As people of Christ’s peace, we persevere through life’s stages

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Expectant Hope

Trusting God through all of life’s seasons

BY MARCIA MYLIN

In recent years, Lancaster Mennonite Conference (LMC) has been experiencing growing pains. The process has been painful and costly in unexpected ways. Such remodeling is usually messy and can be stressful, especially when the finished product is not clearly seen. In his book, Mere Christianity, C.S. Lewis describes it well: “Imagine yourself as a living house. God comes in to rebuild his house. He intends to come and live in it Himself. Ace. He intends to make it a decent little cottage: but He is building a palace. He is getting the drains right and stopping the leaks in the roof and so on; you knew that those jobs needed doing and so you are not surprised. But presently He starts knocking the house about in a way that hurts abominably and does not seem to make any sense. What on earth is He up to? The explanation is that He is building quite a different house from the one you thought of – throwing out a new wing here, putting on an extra floor there, running up towers, making courtyards. You thought you were being given a decent little cottage, but He is building a palace. He intends to come and live in it Himself.”

Throughout our lives, from birth to death, our loving heavenly Father exploits every opportunity for growth. We may experience an unplanned pregnancy, a sudden death in the family, a job loss, an accident, an unexpected financial windfall, the opportunity to participate in a mission trip or a surprise diagnosis. Each of these is an opportunity for growth. While at the time, the event may seem like an obstacle or a cause of grief and pain, the Word tells us that our Father is able to use these circumstances for the good of those who love God (Romans 8:28). Mere Christianity, C.S. Lewis describes the process has been painful and costly in unexpected ways. Such remodeling is usually messy and can be stressful, especially when the finished product is not clearly seen. In his book, Mere Christianity, C.S. Lewis describes it well: “Imagine yourself as a living house. God comes in to rebuild his house. He intends to come and live in it Himself. Ace. He intends to make it a decent little cottage: but He is building a palace. He is getting the drains right and stopping the leaks in the roof and so on; you knew that those jobs needed doing and so you are not surprised. But presently He starts knocking the house about in a way that hurts abominably and does not seem to make any sense. What on earth is He up to? The explanation is that He is building quite a different house from the one you thought of – throwing out a new wing here, putting on an extra floor there, running up towers, making courtyards. You thought you were being given a decent little cottage, but He is building a palace. He intends to come and live in it Himself.”

Over this past year, LMC has developed a greater awareness of the need to renew its mission across the lifespan to those who are already in our congregations. Over this past year, LMC has developed a greater awareness of the need to renew its mission across the lifespan to those who are already in our congregations. Although it may seem like an obstacle or a cause of grief and pain, the Word tells us that our Father is able to use these circumstances for the good of those who love God (Romans 8:28). Throughout our lives, from birth to death, our loving heavenly Father exploits every opportunity for growth. We may experience an unplanned pregnancy, a sudden death in the family, a job loss, an accident, an unexpected financial windfall, the opportunity to participate in a mission trip or a surprise diagnosis. Each of these is an opportunity for growth. While at the time, the event may seem like an obstacle or a cause of grief and pain, the Word tells us that our Father is able to use these circumstances for the good of those who love God (Romans 8:28).
Several years ago I was diagnosed with an early stage of cancer. While the diagnosis was not unexpected, I did have many decisions to make. One day a friend gave me a little booklet entitled Don’t Waste Your Cancer. I began to read it but was unable to finish because of the strong emotions that rose up within me, so I set it aside. As time went on however, I realized that I had a choice to make. I could choose to waste this experience by becoming angry and bitter, or I could choose to learn the lessons my Heavenly Father wanted to teach me. By God’s grace, I began to open my heart to the possibility that there were new lessons I needed to learn through the experience with cancer. I do not believe God gave me the cancer, but I do believe I had choices of response toward this disease. As I walked that journey of being diagnosed, meeting with doctors, deciding on treatment and then recovery, there were so many deep and beautiful lessons I learned along the way. What blessings I would have missed if I had made the choice to waste my experience with cancer instead of allowing it to build Christ-like character. Our Heavenly Father is remodeling LMC. This is a time when some of our walls must be torn down, floors must be ripped up and garbage thrown away. It is painful and uncomfortable but God is building us into a temple for His Kingly Presence. Let us submit fully to the process, regardless of the cost.

The disciples had experienced growing pains. At the beginning of Jesus’ ministry, they were invited to follow. During the next three years, their assumptions about Jesus changed. They moved from regarding Him as a good teacher, to a miracle worker, to someone who could fill their empty fishing nets, to, as Peter confesses, the “Son of the Living God.” In addition, their understanding of the purpose for Jesus’ coming also changed. Instead of coming to redeem Israel from Roman oppression, Jesus came to redeem hearts from sin’s oppression. He had no interest in building an earthly kingdom, but rather a kingdom not of this world. Rather than promising earthly riches, Jesus invited disciples to lay up treasures in heaven. Jesus welcomed children, women and sinners and called out the Pharisees and teachers of the law. He marched resolutely toward Jerusalem and crucifixion in order to overthrow death, hell, and the grave. When the disciples wanted Jesus to stay, they were told that when He left, The Comforter, the promised Holy Spirit would come in power.

As we journey together on this remodeling project to become a house of prayer for all nations, we know that, “Unless the Lord builds the house, its builders labor in vain” (Psalm 127:1). Isaiah the prophet affirms this truth: “He will be the sure foundation for your times, a rich store of salvation and wisdom and knowledge; the fear of the LORD is the key to this treasure” (Isaiah 28:6).

Let’s press in and submit to the reconstruction so that we too can attain to the high calling of Christ Jesus “being confident of this, that He who began a good work in us will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus” (Philippians 1:6).

Marcie Mylin serves as resource staff at Lancaster Mennonite Conference and attends Byerland Mennonite Church in Willow Street, PA.

Life Stages Ministry – Christian Spiritual Formation

Christian Spiritual formation is the process of “Christ being formed” in us (Gal. 4:19). Spiritual growth involves both “information” and “formation.” In this respect, spiritual formation is about connecting our knowledge of God with our experience of God. Spirituality is “theology in walking shoes.” What we believe about our relationship with God needs to be lived out in relationship with God. Genuine spiritual formation is not neat, tidy, and linear. It is often “messy.” It takes time, and it continues over a lifetime. Additionally, the dynamics of formation adjust and shift through the various stages of human life.

READ more on the LMC website at: lancasterconference.org/ministries/life-stages-ministry/

Toddler – Preschool
Welcome children to the church family and encourage their innate wonder while teaching them to listen to God.

Elementary Age Children
Invite children to grow in their understanding of who Jesus is, to know that He loves them and that they can be part of His family.

Youth
Encourage youth to begin integrating their faith into all of life and to embrace their identity in Christ as they follow Him.

Young Adults
Invite young adults to build on the faith foundation that began in childhood and to explore how their unique gifts can be used in the body of Christ.

Mid-life Adults
Welcome adults of all ages to continue in their faith journey as they prayerfully apply biblical truth to every season and situation in life.

Elderly
Affirm the wisdom and experience that comes with age and invite these adults to renew their first love and to mentor the younger generation.
La redacción no proporciona la página correspondiente.
The Garifuna are an ethnic group descended from a mix of Amerindian and African people. The African ancestors survived the wreck of a slave ship in the late 1600s. The survivors reached the Caribbean Islands. They are an ethnic group descended from a Garifuna group that speaks the Garifuna language and often Spanish as well. Garifuna of Central America and other places, including the United States. The Bronx, New York 10454

DATE OF FOUNDING: 1987
AVERAGE SUNDAY WORSHIP ATTENDANCE: 100
SERVICE TIMES: Sundays, 2:45 pm; Sundays and Thursdays, 8:00 pm

PASTORS: Celso and Zulma Jaime

G

oe gave EMM the vision to establish a Garifuna church in the Bronx in 1986. Pastors Migdolito Miranda and Matías Arana in San Fe, Honduras recommended that EMM search for Celso Jaime, who had immigrated to the USA and lived in the Bronx. Pastor Esteban Garcia, who led a Garifuna church in Brooklyn, found Celso and his family in February 1987 at the Bubulah Pentecostal Church. After careful discernment, the family began a new ministry in their apartment at 909 Kelly St. with the help of pastor Garcia. As the congregation grew, it shared space at a church located at Freeman St. and Southern Blvd. Then in 1987 with the help of Bishop Monroe Yoder, the congregation moved to 344 Brook Ave, the prior location of Glad Tidings Mennonite Church. The membership is mainly Garifuna, but members from Mexico and the Dominican Republic also worship in the church. The congregation welcomes people from all nations. Their services use two languages, Garifuna and Spanish, and, when necessary, translate to English. Worship songs are mostly in Garifuna, but God has blessed the Church with a new worship style.

On May 5-6, 2017, the Evangelical Garifuna Church in Bronx celebrated its 30th anniversary of ministry. Leaders of Garifuna churches from all around the United States and from Honduras traveled to New York to celebrate together. Leaders held meetings, food was shared, the Word of God was preached, and honor given to Pastor Celso Jaime and his wife Zulma. As a congregation, we preach the gospel to our local community and among the Garifuna community. The Food Pantry and the Immigration Program provide needed services of food and legal help. Immigration occurs in partnership with MCC and Garifuna Services. We also help people with temporary housing. The Anabaptist Biblical Institute has a study center at our location, funded through Mennonite Education Agency. Casa Nueva Esperanza, begun in 1999, ministers to more than 120 orphans whose parents died from HIV/AIDS in Honduras. By the grace of God and the help of pastors Galileo Bernardz and Pastor Omar Guzmán and other ministers, our Church has multiplied across the United States. All of these churches are connected through the Mennonite Garifuna Mission, with the objective to strengthen believers and to continue multiplying churches.

We thank God for everything he has done, for what he is doing and for what he will do. Bungu Waru (God is with us)!

CONGREGATIONAL PROFILE:
Evangelical Garifuna Church

DISTRICT: New York City
LOCATION: 344 Brook Ave, Bronx, New York 10454
DATE OF FOUNDING: 1987
AVERAGE SUNDAY WORSHIP ATTENDANCE: 100
SERVICE TIMES: Sundays, 2:45 pm; Sundays and Thursdays, 8:00 pm

PASTORS: Celso and Zulma Jaime

CONGREGATIONAL PROFILE:
Millport Mennonite Church

DISTRICT: Lititz
LOCATION: 820 Log Cabin Road, Leola, PA 17540
DATE OF FOUNDING: 1956
AVERAGE SUNDAY WORSHIP ATTENDANCE: 150
SUNDAY WORSHIP SERVICE: Sunday School – 9:00 a.m.; Worship Service – 10:00 a.m.

PASTOR: Kerry Martin

While God works through a corporate congregation in various ways, he also works through individual relationships. At Millport, the congregation takes the mission calling very seriously. Many people in the congregation are involved in one-on-one ministry with coworkers, neighbors, and other community relationships. We frequently hear from others that we are friendly and welcoming. In 2015 a planning team formed, who had interest in pursuing ways to reach into our community. As they talked and prayed together, they realized that while our goal was to introduce people to Jesus, the congregation needed to begin building relationships with those outside the church. So the team investigated the Lifetree Cafe materials and eventually decided to start a Lifetree Cafe in Rothsville. Lifetree Cafe is an hour-long conversational cafe with topics and stories that participants interact with as they sit around tables.

The team purposefully decided to begin the Cafe outside the church building. They met with the owner of the White Swan Restaurant, who agreed to allow the use of one section of the restaurant that was typically closed on Wednesday nights. The Cafe went public on May 4, 2016. Due to staffing reasons, the Cafe stopped meeting April 26. Out of the relationships formed, a new ministry called LifePath has begun, which has a similar focus as Lifetree. We are glad for the various contacts this ministry has allowed us to begin in the community.

Another part of our outreach group started looking into ways to reach out to families. They were planning to start something in the evenings, but an opportunity opened up to work with other area churches to provide lunches for the community over the summer. Since children have less access to good meals over the summer when school is not in session, this sounded like a great opportunity. As our church participated in the free lunch program every Tuesday and Thursday, we were able to get to know some of the children and families from the community. When the lunch program ended, we began a weekly ministry in the basement of the Lutheran church in Rothsville. We meet to have a meal, play games, do crafts, talk about relevant life issues. In many ways, this has become “church” to several of our friends from the Rothsville community.

We have also hosted an annual “Picnic in the Park” every year since 2011. In 2016, we counted more community folks at the event than Millport folks. We remain pleased with the potential and growth of this event.

Because friendships are strong within the congregation, we are like a family in many ways. We enjoy being together. It is not uncommon to have people still visiting 45 minutes after the service is over.

Garifuna

The Garifuna live in the coastal Caribbean area of Central America and some Caribbean Islands. They are an ethnic group descended from a mix of Amerindian and African people. The African ancestors survived the wreck of a slave ship in the late 1600s. The survivors reached the island of Bequia. From this island migration occurred to the coastal areas of Central America and other places, including the United States. The group speaks the Garifuna language and often Spanish as well.
Multiplying Pains

Compiled by Brinton Rutherford

Living things move through various life stages. A congregation, a living thing of sorts, also moves through stages. Any congregational change can produce growing pains. Multiplying a new faith community from an established church is one of those pain-generating experiences. Since a new faith community requires leaders, the sending church always sends away some of its leaders.

Josef Berthold, pastor at West End Mennonite Fellowship, commented on this experience recently. He said, “God reminded me early on in our ministry as a church planter to give away your best. Give away your best, and do it early in the life of the church. And I gladly agreed to that. I said, ‘Yes of course.’ When the time comes, we will give away our best.

When that time came for Berthold, the sending of equipped leaders caused growing pains. Berthold said, “It was hard. It felt like we started over again. It felt like we gave away our best. Leaders caused growing pains. Berthold said, “It was hard. It took some time for Berthold, the sending of equipped leaders caused growing pains. Berthold said, “It was hard. It took some time for us to get the leadership team together and for us to feel like we were starting our new faith community in Reamstown, Pennsylvania. Berthold observed a similar process when the Martindale Mennonite Church began its multiplication.

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Daryl Weaver, now bishop of the Martindale District, recalls similar feelings when the Martindale Mennonite Church began a new faith community in Reamstown, Pennsylvania. There was a feeling of hopelessness and a bit of despair as we watched all the eager people with energy leave to begin Parkview, and for a few months I remember a sad, somewhat dismal atmosphere. Perhaps the counter-intuitive part of the church multiplication process in God’s economy is that God returns the leadership investment made to multiplication; Weaver saw this happen.

It became evident that if Martindale was to continue, there was a need for many people to step up and participate in church in new ways. So after a year, things began to feel really good back at Martindale again as we watched many people begin to step up and assume responsibilities.

For Weaver, that emergence of new leadership “has been a real blessing to our church.” Weaver saw that by giving away the best, “God continued to replenish. He always gives back to us.” It was for this very reason that West End Mennonite Fellowship sent out its best leaders to multiply faith communities of various kinds all around the city of Lancaster. Berthold sees this constant sending as an ongoing revitalization process in the congregation. “Because we were always on edge,” he said, “we could never just relax and say, well we have what we need.” The regular sending of leaders meant the constant need to raise up new leaders from within the congregation.

Berthold noted an important lesson from ten years as a multiplication leader in Lancaster Mennonite Conference; “We learned to measure our success by how many people we send rather than by how many people we gather.”

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“Church on the Other Side”

Church on the Other Side provides preparation, equipping, and nurture for potential and active church planters and missional practitioners. It is lead by Omar Guzman and Josef Berthold, along with coaches, who connect with various new missional initiatives to provide encouragement, resourcing, and accountability.

Mark Wenger Departs Leadership of STEP

Dr. Mark Wenger ended his leadership of the STEP (Study and Training for Effective Pastoral ministry) program on June 28 after 13 years of dedicated service. He provided the formative leadership of this new program in its early years, which placed it on a firm financial footing. As STEP gained momentum, Wenger provided mature guidance that included a complete curriculum refresh two years ago and the start of the process to deliver the curriculum materials electronically, including assignment grading. Over his tenure, 105 students graduated from STEP. He leaves STEP to assume the position of Administrative Pastor at Franciscan Mennonite Church. Brinton Rutherford, Lancaster Conference resource staff person, will assume interim STEP leadership, which will include moving all the administrative functions of STEP from EMU to LMC during the next academic year.

New Bishops

James Sutton began as bishop in the new Eastern Ohio District, which has four congregations. James Sutton’s vision is to encourage pastors and congregations to continue and advance the work of Christ, the work of disciple making and kingdom building through personal prayer and evangelism, public proclamation and invitation, and engagement with our communities through “good Samaritan” works of love and compassion. He lives in Painesville, Ohio.

J. Nelson Bechtold was installed as bishop of the Elizabethtown and York Districts in February. The two districts total six congregations. Previously pastor at Goeds Mennonite Church, Bechtold steps in to replace Clair Good, who resigned in 2016 and took an assignment in Congo with MCC. Bechtold and his wife Connie live in Banbridge. His passion is to see the church grow, not only in discipleship, but also in missional vision in our local communities. His prayer is that God would “use us to spread the aroma of the knowledge of him everywhere. For we are to God the pleasing aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing” (2 Corinthians 2:14-15).

Lancaster Conference Constitution and Bylaws Vote this Fall

The Conference Executive Council and the Board of Bishops are working on a revision to the LMC Constitution to reflect the cre-dentialed leaders’ decision to disaffiliate from Mennonite Church USA. The vote will take place at the fall Leadership Assembly on Sept. 21. Passage requires 75% of those in attendance to vote in the affirmative.

Step Graduation

On May 13, 13 students graduated from STEP, the three-year leadership-training program. Each student received a Certificate in Pastoral Ministry from Eastern Mennonite University. This graduating class brings the total number of STEP graduates to 105. The graduates were Maurice Baruti, Lanny Dinh, Richard Dinh, Matthew Eberly, Rodney Horst, Charles Lauver, Jaye Lindo, Anthony Martin, Matthew Martin, Jeff McLain, Jill Miller, Tibebu Shanka, and June Tran.

Spanish church plant in Guadalvile, Pa. Photo provided by Samuel Lopez.

Photo provided by Samuel Lopez.
UPCOMING EVENTS

Complete calendar and more details available at lancasterconference.org.

Monday Night Prayer Gathering
Every first Monday of each month
7:00–9:00 p.m.
Conference office, Lancaster, Pa.
717-293-5246

Thursday Night Prayer Gathering
Every third Thursday of each month
7:00–9:00 p.m.
717-293-5246

A Sending Celebration:
EMM Worker Commissioning
July 9, 6:00 p.m.
Mellinger Mennonite Church
Lancaster, Pa.
jessicaf@emm.org

EMM Global Fair
July 15, 11 a.m. – 3 p.m.
Hans Herr House, Willow Street, Pa.
emm.org/events

LMHS Book Frolic
August 16 – 19
Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society,
Lancaster, Pa.
lmhs.org/events/bookworm-frolic

Friendship Community 45th Anniversary Celebration Dinner
October 17, 6:30 p.m.
Shady Maple Banquets, East Earl, Pa.
eventscoordinator@friendshipcommunity.net

Fall Leadership Assembly
September 21
Location to be announced
jsantiago@lancasterconference.org

LMHS Annual Storytelling Night
September 11, 7 – 8:30 p.m.
Stumptown Mennonite Church,
Bird in Hand, Pa.
lmhs.org/events/event-calendar

Landis Homes Fellowship Day
September 9, 8 a.m. – 3 p.m.
Landis Homes, Lititz, Pa.
landishomes.org/giving/benefit-events/fellowship-day

Eastern Mennonite Missions vision and fundraising banquet
everyone moving in mission
in a changing world

Wednesday, November 1, 2017
Eden Resort Courtyard, Lancaster, PA
Register online beginning August 1 at emm.org/banquet.