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Releasing and Making Room, Eric Massanari, PNMC Executive Conference Minister



Artboard print: Santiago Ortiz

*Listen! I am standing at the door, knocking;
if you hear my voice and open the door,
I will come in to you and eat with you, and you with me.*
REVELATION 3:20

This is the message of Christ to the church of Laodicea in the book of Revelation—a church described as “lukewarm.” It seems that the congregation had grown complacent; they were “neither hot nor cold.” Perhaps they were feeling overwhelmed by the circumstances of their times and did not know how to move forward. They are given this reminder that Christ remains enduringly present—present across the threshold of each moment, present in the liminal possibilities of each encounter—and that they have only to make room in their hearts and their lives to welcome Christ in, and abide in the love through which and for which they have been made.

What is it that makes it difficult for us to open the door?

What makes it difficult to meet and welcome the Christ who is present in each moment we live, and present in each person we meet? Or to welcome the Christ who is pleased to dwell within our own hearts? Do we have our own forms of lukewarmness? Is it our fear? Our judgments and expectations? Our busyness? Our desire for control? Our worry and anxiety?

What might we release so that we can open the door and make room for the Beloved who is already here, within us and among us.

As Anabaptist Christians we have deep wisdom in our lineage of faith that might guide us in discovering what it means to release, to *let go* and make room to welcome Christ more deeply and fully.

The “radical reformers” of the 16th century, our forbears as modern-day Mennonites, sought to describe and live a life of discipleship that was rooted in scripture and, more deeply, rooted in the call of Christ to active discipleship and beloved community. In describing this path of discipleship they drew upon a word and concept that was already familiar in the Germanic Christian context: ***gelassenheit***.

Gelassenheit has often been translated as “**yieldedness**,” as in yieldedness to the will of God, or to the discernment and will of the church, the Body of Christ. Unfortunately, this has sometimes been misunderstood and misused in the history of Anabaptism, as people have been asked to yield to oppressive systems and abusive, violating circumstances within the church itself. It has also been misunderstood to imply a weak passivity. This is not what the founders of our tradition had in mind, nor is it what they practiced in their own time of great tumult and trial.

As they faced severe persecution and the daily prospect of martyrdom, the 16th century Anabaptists were forced to explore a deeper and much more active notion of release and self-surrender on the path of discipleship. They were being asked to walk the path of Christ’s own suffering, and they found inspiration in Jesus’ open-hearted prayer: ***Abba, take this cup from me. Yet, not my will, but your will be done.*** -Luke 22:42

In the words of the 16th century reformers themselves:

If [we] shall become one with God, [we must] suffer what God intends to work in [us]. HANS DENCK

When we truly realize the love of God, we will be ready to give up for love’s sake even what God has given us. HANS HAFFNER

As modern-day North American Mennonites, our lives are not threatened as a result of our faith. Yet, there is much in our lives that prevents us from seeing and welcoming the presence of Christ in the moments we live and the people we are with.

Like the very first disciples who were repeatedly asked to let go—let go of assumptions, judgments, fears, expectations and their impulses for control—in order to “come and see” the fullness of Christ, we too are invited to this path of ***gelassenheit***. This practice of ***releasing and making room*** is not a denial of ourselves, it is in fact a turning toward the truth and fullness of our being, as bearers of the very image of God. It is the path of becoming a beloved community that knows our fundamental connections with God, with our neighbors and with all of life, and nurturing these relationships with faith, hope and love. May the door be opened.

PNMC CONGREGATIONS, ORGANIZATIONS & MINISTRIES

Pacific Northwest Mennonite Historical Society

Voices of Conscience: Peace Witness in the Great War (VOC) Exhibit

This week marks your final opportunity to visit the Voices of Conscience display in the Watzek Library on the campus of Lewis & Clark College, 614, S. Palatine Hill Road, Portland, OR. The exhibit has been extended until **Sunday, September 24th**. Hours are Monday – Friday, 8:00 am to 10:00 pm. Saturday, 11:00 am to 7:00 pm and Sunday 9:00 am to 10:00 pm. On Sunday, September 24, David Kreider, and associate of Kauffman Museum in Newton, KS, will be available to talk about the creation of the exhibit and its impact on viewers. More information and a campus map can be found at pnmhs.org.

Mennonite Country Auction

The 2023 auction will be held **Saturday, October 7 at Menno Mennonite Church**, 1378 N. Damon Rd., Ritzville, WA. All are welcome to this day of fun and special items raising funds for the global development work of [Mennonite Central Committee](#). There is no admission fee and parking is free. (RVs are welcome to camp in the parking lot, however, hookups will not be available.) Gates open at 7:00 AM. Breakfast will be served from 7-9 AM. Sale booths open at 10:00 AM and the [Liberty Quartet](#) will perform on the sale stage at 10:30 AM. (*The quartet will perform again on Sunday for the worship service.*) Cash and checks (with I.D.) are preferred the day of the sale. Credit Cards will be accepted for auction items and most booths. Dollar amounts paid for articles above fair market value of the items are tax deductible.

Oregon Mennonite Relief Sale

Gather at the Linn County Fair and Expo Center, 3700 Knox Butte Rd. E, in Albany for the **2023 Oregon Mennonite Relief Sale, Saturday, October 21**. In addition to the sale's collection of quilts, baked goods, books and antiques, as well as handcrafted items in the new **Menno Marketplace** or search for fabric and notions at the **Sew Much Shop**. Visit www.oregonmccsale.org to learn more.

MENNONITE CHURCH USA & OTHER CHURCH AGENCIES

Goshen College

High School students have several upcoming opportunities to visit the Goshen College campus during fall open houses. Students can tour campus, talk with faculty, learn about financial aid and scholarships and explore what it means to study at Goshen College.

Oct. 6 | [Homecoming Open House](#)

Oct. 23 | [Nursing and Public Health Career Day](#)

Oct. 26-28 | [Fly and Drive Visit Weekend](#) (for students who live 100+ miles away)

Mennonite Church USA

Mennonite Church USA is saddened to announce that **Patricia Shelly**, 71, who was a former pastor, professor, MC USA Executive Board member and moderator, died Sept. 4, in Newton, Kansas, after a three-year struggle with pancreatic cancer. To read more about her many contributions and talents that she generously shared with the church, follow [this link](#).

The Apache Stronghold continues to believe that prayer is one of the most powerful ways to protect one of its sacred sites, Oak Flat. On **November 4**, Indigenous people will gather at Oak Flat to pray, and they have invited people of all faith traditions to join them. [The Coalition to dismantle the Doctrine of Discovery](#) is encouraging individuals who are able, to travel to Oak Flat for a day of prayer, and for those who can't travel, they suggest organizing prayer events at their churches and in their communities. Read the full story [here](#).

OPEN PASTORAL POSITIONS:

[First Mennonite Church](#), Aberdeen, ID,
is seeking a full-time pastor.

The congregation has been worshipping together since 1907.

To read the full job description, click [here](#),
and for congregation information, click [here](#).



[Salem Mennonite Church](#), Keizer, OR,
is seeking a full-time pastor.

The congregation was established in 1961.
To read the full job description, click [here](#).



[Zion Mennonite Church](#), Hubbard, OR,
is seeking a part-time Youth Ministry Director.
The job will include connecting with middle and high school students; partnering with volunteers to plan regular activities and events; and leading a Bible-based Sunday morning youth group.



To inquire about these opportunities,
please contact PNMC Executive Conference
Minister, Eric Massanari by email at
eric@pnmc.org.

Upcoming e-Bulletins:

Oct 2 (submissions due by 9/25)

Oct 16 (submissions due by 10/9)

Nov 6 (submissions due by 10/30)

Nov 20 (submissions due by 11/13)

If you would like to contribute, please send a brief announcement in Spanish & English with website links to 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>