

LMPC Newsletter

Lombard Mennonite Peace Center

Winter, 2005

Vol. XXIII, No. 4

Charting a Course Toward More Stable Ministry

In this era of heightened anxiety, the functioning of leaders is especially crucial to the health and stability of organizations, including churches.

Judicatory and other church leaders charged with the responsibility of working with ministry candidates, seminary students, or new clergy recognize more than ever the importance of careful discernment regarding the call to ministry.

How does one assess the influences in a candidate's attraction to ministry? How can both candidates and judicatory representatives be more objective about vocational decisions?

This past August, the Committee on Ordained Ministry of the Elgin District, Northern Illinois Conference of the United Methodist Church, sent several committee members to LMPC's three-day *Here I Stand* training event held in Lombard, Illinois.

This committee works over several years with persons considering seminary and the ordained ministry as a career.

The committee has been looking for ways to help candidates sort through the dynamics of their attraction to ministry. They believe that the use of a *Beliefs Chart* within LMPC's *Here I Stand* process can provide a context within which such self-assessment can take place.

After having attended the *Here I Stand* training, the Elgin District's Committee on Ordained Ministry invited LMPC's Bob Williamson to facilitate the *Here I Stand* process for the committee

members themselves.

The committee has met for two *Here I Stand* sessions, and plans three more sessions in early 2006. Subsequent to those sessions, they will consider how they themselves might begin facilitating the *Here I Stand* process for the ministry candidates under their supervision.

To meet the needs of this committee and its vocational focus, a specific sequence of questions has been fashioned to serve as the focus of reflection as, first, the committee members and, then, the candidates engage in the *Here I Stand* process and fashion their own *Beliefs Charts*.

The facilitator of the process (LMPC staff for the committee and the committee members for their candidates) will interview participants every couple of months and "chart" facts about relationships and facts about belief changes which the questions elicit.

When someone has fashioned a *Beliefs Chart* over time, they are in a better position to observe the interactions between changes in their beliefs (including vocational choices) and changes in their important relationships.

Bowen family systems theory suggests that much of our thinking is shaped by relationship pressures. When beliefs and goals are adopted in ways which express and support the pushes and pulls of relationships, they are more vulnerable to future shifts in relationships. Thus, a *Beliefs Chart* can be a valuable tool in helping someone assess the long-term resilience of a vocational choice.

Judicatory leaders, Clinical Pastoral Education supervisors, and others who wish to facilitate the *Here I Stand* process for candidates, students, or clergy should be trained for that role by attending one of the *Here I Stand* training events.

Dates and locations of the 2006 training events are listed below. Information about *Here I Stand* and the *Beliefs Chart* is available on the LMPC website. If you have additional questions about the *Here I Stand* training or the *Here I Stand* process, contact Bob Williamson at LMPC.

2006 Training Events

Mediation Skills Training Institute:

- March 6-10 - Glendale, AZ
- May 8-12 - Minneapolis, MN
- Aug. 7-11 - Chicago, IL area
- Oct. 9-13 - Pinole, CA

Here I Stand:

- March 28-30 - Kansas City, MO
- June 13-15 - Minneapolis, MN
- Aug. 22-24 - Chicago, IL area
- Oct. 17-19 - Glendale, AZ

Healthy Congregations:

- March 24-25 - Santa Ana, CA
- May 12-13 - Tulsa, OK
- Sept. 22-23 - Chicago, IL area

Facilitating Healthy Pastor-Congregation Relations:

- April 28-29 - Denver, CO
- Oct. 13-14 - Pittsburgh, PA area
- Nov. 10-11 - Charleston, SC area

Leadership & Anxiety in the Church:

- March 15 - King, NC
- April 5 - Los Altos, CA
- Oct. 4 - Peoria, IL

For registration brochures contact
LMPC at 630-627-0507.



LMPC Welcomes New Staff

LMPC welcomes our newest staff person, Mary Ellen O'Donnell. With the addition of Mary Ellen as Administrative Assistant, LMPC is once again fully staffed. Mary Ellen is a lector and a member of the Social Action Committee at St. Eulalia Parish in Maywood, IL. She is also the site coordinator for the West Suburban P.A.D.S. program, which provides shelter for the homeless, based at St. Eulalia Parish.

Commentary

Back to the Future

by Bob Williamson

“What is the kingdom of God like?... It is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in the garden; it grew and became a tree, and the birds of the air made nests in its branches.” — Luke 13:18-19

My wife and I recently had dinner at our neighbors’ home. Since they’re most comfortable with their native Polish, they had also invited a friend who served as translator for the evening.

I was surprised when the table talk went in the direction of the threat posed by Islamic immigrants to life in the U.S. More precisely, conversation focused on the perceived threat posed by adherents of Islam to the Christian culture of the U.S.

While I began an impromptu lesson on the tolerance of a civil society, our translator for the evening began advocating a return to the Christian basis of America.

We need to “get back,” he believed, to the Christian principles upon which the U.S. was founded.

One might raise questions about the historical accuracy of this view (as I did). But, more importantly, one might also raise a question about whether Christ himself calls us “back” to anything at all.

One might, in fact, make the point that it’s precisely in looking ahead – not back – that makes Jesus’ gospel so unique.

The Jesus of the gospels didn’t call people back to anything. On the contrary, Jesus announced what he called “the Kingdom of God.”

Jesus saw the onrushing Kingdom of God as a reality which overwhelmed the present – so real in its imminence that its coming required changes in the way

people already live now.

For Jesus, the advent of God’s future was what was most real. He didn’t summon his listeners back to any golden age, to some way it used to be. Jesus looked to a coming future which would remake the world, and was already remaking those who heard him.

My friends aren’t alone in looking backward.

In early November, French cities were wracked by violence centered in “immigrant suburbs.” Cars were burned, businesses destroyed, and hundreds of arrests were made.

Not all of the violence involved immigrants or the children of immigrants. But much of the unrest was related to the poverty and unemployment within France’s immigrant communities.

The French may be experiencing just the beginnings of a longer struggle to reshape their future, a future which may look less “French” than the past.

Europe and North America, indeed in many ways much of the world, may be entering a new era in which things will look less and less like they have in the past.

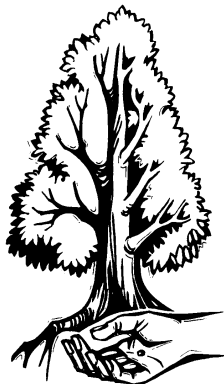
Societies are changing, cultures are changing, the very racial composition of our populations is changing.

Change triggers anxiety – and anxious people are more apt to blame those who are different. Anxious people are more prone to violence and counter-violence.

Moreover, changing times, anxious times, often trigger calls for a return to the past. So zealots of all stripes call us to get back to... something.

Jesus called his listeners ahead to something new, something unexpected, something unlike the comforts of the past.

Jesus announced the advent of God’s Kingdom. That was his “gospel,” his good news.



That good news triggers its own kind of anxieties, of course. It’s a good news which offers less comfort than challenge, less familiarity than adventure, less reassurance than risk.

Jesus’ gospel of the Kingdom of God offers a future which can come only as a surprise.

It’s a future which Jesus pictured in parables. It’s like a banquet to which all are called. It’s like a harvest to which latecomers are welcomed. It’s like a mustard tree, in which all the birds of the air come and make their nests.

During the Advent season, I’m going to reflect on the coming of God. I’m going to turn my attention not just to a baby who came once in the past, but to the still coming future which that child grew to proclaim.

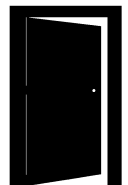
The Jesus who came down at Christmas didn’t call us back into our pasts.

“Repent,” he said, “Turn around. For the Kingdom of God is both here among you and yet to be.”

The Prayer Closet

As we celebrate this season of thanks, joy and promise, embracing the gift of Christ to the world, let us remember also those whose lives have been wrought with loss, violence and disaster. Let us uphold the many victims of natural disasters – tsunami, earthquake, hurricane, flood – and continue to support them through our prayers and our gifts.

We lift up in prayer all those affected by strife and wars – both those whose lives have been torn apart, and also world leaders who make decisions impacting the lives of so many. We pray for all those in power that they may have wisdom, and a sense of justice tempered with mercy, so that all are working towards a fuller expression of Christ’s vision of peace. Let it be so.



Lombard Mennonite Peace Center, 101 W. 22nd Street, Suite 206, Lombard, IL 60148-4987

The *LMPC Newsletter* is published four times a year by Lombard Mennonite Peace Center. A minimum subscription donation of \$10 per year is encouraged. LMPC bases its peacemaking in a biblical view of salvation and Christian discipleship as understood in the Anabaptist-Mennonite heritage. LMPC is a 501(c)(3) organization to which donations are tax deductible. LMPC Staff: Richard Blackburn, Executive Director; Bob Williamson, Associate Director; Marty Farahat, Assistant Director; Jay Wittmeyer, Assistant Director; Erin Dalian, Assistant for Communications; Sheryl Reynolds Slack, Administrative Assistant; Mary Ellen O'Donnell, Administrative Assistant.

Phone: 630-627-0507 Fax: 630-627-0519 E-mail: Admin@LMPeaceCenter.org Website: www.LMPeaceCenter.org

The Bookshelf

Transition Stewardship

by Bob Williamson

A Change of Pastors... And How it Affects Change in the Congregation by Loren Mead. Herndon, Va.: Alban Institute, 2005. 100 pp. \$13.00.

In 1986, Loren Mead authored *Critical Moment in Ministry: A Change of Pastors*. The shift in the title of this “revised and updated” edition suggests one of Mead’s intended emphases: that the time of transition from one pastoral leader to the next affords a unique opportunity for change of the congregation itself, not just of its pastor.

Mead, for the most part, addresses lay leaders of congregations anticipating or experiencing a change of pastors. The heart of Mead’s description of pastoral transition lies in what he calls “procedures and processes.”

“Procedures” include a useful description of the seven steps that need to be followed in moving through a change of pastors: termination, direction finding, self-study, search, decision/negotiation, installation, and start-up.

Mead emphasizes the importance of a congregation doing its self-study *before* it begins its search for candidates. If this sequence is neglected, the guidance which comes from good self-

study cannot be applied to shaping “the criteria of leadership that can fit *this* congregation *now*.”

Mead also makes a point of saying that the last of the steps in a pastoral transition isn’t “installation,” but what he calls “start-up.” He reminds pastors and congregations that “finding each other does not take the place of learning to work in the new relationship.”

As procedures are addressed, congregations should simultaneously be attending to several “processes” familiar to those acquainted with the developmental tasks of interim ministry.

Such tasks include: 1) coming to terms with the past; 2) discovering a new identity; 3) allowing for needed leadership changes; 4) rediscovering the denomination; 5) commitment to new directions in ministry.

These developmental tasks are key, in Mead’s view, to a congregation making the most of the opportunities for change occasioned by a pastoral transition.

Two features of this revised edition struck me as significant in their difference from the 1986 version. First, Mead includes the notion of the “trajectory” of a pastorate. This recognizes that much of what is required for a vital pastor-congregation relationship is a product of years of living and learning together. However, the trajectory of a pastorate can be profoundly influenced by the stewardship of the pastoral transition.

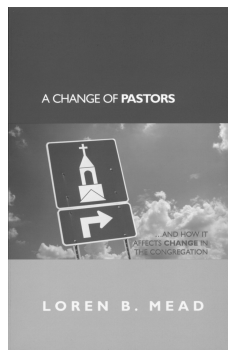
A second interesting difference I noted relates to interim ministries. Twenty years ago, intentional interim ministry was relatively new. In 1986, Mead remarked that interim ministers “can be useful in almost any situation.”

In the revised edition, Mead states “that all congregations [don’t] necessarily need a fully trained interim pastor.” He gives more attention, instead, to describing situations which *require* a trained interim pastor: 1) when the previous pastorate was very long; or 2) ended in conflict (or misconduct) and polarization; or 3) when the congregation is a large, multi-staffed entity.

The revised *A Change of Pastors* benefits from Mead’s added years of consultation and reflection. It will be a useful handbook for search committee members, interim pastors, congregational consultants, church board members, and judicatory executives.

In churches where LMPC has been asked to mediate in the midst of conflict, as we gather information it becomes clear that one element typically contributing to the anxiety is a poorly managed pastoral transition at some point in the past. Thus, *A Change of Pastors* can be an important resource for preventing destructive conflict and helping Christ church grow increasingly in health and wholeness.

Until February 28, *A Change of Pastors* may be purchased from LMPC for \$11.70 (10% off the regular price), plus \$3.00 shipping. Illinois residents please add 6.75% sales tax (\$0.79).



Previews

A Selection of LMPC Winter Events

Mediation Skills Training Institute:

- At Southern Methodist University-in-Legacy, Plano, TX, November 28-December 3.
- For Southeast Unity Ministries at Simpsonwood Conference Center, Norcross, GA, February 20-24.
- At Trinity Mennonite Church, Glendale, AZ, March 6-10.
- For Synod of Lakes and Prairies at Camp Calvin Crest, Fremont, NE, March 20-24.

Advanced Clergy Clinic:

- At Blanchard Road Alliance Church, Wheaton, IL, January 30 – February 1.

Clergy Clinic:

- At First Church of Lombard, UCC, Lombard, IL, February 6-8.

Here I Stand:

- At St. James Lutheran Church, Kansas City, MO, March 28-30.

Leadership and Anxiety in the Church:

- At Resurrection Lutheran Church, Oro Valley, AZ, January 14.
- At Trinity United Methodist Church, King, NC, March 15.

Healthy Congregations:

- For the Calvin Symposium on Worship at the Prince Conference Center, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, MI, January 26.
- At College Heights United Methodist Church, Lakeland, FL, January 27-28.

- At Emmanuel Episcopal Church, Rockford, IL, February 3-4.
- For Pennsylvania Southeast Conference, United Church of Christ, at Mensch Mill Retreat Center, Alburtis, PA, February 10-11.
- At Trinity United Presbyterian Church, Santa Ana, CA, March 24-25.

God’s Own Peace:

- At St. Bartholomew’s Episcopal Church, Pewaukee, WI, March 11.

Conflict in the Church:

- At St. Luke’s Lutheran Church, Chicago, IL, December 9-10.
- At First United Methodist Church, Newark, OH, January 27-28.

The A-V Shelf

Independence or Catastrophe?

by Erin Dalian

Children of the Nakba, Mennonite Central Committee, 26 min, 2005. DVD

In 1948 the State of Israel was established. May 15 is a day of joy for Israeli Jews as they celebrate their independence. However, for Palestinians the years between 1947 and 1949 are remembered with incredible sadness. They refer to this period as the “Nakba,” an Arabic word meaning “catastrophe.”

Children of Nakba highlights the plight of the 700,000 to 900,000 Palestinians who were forced from their land in that period and now live as displaced persons.

With the aid of a study guide, the video examines the situation faced by both Palestinians and Israelis. The viewer hears from those Palestinians who thought they were temporarily leaving their land, only to find themselves living as refugees for nearly sixty years.

An eighty-nine-year-old Palestinian man, his son, and grandson attempt to visit the land that was once their home. Only the son and grandson have a permit and are able to see their land. Though in his thirties and living a mere twelve kilometers away from the land, this is the first time the son has seen the land.



The video also challenges us to consider the view of the Israelis, who longed for their own nation and saw that dream become a reality in 1948. A young Jewish man who came to the town of Beit ‘Itab believing in a Jewish state now realizes that there is more to the history of the land than he once knew.

Also shown are Israelis and Palestinians who have been coming together to dialogue about the refugee situation. In the town of Beit ‘Itab a group meets to understand each other’s views. An Israeli woman who has lived in the area her entire life reveals that it is hard for Israelis to discuss the situation, as it would require them to look critically at their own history.

The DVD also contains three other features (two with accompanying study guides) – *The Dividing Wall* (see *LMPC Newsletter*, Fall, 2004), *Family Stories: Palestine*, and *Walking the Path Jesus Walked*. In the latter segment, Christians from Syria, Palestine and Egypt share their faith stories and how they look to Jesus as their model for responding to injustice.

This resource would be useful for an adult Sunday school class or other group setting for a multi-week study of the complex Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It also can serve as a reminder that there are Christian brothers and sisters living in the Middle East under unjust conditions who, nevertheless, seek to follow the nonviolent example of Jesus.

To borrow this DVD, call LMPC at 630-627-0507.

Return Service Requested

Nonprofit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Lombard, IL 60148
Permit No. 218

LOMBARD MENNONITE PEACE CENTER
101 WEST 22ND STREET, SUITE 206
LOMBARD, IL 60148-4987

