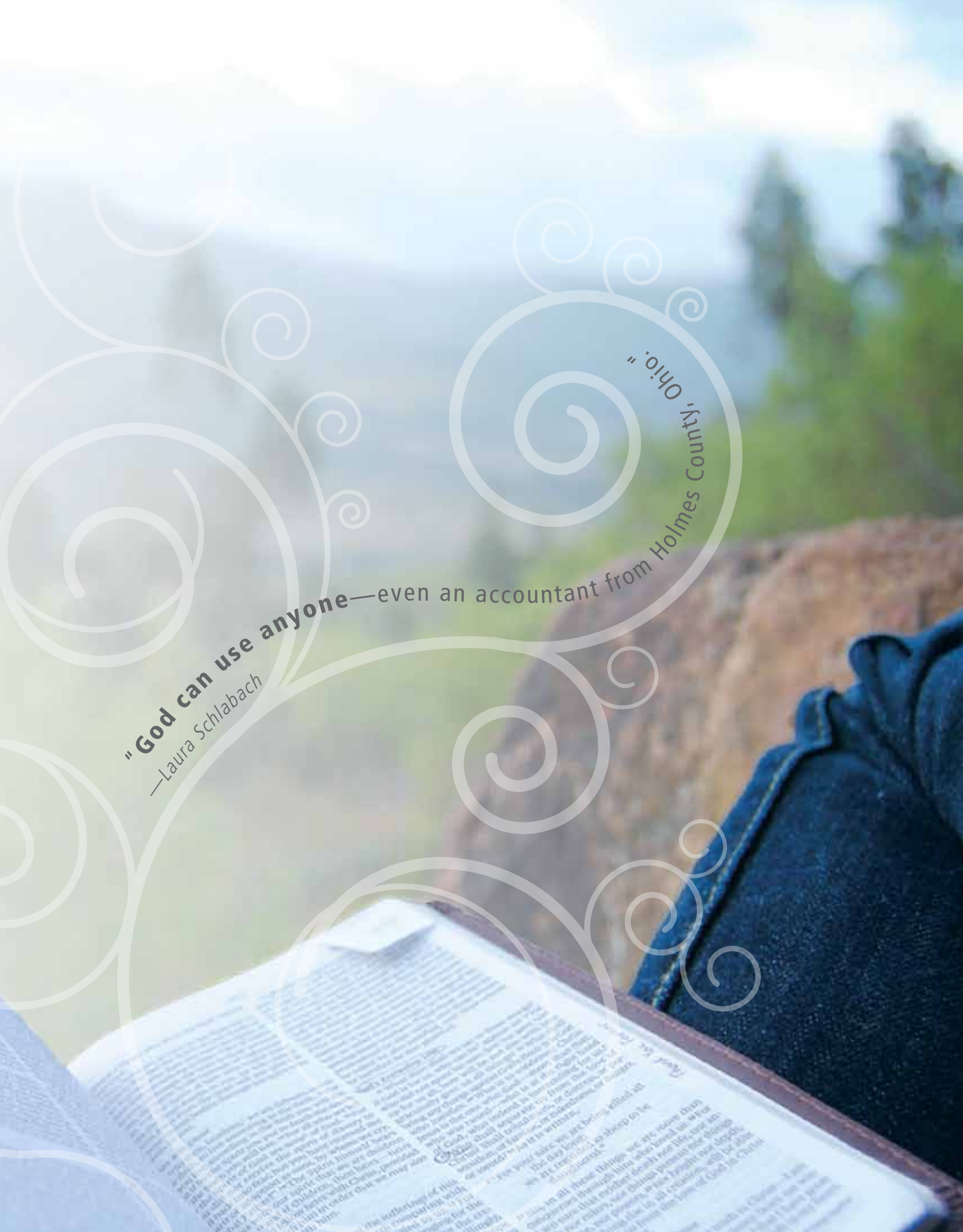


Laura Schlabach, from San Antonio (Texas) Mennonite Church, lives in Bayanhongor, Mongolia, and works for Joint Christian Services.



**"God can use anyone**—even an accountant from Holmes County, Ohio."

—Laura Schlabach



# Who saved whom?

## Reconciliation after the atomic bomb

By Charles Shenk

Though the words “call” or “calling” seem a little out of vogue here in the 21st century, they express a central biblical idea. Whether it is God approaching Abraham or Moses or Isaiah, or Jesus recruiting disciples, or Paul addressing newly committed Jesus followers about a “high” or “holy calling,” something very profound is going on. A new kind of personal connection with God is opening up. A new identity as children or people of God is being conferred. And, amazingly, a new task—the high privilege of partnership in God’s salvation work—is being entrusted to the willing.

Early inner promptings pushed me to inquire into what kind of purpose or plan God might have for my life. Ruth, the young lady at Eastern Mennonite School who became my wife for 56 years, had very similar promptings. Together we searched and researched and prayed. By early 1955, our decision to move into missionary service was made.

It was our clear conviction to go somewhere in the world where there was little or no Christian presence—“unevangelized” territory. During our two years of study at Goshen College and Seminary, we met several missionary couples back from terms of service in Japan, and a young

Japanese Christian, also on the campus. Their love for Japan and the young church there, and their enthusiasm for the work (“If only there were more workers!”), was infectious. We learned that Japan, indeed, was largely “unevangelized” territory.

But, there was a unique element fueling this budding sense of call to Japan. The Japanese had been forced into surrender by America’s military might, the ultimate expression being those atomic bombs on the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Now, American missionaries were there trying to “save” them! A few of these missionaries had even piloted the planes or wielded the weapons that had reigned death and destruction upon the country. What more urgent situation could there be for a peace church presence!

In August of 1957, with three small children and our Japanese friend, Takio Tanase, we sailed for Japan. On board were 30 or so other missionary folks, mostly of

the Fundamentalist persuasion. As young recruits and largely uninitiated in association with people of other denominations, we became a bit uncomfortable with what seemed like an American spirit of superiority and triumphalism among some of these new friends. While we certainly harbored our own piece of that “American spirit,” our intention was to relate humbly to Japanese people and culture, and learn how to communicate a New Testament message of peace and reconciliation. Many who came into faith through the Mennonite Church came precisely because of that message.

We wanted to be faithful and effective agents of change as the gospel calls for change among people of any culture. But we could hardly know, at that point, how much the Japanese culture would also

change—or save—us!



Charles and Ruth Shenk served in Japan from 1957–1994.

Charles and Ruth Shenk with their children (from left) Gloria, Barbara and Steven, on the way to Japan in 1957.



Photo courtesy of Charles and Ruth Shenk





Photo provided

Scenic view near Colorado Springs, Colo.

# Led by beauty

## Finding a calling, not just a vista, in Colorado

By Tylan Coblenz

**T**hroughout my senior year, I had no plan—no idea of what I wanted to do after high school, no idea where to attend college, and no idea what I wanted to study.

I applied to a few colleges, but I was never attracted to one. I started thinking that I should just take a year off and work, which I had no interest in at all. As the year went on, I was getting more and more frustrated because I knew I wasn't ready to start college right away, but I felt as if I was supposed to go, like everyone else. I started asking around for other things that I could do, and a couple people mentioned a year of service. That idea had never crossed my mind.

One night I found a program called Service Adventure, a Mennonite Mission Network program. At first, I think it was mainly the locations they had available that caught my eye. I knew if I signed up, I would want to be in the Colorado Springs group. I had been in Colorado for two weeks the summer before on a service trip and vacation. I loved it there and knew that I would love to live there for a year.

The more I looked into it and heard about that program, the more excited I got. I had an interview a few weeks after applying, and was accepted. I couldn't believe I was doing this. I was so excited for this opportunity, but also very nervous.

I was placed at a day program called Bright Futures for special needs adults. I never saw myself working with special needs people, but I couldn't have asked for a better placement.

I now see that God placed me at the day program to show me that his plan is for me to work with special needs people as a career. I am going to follow that plan and go to college for special education.

Looking back over this year, I am amazed at how God works. What began as indecision was really an opening for God to take control. God used the beauty of Colorado, which is what attracted me to this unit in the first place, to show me the path that he has set out for my life.



Tylan Coblenz is from Goshen, Ind.

## Hear the call?

**W**ant to join in God's work around the world? Here is your chance. Listed below are a few openings. Visit our website at [www.MennoniteMission.net/Serve](http://www.MennoniteMission.net/Serve) for more.

### Christian Service



**DOOR**—DOOR invites those interested in urban ministry to spend time engaging with God's transformative work in the city.



**Mennonite Voluntary Service**—Community-based service and learning rooted in the vision of local congregations.



**Radical Journey**—Intentional faith formation within an Anabaptist perspective in several international locations.



**Service Adventure**—Community-based service and learning experience that emphasizes faith formation and leadership development.



**SOOP**—Sharing one's life experiences through voluntary service.



**Youth Venture**—Two-week service and reflection within a team atmosphere.

### International Ministries



#### Church resource worker in South Korea

**Function:** Teach Anabaptist ecclesiology and become a resource person relating to individuals and groups, sharing about Christian discipleship and community. Teach and lead workshops pertaining to Anabaptist theology and history.

**Term:** 4–12 months



#### Peacebuilding adviser in Nepal

**Function:** Facilitate conflict resolution training, and research, helping people to develop new and creative responses to post-conflict needs.

**Term:** 3 years



#### Church-planting intern in Argentina

**Function:** Patagonia Missionary Project sends interns to communities where relationships have been established. Assignments are based on the gifts and experiences the intern brings. Possibilities may include discipleship work with new believers, activities with children, and teaching Sunday school, English, music or literacy.

**Term:** 1 year or more



Marie and Bala Sourabie enjoy time together at the couples' seminar in Orodara, Burkina Faso. Bala Sourabie is the national treasurer of *Eglise Evangélique Mennonite du Burkina Faso*.

Beyond  
NEWS

## Seminars encourage spiritual renewal

Workshops teach everything from business strategies to communication between couples

During the second week of February, more than 100 Mennonite women had the time of their lives in Orodara, Burkina Faso. The *Eglise Evangélique Mennonite du Burkina Faso* annual women's seminar combines adult continuing education, business training, spiritual renewal, and just plain time-away-from-work fun.

Mennonite World Conference lists the membership of the Burkina Mennonite Church as 315. Though these figures may be a bit low, when a third of the national church shares a powerful experience, it is truly leaven in the loaf, raising spiritual vitality and increasing the capacity to share the Bread of Life with surrounding communities.

At a couples' seminar last August, nearly 80 men and women—roughly a quarter of the national church—

deepened their knowledge about marital relationships, the importance of communication between spouses, mutual forgiveness, child psychology and pedagogy, and resource management, to name a few of the subjects presented and discussed.

"This seminar was transformative for the church," said Rod Hollinger-Janzen, executive coordinator for Africa Inter-Mennonite Mission, who was in Burkina for administrative visits in October 2011. "Two months later, people were still so excited about what had happened when they put into practice what they learned at the seminar, they couldn't stop talking about it."

Claire Traoré, president of the Burkina Faso Mennonite women's association, said that husbands and wives were talking together more—and making time to pray together, too.

"Communication with each other and God really reduces problems in the home," Traoré said.



Photo courtesy of Tim Showalter

Tim Showalter Ehst, interim co-director of DOOR Atlanta, has been leading an initiative to feed DOOR participants using mostly local and organic food.



## Japan: a year later

Churches are 'hands and heart of Jesus' after tsunami

It may seem the land has settled back to normal, but the massive cleanup of rubble continues, and fear of the contaminated soil and water in Japan remains a year after a massive tsunami devastated the country's northeastern coast.

Mennonite Mission Network workers and associates have walked with the Japanese people as they have rebuilt their lives in the past year.

Ray Epp and Akiko Aratani, who direct Menno Village, offered to house evacuees. They opened their home to Yoshiki and Meiko Kanno, a couple whose family farm located about 20 miles from the Fukushima power plant had been contaminated. Since taking refuge at Menno Village, Meiko gave birth to a daughter, Aoi.

They also spearheaded a community-wide volunteer effort that resulted in 15 children and three mothers from the nuclear contamination zone spending two weeks at Menno Village.

Mark Bartsch, who with his wife, Stephanie, and their two sons, serves in Kobe, reported traveling 10 times to Tohoku with work teams to help with the massive cleanup that was further complicated by a typhoon in September.

Working through local churches is how Mission Network personnel

and associates are restoring hope and sharing God's love.

"The seeds of the gospel that are being planted in the restored land will bear fruit of redeemed lives in the future," Mike and Teresa Sherrill, mission associates, said. "The efforts that the Christian churches are extending are the tangible hands and heart of Jesus."

The Sherrill family, Mission Network associates in Japan, report that their church has led more than 30 church groups to Ishinomaki to clear debris and sweep saltwater sludge from people's yards. Teresa Sherrill says the church was able to bring some joy to this family after they were forced to rip the tsunami-ravaged trees, bushes and flowers from their yard. "My fellow church member received Holy Spirit inspiration to buy a flat of flowers," Sherrill said. "Tears flowed down all of our faces as we planted these flowers of hope."



Photo by Teresa Sherrill

## Door to DOOR service

Summer menu: local, organic fare

As volunteers come through DOOR Atlanta this summer, they'll find something unexpected on their plates: local, organic food.

Tim Showalter Ehst, the interim co-director of DOOR Atlanta and a Goshen (Ind.) College graduate, is in the midst of planning and creating menus that will allow the DOOR staff to feed their young volunteers with healthy food grown around Atlanta. It's not a typical focus for a summer mission trip, but Showalter Ehst believes that food justice is an important issue to raise with the high school and college students that will come to serve in the city this summer.

DOOR is a joint program of Mennonite Mission Network and Presbyterian Church USA that invites high school- and college-aged young adults to serve and see what God is doing in six cities around the United States: Atlanta, Chicago, Hollywood, Miami, Denver and San Antonio.

"One goal [for the summer] is that 80 percent of the food they eat while they're here will be local or organic," Showalter Ehst said. "But a bigger goal is to talk with DOOR participants about a new way to look at food. Where our food dollar goes is a Christian issue and part of living intentional Christian lives."

In the past, a limited budget meant that DOOR directors simply went to the closest grocery store and bought inexpensive food to feed volunteers as conveniently and healthfully as possible. Showalter Ehst is trying to change that mindset by investigating low-cost ways to bring local food to DOOR.

Showalter Ehst has found a distributor who can bring food directly to DOOR, which saves money on gas. He's buying a lot of items in bulk.

Heidi Aspinwall, DOOR's national director for volunteers, says that DOOR directors from other cities are eager to hear about Showalter Ehst's summer experiment in local eating.



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the latest news.

# New workers enter service

Mission workers beginning assignments between December 2011 and April 2012

## Dwell

**Sean Fenelon**, Niantic, Conn., St. Agnes Church, began a term with Dwell in Atlanta.

**Jamie Karnetsky**, Melbourne, Fla., First Presbyterian Church of Palm Bay, began a term with Dwell in San Antonio.

## SOOP

**Connie and Gerri Beachy**, Middlebury, Ind., First Mennonite Church, served three months in Brooksville, Fla.

**Jeannette and Thomas Bechtel**, Goshen, Ind., Eighth Street Mennonite Church, served one month in Tucson, Ariz.

**Maribel Beyler**, Wooster, Ohio, Oak Grove Mennonite Church, served one month in Macon, Miss.

**Joan Chupp**, Nappanee, Ind., North Main Street Mennonite Church, served one month in Tucson, Ariz.

**Donald and Marie Clemens**, Goshen, Ind., College Mennonite Church, served one and a half months in Brooksville, Fla.

**Linda and Roger Clemmons**, Normal, Ill., Mennonite Church of Normal, served three months in Gotha, Fla.

**Roger and Sharon Duarte**, Plano, Texas, Fellowship Bible Church, served two weeks in Tucson, Ariz.

**Edna and George Dyck**, North Newton, Kan., Shalom Mennonite Church, served one month in Tucson, Ariz.

**Roger Erickson**, Rapid City, S.D., First United

Methodist Church, served three months in El Dorado, Ark.

**Leon and Melba Eshleman**, Manheim, Pa., Chestnut Hill Mennonite Church, served three weeks in Brooksville, Fla.

**Jim and Lila Gascho**, Goshen, Ind., Waterford Mennonite Church, served three weeks in Glendale, Ariz.

**Elaine and Leon Good**, Lititz, Pa., Lititz Mennonite Church, served two weeks in Glendale, Ariz.

**Cecil and Susan Graber**, Eureka, Ill., Roanoke Mennonite Church, served two weeks in San Antonio.

**LeAnne and Norman Gross**, Oneida, Ill., Faith Lutheran Church, served two months in Glendale, Ariz.

**Daniel and Ramona Hartzler**, North Lawrence, Ohio, Dayspring Christian Fellowship, served three weeks in San Antonio.

**Ernest and Lois Hess**, Lancaster, Pa., East Chestnut Street Mennonite Church, served two weeks in Glendale, Ariz.

**Nancy and Paul Hess**, Willow Street, Pa., River Corner Mennonite Church, served two weeks in Glendale, Ariz.

**Glen and Ruby Hochstedler**, Wakarusa, Ind., North Main Street Mennonite Church, served one month in Glendale, Ariz.

**Elaine and Merle Hostetler**, Goshen, Ind., Belmont Mennonite Church, served three weeks in Glendale, Ariz.

**Barbara and Byron Kauffman**, West Liberty, Ohio, Bethel

Mennonite Church, served one month in Macon, Miss.

**Dwight and Trella Kauffman**, Pandora, Ohio, First Mennonite Church, served one month in Tucson, Ariz.

**Joy Kauffman King and Titus King**, Goshen, Ind., Silverwood

Church, served two weeks in Tucson, Ariz.

**Helen and Samuel Lapp**, Harleysville, Pa., Plains Mennonite Church, served three weeks in Shipshewana, Ind.

**Hershey and Norma Leaman**, Lititz, Pa., Landisville Mennonite

**Phyllis and Bill Miller**, Goshen, Ind., College Mennonite Church, served one month in Brooksville, Fla.

**Lewis Naylor**, Goshen, Ind., Eighth Street Mennonite Church, served one month in Glendale, Ariz.

**Bonnie and Dwayne Rufenacht**, La Junta, Colo., Emmanuel Mennonite Church, served two months in Tucson, Ariz.

**Karen and Lynn Rupp**, Toledo, Ohio, Toledo Mennonite Church, served two weeks in Macon, Miss.

**Anna Belle and Arden Schmucker**, Alliance, Ohio, Beech Mennonite Church, served one and a half months in El Dorado, Ark.

**Delbert and Linda Schrock**, Bristol, Ind., First Presbyterian Church, served one and a half months in Gotha, Fla.

**Geraldine Schrock**, Normal, Ill., Mennonite Church of Normal, served one month in Glendale, Ariz.

**Elinor and Ted Shattuck**, Grafton, N.H., Taftsville Chapel Mennonite Fellowship, served three months in Tucson, Ariz.

**Elaine and Larry Short**, Wauseon, Ohio, North Clinton Mennonite Church, served one month in Washington, D.C.

**Marlene and Stanley Smucker**, North Newton, Kan., Shalom Mennonite Church, served one month in Tucson, Ariz.

**Carolyn and Howard Snyder**, Pettisville, Ohio, Zion Mennonite Church, served one month in Glendale, Ariz.

**Gary and Sharon Stoltzfus**, Elverson, Pa., Conestoga Mennonite Church, served two weeks in Carlsbad, N.M.

**Patricia and William Strunk**, Washington, D.C., Alden Mennonite Church, served one month in Macon, Miss.

**Duane and Marlys Tieszen**, Marion, S.D., Salem-Zion Mennonite Church, served more than one month in El Dorado, Ark.

**Diane and William Trethewey**, Elkhart, Ind., Granger Community Church, served more than one month in Gotha, Fla.

**Gary and Gladys Voth**, Hesston, Kan., Hesston Mennonite Church, served two months in San Antonio.

**Robert P. Walson**, Indianapolis, Ind., First Mennonite Church, served two weeks in Tucson, Ariz.

**Joan and Leonard Wiebe**, Goshen, Ind., Eighth Street Mennonite Church, served two weeks in Glendale, Ariz.

**Elaine and Harold Yoder**, Middlebury, Ind., Sugar Grove Church, served two months in Tucson, Ariz.

**Roy and Sandra Yoder**, Bally, Pa., Bally Mennonite Church, served two weeks in Tucson, Ariz.



Photo by Wesley Richard

SOOP volunteer Sue Richard (right) knots a comforter with Ozola Eichelberger at the Mennonite center in Mashulaville, Miss.

Mennonite Church, served one month in Tucson, Ariz.

**Gene and Virginia Kaufman**, Parker, S.D., Salem Mennonite Church, served one month in Glendale, Ariz.

**Jennifer and Robert Koehn**, Cordell, Okla., Bethel Mennonite Church, served two weeks in Waco, Texas.

**Dennis and Joyce Landon**, Ann Arbor, Mich., Trinity Presbyterian Church, served two weeks in Glendale, Ariz.

**Pearl and Dick Lantz**, Harrisonburg, Va., Harrisonburg Mennonite

Church, served one week in Gotha, Fla.

**Edward and Rhoda Longenecker**, Lancaster, Pa., Lititz Mennonite Church, served three weeks in Gotha, Fla.

**Dale and Linda Miller**, Kalona, Iowa, East Union Mennonite Church, served two months in Gotha, Fla.

**Helen Miller**, Lancaster, Pa., Mellinger Mennonite Church, served one month in San Antonio.

**Judith K. Miller**, Middlebury, Ind., Bonneyville Mennonite Church, served one month in Glendale, Ariz.

**Daniel and Mary Ellen Ness**, Lancaster, Pa., Blossom Hill Mennonite Church, served one month in Glendale, Ariz.

**Ruth and Sig Polle**, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Bethel Mennonite Church, served one month in Tucson, Ariz.

**Kay and John Reimer**, Normal, Ill., Mennonite Church of Normal, served three and a half months in Gotha, Fla.

**Sue and Wesley Richard**, Goshen, Ind., West Goshen Church of the Brethren, served three weeks in Macon, Miss.

## International

**Michael and Lorri L. Hardin** began a four-month special assignment as a resource couple doing peace teaching among Anabaptist groups in Australia and New Zealand. They are members of Akron (Pa.) Mennonite Church.

**Scott M. Litwiller** began a two-year term working with the youth and young adults of Mennonite churches on the Caribbean Coast of Colombia. He is a member of Hopedale (Ill.) Mennonite Church.



## More than a tour

Finding God in Ecuador

By Alyssa Rodriguez



While on the fellowship and learning tour to find out about the Ecuador Partnership, I learned it should not be treated much like a “tour” at all. Entering a new world requires openness and adaptability. It doesn’t mean straddling the world you came from and the world you entered, but, rather, immersing yourself fully into this new world to get the most out of it.

It means ascending a steep mountain every morning with your host mom in an unfamiliar altitude just to make it to and from home each day.

It means that if your group’s van breaks down while roller-coasting one of Ecuador’s many mountainous areas, you trust in the driver and the ability of the van’s brakes to coast down to the next house so you can then hop on a bus back to town. Also, if you are offered the local delicacy of guinea pig (*cuy*), you eat it.

I sought the Lord, but I didn’t meet him on the mountaintop as Elijah did in 1 Kings 19, or in the two Ecuadorian Mennonite church buildings, but, rather, in the builders of these churches. It was the people themselves who helped me to see the Lord’s work.

When you open your heart and mind, you make room for God and his love to dwell in your midst.

On the “tour,” I learned that many things can transcend language barriers: smiles and laughter exchanged between the children of your host family and yourself; music; the hugs and kisses we were greeted with each day by every church person we encountered; and, finally, tears.

We wept for our Colombian co-workers, displaced from Colombia for the safety of their families. The Colombian Refugee Project, a project of the Quito Mennonite Church, serves many individuals who are forcibly removed from their homes, mostly due to threats against their lives and the lives of their family members.

It was in the love for the Lord that I could sense in the young refugee families that I found God the most. Despite an uncertain future, they serve the Lord and lean on him to get through. They put their hardships into his hands and remain unquestionably faithful. Witnessing their faith was an honor.

This is an excerpt from a longer reflection on Alyssa’s travels to Ecuador with six other people from the Central Plains Mennonite Conference, which is part of the Ecuador Partnership. She attends First Mennonite Church in Iowa City, Iowa.

## God at the helm

When the Spirit says lead, you have to lead

By Ervin Stutzman



This issue’s focus on being called by God prompted me to reflect on my own sense of call to the office of executive director of Mennonite Church USA. The first words of our denominational vision statement say: “God calls us to be followers of Jesus Christ.” We are to follow wherever God leads, even in pursuit of a new ministry or mission.

I would not have taken this role without clarity from God and the church. Even as things became clear, the decision to accept was not made quickly or easily. In January 2009, a search committee member suggested that I consider the role. While praying afterward, I sensed the Spirit urging me to consider. Several factors made pursuing the new role difficult, the biggest being that I would have to leave my post as dean at Eastern Mennonite Seminary, which I loved. I was energized by EMU’s mission. I felt a deep bond to the broader campus; all five members of our family are alumni. My wife, Bonnie, and I love the Shenandoah Valley and live in a home that we designed to take us far into our retirement years. We also love Park View Mennonite Church, where our faith is deeply nurtured and we have many opportunities for ministry.

Five primary reasons sealed my acceptance of the invitation from Mennonite Church USA:

- 1) I love Mennonite Church USA and I want to see it prosper.
- 2) My gifts, interests and experience seemed like a strong fit.
- 3) The search committee issued a unanimous recommendation, and the Mennonite Church USA Executive Board issued a unanimous call. The search process was extremely thorough and Spirit-led.
- 4) I sensed an unmistakable inner call from God through prayerful discernment.
- 5) A “clearness” committee (which included my wife, my pastor, my spiritual director, a spiritual friend, and a mature member of the seminary faculty trained in spiritual direction) confirmed that I had considered the necessary factors for hearing God’s call to this role. A member of the search committee met with the clearness committee to relay the call of the church. It was a holy moment when the group affirmed that God had called me “for such a time as this.”

In a task as challenging as my current role, I take great comfort in knowing that I am following God’s call. I trust that every mission worker has that same assurance.

Ervin Stutzman is executive director of Mennonite Church USA.



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