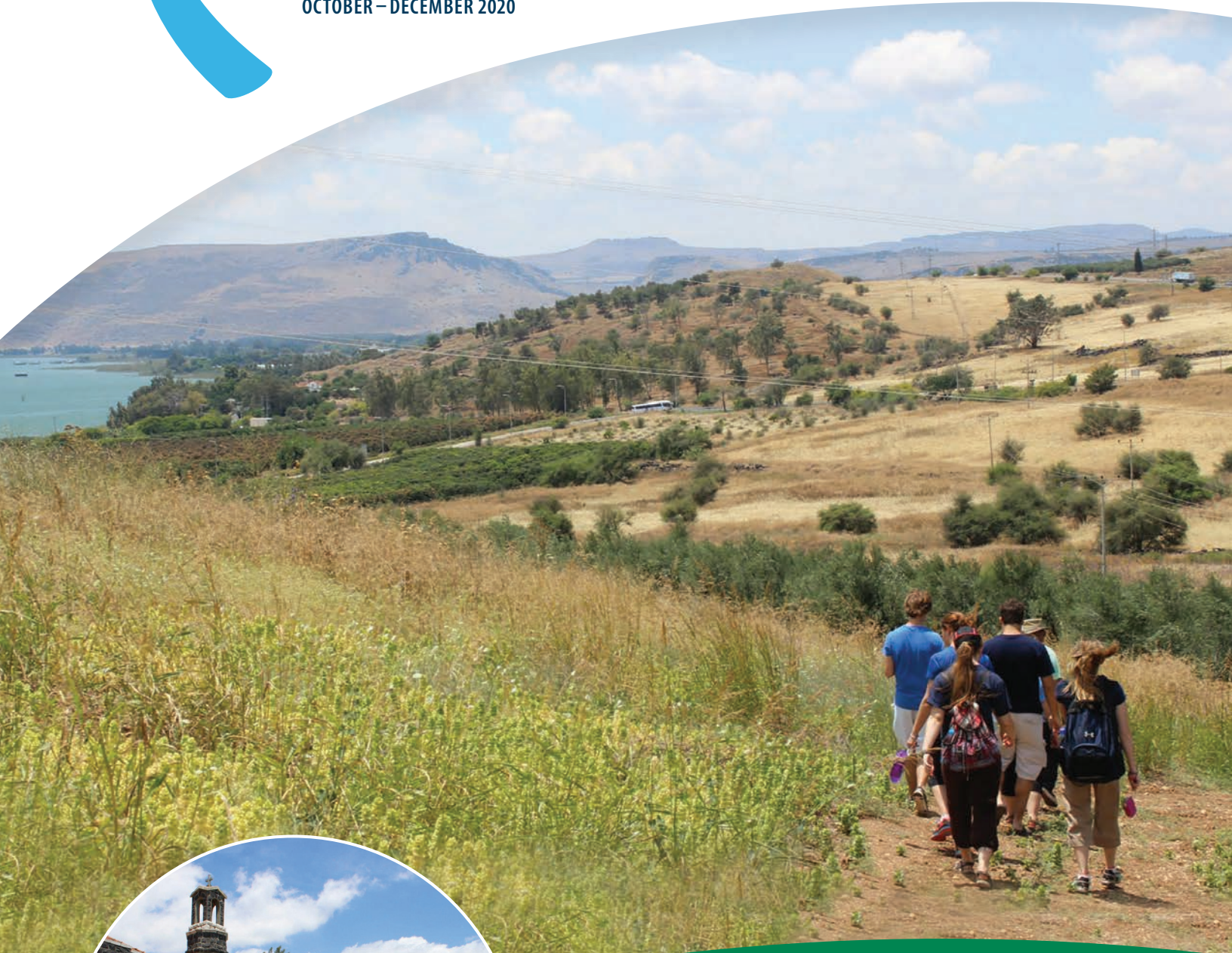




LMC *a fellowship of anabaptist churches* Shalom NEWS

OCTOBER – DECEMBER 2020



Responding To The Spirit

The Hard Part is the Journey – page 3

Call: a Journey, Not an Event – page 6

Great Lakes East & West District of LMC – page 8

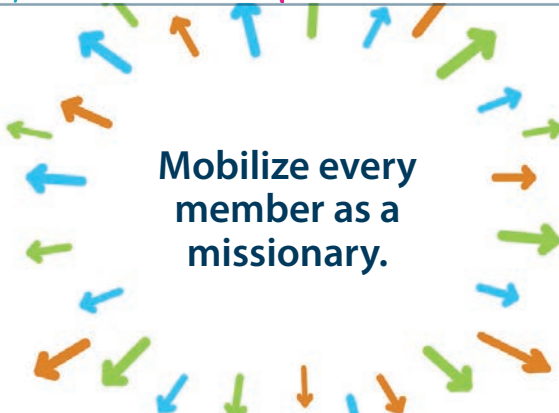
OUR MISSION

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October – December 2020

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ON THE COVER

Main photo: Pathway to the Sea of Galilee.

Photos provided by Ashley Litwiller.

Small photo: Church of St. Peter by the Sea of Galilee.

The Hard Part is the Journey

BY ASHLEY LITWILLER

I have spent a solid portion of my life in or beside water. I have some bad memories related to it. I had a cousin named Jonah who almost drowned. One of my first relationships ended beside water. And I feel the frustration of never learning the art of slalom skiing. On the positive side and perhaps more importantly, water reminds me of one of my favorite places on earth, the Sea of Galilee. I am also reminded of Isaiah 35, a very formative passage for me.

Responding to the Holy Spirit was the easiest when I was wading in the waves of the Sea of Galilee six years ago. I would have dropped everything I had if the Spirit asked me to do so. You cannot deny Jesus' commission at the end of Matthew while walking the same pathways Jesus used to walk. I was completely marinated in the Holy Spirit and felt the tangible proof of God With Us. It was the land Jesus walked, the waves Jesus calmed, the descendants of those Jesus touched and the places where Jesus spoke the words, and we still study today.

To think I almost didn't go on that trip to the Holy Lands. It was one of those moments where I felt the Spirit saying, much like my earthly parents have said about things like chores, "Would you just do it already?!" When you pass a child not listening to their parent's instruction in the grocery store, have you ever questioned yourself if you look like that to God sometimes? I'm absolutely positive I have more times than I care to admit. There are times when I would feel the Spir-

it calling me out of my room because God needed to use me somewhere. There have been times where I have continuously tried to be there for others, and I feel the Spirit leading me into the wilderness. God's assignments for us can be of short or long duration and easy or difficult to complete; we have to be in tune with the Holy Spirit to understand each assignment. Stubbornly crossing our arms to sit and pout is not the best choice.

It's comforting to learn we're not the only ones who may have felt this way. Do you think Moses might have been tired by year 30 of his time in the desert with the Israelites? I do. Do you think David was tired of fighting and hiding from King Saul? He might have loved to go back to being a shepherd, the job he

knew how to do, if it hadn't been for God's call. Don't you think, after all was said and done, that Jonah was kicking himself for not just going to Nineveh in the first place? Do you think Mary, seven months pregnant with Jesus, may have been sick and tired of being around people who didn't under-

When you pass a child not listening to their parent's instruction in the grocery store, have you ever questioned yourself if you look like that to God sometimes?



A waterfall in Galilee. Photo provided by the author.

stand what God was asking of her? I imagine so. Isaiah 35 is a passage that brings us into that “end goal” mindset.

Just as the Spirit and a river flows, so does the story of the Bible. As I specifically consider Isaiah 35, the prior books generally show us such a flow. The Psalms provide a constant reassurance that God loves us, that God cares for us, and that God has the strength and power to enable us. Proverbs brings wisdom to minds constantly working to make choices to be a stronger disciple every single minute of every day.

Ecclesiastes reminds us that everything of our own making is meaningless, God has perfect timing, and God is the only judge of what is good or evil. Song of Songs figuratively illustrates the passionate love that God holds for the church, his bride. Then Isaiah talks of the intimate involvement that God holds in each and every one of our lives. Chapter 34 reminds us the Lord’s revenge is real, evil will pay for what it did to God’s people. Before we enter into chapter 35, we read 34:16, “Search the Book of the Lord, and see what he will do...His Spirit will make it all come true.” We know God’s Spirit is working now to make all God has planned come true.

Isaiah 35 reminds me that joy is one of divine guarantees God has awaiting us, the redeemed, after we have completed the work he has for us. In chapter 35 (NLT), we see what the Holy Spirit is working towards.

Even the wilderness and desert will be glad ... (v.1)

You’ll notice the majority of this Isaiah 35 shows how nature will be our cue to know what is going on; this personification of nature is common in Isaiah. Even those spaces that seemed barren, useless, forgotten, dirty, rejected, will be glad.

...an abundance of flowers and singing and joy! (v.2)

I have no green thumb, so I’m pretty excited for the day when flowers will be abundant. Song, however, runs deep in my veins and heart; even so, there are days I don’t want to sing, or be joyful. The suffering around the world feels heavy.

We can read Isaiah 35 and yearn for the peace and calm described and instantly find it. The hard part is the journey, a daily decision for all our years.

...strengthen those who have tired hands, and encourage those who have weak knees. Say to those with fearful hearts, “Be strong, and do not fear, for your God is coming to destroy your enemies. He is coming to save you...(v.3-4)

The same words spoken to Joshua, Solomon, Esther, Mary, Peter, and many more are here yet again. God is in control, do not let your body, heart or mind be distracted from this truth.

...streams will water the wasteland... (v.6)

Jesus came to save us. The opening of blind eyes, the unplugging of deaf ears, the lame leaping, the mute singing for joy....Jesus came and healed! We know the proof that God comes right on time, and so we do not need to destroy our enemies; the Trinity has that covered for us. Spiritual and physical healing is the business of the Holy Spirit. Here, God uses water as a sign of that peace and healing.

And a great road will go through that once deserted land. It will be named the Highway to Holiness. Evil-minded people will never travel on it. It will be only for those who walk in God’s ways; fools will never walk there (v.8)

A route that was once difficult and uneven will now be easier. In ancient times, certain roads between temples were open only to those who were ceremoniously pure. Wild animals also made those trips dangerous, but no more.

Sorrow and mourning will disappear, and they will be filled with joy and gladness.” (v.10)

Everlasting joy; there won’t be room for any other emotion. Hard to imagine, but such a hope to reach for.

The great thing about the Holy Spirit is that the Spirit is everywhere all the time. We can read Isaiah 35 and yearn for the peace and calm described and instantly find it. The hard part is the journey, a daily decision for all our years.

When I get to Heaven, I’d like to be able to hear my God affirm to me that I did everything asked of me...don’t you? So let’s stop making excuses, stop complaining, stop letting stubborn pride win. Follow what the Spirit is calling you to do. Whatever God is asking you to do, do it right now. Don’t be the whiny kid unwilling to do what their dad asked them to. Would you Juuust DO It!?

Ashley passionately follows after Jesus inviting others to join her on the journey. She also enjoys reading books or connecting with friends while cruising on a boat. She is an ordained LMC minister currently serving at Menno Haven Camp & Retreat Center in Illinois.



La parte difícil es el viaje

POR ASHLEY LITWILLER

He pasado una gran parte de mi vida en el mar o cerca de él. Tengo algunos malos recuerdos al respecto. Tenía un primo que se llamaba Jonah que casi se ahogó. Una de mis primeras relaciones terminó al lado del mar. Y me frustra no haber aprendido nunca el arte del esquí acuático. En la parte positiva y quizá más importante, el agua me recuerda a uno de mis lugares favoritos del planeta, el mar de Galilea. También me recuerda a Isaías 35, un pasaje para mí muy instructivo.

Responder al Espíritu Santo fue de lo más fácil cuando andaba entre las olas del mar de Galilea hace seis años. Lo hubiese dejado todo si el Espíritu Santo me lo hubiese pedido. No puedes negar la misión de Jesús al final de Mateo mientras recorres los mismos caminos que solía recorrer Jesús. Estaba completamente impregnada del Espíritu Santo y sentía la prueba palpable de Dios con nosotros. Era la tierra por la que caminó Jesús, las olas que Jesús calmó, los descendientes de aquellos tocados por Jesús y los lugares en los que Jesús pronunció las palabras que todavía hoy estudiamos.

Y pensar que estuve a punto de no ir a ese viaje a Tierra Santa. Fue uno de esos momentos en los que sentí al Espíritu decirme, justo como me habían dicho mis padres terrenales tantas veces acerca de mis tareas, “¿Por qué no lo haces de una vez?”. Cuando pasas al lado de un niño que no hace caso a sus padres en el supermercado, ¿te has preguntado alguna vez si a veces eres así con Dios? Tengo la certeza de que he sido así más veces de las que me gustaría admitir. Hay veces en las que siento que el Espíritu me llama a salir de mi habitación porque Dios me necesita en otro lugar. Hubo veces en las que he intentado estar ahí continuamente para los demás y siento que el Espíritu me guía por el desierto. Las tareas que Dios nos manda, pueden ser de corta o de larga duración y fáciles o difíciles de llevar a cabo; tenemos que estar en sintonía con el Espíritu Santo para entender cada cometido. Empeñarse en cruzarnos de brazos y poner mala cara no es la mejor opción.

Resulta alentador saber que no hemos sido los únicos que nos hemos sentido así. ¿No crees que Moisés estaría cansado ya para el año 30 de sus días por el desierto con los israelitas? Yo creo que sí. ¿No crees que David estaba cansado de luchar y esconderse del rey Saúl? Seguramente, le hubiese encantado volver a ser un pastor, el trabajo que sabía hacer, si no hubiese sido por el llamado del Señor. ¿No crees que después de todo, Jonás se arrepentía de no haber ido a Nínive a la primera vez que Dios lo llamó? ¿Crees que María, embarazada de siete meses de Jesús, podría haber estado harta de estar rodeada de gente que no entendía lo que Dios le estaba pidiendo? Yo me imagino que sí. Isaías 35 es un pasaje que nos lleva a esa mentalidad de “objetivo final”.

Del mismo modo que fluyen el Espíritu y un río, así lo hace la historia de la Biblia. Mientras tengo en consideración Isaías 35 en concreto, los libros anteriores nos muestran este fluir. Los salmos nos brindan una reafirmación constante de que Dios nos ama, que Dios nos cuida y que Dios tiene la fuerza y el poder para que seamos capaces. Los proverbios brindan sabiduría a las mentes que se esfuerzan continuamente en tomar decisiones para ser mejores discípulos cada minuto de cada día. Eclesiastés nos recuerda que todo lo que hacemos por nuestra cuenta no tiene sentido, Dios tiene una coordinación perfecta y Él es el único juez de qué está bien y de qué está mal. Cantar de los Cantares ilustra de manera figurada el amor apasionado que Dios tiene por la iglesia, su esposa. Después Isaías habla de la implicación íntima que tiene Dios en todas y cada una de nuestras vidas. El capítulo 34 nos recuerda que la venganza del Señor es real, que el mal pagará por lo que le ha hecho al pueblo de Dios. Antes de entrar en el capítulo 35, leemos en 34:16, “Busca el libro del Señor y mira qué es lo que hará... su espíritu hará que todo se cumpla”. Sabemos que el espíritu de Dios está trabajando para que todo lo que Dios ha planeado se haga realidad.

Isaías 35 me recuerda que la alegría es una de las garantías divinas que Dios nos reserva a los redimidos tras haber completado el trabajo que Él tiene para nosotros. En el capítulo 35 (NTV), vemos hacia dónde se dirige el trabajo del Espíritu Santo.

Incluso el yermo y el desierto se regocijarán... (versículo 1)

Verás que la mayor parte de Isaías 35 muestra como la naturaleza nos dará la señal de lo que está pasando; esta personificación de la naturaleza es habitual en Isaías. Incluso esos espacios que parecían baldíos, inútiles, olvidados, sucios y rechazados se regocijarán.

... ¡juna abundancia de flores, cantares y alegría! (versículo 2)

No se me da bien la jardinería, pero me emociona pensar en el día en el que las flores sean abundantes. El cantar, sin embargo, corre por mis venas y mi corazón; incluso así, hay días en los que no quiero cantar o estar alegre. El sufrimiento que hay en el mundo pesa en el alma.

... fortalece a aquellos cuyas manos están cansadas y dale aliento a aquellos cuyas rodillas flaquean. Dile a aquellos de corazón temeroso: “Sed fuertes y no temáis, pues vuestro Dios está al llegar para destruir a vuestros enemigos. Él vendrá a salvarlos... (versículos 3-4)

Las mismas palabras dirigidas a Josué, Salomón, Esther, María, Pedro y a tantos otros están aquí otra vez. Dios está al mando, no dejes que tu cuerpo, tu corazón o tu mente se desvien de esta verdad.

... el desierto será regado por arroyos... (versículo 6)

Jesús vino a salvarnos. El devolver la vista al ciego, el oído al sordo, hacer saltar al cojo, hacer que el mudo cante de alegría... ¡Jesús llegó y los curó! Sabemos de la prueba de que Dios llega justo a tiempo y es por eso que no necesitamos destruir a nuestros enemigos; la Trinidad se encarga de eso por nosotros. La sanación espiritual y física es cosa del Espíritu Santo. Aquí, Dios usa el agua como símbolo de paz y de sanación.

Y un gran camino recorrerá esa tierra una vez desierta. Se llamará Camino de Santidad. Nadie malvado pasará nunca por él. Será solo para aquellos que caminan por la senda del Señor; los necios nunca lo recorrerán (versículo 8)

Una ruta que antaño fue difícil y accidentada ahora será más sencilla. En tiempos antiguos, algunos caminos entre templos estaban abiertos solo a aquellos ceremoniamente puros. Los animales salvajes también hacían que esos viajes fuesen peligrosos, pero nada más.

La tristeza y el llanto desaparecerán y se henchirán de gozo y alegría (versículo 10)

Gozo eterno; no habrá sitio para ninguna otra emoción. Es difícil de imaginar, pero se puede aspirar a tal esperanza.

Lo genial del Espíritu Santo es que el Espíritu está siempre en todas partes. Podemos leer Isaías 35 y anhelar la paz y la tranquilidad descritas y encontrarlas al instante. La parte difícil es el viaje, una decisión diaria por todos nuestros años.

Cuando llegue al Cielo, me gustaría que Dios me confirmase que hice todo lo que me pidió... ¿a ti no? Así que dejemos de poner excusas, dejémonos de quejas y permitamos que el testarudo orgullo se salga con la suya. Sigue lo que el Espíritu te pide que hagas. Lo que sea que Dios te pide que hagas, hazlo ya. No seas el niño quejica que no quiere hacer lo que le ha pedido su padre. ¿Por qué no lo haces YA!? ■

Ashley sigue apasionadamente a Jesús invitando a otros a unirse a ella en el viaje. También le gusta leer libros o conectarse con amigos mientras navega en un bote. Ella es una ministra ordenada de LMC que actualmente sirve en Menno Haven Camp & Retreat Center en Illinois.

Call: a Journey, Not an Event

BY KEILA FLORES

I am from Honduras, Central America. I work as a missionary for the Shalom Council of Evangelical Churches (CIES) in Huatabampo, Sonora, Mexico. God called me to mission

at 12 years old during a service at my elementary school in Honduras. Understanding God's call on my life has been a process. As a youth, I struggled to stay focused on God's call because some people told me I was unprepared and unqualified to do mission and because I got sick easily. God's thoughts, however, are greater than human thoughts. God had a plan for my life even though I struggled to grasp it.

God was guiding me toward mission and

providing me preparation and training along the way. First, I worked as a secretary at The Living Love Church in Siguatepeque, Honduras for six years. Then God gave me the opportunity to participate in the YES Program (EMM), and

I went to Hong Kong for one year. After my return from Hong Kong, I thought God's call to mission was done, but then, I started working in my local church with a Children's Project. I was very happy and relaxed, but then God showed me that his call was not just for a year!

In prayer, I regularly asked God about what was next. Then in 2006, I received an invitation from a Mennonite Church in the Philippines to design and help with a Children's Project. I started the preparations by raising funds for a plane ticket and for my visa. I did not have the requirements that the U.S. immigration agents required, but the Embassy gave



Above: The author at Jubileo 2017 for the Shalom Council of Evangelical Churches (CIES). Photos provided by the author.

Left: The author teaches at an event.

Right: The author and pastors in Mexico.



SPANISH TRANSLATION

Llamado: un viaje, no un evento

POR KEILA FLORES

Soy de Honduras, Centroamérica. Trabajo como misionera para el Consejo de Iglesias Evangélicas Shalom (CIES) en Huatabampo, Sonora, México. Dios me llamó a la misión a los 12 años durante un servicio en mi escuela primaria en Honduras. Entender el llamado de Dios ha sido todo un proceso. Cuando era joven, luché por concentrarme en el llamado de Dios porque algunas personas me dijeron que no estaba preparada y no estaba calificada para realizar la misión, y porque me ponía enferma con facilidad. Los pensamientos de Dios, sin embargo, son más grandes que los pensamientos humanos. Dios tenía un plan para mi vida a pesar de que no podía entenderlo.

Dios me estaba guiando hacia la misión, proporcionándome preparación y formación para afrontar el camino. Primero, trabajé como secretaria en la iglesia Amor Viviente en Siguatepeque, Honduras, durante seis años. Entonces Dios me dio la oportunidad de participar en el Programa YES (EMM) y me fui a Hong Kong durante un año. A mi regreso de Hong Kong, pensé que el llamado de Dios a la misión había terminado, pero luego comencé a trabajar en mi iglesia local con un proyecto para niños. Me sentía muy feliz y relajada, pero Dios me mostró que su llamado no era solo por un año.

Al orar, normalmente le preguntaba a Dios sobre lo que vendría a continuación. Más tarde, en 2006, recibí una invitación de una iglesia menonita en Filipinas para diseñar y ayudar en un proyecto para niños. Comencé los preparativos recaudando fondos para conseguir un billete de avión y un visado. No cumplía con los requisitos que los agentes de inmigración de EE. UU. me pedían, pero aun así la embajada me otorgó un visado de una duración de 10 años, a pesar de que solo necesitaba un visado de tránsito para ir a Filipinas.

A estas alturas, estaba segura de que Dios quería que fuera a Filipinas para trabajar, pero me sorprendió cuando descubrí que no era mi destino. Después de un tiempo, Dios me mostró que Filipinas no era el lugar al que quería que fuera. En ese momento, me sentía frustrada porque había dejado mi trabajo en Honduras para ir a Filipinas.

Mientras estaba en Filipinas, asistí a la Conferencia del Espíritu Santo 2006 en Lumban, patrocinada por la Asociación Internacional de Misiones. Allí escuché informes de diferentes organizaciones misioneras menonitas. Samuel López, representante del proyecto Mission RED, habló sobre la necesidad de que una persona comience y dirija un Centro de Estudios Bíblicos en México. Samuel López me pidió

me a visa for 10 years even though I only needed a transit visa to go to the Philippines.

At this point, I was sure God was calling me to work in the Philippines, but I was surprised when it did not work out. After a time, God showed me that the Philippines was not the place He was calling me to serve. At that time, I was frustrated because I had quit my job in Honduras in order to go to the Philippines.

While in the Philippines, I attended the 2006 Holy Spirit Conference in Lumban, Philippines sponsored by the International Mission Association. There I heard reports from different Mennonite missionary organizations. Samuel Lopez, representative of the Mission RED project, shared about the need for a person to start and lead a Center of Biblical Studies in Mexico. Samuel Lopez asked me to consider the possibility of going to Mexico and help start this new project for the Mexican churches.

I returned to Honduras with very different thoughts than I had when I left on the aborted trip to the Philippines. I understood that it is not where I want to go, but where God wants me to go. I began to pray about going to Mexico, and after I talked with my

God opened the doors that needed to be opened, and God helped me to do the things I had to do.

parents and my pastor, I was sure God was calling me to Mexico. Mission was going to be different than what I originally imagined, but in my heart, I was willing to obey and serve wherever God leads.

God has given me the privilege to serve in Mexico for 13 years, and now I also work with the Christian Church Workers (CIES program) in the United States. I serve in Mexico and in the United States, something I never imagined!

During these years God blessed me in so many ways. I can say sincerely that God is good and faithful because my health throughout my years of service has been good. God opened the doors that needed to be opened, and God helped me to do the things I had to do.

Jeremiah 29: 11 says: "For I know the plans I have for you", declares the Lord, "plans to give you hope and a future." Reflecting on my journey with God, I have learned to obey God's call because He is Faithful. Second, I understand I must trust in God with all my heart, with all my thoughts, and with all my strength. Lastly, I know that I must serve him for His mercy and power, not because of my own skills or abilities. ■

Keila Flores serves as the Director of the Center of Biblical Studies in Huatabampo, Sonora, MX. She also serves as Director of Christian Church Workers Program in New Holland, PA.



que considerara la posibilidad de ir a México y ayudar a empezar este nuevo proyecto en las iglesias mexicanas.

Regresé a Honduras con pensamientos muy diferentes a los que tenía cuando estaba en Filipinas. Comprendí que no es a dónde quiero ir, sino a dónde Dios quiere que vaya. Comencé a orar para ir a México, y después de hablar con mis padres y mi pastor, estaba segura de que Dios quería que fuera a México. La misión iba a ser diferente de lo que originalmente tenía pensado, pero en mi corazón estaba dispuesta a obedecer y servir a donde Dios me guiará.

Dios me ha dado el privilegio de servir en México durante 13 años, y ahora también trabajo con los Trabajadores de la Iglesia Cristiana (programa CIES) en Estados Unidos. Sirvo en México y en Estados Unidos, algo que nunca pude llegar a imaginar.

Durante estos años, Dios me ha bendecido de muchas maneras. Puedo decir con total sinceridad que Dios es bueno y fiel porque mi salud durante mis años de servicio ha sido buena. Dios abrió las puertas que debían abrirse, y Dios me ayudó a hacer las cosas que tenía que hacer.

Jeremías 29:11 dice: "Porque sé los planes que tengo para ti", declara el Señor,

"planes para darte esperanza y un futuro". Al reflexionar sobre mi viaje con Dios, he aprendido a obedecer el llamado de Dios, porque Él es fiel. Comprendo que debo confiar en Dios con todo mi corazón, con toda mi energía y con todas mis fuerzas. Por último, sé que debo servirle por Su misericordia y poder, no por mis propias habilidades o capacidades. ■

Keila Flores se desempeña como Directora del Centro de Estudios Bíblicos en Huatabampo, Sonora, MX. También se desempeña como Directora del Programa de Trabajadores de la Iglesia Cristiana en New Holland, PA.



DISTRICT PROFILE

Great Lakes East and West District of LMC

BY JIM SUTTON

In the spring of 2016, pastors from at least a dozen congregations who left Mennonite Church USA began meeting and praying together. They were all without a denominational home and had no desire to function as “independent congregations.” Several options were available and were being explored. In response to invitations, Keith Weaver and Dale Stoltzfus visited several congregations, invited a few joint meetings to share the vision of LMC, and fielded a host of questions. By summer, Aurora MC, Martins Creek MC, First Mennonite Church, Berne, In., Moorhead MC, and Beavertown MC voted to seek membership in LMC. They became organizing members of a new Eastern Ohio District of LMC. In the fall of 2016, I was asked and eventually agreed to serve as Bishop of this new district. We began meeting monthly as a Pastors’ Fellowship in early 2017.

By the end of 2018, there were nine congregations in the new Eastern Ohio District and three of those were in Indiana. Because of the geographical challenges involved, the group decided that, beginning in January, 2019, I would meet with Ohio and Indiana congregations separately in alternating months. However, by June of 2019, the district had grown to 14 congregations. These congregations were scattered over six states with seven of these congregations west of the Ohio-Indiana state line

and seven east of that line. Since I could not envision providing Bishop oversight to such a district by myself, the decision was made to create two separate districts and seek two bishops, one for a Great Lakes East district and one for a Great Lakes West district. Currently, Bishop Discernment groups are actively seeking new bishop oversight for each district.

Along with growth in terms of member congregations, we have grown relationally as a team of church leaders. Pastors now know each other better and relationships are stronger. For the first 18 months, the prior Eastern Ohio district benefited from meeting monthly for lunch, fellowship, and prayer. After I began meeting separately with Indiana and Ohio area pastors, the work of team building continued in both groups. Because of issues related to COVID-19, both districts meet virtually about every two weeks. Subsequently, both districts have drawn much closer together as each worked on closing/reopening issues in their unique, local situations. Another encouraging note in this period is that in both districts, better resourced congregations have shared generously with congregations that were more adversely affected by the pandemic.

What may be a somewhat unique situation, both Great Lakes East and Great Lakes West districts have a few congregations that hold dual membership in Evana and in LMC. Also, both districts work to-



Children's Sunday School at North Lima Mennonite Church, OH



1. Camp hot dog roast at Alden Mennonite Church, NY
2. Women's Sunday School Class at Aurora Mennonite Church, OH
3. Worship Service at First Mennonite of Middlebury, IN
4. Duffle bag project at First Mennonite of Berne, IN
5. Baptism at Arthur Mennonite Church, IL
6. Service at Michigan Avenue Mennonite Church, MI
7. Outdoor fellowship at Yellow Creek Mennonite Church, IN

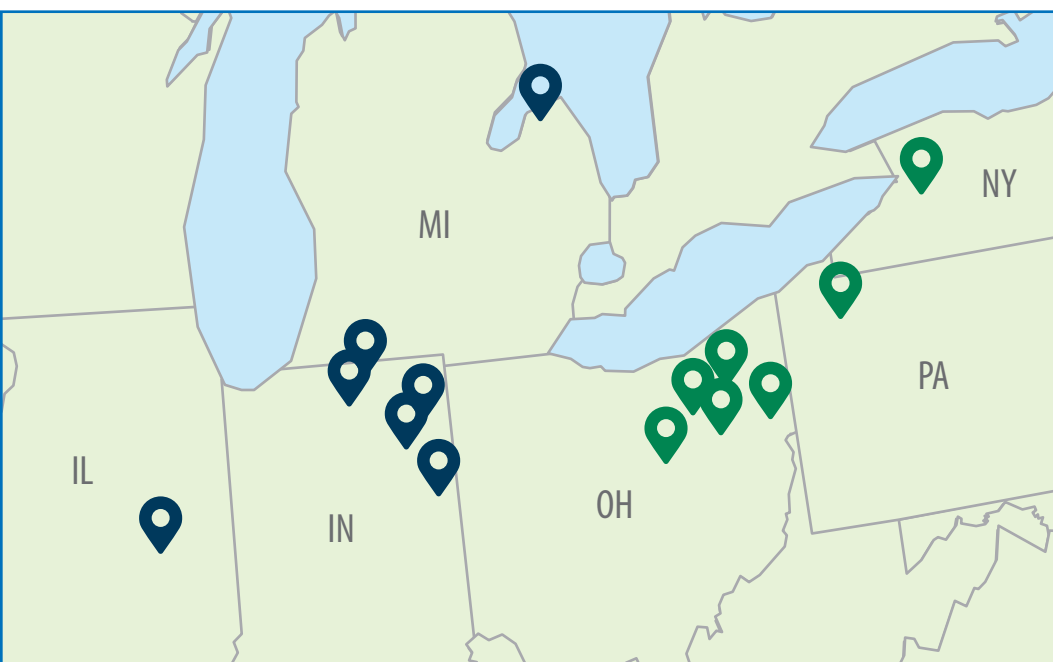
Church, a new Anabaptist church plant in Cincinnati, Ohio led by Chet and Holly Eshelman. We value and are enriched by this partnership with these dear brothers and sisters.

One of the challenges we have faced since our inception is the issue of geographical distance between congregations and its effect on building a sense of community and shared mission among district congregations and with other LMC districts. As God continues to add to LMC, we know that we are not the only district to grapple with this challenge. Virtual communication options such as Zoom have become an important and essential part of district communication and relationship building.

gether with Evana congregations in sponsoring the Peace

So, in just under three years, the Eastern Ohio District has morphed into Great Lakes East and Great Lakes West districts with 14 congregational mission centers scattered over six states all endeavoring to glorify God through the expanding of His Kingdom.... "to God be the glory, great things He has done." ■

Jim and Debby Sutton have been married for 46 years and have 2 children and 3 grandchildren. They have served as church planters, transitional pastor, and Bishop. Jim thanks God for the privilege of serving with the pastors and 14 congregations in the 2 Great Lakes Districts. He views encouragement, edification, and expansion foundational to his ministry in proclaiming the Gospel of Christ to advance God's Kingdom.



GREAT LAKES EAST

Alden Mennonite, NY
Aurora Mennonite, OH
Beaverdam Mennonite, PA
Martins Creek Mennonite, OH
Moorhead Mennonite, OH
North Lima Mennonite, OH
Vishva Jyoti Church, OH

GREAT LAKES WEST

Arthur Mennonite, IL
First Mennonite of Berne, IN
First Mennonite Church of Middlebury, IN
Michigan Avenue Mennonite, MI
North Leo Mennonite, IN
True Vine Tabernacle, IN
Yellow Creek Mennonite, IN

FROM AROUND LMC

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.

LMC-ACC MEETING

In May, leaders from LMC met with ACC leadership to continue work on building relationships between the two groups.

LMC-MC USA MEETING

In June for the third year in a row, Keith Weaver, LMC moderator, and other LMC leaders met with a group of MC USA leaders. The gathering continues a process put in place by Ervin Stutzman as LMC was leaving MC USA. Prior years, the meeting was in person in Lancaster. This year, because of Covid-19, the meeting was facilitated by Zoom.

TIM WINTER TERM

Training in Ministry will offer two distance-learning classes in the Winter Term beginning the week of January 4. These classes are undergraduate courses designed to enhance a leader's congregational skills. Monica Jefferson will teach *Spiritual Formation*, and Preston Yoder will teach *Caring for the Congregation*. To enroll, visit rosedale.edu/tim/. For more information contact brutherford@lmc-churches.org.

DISCOVERY IN SPANISH

Following interest from CIES (Shalom Council), a team began work on translating the *Discovery Course* into Spanish. Peter Cook, Susan Hochstedler, Alexis Roman, Brinton Rutherford, and Daniel Sanchez are navigating the effort.

CHILD PROTECTION IN SWAHILI

Following a Child Protection Seminar at RiversEdge Fellowship, the congregation arranged for the presentation to

be translated into Swahili for better understanding within the Congolese congregation. This follows the translation of child protection materials into Spanish.

LANCASTER CITY MISSIONARY

RiversEdge Fellowship recently received approval from EMM to sponsor an urban missionary in Lancaster city. Menuka Tamang was sent into Lancaster as a missionary to Buddhist, Hindu, and other immigrants. She is part of the Bhutanese-Nepalese congregation at RiversEdge.



CCL 2021

Save March 19–20, 2021 for the next Celebration of Church Life event at Petra Church in New Holland. The seminar content, planned for the cancelled CCL 2020 event, will be moved, as possible, to CCL 2021. CCL 2022 is planned for four days in late summer in Western Maryland. More details will be announced soon.

MOBILE SHALOM NEWS

Shalom News is now available in pdf, including easy viewing on mobile devices. This pdf file is sent by email to each congregation and then passed to members by email from each church office.

ZOOM PRAYER

Because of Covid-19, LMC moved its scheduled prayer gatherings to Zoom. The first Monday of the Month prayer group has now met twice by Zoom. The quarterly Multiplication prayer group

met in July by Zoom and plans for the October 15 prayer meeting to gather by Zoom.

LEARNINGS FROM LEADER SURVEY

We identified the following themes in the responses from the leader survey taken in the Spring in response to changes from Covid-19.

1. Congregations moved from expressions of “Sunday-centered church” to “life-centered church” (centralization to decentralization). Congregations responded with nimbleness and the ability to adapt as we need to do so.
2. Some congregations were wrestling with core changes before the pandemic and are seeing this as a “holy pause” and are responding to this as the Early Church responded to these kinds of disruptions. Technical adaptations were the most common mentions with related comments about online technology and meetings with Zoom, and an increase in prayer.
3. Leaders are going deeper with their faith; people have risen up and are more caring and connected.

It is important to learn from this current crisis. It will be important to help leaders foster nimbleness, creativity, and apply this going forward. We should be impressed with the nimbleness we see. It is important that we not rush back into doing what was comfortable so that we live into some of these new postures. How do we encourage this to continue and not let that get away 12 months from now?

NEWS NOTES

CREDENTIAL ACTIVITY

The following men and women were licensed, ordained or installed in recent months.

Brocklyn (Brock) Sensenig (*Brooke*) was licensed toward ordination as associate pastor at Ephrata Bible Chapel.

Lynn Zimmerman (*Debra*) was licensed toward ordination as associate pastor at Ephrata Bible Chapel.

John Martin (*Katie*) was licensed toward ordination as associate pastor at Gortner Union Church.

Deepak Rai (*Sita*) was ordained as lead pastor at Bhutanese Nepali Church of Lancaster.

Steven Showers (*Lindsey*) was licensed toward ordination as lead pastor at North Leo Mennonite Church.

Adam Shank (*Bonnie*) was licensed toward ordination as associate pastor at North Lima Mennonite Church.

Charles Brenner (*Rebecca*) was licensed toward ordination of Charles Brenner as lead pastor at Pleasant View Mennonite Church.

CHILD PROTECTION REMINDER

Child Protection Teams are encouraged to keep their policies up to date and in force. Keep all personnel checks within the five-year window. Execute any training regimen your policy requires. If your congregation does not have a Child Protection policy, contact the LMC office to learn how you can put a policy in place.

WILLIAM HIGGINS JOINS LMC STAFF



William Higgins began work as an LMC resource staff in the area of theological education and specifically Anabaptist Christian identity formation on March 3rd. In this role he will offer classes, study groups, seminars and other educational events that seek to engage pastors, leaders and anyone who is interested in biblical, theological and historical reflection and formation. As time allows he will also visit with districts and preach and teach in congregations. William also works as an associate pastor at New Danville Mennonite Church, where he and his wife attend.

CORONAVIRUS RELIEF FUND

The generosity of many people made it possible to practice mutual care in such tangible ways. As of July 10, \$136,000 was received and \$115,439 was disbursed to 33 congregations. The current Fund Balance is \$ 20,760.

EDUCATION GRANT AWARDS

The fall cycle for education grants awarded 19 applicants a total of \$14,800. Thanks to the donors who added to these grant funds in our fundraising appeal this summer. If anyone wishes to contribute for the next grant cycle, you may do so at lmcchurches.org/donate/. Amounts by scholarship awards by category were as follows:

- ▶ STEP Study Award: \$5,000
- ▶ Leadership: \$4,800
- ▶ Urban Education: \$4,000
- ▶ Women's Education: \$1,000

STEP GRADUATION

The STEP class of 2020 graduated on May 16. The celebration, however, was postponed until October 10 at 4:00 pm at Slate Hill Mennonite Church, 1352 Slate Hill Rd, Camp Hill, Pa.



LMC GOVERNING STRUCTURES

In the February Bishop Board meeting as part of a structure overhaul, Bishops looked at a proposal from the Governance/Structure. Bishops participated in a one-day workshop looking at spiritual gifts. New structures must make use of the full range of APEST gifts (apostle, prophet, evangelist, shepherd, teacher) among us in order to organize around our mission/vision.

MISSION STATEMENT

In 2019 LMC leadership worked to update the prior mission statement from 2001. The new statement appears inside the front cover. The fall Leadership Assembly in 2019 worked on this revision process, and the Leadership Assembly this past September further processed this statement.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Complete calendar and more details available at LMCchurches.org.

Monday Night Prayer Gathering

Every first Monday of each month

7:00 – 8:00 p.m. via Zoom

LMC office, Lancaster, Pa.

717-293-5246

Women's Prayer Gathering

Every first Friday of each month

8:00 – 9:00 a.m.

LMC office, Lancaster, Pa.

717-293-5246

STEP Graduation

October 10, 4:00 p.m.

Slate Hill Mennonite Church

1352 Slate Hill Rd, Camp Hill, PA

717-293-5246

Thursday Night Quarterly Prayer Meeting – Tentative

October 15, 7:00 – 8:00 p.m. via Zoom

Harvest Room, Landis Homes, Lititz, 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

Celebration of Church Life 2021

March 19–20, 2021

Petra Church

565 Airport Rd, New Holland, PA 17557



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 everyone moving in mission



SAVE THE DATE!

CELEBRATION OF CHURCH LIFE

March 19–20, 2021
Petra Church, New Holland, PA

 **LMC**
a fellowship of anabaptist churches

The event is for the entire family and includes children and adult seminars as well as a youth rally. Everyone is welcome!

For more information, go to lmchurches.org/celebration-church-life/



LMC EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES IN 2021

► Training in Ministry Classes

January 4–March 12, 2021

10 week distance learning through Rosedale Bible College

Caring for the Congregation – Preston Yoder

Leader Self Care – Mark Miller

► LMC Office Options

Church History for Anyone, Part 2 – Brinton Rutherford, begins March 2 for 10 weeks

Discovery course – 8 week study available to congregations on their schedule

For more information connect with Brinton Rutherford by phone or email: 717-293-5246 brutherford@lmchurches.org