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Peace Candle Meditation at Albany Mennonite Church

By Mark Nord | *We thank Mark Nord for being willing to share this reflection that was offered at Albany Mennonite on Sunday, January 18, 2026.*



For the peace candle today, I am taking courage in both hands to share some thoughts on peace in the congregation during a mid-term election year.

I start with the assertion that healthy societies and healthy congregations need to include both conservatives—who want to conserve the wisdom of the past and progressives—who want to change some things from the past that seem wrong to them. I will give two examples of why we need both—one from genetics and one from biblical history.

As we all know, our genetic makeup is encoded in enormously long strings of DNA. Your particular DNA—unique to you unless you are an identical twin—is in every cell of your body. It designs the proteins that make you into who you are. Now, DNA is very conservative. It replicates so that when a cell divides, each new cell has exactly the same DNA. And it replicates its millions of bits of information with excruciating exactitude. Without this stubborn conservatism of our DNA, there would be no us, no animals, no plants, not even single-celled

animals. Stability is essential to the development of complex life.

But, sometimes some small part of the replication process goes wrong, and the DNA of the embryo of a child-to-be differs slightly from that of either parent. In most cases, this causes developmental problems and the embryo or fetus does not survive. This should be a cautionary tale to progressives. But now and then, such a mutation confers an advantage and the child thrives and passes on this new genetic advantage to his or her children. Such mutations that create genetic diversity in a population are critical to long-term survival of the species—especially in a changing world. The dinosaurs—which (other than the bird line) were mostly unable to adapt—may be a cautionary tale to conservatives.

So, genetically, both conservers and changers are essential.

For a biblical example, we need only consider the priests and prophets. You can read the Bible, substituting “conservative” for “priest” and “progressive” for “prophet,” and it reads pretty well. Priests were concerned with keeping the religious institutions and practices from changing. The prophets saw that at times the institutions and practices did not serve their original God-given purposes and needed to be changed. Yet, Jesus is hailed as both prophet and priest. He said, “I did not come to abolish the law, but to fulfill it.” But he also regularly prefaced teachings with, “You have heard it said....but I tell you.”

So, a healthy congregation needs both conservatives and progressives, and whichever your tendency is, you need to acknowledge and value the contribution of the other. To complicate matters, we may each tend to align with national political parties or movements that reflect our own balance between conservative and progressive, but we must take great care not to be co-opted by national political forces. They would like us to buy in 100% to their politics and policies and look on the other party as enemy. **But that will polarize us and break our bonds of love. Our full allegiance is not to national parties, but to each other and to our shared vision of God’s kingdom.**

John’s gospel includes only one extended teaching of Jesus. In it, Jesus does not teach us to be conservers or changers, he teaches us to love each other. May it be so in our beloved congregation.

We pray with our friends at Ministerios Restauración in Portland, OR. Two members were detained and deported by ICE.

Erwin and Heber were arrested as they left their home on January 24. Pastor Samuel & District Pastor Sylvia Shirk reported that the men were transferred to the ICE detention center in Tacoma, WA and have since been deported to Guatemala. They are with their families there.

Please pray for Erwin and Heber—for their safety and wellbeing. Please pray for their family members. Please pray for Ministerios and Pastor Samuel as they seek ways to give care and support. Please pray for all of our siblings in Christ and all our neighbors throughout our region and our nation who are suffering the cruelty, violence and uncertainty of this moment. Let us pray that we—the Body of Christ—will not remain silent, and that we, like Christ, will stand in solidarity with all who are suffering most acutely.

**Thank you to everyone who was able to participate in the
Conference Communications Council on Saturday, January 31.
It was a meaningful time of learning, sharing and connecting with one another.**

Mark your calendars for our next conference gathering!

This year's PNMC Annual Meeting will be June 25-28, 2026 in Albany, Oregon!

Planning committees have been formed and are collecting details to create a meaningful time together as we gather this coming June for worship, fellowship, renewal and discernment.

As details come together, needs will be communicated. We hope that conference members will consider creative ways to get involved, whether that be through making the trip to attend, opening homes to accommodate those traveling from a distance, providing snacks or transportation. *We hope to see you there!*

PNMC CONGREGATIONS, ORGANIZATIONS & MINISTRIES

Albany Mennonite Church and Portland Mennonite Church

Join friends for the [Mennonite Central Committee's Global Voices Speaking Tour](#) on **Wednesday, February 11 at 7pm** at [Albany Mennonite Church](#) and on **Thursday, February 12 at 6:30pm** at [Portland Mennonite Church](#). What is the connection between climate and peace? How does the changing climate drive conflict or make it worse? Can peacebuilding help communities become more climate resilient? The tour will feature two speakers from regions experiencing both the brunt of climate change and resource-related conflict: South Asia and the Sahel region in Africa. **Dr. Arefur Rahaman**, the MCC coordinator of food security and livelihoods in Bangladesh, and **David Waiswa**, the MCC East Africa and Sahel regional peace, advocacy and monitoring and evaluation coordinator, will share how communities are navigating unpredictable weather patterns, drought, flood, and heat, through climate adaptation and peacebuilding. This is a unique opportunity to hear firsthand stories on the intersection of climate and peace. Explore how your own commitment to peace can make a difference!

Pacific Northwest Mennonite Historical Society

All are invited to attend the upcoming **PNMHS Annual Meeting, Saturday, February 21, 2026**, at Zion Mennonite Church. The luncheon and business meeting are at 12:00pm. At 1:30pm **Jeryl Hollinger** will begin his presentation entitled **Montana Bound—A history of the Mountain View Mennonite Church, Kalispell, MT.** *Jeryl and his wife, Mary, live in the foothills of the Swan Mountains in northwest MT. His spare time goes into a variety of community clubs and fruit trees, berry bushes, and vegetable garden that feed them most of the year. Jeryl is the retired pastor of the Mt. View congregation.* The luncheon is \$15/person. An RSVP is needed for lunch only. To reserve a meal, contact **Jerry Barkman** by **February 13** at treasurer-pnmhs@canby.com or 503-871-6413. An offering to support the work of the Historical Society will be taken and guests are invited to visit the archives following the afternoon presentation.

Camp CAMREC

Adults in their 20s and 30s are invited to enjoy the snowy outdoors, fireside activities and build community with other like-minded folks over a long weekend. People are invited to enjoy CAMREC between **February 13 and 16**. (*Additional days available upon request.*) Optional activities include tubing, snow shoeing, cross country skiing, excursions into Leavenworth as well as Alpine skiing or snowboarding at [Steven's Pass](#) or [Mission Ridge](#). Participants are invited to jump in on contemplative worship, collaborative cooking and baking, music sessions, yoga, or continue working remotely on WiFi. The suggested fee is \$35/day. Costs for off-site activities will be covered by participants. To sign up, contact **Brisa Peacock**: program@camrec.org.

Located on 240 acres in the east foothills of the Cascades, CAMREC is looking for a year-round **Facilities Manager**. The position requires a self-starter with broad maintenance skills and a passion to further the camp's mission through facilities and grounds maintenance with a focus on safety and care for the natural environment. CAMREC provides year-round retreat from the daily noise of life to renew the gift of peace found in God's creation. Recreational opportunities nearby include downhill and cross country skiing, white water rafting, rock climbing, mountain biking, hiking, and trail running. For more details, visit camrec.org.

Seattle Mennonite Church

Seattle Mennonite, located in the Lake City neighborhood, invites applications for the permanent, part-time position of [Property Manager](#). This on-site position executes the daily, weekly, and monthly tasks related to administering church properties. The Property Manager is responsible for the church's financial, legal, and compliance matters as they relate to its properties. The Property Manager is also responsible for overall property and project management. This position works in close collaboration with the volunteer Stewardship Council, the Maintenance Manager, pastors, and staff. More details can be found [here](#).

MENNONITE CHURCH USA & OTHER ORGANIZATIONS

Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary

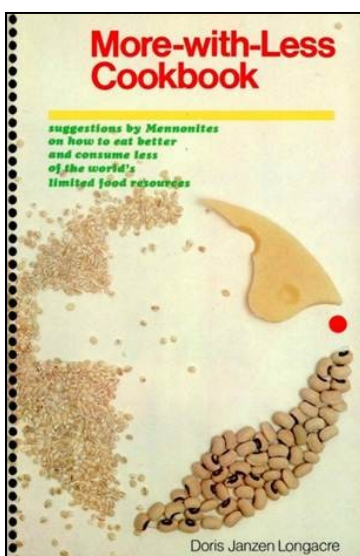
Earn a Master of Divinity at a distance! Develop your leadership abilities from an Anabaptist perspective while staying in your current vocation. Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary's MDiv Connect program offers you in-depth biblical and theological study, spiritual formation and vocational internships — right where you live. Generous need-based financial aid, scholarships and matching grants are available. amb.edu/mdiv-connect

Eastern Mennonite Seminary

Practicing Conflict Transformation in Community Training Event

Take up the tools you need to navigate conflicts and respond to harms with clarity and compassion. Whether you're a community leader, educator, faith leader, or seeking healthier relationships, this training offers practical, real-life strategies. Through interactive sessions, real-world scenarios, and reflective practice, learn how to transform conflicts into opportunities for growth and positive change. [Learn more and register today](#), **March 12-14, 2026**, Village Church, Beaverton, OR.

Herald Press and Mennonite Central Committee



In celebration of the upcoming 50th anniversary edition of *More-with-Less*, releasing **September 2026**, Herald Press and Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) are inviting the public to share real-life stories that reflect the heart of this beloved cookbook: food as a source of joy, generosity, resilience, and community.

First published in 1976, *More-with-Less* by Doris Janzen Longacre has sold nearly a million copies and shaped generations of home cooks and communities with its vision of simple, nourishing food rooted in faith, global awareness, and care for neighbors near and far. As Herald Press prepares this milestone anniversary edition, the publisher and MCC hope to amplify contemporary voices that show how these values are still lived out—around kitchen tables, in congregations, and across cultures.

“More-with-Less has been a forward-looking resource for 50 years. More than a cookbook, *More-with-Less* is a way of life, a way of seeing the world as bigger than ourselves, and understanding how to eat simply and sustainably with the whole world in mind,” said **Amy Gingerich**, Herald Press publisher. “We know readers have their own stories and connections to share about this iconic text and how it has sparked moments of connection, generosity, and hope.”

Stories from individuals and communities of all backgrounds are welcome. Submissions may be featured in the anniversary edition or in accompanying digital resources designed to help congregations and communities connect around food and faith.

Submission Option 1: Storytelling

Share a time you witnessed or experienced resilience, generosity, or joy through food. This may include a *More-with-Less* recipe—but it doesn't have to. Stories might involve family traditions, church meals, neighborhood gatherings, service or activism, cross-cultural experiences, or moments when strangers became neighbors around the table.

Submission Option 2: Practical Wisdom

Share your own “more with less” tips—practices for simple or celebratory eating, hosting, and sharing. These might be inherited family traditions, rooted in your culture or a host culture, or your own creative ideas.

Submission Option 3: Blessings and Words

Submit a favorite blessing, poem, or brief meditation connected to themes of resilience, generosity, and joy. Please include where you learned it, or note if you are the author. **Stories must be submitted by February 15, 2026**, using the online form found [here](#).

Mennonite Church USA

- Discover news and resources from Mennonite Church USA in the latest edition of *PeaceMail*, simply follow [this link](#).
- Explore **Lent at Home** resources at [this link](#).
- Mennonite Church USA is requesting prayer for the hearing for injunctive relief in the “sensitive locations” lawsuit, *Mennonite Church USA et al., v. U.S. Department of Homeland Security, et al.* Oral arguments will be heard on Feb. 5, 2026, in the US Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit in Washington, D.C. Representatives from MC USA leadership will attend. Please note that no further action is requested at this time. Read the opening brief [here](#).

Upcoming e-Bulletins:

Feb 16 (submissions due by 2/9)
Mar 2 (submissions due by 2/23)
Mar 16 (submissions due by 3/9)
Apr 6 (submissions by 3/30)

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>