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# HOPE HEADLINES

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## **It Matters How We Speak and Listen to One Another**

*“Let every person be quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to display anger”*

**(James 1:19)**

The advice of James is very helpful to us as we prepare for a discussion on welcoming,

I have a vivid recollection of living out this particular command to be quick to listen and slow to speak.

When I was pastor at Eden in Moundridge, we had a young couple in whose wedding I participated. The couple decided to make Eden their church. Eden was the groom’s home church. The young woman was from another congregation where she was born and raised, and which had been her church for her entire life to that point.

This was a time when there was some friction in the congregation over worship styles. And for this young woman from another congregation who had just started attending Eden, the friction touched a nerve.

During one very public occasion of sharing, she took the opportunity to point out all the inadequacies in Eden’s worship, as she saw things.

The room was quiet. For a long time, no one else spoke. The woman’s words had been blunt and abrasive. I knew that for some others in the room, her comments were hurtful. Yet the room remained quiet for a while. No one erupted. The people were simply holding those words *and her*.

Finally, someone offered this comment: “It must be very hard to leave the only church you’ve ever known and come to a new place.” Those simple words touched the real nerve, the one that really needed healing. Within seconds, the young woman began crying. And after this Sunday School time, several people went up to her to console her further.

The community of faith, because it exercised the command to be quick to listen and slow to speak, had created a healing space. The healing space worked first to allow someone to vent—even with the “sharp edges” and inaccuracies. And then, through the quiet and venting and non-reactivity, the simple slow-to-speak words came and touched the larger truth—which was not about worship styles at all, but about a person dealing with grief and loss.

This occasion was uncomfortable for everyone. It was also the church of Jesus Christ at its best.

It matters greatly how we listen and speak to one another.

~~Pastor Dave

## **Small groups at Hope**

Following the fall invitation to small groups, three current groups stayed the same and four new ones formed. There is also the opportunity to join a small group if you so desire. Simply contact the church office.

Here is the current list.

### Group 1

Charlene Grinsell; Vicki & Eric Hofer-Holdeman; Jason Jantz; Lori & Dave Miller; Delaine & Bob Stolzle; Margaret Wiebe

### Group 2

Annette & Eldon Chlumsky; Michelle Jantz; Brenda & Cecil Lilliston; Connie & Scott Luty; Lee & Marvin Schmucker; Karen Zehr

### Group 3

Jim & Twila Blakeley; Heidi Johnson-Laws; Dave & Carole Stevens; Alan & Joan Stambaugh; Audrey Unruh

### Group 4

Marcus & Cynthia Loganbill; Mike & Val Mayta; Linda & Larry Miles; Todd & Debbie Kasitz; Chris & Mel Teufel

### Group 5

Gary & Natalie Hand; Jan Worley; J Clyde & Donna Bradbury; Steve & Vicki Howard; Kendal & Marjie Warkentine; Travis Cox

### Group 6

Galen & Cindy Fast; Don Flynn; David & Sharon Morford  
Trina Wynn; Cody & Robin Wray; Heidi Johnson

### Group 7

Mike & Kim Voth; Russ & Berni Ronnebaum; Kyle & Malika Howard; Jerold & Donna Heide; Randy & Joanna Pinkerton

Julian Bartel received a citizenship award at a ceremony on January 11. The citizenship award is given at the end of each semester to two students (a female and a male) in each grade of The Independent School Middle School. The recipients are selected by the faculty and the award recognizes character, leadership and academics. Congratulations Julian!

*Bits  
&  
Pieces*

## Thrift on Woodlawn



Thrift on Woodlawn is a not-for-profit thrift shop owned by Central Mennonite Thrift, Inc., which supports local and global relief, development and peace projects of Mennonite Central Committee (MCC), and partners with Working Men of Christ (WMOC). Thrift on Woodlawn will sell donated, gently used clothing, household items, furniture, and books. It will sell these items to the public in an atmosphere of dignity with no discrimination.

The store is located on the northeast corner of Woodlawn and Lincoln--830A S Woodlawn. The stores' hours will be Monday-Saturday, 9:00 am - 7:00 pm.

Carly Brock has been hired as manager of the store and Mile Wilkerson as assistant manager. Staff will begin work on January 22. They will be setting up operations, organizing volunteer recruitment and orientation, and starting to market the store. Volunteer orientations and processing of items will begin in mid-February. A soft opening will take place in March and a Grand Opening in April.

You are invited to donate items to the store as well as to consider volunteering (clerking, sorting, pricing, repairing items etc.). You may sign up to volunteer as few or as many hours as you would like. Since I am still working, I volunteer at the New Et Cetera store two Thursday evenings (after work) each month. It is just the right amount of time for my own schedule as well as a regular time for which the store can count on me to be there.

Check the Witness and Outreach bulletin board for more information about the store, volunteering, a list of acceptable donations, and a list of items not accepted. Watch Facebook or [thriftonwoodlawn.com](http://thriftonwoodlawn.com) for the donation receiving timeline as well as for other updates. Carrie Rengers of the Wichita Eagle wrote an article on November 7, 2018, about the store:

<http://www.kansas.com/news/business/biz-columns-blogs/carrie-rengers/article221284960.html>. If you have any questions, ask Margaret Wiebe who is a member of the store's Operation Council.



NAMI (National Alliance of Mental Illness) Wichita is offering the Family to Family Education Program with a class beginning on February 11.

Please forward this announcement to your congregation via e-news, newsletters, etc. so persons and families impacted by mental health conditions in their lives can benefit from this FREE education opportunity in Wichita. There is more detailed information on the bulletin board.



## Be a Lunch Buddy.

Make a difference with **one lunch** a week! Do you enjoy helping children? Do you like games, crafts and activities? Do you want to help improve a child's life? Compeer Lunch Buddies spend one lunch per week with at-risk elementary and middle school students and help them to improve social skills, confidence, and an overall sense of belonging. Provide a child with a positive role model, mentor and caring friend. For more information contact: Hillary Zwetzig 316.207.9313| [Hillary.Zwetzig@mhasck.org](mailto:Hillary.Zwetzig@mhasck.org) Program sponsored by Mental Health Association of South Central Kansas.

## “The little green dove” Who is MC USA?



Who and what is Mennonite Church USA? That is a question we must continually ask ourselves as we seek to fulfill our mission as a denomination. The answer is complex, and the answer you receive may vary, depending on who you ask.

If you ask an attorney, they may point to the bylaws of MC USA that say this: *“The area conference is the basic membership unit of Mennonite Church USA, and through which the member congregations of the area conference also are members of Mennonite Church USA. The area conference is an affiliation of congregations that join together in common life and mission. In coming together, congregations recognize their interdependence and their need for mutual exhortation and admonition, and their strength to fulfill the church’s mission in the world.”*

But if you ask a person in Kalona, Iowa, or San Antonio, Texas, you may get an entirely different answer. To that person, MC USA may have more to do with what happens in the local church, which is not a bad thing. Developing and nurturing missional congregations is part of why MC USA exists. And congregations are connected to MC USA through the area conference. Area conferences are at the core of who we are as MC USA, combined with an Executive Board and its agencies. That is our structure.

Conferences were at one point more regionally based—geographic conglomerations that could serve congregations in close proximity to one another. The area conference is the middle adjudicatory of our denomination, responsible for credentialing, resourcing and equipping the local church and its leaders. With the rise of congregations joining conferences based on political or ideological affinity rather than geographic proximity, we may be losing a key strength in our denomination, regional diversity. Our middle adjudicatory could move from small, diverse bodies that have to deal with differences on the micro

level to ideological monoliths steeped in identity politics. Our denomination will suffer if issues of diversity aren't first lived out in the local context. If we can't struggle and forebear regionally with those in close proximity to us, we will never be able to do so at the national level.

A key strength of MC USA's structure lies in our relationship with our program agencies. The task of the churchwide program agencies and other designated entities is to arrange for the delivery of programs and services that carry out specific churchwide goals. Agencies and entities cooperate and network with each other as well as other parts of the church around common goals. Our agencies connect our denominational capacity to conferences, congregations and individuals.

- Everence[i] is a program agency of MC USA, part of the fabric of this denomination, meeting the financial service needs of our members and others.
- Mennonite Mission Network is a program agency of MC USA, part of the fabric of this denomination, working in and through congregations to spread God's message of grace, joy and peace.
- Mennonite Education Agency is a program agency of MC USA, part of the fabric of this denomination, meeting the educational needs of our members and others.
- MennoMedia[ii] is a program agency of MC USA, part of the fabric of this denomination, shaping church and society with resources for living Christian faith from an Anabaptist perspective.
- MHS is a program agency of MC USA, part of the fabric of this denomination, meeting the health-care needs of our members and others.
- The Corinthian Plan is a program, part of the fabric of this denomination, that helps us provide mutual aid to our pastors.
- Hispanic Pastoral and Leadership Education programs are part of the fabric of this denomination, providing Anabaptist Mennonite theological training for Hispanic Mennonites.
- The Mennonite is an entity, part of the fabric of this denomination, tasked to provide a forum for the voices of MC USA.

There are many other programs developed by generations of Mennonites, too many for me to try to name, that work locally, across the nation and around the world in many ways and forms.

**MC USA is a collective of people, programs, area conferences and other structural components offered by and through this denomination that serve as witness to our capacity to do more good together and ensure that the message of the gospel is effectively preached.**

MC USA has never been one person or group of people. MC USA is not exclusively the executive director or the Executive Board. In fact, MC USA works best when each part of the system works collaboratively to enhance the mission of the whole. Though we have separate boards and staff, we must never forget that we are one church.

*Glen Guyton is executive director of Mennonite Church USA. In a three-part blog series, he will be exploring MC USA structure while challenging us as members of this denomination to Journey Forward together.*

[i] Everence is made up of numerous corporations. The stewardship agency is the primary connection to MC USA.

[ii] MennoMedia is a binational organization jointly owned by MC USA and MC Canada.



### UPCOMING EVENTS:

\*Young Adult Snow Camp – February 22-24

\*Mountain States Men's Retreat – March 1-3

\*First annual Women's Retreat

If you are interested in any of these events, there are flyers on the literature table.



### Let's hear it for the boys!

As the Basement Ladies busy themselves with preparations for their churches participation in the town's 1864 Centennial Celebration, we get to see their coming and goings from the eyes of the menfolk, who have their own problems to solve...dealing with furnace salesmen, looming retirement, rival

Protestant denominations, the Pastor's bad jokes, and more in "Rise Up, O Men." If you loved the original "Basement Ladies," you'll love this.

McPherson Opera House, McPherson, Kansas

Wednesday, April 17, 2 & 7 p.m.

Tickets: \$25, \$30, \$35

Group rates available by calling the box office.

For tickets call 620-241-1952 or online at

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

A flyer has been posted on the bulletin board.



## News from Mary Raber our mission partner in Ukraine

I want to thank you so much for your congregation's prayer and financial support to Mary and her ministry. As the church, we exist to align our hearts with God's purposes. One way we can do that is by equipping others to define, embrace, and live out their unique role in advancing the kingdom, growing to their fullest potential in Christ. With your support Mary is able to answer the call of God for her life and be there for others.

Mary is planning on staying for four more years in Ukraine. Her annual budget is \$50,000 a year, and she currently has commitments of only \$30,000. Mary's ministry needs additional financial support so we invite your congregation to prayerfully consider increasing your annual commitment for the next four years, take up a love offering, or whatever the Lord puts on your heart, will be gratefully received. Thank you for being the hands and feet of Jesus. -- From Mary's Support Team in St. Louis

Article from Mary:

Explosions shook the ground for hours as a fire raged through a munition's depot in Ukraine. Church members with cars rushed to ferry people out of the neighborhoods closest to the blaze. Repeated blasts shattered all the doors and windows in the church building they had constructed themselves. For the next 10 days, the congregation managed to feed their own families and their homeless neighbors, even though they were without gas, water, or electricity.

This disaster happened a year ago, and though the church is still recovering from it, members thank God. "We're so grateful for everything we've learned about listening to God," Volodya said. Volodya (a pseudonym for security reasons) is a Baptist pastor from a city north of the militarized zone in eastern Ukraine. Now, in the fourth year of the war, there is relatively little reporting in the West, though the war has claimed more than 10,000 casualties and created about one million refugees. Many who have remained in the region are those who are unable to run—the elderly, the disabled, and small children. However, all participants at a retreat last March had decided to stay and minister despite danger and difficulty.

When I agreed to attend the retreat, I braced myself for tears and heartbreak. What would the participants say about what they were going through? Would they be depressed? Angry? Unable to sleep?

Some wept as they described days of shelling, tense encounters with military officials, and exhausting efforts to provide food for helpless neighbors. They talked about death, impossible decisions, hunger, and overpowering fear. They prayed together for wisdom and courage in a dead-end situation. But that was

only part of the picture. Under the circumstances, I could understand gloom. But I was not prepared for gaiety, exuberant singing, and helpless laughter.

Some of the lighthearted mood was doubtless due to relief and delight at being in the Carpathian Mountains in western Ukraine. The retreat had given the participants a few days off from their daily worries, and they made the most of it. Some laughter was a release of tension and could just as easily turn to tears.

Over and over, from the depths of difficult situations, people, like Volodya, described their profound sense of divine presence and guidance. One couple marveled at their abiding sense of peace over their decision to stay in the region. Others rejoiced that, paradoxically, the war had brought them into a new relationship with formerly hostile or indifferent neighbors, allowing them to share the gospel. Another couple had taken in 10 children and reflected on the surprising ways God continued to supply their needs. All agreed that they were glad to be alive.

No one had illusions about the future, but they were prepared to stay where they were, convinced that God would continue to be with them. Their faith stabilized them; it made them resilient, free to sing and laugh. This must be what Nehemiah meant when he told the exiles who had returned to Jerusalem from the Babylonian exile that “the joy of the Lord is your strength” (Nehemiah 8:10). What makes the joy of the Lord so powerful?

First, unlike mere optimism, it does not depend on favorable circumstances or wishful thinking. Instead, it comes from God’s own presence (Psalm 21:6), and because it is “of the Lord,” it is eternal. Even when we do not feel it, it is never gone, any more than God ever leaves us.

Second, God’s presence assures us of God’s care. Convinced of that, the Ukrainian believers could see blessings all around, and thanked God, turning away from self-pity and fear, and generating more joy.

Finally, while joy does not deny sorrow, it always has the last word: “Weeping may remain for a night, but rejoicing comes in the morning” (Psalm 30:5). Or, as Jesus assured the disciples, “In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world” (John 16:33). With assurance like that, how can we keep from singing?