



LMC *a fellowship of anabaptist churches*

# Shalom NEWS

JULY – SEPTEMBER 2020



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### ON THE COVER

Main photo: iStock by Getty Images

Small photo: Glenn Kauffman delivers the plenary address.





Raquel Rivera holds newborn Judah, while Joshua reads to 2-year-old Ezra. Photos provided by the author.

# Birthing Something New

*Growing closer to Jesus during quarantine*

BY JOSHUA RIVERA

**O**n Monday, March 9th, 2020, at 9:37 in the morning, Raquel gave birth to our second son, Judah, in the peace and comfort of our own home. Raquel and I serve in a co-pastor role at Bethlehem Community Fellowship. As the due date approached, we spoke with church leadership about taking four weeks away from ministry to be together and adjust to life as a family of four.

Two days after our son's birth, a national emergency was declared and within a week, we were asked to shelter-at-home and distance ourselves from everyone outside of our four-person household. At first, we were not impacted greatly. Since we were planning to step away from the hustle and bustle of life, that's what we did.



Joshua and Ezra play a game together.

The first week was almost a dream. Friends and family delivered groceries, meals, and needed household items to our front door, so we didn't need to leave the house. We were enjoying sleeping in with the boys, laughing together as a family, and staring at our new baby boy as much as possible. In this strange time, my family and I felt removed from it all.

A week later, though, we began to feel the impact. The weeks we planned to fill with trips to zoos, parks, libraries, and with visits from family and friends, all cancelled. We are an active family, and Raquel is great at planning fun family outings. The pandemic forced us to be at home together in an unusual way. We spent the first week or so in front of the television. But one can only distract from real life for so long. Watching the news was not helpful, satisfying, or edifying.

I felt helpless to assist my church community because I was on leave, had a two-year old, a newborn and a healing wife to care for at home. Worst of all, the lack of routine in this situation made much of our week feel wasted. Raquel and I sat down and created a special routine for our family. We made space for her to continue to rest and heal. We set times for her and I to be alone with the Lord. We built in a lot of play time. We made a schedule that had an immediate, positive impact.

There is something empowering about being intentional with one's time. It was powerful to set aside time to meet with Jesus and expect Jesus to show up. The changes seemed to begin with me. I began the day in silence and then prayer. My prior patterns of personal worship, meditation and study the word,

**Now instead of Judah, it was the Lord who woke me up to pray and war in the spirit for the church of Jesus Christ.**

and prayer altered. I spent the time praying for the world, our nation, our leaders, the church, and my family. I didn't recognize it immediately, but that time of prayer shifted something in me. After my prayer, I brought Ezra downstairs for breakfast and started our morning routine while Raquel and Judah slept. After breakfast cleanup, Ezra and I read a few stories from his Children's Bible, said our prayers, and worshipped together. When Raquel and Judah woke up, we made crafts, took walks, and played. After bedtime, Raquel and I spent time together.

Quarantine was so much easier. I found myself praying throughout the day. When Judah would wake up in the middle of the night, I would change his diaper, give him to Raquel, and then pray.

One day, after our morning routine, Ezra and I did our worship time together. Often Ezra just played in the corner of our living room. This particular morning, I sensed the Holy Spirit draw near. I also noticed the room was quiet, dangerously quiet for a two-year old playing in the room. I opened my eyes, and I saw

Ezra kneeling in front of me. With his face pressed to the floor, he began to pray. My two-year-old son prayed like I never heard him pray before. Ezra told Jesus he loved him. He thanked Jesus for helping him go to the potty, and asked Jesus to take the coronavirus away so he could go play in the park and

see his friends. Weeping, Ezra and I entered into an unbelievably beautiful time of worship. My two-year-old and I genuinely worshipped the Lord together.

From that morning, whatever had shifted in me now shifted within our household. Every day was spent worshipping Jesus, reading our Bibles together and praying together while making crafts, taking walks, or playing. We spoke with increased love for one another and served each other. Ezra sought ways to serve his baby brother and us, which included giving him his pacifier and grabbing burp cloths as needed. Now instead of Judah, it was the Lord who woke me up to pray and war in the spirit for the church of Jesus Christ.

When our four weeks of leave ended, Raquel and I began socially-distanced discipling in our community and prayed for people over the phone and video chat. We began receiving regular testimonies of people being healed and experiencing the love and peace of God while praying over the phone! We



began to see growth in our leadership team with a passion for prayer. What the Lord birthed in us during our quarantine spread throughout church leadership.

The more time I spent with Jesus, and the more I began to meditate on the change taking place in me and my family, the more I seemed to glimpse the Lord's heart for this season. He was, and is, restoring the institution of family. I became convinced that Jesus was working to restore the family unit back to its place of influence in our society.

My scripture study seemed to echo the same idea. I saw the work of God often accomplished through family. In Genesis 1:26-29, the Lord blessed man and woman and told them to multiply upon the face of the earth. The family received the mandate to subdue the earth and have dominion over it. In Genesis 6 and 9:1-3, the Lord saved Noah and his family from the flood waters and tasked them to multiply and have dominion on the earth. In Genesis 12, the Lord chose the family of Abraham, promised to multiply this family, and blessed all of the families of the earth through them.

In the New Testament, Jesus fulfilled the promise to Abraham. Jesus, part of the family of Abraham, brought the kingdom of heaven near. Jesus sent the apostles to find households as a base to share the good news. Many new church communities began in households. When persecution pushed the gathering of the church out of larger public gatherings, the family and the home often served as the center of church life. The phrase, "salvation has come to you and your household" (Luke 19:9) came to mind.

**When my family and I aligned with the Lord, the Spirit began what I am calling a revival in our home. I hope and believe that revival spreads throughout our church community.**

In the New Testament book of Ephesians, Paul gave a practical example of our new life in Christ in the context of the family unit. We are blessed with every blessing in the heaven and the earth, we are sons of God, we are seated with Christ above all powers, principalities,

and rulers of the air, we are made alive in Christ, we are the temple of Holy Spirit, and we are empowered to live holy and righteous lives as imitators of God! And empowered in this way, we are to submit to one another, first within the context of family, and then within the larger body of Christ, just as Jesus submitted himself to the will of God.

The Lord taught me beautiful lessons in this strange season of quarantine. In the process of being a better father and husband and my struggle with feelings of helplessness to serve the needs of my church community, the Lord matured me as a leader. As I strove to look after my family, the Lord helped me love and disciple the church better. When my family and I aligned with the Lord, the Spirit began what I am calling a revival in our home. I hope and believe that revival spreads throughout our church community. As we look at our families, empowered by new life in Christ, I believe the Lord is preparing us to serve well in the Kingdom of God. ■

*Joshua and Raquel Rivera and sons, Ezra and Judah, reside in Bethlehem, PA. Joshua and Raquel serve as associate pastors at Bethlehem Community Fellowship.*



## RESOURCES FOR FAMILIES AT HOME

### Devotionals for Children's Ministry at Home

By Pastor Joshua Jefferson – Sunnyside Mennonite Church in Lancaster, PA

- ▶ Present Your Present
- ▶ Morning and Evening Routines
- ▶ What is the Lord's supper
- ▶ Multi-Sensory Treasure Hunt
- ▶ Scripture for Memorization and Meditation

Download these free resources at the LMC website:  
[lmcchurches.org/resources-for-families-at-home/](https://lmcchurches.org/resources-for-families-at-home/)



# Dar a luz a algo nuevo

POR JOSHUA RIVERA

El lunes 9 de marzo de 2020, a las 9:37 de la mañana, Raquel dio a luz a nuestro segundo hijo, Judah, en la paz y la comodidad de nuestro hogar. Raquel y yo servimos como pastores en la Bethlehem Community Fellowship. A medida que se acercaba la fecha prevista, hablamos con los líderes de la iglesia sobre la posibilidad de tomarnos cuatro semanas de descanso del ministerio para estar juntos y ajustarnos a la vida como una familia de cuatro.

Dos días después del nacimiento de nuestro hijo, se declaró una emergencia nacional y, al cabo de una semana, se nos pidió que nos resguardáramos en casa y nos distanciáramos de todos los que no pertenecieran a nuestra familia de cuatro personas. Al principio, no nos afectó mucho. Como teníamos planeado alejarnos del ajetreo cotidiano, eso es lo que hicimos.

La primera semana fue casi un sueño. Amigos y familiares nos dejaban provisiones, comida y artículos de primera necesidad en la puerta de casa, así que no necesitábamos salir a la calle. Disfrutábamos durmiendo con los chicos, divirtiéndonos en familia y contemplando a nuestro nuevo bebé tanto como podíamos. En esos días extraños, mi familia y yo nos sentíamos alejados de todo.

Sin embargo, una semana después, empezamos a sentir el cambio. Las semanas que habíamos planeado llenar con visitas a zoológicos, parques, bibliotecas, y con las visitas de familiares y amigos..., todo cancelado. Somos una familia activa, y a Raquel se le da muy bien planear divertidas salidas familiares. La pandemia nos obligó a estar juntos en casa de una manera inusual. La primera semana la pasamos frente al televisor. Pero uno solo puede distanciarse de la vida real por un tiempo. Ver las noticias no era útil, satisfactorio ni edificante.

Me sentía impotente para ayudar a mi comunidad eclesiástica porque estaba de permiso; tenía un niño de dos años, un recién nacido y una esposa en recuperación a los que cuidar en casa. Lo peor de todo es que la falta de rutina en esta situación nos hizo sentir que desperdiciábamos gran parte de la semana. Así que Raquel y yo nos propusimos crear una rutina especial para nuestra familia. Creamos un espacio para que ella siguiera descansando y recuperándose. Fijamos horarios para estar a solas con el Señor. Establecimos mucho tiempo de juego. Elaboramos un programa que tuvo un efecto inmediato y positivo.

Ser el dueño de tu propio tiempo puede ser estimulante. Fue estupendo reservar tiempo para reunirnos con Jesús y esperar que este apareciera. Creo que los cambios comenzaron conmigo. Empezaba el día en silencio y luego en oración. Mis anteriores hábitos de culto personal, meditación, estudio de la palabra y oración cambiaron. Pasaba el tiempo rezando por el mundo, por nuestra nación, nuestros líderes, la iglesia y mi familia. No lo noté de inmediato, pero ese tiempo de oración cambió algo en mí. Después de rezar, bajaba con Ezra a desayunar y empezábamos la rutina matinal mientras Raquel y Judah dormían. Después de limpiar tras el desayuno, Ezra y yo leíamos algunas historias de su Biblia infantil, rezábamos nuestras oraciones y rendíamos culto juntos. Cuando Raquel y Judah se despertaban, hacíamos manualidades, dábamos un paseo y jugábamos. A la hora de dormir, Raquel y yo pasábamos tiempo juntos.

La cuarentena fue mucho más fácil así. Me pasaba el día rezando. Cuando Judah se despertaba en plena noche, le cambiaba el pañal, se lo daba a Raquel y luego rezaba. Un día, después de nuestra rutina matutina, Ezra y yo rendimos culto juntos. A menudo, Ezra solo jugaba en un rincón de la sala de estar. Esa mañana en particular, sentí que el Espíritu Santo se acercaba. También noté que la habitación estaba tranquila, peligrosamente tranquila para tener a un niño de dos años jugando por allí. Abrí los ojos y vi a Ezra arrodillado frente a mí. Con la cara pegada al suelo, comenzó a rezar. Mi hijo de dos años rezó como nunca antes lo había hecho. Ezra le dijo a Jesús que lo amaba. Dio gracias a Jesús por ayudarlo a usar el orinal y le pidió que se llevara el coronavirus para poder ir a jugar al parque y ver a sus amigos. Entre lágrimas, Ezra y yo vivimos un momento de culto increíblemente hermoso. Mi hijo de dos años y yo adoramos al Señor juntos.

A partir de esa mañana, lo que había cambiado en mí cambió también en nuestra casa. Cada día lo dedicábamos a adorar a Jesús, a leer la Biblia y a rezar juntos mientras hacíamos manualidades, dábamos paseos o jugábamos. Nos hablábamos con más cariño y nos ayudábamos los unos a los otros. Ezra buscaba formas de ayudarnos a nosotros y a su hermanito, lo que incluía ponerle el chupete y buscar toallas para los eructos cuando era necesario. Ahora, en lugar de Judah, era el Señor quien me despertaba para rezar y combatir en espíritu por la iglesia de Jesucristo.

Cuando nuestras cuatro semanas de permiso terminaron, Raquel y yo comenzamos a servir a la comunidad a distancia y a rezar por la gente por teléfono y videochat. ¡Comenzamos a recibir regularmente testimonios de personas que se curaban y experimentaban el amor y la paz de Dios mientras rezaban por teléfono! Empezamos a ver cómo crecía nuestro equipo de liderazgo gracias a la pasión por la oración. Lo que el Señor hizo nacer en nosotros durante la cuarentena se extendió a los líderes de la iglesia.

Cuanto más tiempo pasaba con Jesús, y cuanto más meditaba sobre el cambio que se estaba produciendo en mí y en mi familia, más parecía vislumbrar la intención del Señor para estos tiempos. Él estaba, y está, restaurando la institución de la familia. Me convencí de que Jesús estaba obrando para devolver la unidad familiar al lugar que le corresponde en nuestra sociedad.

Mi estudio de las escrituras parecía hacerse eco de la misma idea. A menudo, he visto la obra de Dios realizada a través de la familia. En Génesis 1:26-29, el Señor bendijo al hombre y a la mujer y les dijo que se multiplicaran sobre la faz de la tierra. La familia recibió el mandato de someter y dominar la tierra. En Génesis 6 y 9:1-3, el Señor salvó a Noé y a su familia de las aguas del diluvio y les encargó que se multiplicaran y dominaran la tierra. En Génesis 12, el Señor eligió a la familia de Abraham, prometió multiplicarla y bendijo a todas las familias de la tierra a través de ellos.

En el Nuevo Testamento, Jesús cumplió la promesa hecha a Abraham. Jesús, de la estirpe de Abraham, acercó el reino de los cielos. Jesús envió a los apóstoles a buscar familias que sirvieran de base para compartir la buena nueva. Muchas nuevas comunidades eclesiásticas comenzaron con una familia. Cuando la persecución obligó a la iglesia a abandonar las grandes reuniones públicas, la familia y el hogar fueron el centro de la vida eclesiástica. La frase "la salvación ha llegado a ti y a tu familia" (Lucas 19:9) me vino a la mente.

En el libro de los Efesios del Nuevo Testamento, Pablo daba un ejemplo práctico de nuestra nueva vida en Cristo en el contexto de la unidad familiar. ¡Hemos recibido todas las bendiciones del cielo y la tierra; somos hijos de Dios; estamos sentados con Cristo por encima de todos los poderes, principados y gobernantes del aire; estamos vivos en Cristo; somos el templo del Espíritu Santo y tenemos el poder de vivir vidas santas y justas a imagen de Dios! Y con este poder, debemos someternos los unos a los otros: primero, dentro del contexto de la familia y, luego, dentro del gran cuerpo de Cristo, así como Jesús se sometió a la voluntad de Dios.

El Señor me enseñó unas hermosas lecciones en esta extraña época de cuarentena. Mientras trataba de ser mejor padre y esposo y luchaba contra la sensación de impotencia para servir a las necesidades de mi comunidad eclesiástica, el Señor me hizo madurar como líder. Mientras me esforzaba por cuidar de mi familia, el Señor me ayudó a amar y servir mejor a la iglesia. Cuando mi familia y yo conectamos con el Señor, el Espíritu Santo inició lo que yo llamo un renacimiento en nuestro hogar. Espero y confío que el renacimiento se extienda por toda nuestra comunidad eclesiástica. Al mirar a nuestras familias, fortalecidas por la nueva vida en Cristo, creo que el Señor nos está preparando para servir bien en el Reino de Dios. ■

*Joshua y Raquel Rivera y sus hijos, Ezra y Judah, residen en Bethlehem, PA. Joshua y Raquel sirven como pastores asociados en Bethlehem Community Fellowship.*

# On Being a Watchman

BY RAQUEL RIVERA

***As each night watch begins, get up and cry out in prayer.  
Pour your heart out face-to-face with the Master.***

— ***Lamentations 2:19***

Our second son, Judah, was born at the start of a global pandemic. As for many living in the United States, our daily way of living was put on pause and our calendar plans were stomped on. The quarantine bummed us because we couldn't spend our first month as a family of four the way we had hoped, but God had better plans for us.

A week into quarantine life, God began to awaken Joshua (my husband) as a watchman in the night. God led Joshua into the task of night intercession. At first, I admired my husband's ability to wake up at 3:00 a.m. and manage a full day of work. Soon, I realized that his morning cup of coffee was not the thing energizing him. Rather, it was the joy of the Lord oozing out from his night watches. Joshua walked around our house like a new man. He walked in a new type of authority, and he invited his family to walk with him. This began a journey toward prayer without ceasing.

Joshua provided an example. He did not give us a demand or a rule. We saw the difference prayer made on his demeanor, his attitude and perspective. It inspired us to see him take everything to the Lord in prayer and walk in his identity as watchman of the most high God.

When we had an infestation of flying termites invade our sunroom, Joshua went into that room, praying and spraying. When a sewage smell leaked into our basement, Joshua went down and declared war in the Spirit through prayer. Just like the ants, he did not assume that he could just pray the smell away and not deal with the underlying physical problem. Rather, Joshua started to invite God to participate in every area, every situation, and all issues of his life. He asked Jesus to help with the solution. Joshua was no longer parenting alone, fathering alone, being a pastor alone, being husband to me alone; he invited Jesus Christ as a partner in all he did.

This sparked a fire in all of us. I began to feel convicted about the Netflix show I was binge watching. Without Joshua saying a word to me, I swapped my TV time for worship sessions on YouTube. I began to encounter God during my late night feedings with baby Judah. Ezra, our two-year-old, and I began to spend my morning time with him in the secret place worshipping together in our living room. Ezra began to have

***Joshua started to invite God to participate in every area, every situation, and all issues of his life. He asked Jesus to help with the solution.***



Joshua Rivera with Judah. Photo provided by the author.

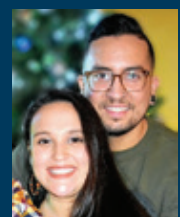
a prayer life of his own. He began to declare with his mouth that "Jesus would remove Coronavirus because He is strong and can do anything He wants." Before bed he would say, "if I'm afraid I will just say I am powerful in God, I am powerful in God." This was not simply a "cute two-year-old thing" to say.

This was evidence of a child who knows the power of the God we serve.

The atmosphere changed in our home, and we sensed the presence of the Holy Spirit more often and easier than ever before. We all began to take our turn as watchmen, in a figurative sense. We felt united as a household as we prioritized time with Jesus and expressed the edification of the Spirit in our daily activities.

Something powerful happened to us when we stepped into the call of God, especially as that of a watchman. When we choose to say "yes" to Jesus, things change and shift in the Spirit. We reaped spiritual benefits in our daily routines and our radically altered quarantine life. Our God is real. Jesus is awakening His bride. May we all dare to take our place as watchmen, as leaders, as disciple makers and Jesus followers. ■

*Joshua and Raquel Rivera and sons, Ezra and Judah, reside in Bethlehem, PA. Joshua and Raquel serve as associate pastors at Bethlehem Community Fellowship.*





# Celebration of Church Life 2020

BY BRINTON RUTHERFORD

**Despite months of planning and an incredible team, Covid 19 required the cancellation of Celebration of Church life in April of 2020. In these pages, you receive a brief introduction to what would have happened with website links to handout materials and summaries of the speaker content, which also can be watched in their entirety online at the LMC website or the LMC Youtube channel.**



## Welcoming Rain

The Celebration of Church planning team expanded its level of planning in 2020 in preparation for the 2022 event that is planned to occur in Western Maryland near Deep Creek Lake resort. Moving the site of Celebration of Church life every three years is in response to the enlarged geographic footprint of LMC that occurred over the last two years. Decisions have been made to respect, honor, and include in meaningful ways the many congregations now in places as far away as Florida and Indiana to name a few locations. As a result, the planners now develop three events simultaneously at various stages of detail: theme, connection to previous year, and connection to next year. To aid in multi-year planning, broad themes have been selected that have the potential to connect over multiple years. Last year's theme of breaking new ground continues with this year's theme of Welcoming Rain. The icon for both years contains previous elements as well as new ones. A similar result will occur next year.

The LMC website on the home page and on the Events page for Celebration of Church Life provides a lot of information. You will find an abbreviated version of the Information Booklet. The eReport of the resource partner organizations of LMC is on this page as well.

Glenn Kauffman's plenary address, *A Topsy-Turvy World*, focused on the Celebration of Church Life theme, Welcoming Rain. He approached the theme by noting three homophones, words that sound the same but have different spelling and meaning. He talked about rain, reign, and rein.

Working from Deuteronomy 32:1–2 and a story of a Jewish Rabbi, Glenn unpacks the theme of welcoming God's refreshing rain.

*Listen, you heavens, and I will speak; hear, you earth, the words of my mouth. Let my teaching fall like rain and my words descend like dew, like showers on new grass, like abundant rain on tender plants.*

He notes that there is a relationship between the land and the rain that falls on it. "How desperate are you for the rain of God," Glenn asks his hearers. With stories of people encountering rain, he asks if we truly welcome the rain of God.

From rain, Glenn moves to reign, the rule of a king, the reign of Jesus over the world. In a similar way, he asks us if we welcome the reign of God in our lives. Whether Covid 19, or rumors of wars or racism or environmental concerns, what do we believe about God's reign in our world.

The third homophone, rein, relates to the reins used to control a horse. He tells a dramatic story of drama between his grandfather and his horse, Ma, in a downpour and flooded stream. Do we welcome the restraint that God provides? Using his experience as a Bishop in bishop board meetings helps illustrate this idea of God using the reins with his people to lead and guide the church.

Switching the metaphor a bit Glenn uses a kite and its control string to explore a bit this reining of God's people into the ways of God. "The beauty is the fact that there is an accountability on the kite through the string." He concludes with a story from his ministry in Hong Kong as an EMM missionary. An elephant ride with his son provides a vivid illustration of the complexities of guiding



Glenn Kauffman delivers the plenary address.

Right: LMC Moderator, Keith Weaver delivers the State of LMC address.





LMC to and into God's mission. "The Spirit of Jesus is pleased to cooperate and to lead us as his church." "God is delighted in the fact that we are learning to trust him."

The State of LMC address by Keith Weaver has been an annual feature of Celebration of Church Life for decades. After some reflections on the pandemic that canceled the event, he focused on three things: LMC Missional Vision, LMC Circles of Relationship, and LMC Changing Structures.

Keith Weaver introduced the new Dwelling in the Word text (Acts 1:1–14) and a new Missional Vision for LMC captured in a new Missional Vision Statement that credentialed leaders worked on in the fall of 2019. It reads, "A Spirit-led movement to make disciples of Jesus, to mobilize every member as a missionary, and to multiply faith communities locally and beyond." He said, "We would be foolish to venture into God's mission without the presence and guidance of the Spirit." He called for a full-scale LMC reset in order to resource congregational multiplication.

In *Circles of Relationship* he addressed God's initiative to restore the relationship between God and humans. Foremost we nurture a love relationship with Jesus. Out of that center we enter into God's mission. More broadly, he then addressed the need to embrace the neighbors around us. The next level of relationships is in the congregation, where teaching, fellowship and discipleship takes place. Human milestones of birth, confession of faith, marriage and death take place. Districts represent another layer where bishops lead groups of congregations. This level of relationship is evaluating how it works together. The next level is all of the churches of LMC, a fellowship of congregations and a Spirit-led movement. This includes the 50% of the congregations that are majority nonwhite. This statistic suggests that as a fellowship of congregations LMC needs to work at its cultural competency, at which it is working. The final circle is the global relationships that LMC has around the world and its connection to Mennonite World Conference.

Finally he talked about the *Changing Structures* needed to pursue and partner with the mission of God in our time. The decades-long discussion in LMC about change continues and perhaps has reached a tipping point. "By God's grace, may it be so," he said. Change is occurring and will continue to do so. Currently there are four changes in process. First, there is a change in spiritual authority under discussion; asking questions about accountability within the LMC

**"We would be foolish to venture into God's mission without the presence and guidance of the Spirit."**

system for moderator, bishops and staff. Second there is a goal to intentionally include all of the five-fold ministry offices (apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor and teacher) instead of an emphasis on just two (pastor and teacher). To realize our new mission statement, we will need to organize around the mission of God. Third, there is a necessity to pay attention to our relationships in all of this change; our growing racial ethnic diversity, our global relationships, and our expanded geography here at home. Fourth, it is essential for us to learn how to see and embrace a world of the invisible life of faith, especially as the temporal reality that seems so true shatters around us.

Celebration of Church Life 2020 expected to restart the Annual Youth Assembly. Keith Nyce's address, "I hate you and want you to move," provided a very dramatic, first-person experience with loving one's neighbor working from Mark 12:28-31. His message broke into three parts; the tension, the story, and the resolution. "God continues to lead us," he said "to the new heaven and the new earth."

In the tension, Keith described the immediate difficulty he had with one neighbor from the first day they moved in. On that first day, the neighbor announced, "I hate you and want you to move." Problems with Keith's dog barking and notes from the neighbors on his mailbox set the general tenor for "the story." In the second part of the three part address, Keith uses the story of Saul/Paul in Mark 12 as a backdrop for the challenges the followers of Jesus often encounter. Then in the resolution, part 3, we learn about the neighbor going to jail and returning, about the loan of a lawn mower, a handout after a fight, and generally things not getting better. Until one day as Keith was doing a job in the front yard without the proper tools. The neighbor arrived holding out his Sawzall. "Here. Use this. It has a new blade on it. I've been a jerk." And Keith prayed for him, right there in his driveway. ■

*Brinton Rutherford is an LMC staff person and attends Willow Street Mennonite Church.*



Keith Nyce gives the youth address.



**WATCH ONLINE – visit [lmchurches.org/celebration-church-life/](https://lmchurches.org/celebration-church-life/)**

# FROM AROUND LMC

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*Congregations who would like to report briefly on events in their congregation should send a descriptive paragraph and a high resolution picture to [smartin@LMCchurches.org](mailto:smartin@LMCchurches.org).*

## VISIT FROM TANZANIA

Bishop Kisare attended the funeral of Don Jacobs in March. While here in the USA he visited with many people including a day with the LMC office. Joe and Yvonne Garber and Keith Weaver each hosted him in their homes for a couple of days. Weaver indicated it was a great opportunity to get to know our fraternal partners of Tanzania Mennonite Church.



## ANNUAL GARIFUNA ASSEMBLY

Keith Weaver traveled to New Orleans to attend the annual assembly of Garifuna leaders in early March. He reported experiencing a most blessed time with our Garifuna brothers and sisters. It's been a long time since I've been around people so filled with the joy of Jesus.

## LMC COVID 19 RESPONSE

The LMC website ([www.lmcchurches.org](http://www.lmcchurches.org)) provides many resources related to the current pandemic. Included in the resources is a document offering scenarios for public regathering as churches. In addition there is a list of congregations who are streaming worship. If your congregation is unable to stream, pass on the list to your congregation so they might join a streaming service.

## TWO BECOME ONE

The journey of New Danville Mennonite and New Providence Mennonite Church reached a new place recently. At this time both churches have agreed to merge and become one congregation with two locations. In March, Keith and

Beth Roberts serves as the Pastoral team at New Providence. Several families from New Danville joined them. Bishop Robert Brody reports, "We have generated interest with several other families in the community who plan to attend. Once we've finalized all of the details of the merger, we hope to have a public grand-opening in September."

## GLOBAL ONLINE PRAYER MEETING

In May LMC organized a virtual praying meeting. The gathering took place through the use of ZOOM. Seventy two people from around the world gathered to pray together for about an hour. With ZOOM, the large group was broken into teams of eight or nine. Mexico, Honduras, Hong Kong, and many states across the USA prayed for the peoples of the world caught in the current pandemic.

## IPD RETREAT

International Partner Delegates gathered in April for the second such gathering, although the meeting was held virtually. Tom Eshleman, LMC Global Delegate, hosted the event. He reported a rich day of fellowship and mutual learning.

## MULTIPLIERS TRAINING

Church on the Other Side began a training for prospective church multipliers in April. Originally scheduled for March, the first of three initial meetings was postponed a month and then convened electronically via ZOOM.

## TRAINING BY DISTANCE LEARNING

LMC has collaborated with CMC and Rosedale Bible College to begin a new

training option for leaders and emerging leaders. TiM, or Training in Ministry, will offer the first two courses in September -- *Discipling Others* taught by Troy Landis, and *Congregational Counseling* taught by Shaun Otto. Courses use an innovative, multi-level approach to online education. The new program was made possible by a generous grant from the LMC Legacy Foundation and financial support from LMC and CMC. For more information or to register for a fall course, go to [rosedale.edu/tim/](http://rosedale.edu/tim/). Contact [brutherford@lmcchurches.org](mailto:brutherford@lmcchurches.org) for more information.

## CHURCH HISTORY CLASS

The ten-week study this Spring of church history concluded in May. The 15 students traveled through the first 1500 years of church history. The course was originally planned late last year as a Google Classroom and ZOOM hybrid course with both in-person and ZOOM connected students. By the third week, as the meeting size guidelines dropped, the course went solely online. Student evaluations suggest the model worked extremely well. The group will continue in September and cover the Reformation to 20th century. Interested students should connect with [brutherford@lmcchurches.org](mailto:brutherford@lmcchurches.org).

## CHURCH HISTORY ON-LINE

LMC will offer several study options using a ZOOM and Google classroom hybrid platform this fall. Part 2 of Church History begins on September 29. Part 1 of Church History will repeat beginning on September 17. To reserve one of the limited seats, go to [lmcchurches.org](http://lmcchurches.org), select *Donate and Other Payments* to pay the \$30 fee. For more information, contact [brutherford@lmcchurches.org](mailto:brutherford@lmcchurches.org).



# NEWS NOTES

## MINISTERIAL ACTIVITIES

**Nestaly Esponia** (*Dana*) was ordained as youth pastor at Oxford Circle Mennonite Church.

**J. W. Sprunger** (*Deborah*) ordination was reaffirmed and he was installed as lead pastor at Parkesburg Mennonite Church.

**Greg Donough** (*Sylvia*) was licensed for specific ministry as chaplain at New Danville Mennonite Church.

**Dale Rintelman** (*Lauri*) was installed as Bishop of North Penn District of LMC.

**Duane A. Shirk** (*Stacy*) was licensed for specific ministry as youth pastor at Parkview Mennonite Church.

**Kyle Risser** (*Jacinda*) was ordained as minister of congregational care at Shiloh Mennonite Church.

**Andrew Burkholder** (*Sheila*) was ordained as lead pastor at Shiloh Mennonite Church.

**Manny Mercado** (*Janessa*) was ordained as minister of congregational activity at Shiloh Mennonite Church.

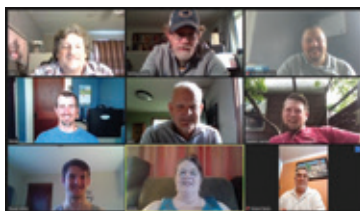
**Dave Weber** (*Cindy*) was ordained as associate pastor at Shiloh Mennonite Church.

## LMC DEACONS FUND

Earlier this year the Conference Executive Council created an LMC Deacons Fund to make available financial assistance for congregations. With the sudden onset of the pandemic, Keith Weaver convened a committee to manage the fund. As part of the process LMC launched a Coronavirus Relief Fund to generate a pool of support. Appeals for contributions to the Relief Fund generated the first money into the fund. However, requests for aid from the fund have far exceeded fund balances to this point. Job losses have seriously impacted congregational income. This pushes the committee to look for creative ways to address needs in our under-resourced congregations.

## STEP GRADUATION

In May, STEP graduated ten students. This extremely diverse group of students worked together as a cohort over the last three years to hone their leadership and ministry skills. While officially graduated, the celebration of the efforts will wait for a later date, to be announced.



## CORONAVIRUS RELIEF FUND

To make a donation to the Deacon's Fund, go to the LMC website ([lmcchurches.org](http://lmcchurches.org)) and select the donate button at the top right of the page. Select the link under Covid 19 Relief. Currently, aid requests exceed the funds available. Thanks for your support.

## EMM UPDATE

EMM recently hosted a Strategic Discernment Retreat, a three-day ZOOM meeting in which three LMC leaders were invited to participate. This turned out to be a great opportunity to build relationships between EMM and LMC leaders and to think together about our partnership in the mission of God. The fundraising for remodeling the 450 Prince Street site continues. The Presidential Search is in full swing with a goal of announcing a new leader by year end.

## LMC LEGACY FOUNDATION GRANTS



### ► **Janae Allgire, Trinity Neighborhood**

**Church**, received a \$25,000.00 grant for "Pursuing Mental Wellness." The initiative seeks to spearhead mental health wellness training within the context of the church via the evidenced-based curriculum, Wellness Recovery Action Plan®.

► **Linda Crockett, Safe Communities**, received a \$50,000 grant for "Safe Communities: Expanding Impact Project," (SCEIP). The project will bring primary prevention of child sexual abuse workshops to congregations, provide survivor-centered curriculums for churches, and offer several modalities of healing circles for adult survivors of sexual abuse within and beyond congregations.

► **Brinton Rutherford, LMC**, received a \$65,000 grant for "Distance Learning with the Training in Ministry program." LMC, with partners, is developing two tracks of six undergraduate distance learning courses to raise the level of mental/behavioral health for the pastor, the congregation, and the neighborhood around the congregation respectively.

► **Dawn Landes, Habecker Mennonite Church**, received a \$40,360 grant for "SEED - A Church Leadership Development Program for English Language Learners." The program provides church leadership development for second-language learners and those relatively new to the United States in Biblical study, leadership foundations and church ministry basics.

# UPCOMING EVENTS

Complete calendar and more details available at [LMCchurches.org](http://LMCchurches.org).

## **Monday Night Prayer Gathering**

**Every first Monday of each month**

**7:00 – 9:00 p.m.**

LMC office, Lancaster, Pa.

717-293-5246

## **Thursday Night Quarterly Prayer Meeting – Tentative**

**July 16, 7:00 – 8:30 p.m.**

Harvest Room, Landis Homes, Lititz, Pa.

717-293-5246

## **Women's Prayer Gathering**

**Every first Friday of each month**

**8:00 – 9:30 a.m.**

LMC office, Lancaster, Pa.

717-293-5246

## **LMC Youth Worker Monthly Breakfast**

**Every fourth Tuesday of each month**

**8:00 – 9:30 a.m.**

Lyndon City Diner, Lancaster, Pa.

[facebook.com/groups/LMCYouthWorkers](https://facebook.com/groups/LMCYouthWorkers)

## **STEP Orientation**

**August 22, 9:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.**

LMC Office, Lancaster, Pa.

717-293-5246

## **Landis Homes Fellowship Day Chicken BBQ & Benefit Auction**

**Saturday, September 12**

[landishomes.org](http://landishomes.org)

## **Fall Leadership Assembly**

**Saturday, September 26**

**9:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.**

Capital Christian Fellowship, Lanham, MD



EMM is searching for a **collaborative, mission-hearted change leader** to be its next president.

LEARN MORE AND APPLY  
[EMM.ORG/PRESIDENTIALSEARCH](http://EMM.ORG/PRESIDENTIALSEARCH)

**EMM**  
everyone moving in mission



**Landis Homes Fellowship Day**

**Saturday, September 12, 2020**

**Take-Out Chicken BBQ and Featured Foods**

**Online Auction featuring Quilts, Art Work and Specialty Items**  
(check website for auction details)

**Benefits the Landis Homes Caring Fund**

[www.landishomes.org](http://www.landishomes.org) 717-569-3271

## **LMC EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES**

► **STEP** enrollment, Class of 2023 forming NOW. Contact [mmysin@lmcchurches.org](mailto:mmysin@lmcchurches.org)

► **Training in Ministry** fall classes, register at [rosedale.edu/tim/](http://rosedale.edu/tim/).

*Congregational Counseling* – Shaun Otto. Ten weeks, training to increase skills for mental health intervention in the congregation and community with topics like premarital counseling, grief counseling, marriage counseling, parenting, and referral to professionals.

*Discipling Others* – Troy Landis. Ten weeks, helps students learn to aid others grow in Christ in the context of personal relationships.

► **LMC Distance Education** – Registration Required

*Church History for Anyone, Part 1* – Brinton Rutherford. Ten Thursday evenings starting September 17, covering the first 1,500 years, 6:30–8:30 p.m.

*Church History for Anyone, Part 2* – Brinton Rutherford. Ten Tuesday evenings starting September 29, covering the 500 years from the Reformation, 6:30–8:30 p.m.

*Study of the Sermon on the Mount* – William Higgins. A detailed study of Matthew 5-7 over the course of eleven Tuesday evenings starting September 8th from 6:30–8:00 p.m.

**For more information connect with Brinton Rutherford by phone or email: 717-293-5246 [brutherford@lmcchurches.org](mailto:brutherford@lmcchurches.org)**