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## PNMC 2019 Annual Meeting, June 21-22, Albany, OR



By Britt Carlsen, Portland Mennonite Church

"In June a crew of us from PMC headed to Albany for our yearly conference meeting. Churches gathered to hear stories of God's work in our congregations and to explore what it will look like to **journey forward together**.

There were workshops ranging from Weldon Nisly sharing about his recent time in Palestine with Christian Peacemaker Teams to our own Curt Weaver presenting on a panel about being a **peace witness**.

This is the third PNMC meeting I've attended, and one of the most profitable parts was a session by Katherine Jameson Pitts on healthy boundaries in church life. As she pointed out, power is hard to talk about for Mennonites, but it's so important for pastors to recognize their power and who is truly vulnerable in situations. I found the discussion around the table to be so good. We discussed where things have gone wrong and right with boundaries (*especially with regards to clergy*) in the congregations that we've been a part of. I'm thankful that we are continually talking about ways we can work towards health, transparency and accountability!

Read more about **Sue Park-Hur** at [this link](#).

Read **Iris de León-Hartshorn's** Annual Meeting sermon [here](#).



By Jeryl Hollinger, Mountain View Mennonite Church

At the opening worship session of the PNMC gathering each congregation had a few minutes to share about their "**Journey Forward**." At the closing service four of the newest and youngest pastors reflected on their journey and the John 20 text. Those two events alone were worth the trip for me. I had this hopeful and satisfied feeling of belonging to an underground culture of grace and peace-making. The transforming activity of the Spirit is changing the world through many creative and committed folks doing very ordinary things in very ordinary congregations as they worship and dream forward.

Too much to tell: music & communion, what does it mean to be a peace church?, delegate sessions and food, if you're not talking about climate change you're irrelevant, old friendships and new acquaintances, the cosmic Christ, reports and finances, the end of the potato wars (between ID & WA), sexual and internet boundaries, prayer & discussion and laughter. We also had a special time of commissioning for Linda Dibble who is becoming the MC USA moderator-elect at Kansas City. She will be the first the west and first from our conference.

### Support Refugees Through West Coast MCC

As the U.S. continues to meter asylum seekers along the Northern Mexican border, more and more families are having to wait to speak with U.S. officials. Some asylum-seekers are waiting 3-5 months in border towns with little to no resources. West Coast MCC is showing Christ's love to immigrants by providing [Asylum & Immigration Detainee Kits](#) to those recently released from detention centers. Kits containing clothing and hygiene products can help to rebuild their dignity as they wait to enter the U.S. Learn more [at this link](#).



## A MennoCon19 Reflection by Kara Histan Kropf, Zion Mennonite Church (*below, right*)



The 2019 biennial Mennonite Church USA Convention was held July 2-6 in Kansas City, MO. The scripture theme was John 20:19-22: Jesus appears to his disciples. *19* On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you!” *20* After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord. *21* Again Jesus said, “Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.” *22* And with that he created on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit.”

The last time I attended a MC USA Convention was as a high school student for Oregon ’91 and Philadelphia ’93. This year I entered back in, 26 years later, as an adult, a youth leader, and as a parent.

During Convention I heard the Holy Spirit talked about and experienced in ways that I’m not sure I’d ever really been taught to or fully embraced in the past. In an age of division and uncertainty, Meghan Good, teaching pastor at Trinity Mennonite Church in Glendale, AZ and author, challenged us to consider that the church doesn’t die because it’s wrong or irrelevant, it dies because it stops breathing in the Spirit of God. We often get so caught up in our action, work, service and theologies that **we forget to breathe in the Holy Spirit, we forget that God works with imperfect people and gives room for every single one of us.** Dustin Gaylon, head coach of Hesston College Men’s Basketball team, reminded us that we are created to be in community, but that we often close doors, build walls and let fear hold us back instead. He said, **“Fear fears community and wants us to be isolated and alone.”** I see evidence of this and its devastating consequences all around us in the world today. Our last morning Glen Guyton, executive director for MC USA, blew us away when he opened his message beautifully singing the rock band Nirvana’s early 90’s song “Come As You Are.” In his message he again suggested **there is room for each of us.** No matter how we identify ourselves or what baggage we bring, *there is room.* “God is greater than our limited understanding. God is greater than me, God is greater than you, God is enough.”



During MennoCon19 I felt challenged, not only by the messages given in worship and in seminars but by each one of our youth as well. One of our youth said it well when she told me after returning home, “the first 24 hours were rough.” The sticky, humid Kansas City heat, fatigue, illness, uncertain attitudes and a disappointing first night were barriers. Honestly, it felt a bit like the disciples locking the doors for fear. I felt fear. I had 2 children of my own and a group of 11 youth that I wanted more than anything to experience Convention as I had. I wanted them to feel the excitement and energy of collective worship with hundreds of other Mennonite youth, I wanted them to experience a church serving and engaging peace and social justice issues, to be open to listening, learning and experiencing God in new ways and to develop the deeper relationships with each other that only close time together can bring. As the week at MennoCon19 went on, I felt more than just the fatigue, I felt doors cracking open little bits at a time; smiles on faces, new kids met, a desire to join other youth in what we later termed the Menno Mosh Pit (front stage) during worship, an interest in seminar topics and an increasing willingness to

engage and open up in discussions. As a group we shared during small group sessions about some about our struggles - our struggles with fear, struggles with the church, difficulty with scripture, frustration with not feeling asked to participate or empowered by the church, and with the idea of the Holy Spirit...we sat in some real discomfort together. Whether the youth felt it or not, **I believe that for those brief few days we breathed the Holy Spirit together.**

Although they had the opportunity to share positive experiences from MennoCon19 with their home congregation, I don’t honestly know what all of the youth really thought about the week or if they will even think very deeply about it at all...but I do know that they are each one, no matter what baggage they bring, what they feel, think, or believe, are very loved. **Love by God and loved by me.**



## Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary

**Brian Miller O'Leary** of Goshen, IN, graduated May 4 from AMBS with a Master of Divinity with a major in Theological Studies: Biblical Studies. He also was selected to receive the Perry B. Yoder Award for Excellence in Hebrew Exegesis from the seminary's Bible Department. Leary, whose home congregation is Seattle Mennonite Church, plans to teach high school English. He previously earned a Bachelor of Arts in Bible and Religion from Goshen College. Locally, he attends Berkey Avenue Mennonite Fellowship in Goshen, a congregation of Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference. He is married to **Katie Miller O'Leary**, and his parents are **Robbin and Mike O'Leary** of Seattle. "I have enjoyed reading Greek and Hebrew on Wednesdays over lunch almost every semester that I have been at AMBS. It has been both very helpful in learning the languages and a fun way to spend an hour over lunch," O'Leary said. Thirteen of the graduates are serving in ministry roles or seeking pastoral or chaplaincy assignments. Four are pursuing mission, church planting, service and/or peacebuilding work; one will teach high school; one will seek a second degree from AMBS; one is pursuing opportunities where her faith and health interests intersect; and one plans to work with linking theology and business.



## Mennonite Women USA

Carolyn Heggen and Rhoda Keener taught their first European Sister Care seminars in Ukraine in May with 86 women attending. The seminars were held in Dnepr at a Russian Baptist church (pictured) and later in Zaporizhzhya for women leaders from a variety of churches and agencies. Women talked about the toll of past wars – World Wars I and II as well as conflict in the 1990's when the Soviet Union broke up and Ukraine gained independence from Russia, the 2014 Russian invasion that was pushed back, and the current conflict on the border between Ukraine and Russia. Carolyn says: "The response to us and our teaching was extremely warm and enthusiastic. Numerous women said they had never had the stories of the Bible connected to their own life stories. Another said they have not had training in 'practical theology' and appreciated gaining tools based on Biblical principles for their personal healing and to help others heal." Ukraine is the 17<sup>th</sup> country where Sister Care leadership training has been taught; the Sister Care manual is available in 15 languages.

## The Mennonite, Inc.

The Mennonite, Inc., invites your original submissions for our September 2019 print magazine issue and corresponding online content focusing on **Faith-filled responses to health-care costs**. Description: *Jesus is recorded to have healed many people during his life and ministry, yet we see no mention of people getting charged. His only instructions were to give thanks to God and at times to return to their community. As today's health-care system continues to drive up costs for those living in the United States, we are called to respond in ways that are faithful to God, who desires justice and shalom (healing and wholeness) for all people. Responding faithfully to such a complex system requires discernment, cooperation and action. Our faith-filled responses include thinking and acting together to provide care to those living with chronic illness and those with accessibility needs.*

Submissions may consider one of the following prompts/questions, among others:

- How have you experienced the rising costs of health care? Tell your story and include the voices of all involved, with their permission.
- How do the rising costs of health care impact your life, your community?
- What is your community, congregation or organization's faith-filled response to the health-care system's increased financial, social, spiritual burdens or costs? Describe the ways it was meaningful and helpful and the ways it was not.
- In what ways do you believe health care should and could be available to all? How and why?
- How do you understand the Bible's message about God desiring/designing humanity for shalom (healing & wholeness) and our participation in that?
- How do you understand race, class, gender and sexuality intersecting and impacting the rising costs within the health-care system?

**Submissions are due to Editor@TheMennonite.org by July 29.** Articles with personal stories, biblical or theological reflections, stories about your congregation, and more are welcome (800-1,200 words)—as well as original photography, videos and artwork on the theme.

## Upcoming e-Bulletins:

August 5 (submissions due by 7/29)

August 19 (submissions due by 5/12)

Sept 2 (submissions due by 8/26)

Sept. 16 (submissions due by 9/9)

If you would like to contribute, please send a brief announcement in Spanish & English with website links to [brenda@pnmc.org](mailto:brenda@pnmc.org). Our goal is to provide a valuable resource, not an In-Box jammer. If space is tight, we may omit announcements that are not as pertinent to PNMC. Announcements will run ONE time only, unless specified otherwise. We welcome your feedback!

For more PNMC updates: <http://pnmc.org> e-Bulletin Archives: <http://pnmc.org/Resources/eBulletin>