



April
2012

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Scattered Seeds

Children of the Kingdom Sowing the Word

—Matthew 13



La and Ha Baccam



Julie and Mick Murray

We remember three good and faithful servants

by David Boshart, Executive Conference Minister

February was a season of sorrow for Central Plains Mennonite Conference. We are grieving the loss of Mick Murray and his wife Julie who died in a tragic car accident, leaving four children behind. Mick was a pastor at Kalona Mennonite Church.

We also experienced the death of Ha Baccam, pastor emeritus at Des Moines Mennonite Church. Ha continued to translate the scriptures into his native Tai Dam language in spite of his terminal illness. All three of these served the church faithfully. The following pages of this issue of *Scattered Seeds* will give you some insight into their lives, their witness to the Lordship of Jesus, and their commitment to serving the church.

Death is a very effective reminder. It reminds us all of our mortality. It reminds us of our common humanity. It reminds us of the precious bond we share as the body of Christ, running the race together. Mick, Julie and Ha have fought the good fight; they have finished the race; and they have

kept the faith. From now on there is reserved for them a crown of righteousness [which is given to] all who have longed for his appearing 2 Timothy 4:7-8.

I know that I speak for both Kalona and Des Moines Mennonite Churches when I say that the prayers of their brothers and sisters throughout the conference and across the Mennonite Church have sustained them in their time of grief. Though we grieve, we do so in hope because pastors like Mick and Ha have taught us well.

When our world is turned upside down in grief, we don't try to "get over" our sorrow; we walk through it, knowing that God is present in our grief. We pray. We reaffirm our hope in the resurrection. And we worship God who, in Jesus, promised to never leave us or forsake us.

We celebrate the labors of these three who, no doubt, stand before their Lord who received them with those victorious words, "Well done, good and faithful servant!"

*And I heard
a voice from
heaven saying,
"Write this:
Blessed are the
dead who from
now on die
in the Lord."
"Yes," says the
Spirit, "they
will rest from
their labors,
for their deeds
follow them."
—Revelation 14:13*



Mick and Julie Murray, surrounded by their children (clockwise from bottom left): Jordan, 14; Brittany, 20; Chase, 16; and Nicole, 18. The children will be cared for by Julie's sister and her husband, Beth and Bill Fiordelise, also members of Kalona Mennonite.



Mick and Julie Murray leave a legacy of faithfulness

by Marcus Miller, Kalona Mennonite Church

Kalona Mennonite responds with Christian practices

How does a congregation respond when their pastor and his wife die suddenly? In the tragedy of Mick and Julie's death, the "Christian reflexes" ingrained in Kalona Mennonite by God's Spirit are enabling this faith community to do what God's people do.

Gathering to pray. On the Saturday night of the accident, several hundred people gathered spontaneously at the church to pray and to be present for and with each other.

Gathering to worship. Broken by the news of Mick and Julie's death, the congregation gathered for worship on Sunday morning, bringing their pain, their questions and their confusion to God. In worship we look to God for hope and cry out "Restore us, O God."

Caring support. Care for the four Murray children, surrounding them with community, finances, counseling and loving support. Care for Scott as lead pastor, tending to his grief and building an interim team to meet ministry needs. Care for the church: tending the needs of the youth group, tending to the grief work of the faith community and caring for those who made faith commitments at Mick and Julie's funeral.

Seeking outside help. KMC is drawing on the support of conference leaders and seeking professional help from counselors. Given these "Christian reflexes" and the help of the Spirit, this community of faith is finding a way forward and being a witness in the community to God's loving, healing and powerful presence. —Tim Detweiler

On Saturday, February 4, I was settling in for the flight from Dulles to Chicago after the Mennonite Educators Conference. Just when we were told it was time to turn off our electronic devices, the teacher next to me showed me a text she had just received. "Mick Murray killed in car accident." When we landed in Chicago two hours later, my phone showed messages from my wife and from our head elder, and I realized the horrible news must be true.

That morning, Mick and Julie, with their daughter Nicole, were on their way to their son Chase's wrestling meet. Traveling back roads, the car apparently hit a patch of ice. The car went into the ditch, rolled, and hit a culvert. Mick made the 911 call but died at the scene. Julie and Nicole were taken to the hospital where Julie later died. Nicole was released later that evening.

Mick pastored at Kalona Mennonite Church with Scott Swartzendruber for 17 years. A graduate of Liberty University, he was not your typical Mennonite pastor. In sermons over the years, we heard many stories about his youth in southern Indiana, his parents' conversion, and his father's ministry in a Baptist church.

At Liberty, Mick met Julie, who was from eastern Maryland. They both graduated with degrees in youth ministry. After working as a youth minister, Mick decided to pursue a career training hunting dogs. This is what first brought Mick and Julie to Iowa. Living in Swisher, a small town north of Iowa City, the Murrays met some folks from Kalona Mennonite who invited them to visit. Not long after, Mick and Julie moved to Kalona where they began working with the Kalona Mennonite youth group. In 1995, the congregation hired Mick as the assistant pastor.

Mick said what he thought in a way that was both direct and down-to-earth, occasionally surprising the congregation with what he would say over the pulpit. Yet, he had a way of communicating the Gospel to people the church might not otherwise reach.

Julie had a smile for everyone and never a bad word about anyone. Her calm demeanor complemented Mick's irrepressible energy. For years she helped organize the summer Bible School program and youth group fundraisers.

The evening of the accident, over 200 people gathered at the church as Conference Minister David Boshart led a time of prayer and sharing. Sunday morning, the building was full as Conference Minister Tim Detweiler opened the service with Psalms of lament. David Boshart preached using the title Mick had given his sermon for that morning, "Fighting a battle that has already been won." The message was meaningful as the congregation dealt with different emotions and the shock of the deaths.

The funerals for Mick and Julie were held the following Saturday at Mid-Prairie High School. Over 1,500 people attended, and when Mick's brother, a Baptist pastor, gave an altar call, many people stood. Sitting at the funeral, I realized Mick had become more than a minister at Kalona Mennonite; he had become a pastor to the community.

Mick and Julie leave a lasting legacy of faithfulness to the Kalona community. In addition to their children and extended families, Mick and Julie were an important influence in the lives of many youth and others in the area. Mick and Julie will be missed.

by Mark Siebert, Des Moines Mennonite Church



Baccam, 70, pastor emeritus of Des Moines Mennonite Church, died February 10 at his home in Des Moines. Baccam immigrated to this coun-

The Baccams first translated and printed the Gospels in 1997. They later completed the New Testament and began work on the Old Testament.

Ha and La immigrated to the United States during the resettlement of Southeast Asian refugees to Iowa. They first settled in Washington, Iowa, sponsored by the Washington Mennonite Church, and later moved to Des Moines.

But he wanted to reach more than just his small community who worshiped each week in the northwest part of Des Moines. He wanted to take God's word back to Vietnam.

The Bible translating company Wycliffe was working on a Tai Dam language Bible, but would not have their version ready

Official translations are based on the original Greek of the Bible. Ha drew on English, Laotian, Thai, French and Vietnamese languages. Among the problems: the language had no single word for God, so he used the T  i Dam words for “heavenly prince” or “prince of heaven.” Other problems were technical: where do you get a T  i Dam font for a less-than-top-of-the-line computer?

“He would ask us kids what words or phrases meant,” said his daughter Sonya Streit, who remembers her father and mother working on the translation project at home. “He was so proud of it, but also so humble at the same time about it.”

In 1997, Ha and La printed the Gospels while continuing the editing process through the New Testament. Eventually they printed the New Testament and were in the process of a final edit of the Old Testament when he died.

Ha's dream was to bring the Bible back to his people, who live in Vietnam, Laos and Thailand. But those countries have rules limiting proselytizing, so traveling there with a box full of Bibles was out of the question.

Instead, Ha made his translated version available to other parts of the world where the Tai Dam people have scattered, including Australia, Germany and Canada. In 2008, the Des Moines Mennonite Church also made the translation available on its website: www.desmoinesmennonite.org

Click on one of the PDFs, and you can see how little the two languages have in common.

Ha retired as associate pastor of Des Moines Mennonite in 2002 but continued to attend services, and occasionally translated sermons and scripture.

He is survived by his wife, Nang La Baccam; six adult children; 12 grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.



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Please send subscription requests and changes of addresses to office@centralplainsmc.org.

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An area conference of



www.centralplainsmc.org

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More than a tour

by Alyssa Rodriguez, First Mennonite Church, Iowa City



Alyssa Rodriguez

Alyssa Rodriguez participated in a “Fellowship and Learning Tour” sponsored by the Ecuador Partnership. Seven persons from Central Plains Mennonite Conference participated in the 12-day tour visiting the Mennonite congregations in Quito and Riobamba and an indigenous congregation in San Antonio. The Colombian Mennonite Church, Mennonite Mission Network, and Central Plains Mennonite Conference partner with the two Mennonite congregations in Ecuador. Aid to refugees from the civil war in Colombia is part of their mission. —Don Kempf, Ecuador Partnership Chair

While on the “Fellowship and Learning Tour” to learn about the Ecuador Partnership, I quickly learned it should not be treated 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; it means, rather, immersing yourself fully into this new world to get the most out of it.

It means being okay with 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-coastering one of the many mountainous areas Ecuador has to offer, 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. (Many of us praised God because we never found ourselves in this situation.)

I sought out the Lord, but I didn’t meet him on the mountaintop like Elijah did in 1 Kings 19, or inside the two Ecuadorian Mennonite churches; rather, I met God in the builders and “co-workers” 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. For one, smiles and laughter exchanged between the children of your host family and yourself. Secondly, music. Also, the hugs and kisses that *every* church person we encountered greeted us with every day; and finally—tears.

We wept for our new-found 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 nation of origin, mostly due to threats against their lives and the lives of their family members.

Where I saw God at work the most was when I met a young refugee family whose love for the Lord I could easily sense. Despite an uncertain future, this couple serves the Lord and leans on him to get through. They put their hardships into his hands and question little.

So, even though it seemed our hosts and new-found “co-workers” felt honored for *us* to be visiting *them*; it could have easily been the other way around. Witnessing their faith was an honor.



Luz Marina and William Valencia of Colombia arrived in Ecuador January 14 to serve the Riobamba Mennonite Church. Cesar Moya, pastor of the Quito Mennonite Church, installed them for pastoral leadership January 16. In addition to the weekly worship services, the Valencias have conducted the first baby dedication and have initiated Bible studies in their apartment and a couples meeting in a local restaurant. Please pray for them as they make personal contacts and search for a larger space for the congregation.



Leaders encouraged to “multiply” power

by David Boshart, Executive Conference Minister

On Saturday, February 25, 83 congregational leaders gathered at Manson Mennonite Church for a workshop entitled “The Paradox of Power.” We were delighted to have J. Nelson Kraybill as our speaker. Dr. Kraybill led two rich teaching sessions on the biblical foundations of power and authority and how leadership teams deal with these issues in order to provide effective leadership in congregations.

Out of close work with the biblical texts and responding to the reflections of participants, Kraybill asserted key characteristics of effective biblical leaders:

- They have an inner sense of call and a healthy ego.
- They cultivate and maintain the response to that call through disciplines of worship, prayer, silence, and otherwise communing with God.
- They will insist that groups face problems and engage opportunities.
- They draw out diverse perspectives, identify common ground and articulate positive vision.
- They define themselves in the midst of congregational discernment; and effective leaders stay connected, especially with people or factions who disagree.

Finally, effective leaders do not see power as a limited commodity but instead seek to multiply power, authority and vision by inspiring and empowering, and serve others rather than control them. These leaders expect that the group will embrace opportunities and face challenges.

At the end of the morning session, deacons/elders and pastors met in separate groups to reflect on the challenges they face in building effective leadership teams.

Following the afternoon session, based on what they had heard through the day, participants met as congregational leadership teams to name commitments they were ready to make in the coming months that would help them strengthen their leadership effectiveness.

WDC Resource Library

Top picks for spiritual practices

by Marlene Bogard, WDC Library Director

Just what is a spiritual practice? It is any intentional activity that turns our awareness more fully to God. Spiritual or Christian practices are the things we do together over time that shape us more into the likeness of Christ.

Search our on-line catalog at: www.mennowdc.org/library/catalog/ for “Spiritual Practices” and you will get a whoppin’ list of 85 fantastic resources. Here are a few of the best:

Spiritual Disciplines Handbook: Practices that transform us by Adele Calhoun. Simply the best! If you don’t know where to start, start here!

Soul-Tending: Life-forming practices for older youth and adults by Anne Broyles. A nice, basic intro to spiritual formation.

Living Well: Christian practices for everyday life edited by John Roberto. A how-to book about Christian practices, their foundation in scripture and how they can become an integral part of everyday life. There is also a children’s version that is adaptable to Sunday School, midweek, weekend retreats, etc.

On Our Way (DVD) Thirteen conversational video clips, each 3-10 minutes, based on the chapters in the book, **On Our Way: Christian Practices for Living a Whole Life**, edited by Dorothy Bass and Susan Briehl.

Cedar Falls church introduces itself to the community

by Carolyn Brown, Cedar Falls Mennonite Church

If given an hour to tell people about Mennonites and about your church, what would you present? That was the challenge our congregation faced preparing for an open house. The February 19 open house was part of an ongoing series coordinated through the Cedar Valley Interfaith Council.

We led off with singing and a four-minute video, “Who Are The Mennonites,” from Third Way Media, in our sanctuary. Then we split the 60-70 guests into two groups. One group went to our Peace and Justice Center and heard about its work, and the other group went to our fellowship hall to see displays put together by congregants. Then the groups switched.

Display themes included our church history, The World’s Window (the Ten Thousand Villages shop our congregation started), Mennonite Central Committee and the relief sale, Mennonite Disaster Service, and one displaying photographs of members accompanying paragraphs they had written about why they belong to our congregation. It really touched many of us that the children wrote one of these too.

Come enjoy fellowship, worship and discernment at Central Plains Annual Meeting

by Shana Peachey Boshart, Conference Minister for Christian Formation

What good things are happening in Central Plains? Come find out at Annual Meeting June 28 to July 1 in Henderson, Nebraska! We are extremely fortunate to have Ervin Stutzman, executive director of Mennonite Church USA, as our speaker. In Ervin's short tenure as executive director, we have experienced him to be a very gifted leader in unifying a diverse church and charting new directions for mission. Besides bringing us inspiring, biblical messages, Ervin will share his vision for Mennonite Church USA.

Our theme for the weekend will be *Guided by the Spirit: To Let the World Know*. This is the second in a three-year series from John 17:23, *Guided by the Spirit: Brought to Complete Unity* for 2011; *Guided by the Spirit: To Let the World Know* for 2012; and *Guided by the Spirit: Knowing God's Love* for 2013.

Why come to Annual Meeting?

Come to hear how our priorities of discipleship, fellowship and leadership for holistic witness are being expressed in our conference ministries and our congregations. Come and participate in discernment about how to strengthen our holistic witness to "let the world know."

In delegate sessions, you will hear what conference leaders are doing to address the leadership needs of our congregations, how our committees are working together to achieve our strategic plan for holistic witness, how we are using denominational staff to train our leaders, and how we are expanding our communications and web-based resources.

Most of all, come and see how our priorities are expressed when we gather for Annual Meeting. Fellowship with folks from all over our conference, grow in discipleship through worship and workshops, and develop your leadership skills in workshops and delegate sessions.

Plan to come to Henderson—you'll be so glad you did!

About Ervin Stutzman

Ervin R. Stutzman is executive director for Mennonite Church USA. Before taking on this role in January 2010, he served for nearly 12 years as dean and professor of church ministries at Eastern Mennonite Seminary, Harrisonburg, Virginia. He has also served the Mennonite Church in the roles of pastor, district overseer, missions administrator, conference moderator and, from 2001 to 2003, as moderator for Mennonite Church USA.

Ervin graduated with a bachelor's degree from Cincinnati (Ohio) Christian University. He holds master's degrees from the University of Cincinnati and Eastern Mennonite Seminary. He received his Ph.D. from Temple University.

Ervin was born a twin into an Amish home in Kalona, Iowa. After his father's death a few years later, his mother moved the family to her home community near Hutchinson, Kansas. Ervin was baptized in the Center Amish Mennonite Church near Partridge. Later, he joined the Yoder Mennonite Church.

Ervin married Bonita Haldeman of Manheim, Pennsylvania. They currently live in Harrisonburg, Virginia, and are members of Park View Mennonite Church, where Ervin regularly teaches a men's Bible study.

Leaders Credentialed

Shane Van Meveren, pastor at Bethany Mennonite Church, Freeman, South Dakota, was ordained January 15.

Steve Nelson, associate pastor at Lower Deer Creek Mennonite Church, Kalona, Iowa, was licensed toward ordination February 12.

Amanda Beachy was licensed toward ordination March 4. She is co-pastor at Washington (Iowa) Mennonite Church.



Ervin Stutzman

Pastor and spouse gathering will focus on self-care

The pastor's work focuses on deep spiritual questions such as, "What gives life meaning and purpose?" Pastors are engaged with people and causes that are much bigger than themselves. Given these demands, how do pastors and their families maintain balance for effective ministry?

This year's Pastor/Spouse Gathering planned for April 27-29, 2012, at the St. Benedict Retreat Center in Schuyler, Nebraska, will focus on "Finding Balance for Effective Ministry." Balance between physical, emotional, spiritual and intellectual self-care. Balance between family, personal time, ministry and church. This event is planned for all pastors, single and married, and for pastors' spouses. Our resource leaders will be David and Janice Yordy Sutter, pastors at Kern Road Mennonite Church in South Bend, Indiana. Mark your calendar now and plan to attend. More information is coming soon. —*Tim Detweiler*

Nebraska women make space for God, love, hospitality—and chocolate

by Jolene Boshart

The 2012 Nebraska Mennonite Women's retreat was celebrated, as it has been for the past several years, during the first weekend of March at the Leadership Center in Aurora, Nebraska. This year, the women of First Mennonite Church in Lincoln served as the host church, and we invited Janice Yordy Sutter of South Bend, Indiana, as our guest speaker.

Janice presented sessions around the theme, *Making Space In Your Heart*. These sessions covered topics such as "making space in your heart to be loved by God," "making space for a spiritual makeover," and "making space to welcome the people that God sends into our lives." She used Lydia, the woman from Philippi, as a pivotal character in these sessions, showing how she showed hospitality and influenced early believers through her ministry.

As a complement to Janice's presentation, we had wonderful musical and devotional segues. Our tables were decorated with themes pointing out how we interact with God and with others. The remarkable thing was that while Janice was working in Indiana, FMC women were working in Nebraska—and God blended everything together brilliantly, of course!

And of course, being Mennonite women, we had lots of food—coffecake, popcorn, and lots and lots of chocolate! Our Sunday morning service featured sharing and communion, and the retreat ended with participants feeling very uplifted spiritually.

Everence grants ease financial challenges

(Goshen, Ind.) — Twenty-three churches in the Central Plains Mennonite Conference received financial assistance last year to help people facing financial challenges as part of a grant program from Everence Financial.

In 2011, the Everence Sharing Fund program provided more than \$27,636 in matching grants to churches in the conference. Among the churches receiving grants were: Bethesda Mennonite in Henderson, NE; Bethany Mennonite in Freeman, SD; East Union Mennonite in Kalona, IA; and Pulaski Mennonite in Pulaski, IA.

The grants help members facing financial distress because of lost employment, medical bills or those struggling to pay for basic living expenses. The program also supports other church needs like community aid or service projects.

Phyllis Mishler, member benefits manager, said the grants for part of how Everence and Everence Federal Credit Union fulfill their joint mission – and work together to support the financial needs of local congregation members.

Everence helps individuals, organizations and congregations integrate finances with faith through a national team of advisors and representatives. Everence offers banking, insurance and financial services with community benefits and stewardship education. Everence is a ministry of Mennonite Church USA and other churches. To learn more, visit Everence.com or call (800) 348-7468.

Mercy Church grows in numbers and maturity

by Shel Boese, Pastor

Mercy Church hosted its first ever marriage seminar using presenters from *Laugh Your Way to A Better Marriage*. Some were skeptical given the title, however the actual content and approach impressed and helped many. There were 53 participants.

We continue to wrestle with the need for parking, lobby and classroom space. We met for the second time on February 29 with architect Tim Peterson of Menomonie, Wisconsin, who has worked with over 220 churches in building, remodeling and consulting.

We are thankful for God's work in our church. In terms of involvement, we continue to see growth through newcomers and new converts/confessions of faith and have crossed the 170 threshold several times.

Central Plains Mennonite Conference
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Freeman, SD 57029

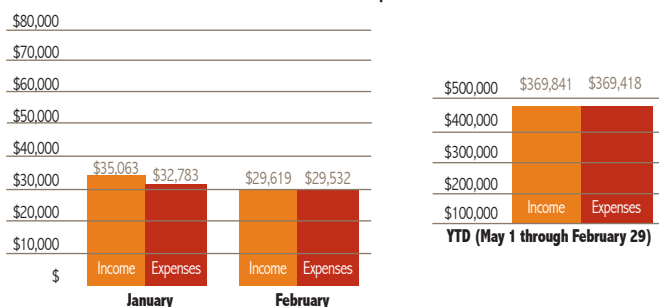
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Growing in
holistic witness
to God's
reconciling mission
in the world through
fellowship,
discipleship
and leadership

The graphs illustrate a financial snapshot of Central Plains Mennonite Conference through February 29, 2012. In January, the month's surplus was large enough to create an overall fiscal year-to-date surplus of \$335.51. At the end of February, year-to-date income rose to \$422.32 over expenses. The conference fiscal years ends on April 30. Please help us finish the year with a balanced budget!
—*Stewardship Task Group*

Central Plains Mennonite Conference Income vs. Expenses



FYI: COMING EVENTS

Central Plains Annual Meeting, Thursday through Sunday, June 28 – July 1, at Bethesda Mennonite Church, Henderson, Nebraska
Youth Escape 2012, Friday through Sunday, August 3-5, at Hidden Acres Christian Center, Dayton, Iowa
Pastors and Spouses Gathering, Friday through Sunday, April 27-29, 2012 at St. Benedict Center, Schuyler, Nebraska

An area conference of



Mennonite
Church
USA