
HOPE HEADLINES

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WELCOME TO OUR SABBATICAL INTERIM

Susan (Claassen) Jantzen has been involved in congregational or denominational leadership most of her post-college years (Bethel College, '76 History major). This includes serving as Coordinator for Christian Education at Lorraine Avenue Mennonite Church, managing the denominational book store in Newton, administering the US/Canadian women organization for General Conference Mennonite Church including the merger that resulted in Mennonite Women, and serving with her husband, Jim, in Chad, Africa, with Mennonite Central Committee. Since her completion of seminary training in 2008 (AMBS/Saint Paul School of Theology, Kansas City), Susan has served briefly as pastor at Deer Creek Mennonite Church (Oklahoma), three years as Ministry Coordinator at Trinity Heights United Methodist Church (Newton), seven years as Lead Pastor at First Mennonite Church, Hillsboro, one year as Interim Pastor of Nurture at Bethel College Mennonite Church (Newton), and is finishing up a two-plus year Interim Pastor of Worship and Visitation at First Mennonite Church (Newton).

During Susan's growing up years, she and her family were active at Lorraine Avenue Mennonite Church. Through this Wichita experience, she has come to appreciate the gifts that an Anabaptist faith community can bring to the urban setting and also appreciates the gifts an urban setting can bring to an Anabaptist faith community.

Susan is married to Jim Jantzen. They have two adult sons, Peter (California), and Robert (Washington state). Susan's first Sunday will be June 12 which is Dave's last Sunday prior to his sabbatical. We will celebrate this transition with a fellowship meal.



UKRAINE NEWS

April 11, 2022



Dear Hope Mennonite friends:

Too much time has gone by without my acknowledging your beautiful card, sent when the war began. It's very kind of you. I know your prayers are powerful.

The news from Ukraine is dreadful every day, but there are good stories too. I think I remember that Hope Mennonite sent a financial gift to Good Shepherd Children's Home at least once -maybe more. You'll remember that Good Shepherd relocated to the Kyiv suburbs when the war situation got too dangerous in Makeevka (eastern Ukraine) in 2014. There were many reports of the devastation of Irpin; the small town where they lived and I was very worried. But it turned out that the children and staff arrived safely in Germany where they are being looked after by some churches that have supported them in the past. Thank God!

Some of you may be interested in viewing two informative and moving webinars that have been posted on YouTube. The first is titled, "Russia-Ukraine War: Evangelical Voices" and features the leaders of several theological seminaries including Oleksandr Seychenko, my "boss," the president of Odessa Theological Seminary. The other is called, "Russia-Ukraine War: Women (sic) Voices." This one requires a little patience, because the first speaker gave her whole presentation in Ukrainian before the English translation breaks in. The other participants all speak English. Feel free to share these webinars further, if you think anyone would be interested.

As for me, I'm afraid I've let a lot of work slide over the past months as I've followed the war news. By no, though, I'm beginning to feel a bit steadier. I continue to edit the English translation of the [Slavic Bible Commentary](#).

I wish you all a blessed Holy Week and a joyful Easter season. Christ is risen!

~With peace, Mary Raber (our former mission partner)



MAY GRADUATES

High School

Isaac Epp – Maize South, May 12
 Chase Ingram – Maize South, May 12
 Daniel Jantz – Maize South, May 12
 Kyle Kasitz – Maize South, May 12
 Elisha Miller – Wichita Southeast, May 10

College

Katrina Miller – Butler Community College
 May 13, AS in agriculture
 Kendra Gooden – Bethel College
 May 15, BA in Psychology



Library News Here are some of the titles on the topic of racial justice from our Hope Mennonite Church Library that can be found on the display table near the library door. These books are in addition

to the five which were specifically highlighted during the worship service on April 24th, which can also be checked out at the table.

For adults:

- *Rosa Parks; My Story by Rosa Parks
- *America’s Original Sin: Racism, White Privilege, and the Bridge to a New America by Jim Wallis
- *I’m Still Here: Black Dignity in a World Made for Whiteness by Austin Channing Brown
- *Dismantling Racism: The Continuing Challenge to White America by Joseph Berndt
- *Plantation Jesus: Race, Faith, and A New Way Forward by Skot Welch and Rick Wilson

For children:

- *Different Like Me by Xochitl Dixon (used for the Children’s Time)
- *When God Made You by Matthew Paul Turner
- *Same Kind of Different as Me by Ron Hall and Denver Moore
- *Why Are People Different: A Book About Prejudice by Barbara Shook Hazen
- *The Skin You Live In by Michael Tyler
- *The Story of Ruby Bridges by Robert Coles



MC USA Special Delegate Session May 27-30, 2022

Hope will send three delegates to the special delegate session at the end of

May. Bethan Gipson, Renetta Gooden, and Pastor Dave Stevens will attend the session in Kansas City on behalf

of Hope. Below is a summary of the resolutions as well as a link to additional information. If you have thoughts regarding the resolutions, please share with one of the delegates. The delegates along with Executive Board Member and Hope Member, Karen Zehr will work to find time in May to share more about each resolution during adult Sunday School.

Clarification on Mennonite Church USA Polity and the Role of the Membership Guidelines of Mennonite Church USA

Retire the Membership Guidelines as the active polity in Mennonite Church USA. The resolution clarifies authority in MC USA and aligns our practice with our stated polity. The retirement of the Membership Guidelines does not change where authority lies within our system. This organizational resolution does not speak to the merits of LGBTQ inclusion in MC USA nor address concerns about same-sex unions. Summary of Actions: Retire the Membership Guidelines as the active polity in Mennonite Church USA.

MC USA For Justice Resolution

This resolution provides members of MC USA an opportunity to explore core Anabaptist beliefs in a modern context, especially in the contexts of the church’s relationship to the state and the use of violence by the state. The church statement calls for study, education, and action. Several options are given for members to choose from. Summary of Actions: There is a general call to “confront the injustice within the current U.S. criminal legal system.” The resolution lists ten “starting places” to work at the aspirational call.

MC USA Accessibility Resolution

This resolution affirms the need to care for and integrate people with disabilities in the life and work of MC USA. As the church works at being an inclusive body, we must ensure that we eliminate barriers that prevent people from fully engaging in the mission of MC USA. Summary of Actions: Affirm people with disabilities as part of the work of MC USA. Remove barriers to belonging for people with disabilities.

MC USA Resolution for Repentance and Transformation

This resolution is a response to a variety of practices and policies in MC USA and seeks to have the delegate body acknowledge harm done to the LGBTQIA members of MC USA. The resolution is also positioned as a commitment to live into forbearance by “doing the difficult work of being church together.” The Executive Board recognizes that Section III of the Membership Guidelines have been applied differently by the various MC USA

area conferences, which has resulted in a diversity of practices that have led to confusion and conflict.

Summary of Actions: There is a general call to confession, truth-telling and repentance. Rescind Section III of Membership Guidelines. Executive Board will consult with LGBTQIA leaders to create a constituency group. Provide denominational resources for individuals, congregations, and conferences to engage with repentance and reconciliation in their own contexts.

Details on each resolution:

<https://www.mennoniteusa.org/special-delegate-session-22/#resolutions>



“Suffering Church: How theater can help us learn from those who leave” an original play

by Karen L. Robu.

In late 2019, the Pew Research Center released a study that revealed between the years 2009 and 2019 the number of people in the United States identifying as Christians dropped by 12%. Karen was curious about the stories behind the numbers and began interviewing people and gathered responses to this question, “What is your story in regards to leaving the church?” She collected 56 stories, both in-person and via an online survey. The stories varied but most often involved some form of suffering caused by the church.

In *The Empty Church: Theatre, Theology, and Bodily Hope*, Shannon Craigo-Snell writes: “Across centuries and continents, Christian churches have perpetrated enormous harm. Christian communities have visions of what church should be, visions that vary but carry many common themes of faith, hope, love, hospitality, and service. We fall short of these visions, often enacting pride, fear, hate, exclusion and domination...Part of the tragedy of Christian communities causing harm – part of what demands a response of lament, repentance and justice – is that this is not what the church is supposed to be...The “pride, fear, hate, exclusion & domination” Craigo-Snell refers to was evident in the stories of abuse, marginalization and unwelcome that Karen heard from those who were interviewed. This play is based on those stories and moves us to ask “How can we be and do church better?”

On April 11, six Hope members – Marcus & Cynthia Loganbill, Joanna & Randy Pinkerton, Cindy Fast, Margaret Wiebe – attended the play at Bethel College.

Following are some of their thoughts and reflections on what they heard.

**It was important to the integrity of the survey that Rev Robu prefaced the participants with two statements everything shared was confidential - identities protected she would not evangelize - to get them to come back. This enabled participants to share authentic, honest reasons they left the church.

**Many of the participants were from the theater community or the LGBTQ community who had grown up in Evangelical churches or strict Catholic schools and churches. The stories were painful to listen to...but also relatable. One woman - who was also a lesbian - found a church community that welcomed her and her partner, but they were not accepted as full participants in the life of the congregation.

**I found the monolog of God -having male anatomy-hilarious and had similar monologues in my head as a child. (I am thankful that my own mother emphasized to me that we call God "Father" but actually God is Spirit having both fathering and mothering qualities...that we say "he" but it means all humans, not just males.)

**The story of the "warring" Mother Superior and Protestant Grandmother over the soul of a little boy broke my heart.

**I was disappointed in the presentation. I thought it was good but the MC-USA website reports that our membership is one-half of what it was 25 years ago or less. Most of the members and churches that have left are on the opposite side of the LGBTQIA side that she presented. I had hoped and was curious if and how she would present their views. She ignored that issue that is facing the church so I thought a better job could have been done.

**I found the play to be poignant and heartfelt. I felt for the people who were traumatized by their church experience – trauma caused by fear, abuse, rigidity, exclusion, patriarchy, us vs them (whoever us and them were) – to the point of leaving the church and never returning. They did not experience nor hear much about the love, grace and mercy as seen in the life and teachings of Jesus. Though a large number majority of those who responded to her survey were women and members of the LGBTQIA community, her participants were of all ages and geographic areas of the US. I was also impacted by the story of the young boy who became the victim of a ‘battle’ of his soul between his Protestant grandmother and his Catholic grandmother. The breaking point for him was at his confirmation service and resulted in him walking out of the church at age 12 and never

going back. My biggest takeaway was the danger of churches believing they were the only ones with the 'right' belief and the 'right' way. After this presentation, it is no wonder that there is declining church attendance.

**During the "Struggling Church" performance, I thought often of Hope Mennonite Church, especially when the multiple stories of LGBTQ+ people were presented on how the church has perpetuated harm to them consequently leading many LGBTQ+ people to leave the church. I found a bit of comfort in knowing that through our welcome statement process we have worked hard through study and discussion so as not to be one of the churches that perpetuates harm to people, particularly LGBTQ+ people. I am thankful for the preaching and teaching at Hope which is Christocentric and the emphasis is on Jesus' commandments and teachings about everyone being made in God's image and that we are to love everyone and not exclude anyone. The presentation was powerful and educational as I learned about many of the ways the church has harmed and alienated people. It emphasized for me that the church needs to be open to listening to the stories of those who have left the church so as to learn to do better and to be sure we are not harming and excluding others.

**With this Minister's background in Theater, I was interested to see this presentation and her findings. It was a poignant performance and the cast of 8 characters retold the stories of individuals and their experiences leading up to leaving the church. All of the real-life individual stories portrayed on stage had taken place over a long period of time and were truly hurtful to the individual. They weren't one-time experiences but rather many started in childhood and some lasted into adulthood before the participants left the church. While most of the experiences took place in strict or very conservative Protestant and Catholic churches, it is not known how many of these took place in Mennonite churches, due to confidentiality of the participants of the project. But knowing that the number of people who identify as Christian has dropped in the last 10 years, makes me believe that all churches and denominations should be aware of the reason people are leaving and *also* not even connecting/attending to begin with.

**It was saddening to hear these stories and should help us all ponder: what is our role as members to address the hurt and exclusion of others in the church? In addition, some of the comments made by the actors after the presentation stuck with me: "I feel like I'm an imposter at church. It doesn't allow for the fullness of being human. There is a need for acceptance and feeling in the church."

"Church is like a group project. It is not fulfilling due to individual needs and differences that are not addressed."

Our hope is to share the presentation and have a discussion during Sunday School next fall. It is especially a relevant topic for Hope because one of the 5 priorities from our 2017 congregational review was on how to 'grow' Hope. Please feel free to talk to any of the participants for more information.

Karen Robu is an Assistant Professor of Communication Arts at Bethel College. and full-time Associate Minister for Plymouth Congregation Church. This play represents 2 years work of work and is the final project for her Doctor of Ministry degree at Phillips Theological Seminary in Tulsa. Karen has also been involved entertaining Wichita audiences since 1993 and has performed on most stages in town, including Music Theatre of Wichita.



May Reminders...

May 1

Worship L.-Lowell
Pianist-Ruthie
Song L-Jared S.
Scripture-Marcus
Worship tech-Galen

May 8

Worship L-Mike V
Pianist-Vicki
Song L-Lowell
Scripture- Randy P
Worship tech-Galen

May 15

Worship L-Amy
Pianist-Cynthia
Song L-Kendrick
Scripture-Greg
Worship tech-Galen

May 22

Worship L-Lori M.
Pianist-Vicki
Song L-Lowell
Scripture-Brenda
Worship tech-Galen

May 29

Worship L.-TBD
Pianist-Laurie
Song L-Jared S
Scripture-Connie
Worship tech-Galen

Worship Prep

May 1-Cynthia
May 8-Heidi
May 15-Joanna
May 22-Lori M
May 29-Connie

Coffee

May 1-Galen & Cindy
May 8-Scott & Connie
May 15-Mike & Kim
May 22-Marcus Cynthia
May 29-No coffee

SS Helper May-Cindy

SS Super-May-Cynthia

Mowers

May 8-Grant
May 15-Scott
May 22-Jerold
May 29-Randy P.