



Mennonite
Healthcare
Fellowship

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Many of us in North America have experienced an unusually cold and snowy winter. This issue of *Mennonite Health Journal* (MHJ) looks forward to the events of this spring and summer when we anticipate getting out into warm temperatures and warm fellowship! A listing of these (already known) spring and summer events can be found elsewhere in this issue.

A special feature of this issue is to introduce the theme of the Annual Gathering 2014, June 13-15 at Laurelville. Since Mennonite Healthcare Fellowship (MHF) is an organization operating at the intersection of faith and the healthcare professions, it seemed appropriate for this year's theme to be "**Faith at Work: Practicing Our Profession.**" Paul Leichty, MHF Executive Director, explores the multiple facets of this theme in his Editor's Column.

Our feature article is reprinted through the gracious permission of Everence after it first appeared in their Fall 2013 edition of *Everyday Stewardship*. Laurie Oswald Robinson's article, "When Tim met Kathy," highlights the intersection of faith and work in the lives of Tim and Kathy Wiens of Newton, Kansas. Tim and Kathy were recipients of the Everence 2013 national Journey Award which recognizes people who model Christian stewardship. We think you will find their story inspiring.

Moving onto the international scene, MHJ recognizes the very difficult issues surrounding medical and other human service work in the developing nations of the world. A review of Murray Nickel's 2013 book, *Rhythms of Poverty* introduces affluent Western Christians to the immense complexity of attempting to live out the compassion of Christ across cultural and economic boundaries.

Speaking of the international scene, the editor introduces the tremendous opportunity for North Americans, especially those in the state of Pennsylvania, to host Mennonite World Conference and its Global Assembly in July 2015. MHF is already beginning to plan for that occasion by scheduling Annual Gathering 2015 for the same area and just prior to the Assembly itself.

Finally, MHF President, Joe Longacher, shows how a simple act can generate happiness as we continue in our faith journey. You are encouraged to find your own ways of passing it on!

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When Tim met Kathy Dreamer boy and homeless girl grow up and team up By Laurie Oswald Robinson

This article is reprinted from Everyday Stewardship, Fall 2013, by permission of Everence.



This fall, Kathy Wiens is publishing *Dumps, Bars and Other Childhood Hang Outs*. She plans to use the book as a springboard for speaking engagements and workshops about childhood abuse and neglect.

Kathy offers workshops on childhood development as well as abuse of children. A teacher during much of her life, she holds bachelor's and master's degrees in elementary education and is pursuing a master's degree in mental health counseling.

But a different kind of education started Kathy down the path of teaching others about child abuse – the education of life. Her new book is based on her own childhood memories of being homeless, bruised and abandoned.

In a newspaper's letter to the editor earlier this year, she wrote, *"On the last day of my kindergarten year my family drove out of the small Nebraska town of Ulysses and drove to Lincoln, Neb. When we arrived in Lincoln we had no place to go. We were homeless....The next time I was homeless was with my mother. This time we stayed in the home of my mother's "friends." This was even scarier... My mother was an alcoholic and the people we stayed with also used alcohol and their behaviors frightened me."*

Eventually her life turned around in a safe, nurturing adoptive home.



Kathy and her husband, Tim, both found redemption from difficulties when they were young. Their turnaround experiences have led them to team up to offer hope and help others who are in difficulties, especially children and youths.

More than two decades ago, Tim and Kathy were walking through their neighborhood in Newton, Kan., pushing their 2-year-old daughter, Terra, in a stroller and discussing their day. Tim, a family practice doctor, talked about the growing problem of people not being able to afford medical services. Kathy, sensitive to struggling people because of her own experiences, dreamed with him about better serving people in the local community.

Through the support from their congregation, New Creation Fellowship, and other church and civic leaders, Tim then spearheaded a group to found Health Ministries Clinic to serve low-income residents in Harvey County. The clinic today has expanded into a community health center that serves much of south-central Kansas. While his family practice is based at another clinic, he continues to provide medical services at Health Ministries. These threads of

compassion have woven through their lives as they focus on serving marginalized and powerless people in society.

Tim has formed teams to do medical mission work in Asia. And the couple has supported their local homeless shelter. What has increasingly captivated their hearts is the suffering of children who struggle in difficult family situations to find belonging, identity and trust.



To help congregations and communities better nurture and value children, Kathy has founded a ministry, Welcome the Children. Kathy's experience from childhood, including being taken from her family of origin and being placed in an orphanage, fuels her passion.

At age 11, Kathy went to live with the late Floyd and Erma Burkey and became part of their family and Bellwood Mennonite Church in Milford, Neb. The affirmation and love of her new family and faith community brought healing as she developed a sense of trust and safety.



She believes Christ mandates us to be stewards of the youngest – and most vulnerable – generation. “In three of the four gospels, Jesus tells his disciples to ‘let the children come,’” Kathy said. “So it seems to me our congregations could value more significantly what Jesus himself valued.

“Statistics show that children under five comprise the largest population of people in poverty,” she said. “And early childhood is when children are growing and developing into who they will be. Those are the years when they are also the most powerless and most dependent on the adults who care for them.”

Kathy's life experience, turning childhood wounds into her adult passion, influenced Tim to connect with his own childhood story. Tim did not experience early childhood trauma like Kathy. But he struggled with insecurity that paralyzed him as a teen and into young adulthood.

“When I was a kid, I had this strong desire to be great,” he shared recently in a testimony at their church. “Not only to be great, but to be the greatest – the richest, smartest, strongest and fastest.

“However, throughout high school, I had a deep insecurity – self-centeredness and low self-esteem,” he added. “I was socially inept, introverted and didn't fit in well.” To compensate, he became a great student and carried his academic gifts to Bethel College in Kansas.

But his achievements came at an expense. The year after he graduated, he endured a crisis, affecting his faith, emotions and health. Losing 45 pounds, he wasn't sure he would make it through his 20s.

During this low period, he decided to take a Mennonite Voluntary Service assignment at a community center in in Hamilton, Ont. “Here I was, very introverted and doing social work type things,” he said. “It helped me focus 24/7 on all the people I was with. ... I constantly had to think of others, pray for others and care for others rather than myself.

“I gained more than I ever gave to others,” he said. “I gained self-esteem, self-worth and the ability to relate with other people. Most of all, I gained a beginner’s love for others through this act of service. My definition of greatness changed to a desire to serve and love others.”



Tim and Kathy married in 1985 after meeting at Mennonite Church of the Servant in Wichita, Kan., when he was in medical school and she was teaching low-income children in the public schools.

They are very different in background and personality. Yet, their common experience of becoming more whole in Christ has unified them over the years in an ongoing desire to nurture children and young people.

Today, Tim serves on the Outreach Commission where they now attend church, First Mennonite in Newton, where he encourages young adults to seek short-term mission assignments. A former youth sponsor, Tim also nurtures the faith formation of children with his occasional teaching in Sunday school and vacation Bible school.

“We are deeply committed to the church and see the main struggle of the church today is the dropout of youth,” Tim said. “The key elements of faith are trust, worth and belonging. So it’s critical we employ these elements in our relationship to our children, or we’ll lose them. The kingdom of God belongs to them.

“Kathy had nowhere to belong. I struggled to know whether I belonged to my peer group and questioned whether I belonged to God,” he added. “But God’s people helped us see we were God’s children. That made all the difference. We want to give back that gift to others.”

When her new book comes out soon, Kathy will donate sale proceeds to organizations ministering to children, including Cedars Children’s Home in Lincoln, Neb., where she lived before being adopted.



Laurie Oswald Robinson, a longtime journalist, author and speaker, lives in Newton, Kansas, with her husband, Al. She is founder of Tales of the Times, LLC, a communication business in which she serves as a writing coach. She coached Kathy in her process of writing her new book, Dumps, Bars and Other Childhood Hang Outs.

Faith at Work: Practicing Our Profession

Editor's Column by Paul D. Leichty

What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but do not have works? Can faith save you? If a brother or sister is naked and lacks daily food, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace; keep warm and eat your fill," and yet you do not supply their bodily needs, what is the good of that? So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead. James 2:14-17 (NRSV)



Faith at Work: Practicing Our Profession. This is the theme for Mennonite Healthcare Fellowship's Annual Gathering 2014 to be held June 13-15 at Laurelville Mennonite Church Center near Mount Pleasant, Pennsylvania. The title was chosen in part because it can have a variety of meanings, particularly for healthcare professionals.

Faith – *Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.* Hebrews 11:1 (NRSV)

As healthcare workers, we carry out our daily activities with a certain amount of faith. We see most of our patients or clients because they have a sickness, disease, or other health issue. Because of our preparation, education, and experience, we interact with those persons out of faith—faith that they can become healthier and faith that we have some tools that can help them in that quest for better health. Even though we may not see wellness and health at the moment, for many people we operate out of an assurance that their health will be restored.



However, even when we have doubts about a person's recovery, or even when we feel certain that someone is dying, we exercise faith. We carry out a caring ministry in the hope that we can ease pain, offer comfort, minister to feelings of loss and grief, and provide assurance that God cares and offers the promise of eternal life.

As Christians, our faith in God who cares, loves, and heals forms a foundation for the work that we carry out day by day.

Faithfulness -- *By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called... and he set out, not knowing where he was going.* Hebrews 11:8 (NRSV)

The Biblical words for "faith" do not refer to a mental assent to certain doctrines or beliefs. Rather, they have an action component. Faith *in God* is a trust *of God* involving a commitment to move forward as God calls even though we don't see clearly the way ahead. Thus, "faith" has the thrust of "faithfulness," actions that are consistent with our belief about who God is. God is the ultimate example of faithfulness. We act out of faith and into faithfulness in relationship with such a God.

Thus, our faith in God who cares, loves, and heals leads us into a faithfulness in harmony with the character of God.

Work – Noun: *Employment, a place of activity, a setting in which to accomplish something.*

Most often, when we say, “at work,” we refer to a place of employment. We spend most of our time on most days of the week “at work.” It is in this setting that we live out much of our life—and much of our faith.

Work – Verb – *To carry out the action needed to accomplish something.*

In this case, “at work” can carry the meaning of “in action.” When the sign in a highway construction zone tells you that your tax dollars are “at work,” it means that the money is being put into the action of rebuilding a road. Thus, being “at work” is more than just being physically present in a particular place. It is about carrying out meaningful activity in that place.

Faith at Work – *Faith in action*

Considering both “faith” and “work” as action verbs means that we act out of faithfulness to Christ in all that we attempt to accomplish. Our work gets put into perspective as a primary means by which we live out our faith. As the Epistle of James tells us, faith cannot be separated from the action... *faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead.* To be true faith, our faith needs to be at work—faithfulness in action.

Faith at Work – *Living out our faith in the workplace.*

Another way to read “Faith at Work” is to consider what it means to live out our faith in the settings in which we work. Faith is not simply a set of beliefs that we affirm in Sunday worship and then set aside for the week on Monday morning. Rather, our faith is to be at the core of who we are, seven days a week, 24 hours a day. Since we spend a major portion of our days at work, we live out our faith in that setting. Our faith informs and guides us in the daily relationships that we have in the workplace. Our faith informs us in the decisions we need to make about patients and clients, colleagues and employers, systems and communities in which we work.



Faith at Work: ... Our Profession

As Christians, persons of faith, we choose our work, our “line of work,” or profession, based on the gifts and interests God has given us. We want our work to be in the service of not just employers, not just patients or clients, not just local communities. We are in God’s work, in service to God through our professional life.

When we talk about our profession, we may say, “I am a nurse,” or “a doctor,” or “a physical therapist,” or “a social worker.” All of those are professions, ways of being at work that enable us to put our faith into action. Each of us is learning and developing skills for a particular aspect of service to God.

Practicing – *To make a habit*

Neither faith/faithfulness nor work come automatically. They take practice. Practice can have two connotations. When I was a child, I practiced the piano in order to learn to play a piece

for the recital. Sports teams spend far more time in practice than in playing the game. Practice, in this sense, is about preparation, getting ready for meaningful game or performance.

Yet, we talk about “the practice of medicine” or “the practice of psychology.” This kind of practice is not preparation or experimentation, but actually carrying out the responsibilities of our profession. We also may talk about clinical “practices” or office “practices” ranging from sterile technique and washing our hands to how we bill patients or clients and their insurance companies for services rendered.

The common thread here is the development and carrying out of *habits*. We become educated and learn to develop the habits needed for our profession. Then, in carrying out our professions, we reinforce those habits, and, in some cases, modify or learn new habits.

In our spiritual lives, we also develop habits. Some of those habits are prayer, scripture reading, public worship, and nurturing relationships. By consistently practicing those habits, we are more ready for the crisis points in our lives where the habits need to be automatic.



Practicing Our Profession – Faithfully carrying out our work.

Most of the time, when we say that we are “practicing our profession” we mean that we are carrying out the activities of the particular professional discipline that we have chosen. We tend to differentiate the active practice of our profession from what comes before and after. Before we “go into practice” we study and become educated in our chosen profession. As noted above, we are in a preparation phase.

After a period of practicing our profession, many of us retire. Then we say, “I am no longer in practice.” It is not that we have ceased to be professionals, but we are no longer practicing our profession, no longer actively reinforcing the habits that made us professionals.

Neither does that mean that we suddenly lose the skills that we practiced. Many habits practiced over a lifetime will remain ready to be picked up again after a period of disuse. Yet, over time that disuse will eventually mean the loss of that skill or practice.

For most of us, the markers between education, practice, and retirement are not that clean. We ease into practicing our profession as students and we ease out of practicing our profession in our early retirement years. In fact, many of us can put our skills to use in our retirement years in new and creative ways since we don’t need to think about earning a certain income through our profession.

Practicing Our Profession – Doing what we say.

Our life of faith is first expressed publicly in a “profession” of faith. For Mennonites and many other Christians, this usually happens at baptism. It’s not that we don’t have faith before baptism, but at baptism, we let our faith be known to others. We *profess* our faith and make it public.

From then on, our words and actions, our work and worship, all of our activities and life itself become an ongoing profession of our faith. Having signified publicly our loyalty to Jesus Christ, our lives express our faith in him. Our choice to express our faith through the practice of a healthcare profession becomes a part of who we are in Christ. So “practicing our profession” becomes more than just carrying out our work. It is another way of talking about our faith in

action. Who we say we are, who we profess to be, gets carried out in the “practice,” the habits of everyday living.

Faith at Work: Practicing Our Profession – *The conversation continues.*

This, then, is the theme for the Mennonite Healthcare Fellowship (MHF) Annual Gathering, the weekend of June 13-15, 2014 at Laurelville Mennonite Church Center near Mount Pleasant, Pennsylvania. We want to explore the many aspects of what it means to live out our faith more fully through the professions to which God has called us. We hope you will come and add your presence and your insights into our common work as Anabaptist healthcare professionals.



Paul D. Leichty, M.Div. is Executive Director of Mennonite Healthcare Fellowship (MHF). Paul has served as a pastor, church musician, computer support person, disabilities advocate, and administrator/organizer of a number of church-related ministries. In addition to responsibilities at MHF, Paul is Executive Director of Congregational Accessibility Network and Director of User Services at Mennonite.net. He is also active in music at Berkey Avenue Mennonite Fellowship in Goshen, Indiana where he lives with his wife, Twila Charles Leichty.

Save the date and plan now to be there!

What: Mennonite Healthcare Fellowship Annual Gathering 2014

When: June 13-15, 2014. Check-in Friday afternoon. Concludes with Sunday noon meal.

Where: Laurelville Mennonite Church Center, Mount Pleasant, Pennsylvania

Theme: Faith at Work: Practicing Our Profession

Worship Leaders: Jim & Angie Clemens, Dayton, Virginia

Plenary presentations (tentative themes and speakers):

- Friday evening: "Our Faith Calls Us" Scott Holland, McKeesport, Pennsylvania
- Saturday morning: "Our Faith Informs Us" Tim and Jen Leaman, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
- Saturday evening: "Our Faith Guides Us" Panel of MHF colleagues
- Sunday Morning: "Our Faith Sends Us" Melvin Janzen, Charlottesville, Virginia.

Come and renew your ties to friends old and new in Laurelville's scenic natural setting! This is an event for the whole family. A children's program will be provided. Check out the Annual Gathering page on the MHF website for updates: <http://mennohealth.org/events/gathering/>

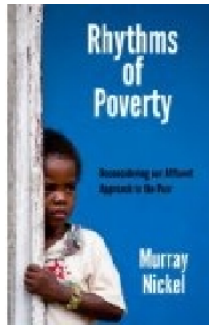


Rhythms of Poverty

Reconsidering our Affluent Approach to the Poor

by Murray Nickel
Reviewed by Paul D. Leichty

For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do. Romans 7:19 (NRSV)



The apostle Paul outlines our common human dilemma, especially among those of us who claim faith. Murray Nickel, in his book, *Rhythms of Poverty*, presents the stark implications of this dilemma for affluent North American Christians who want to “help the poor.”

Nickel speaks from a life of first-hand experience. He grew up as a child of Canadian Mennonite Brethren missionary parents in what is now the Democratic Republic of the Congo. He came back to North America for his education leading to his present work as an emergency room physician in suburban Vancouver, British Columbia. On the very first page of the book, in the “Acknowledgments” section, he confesses to a “self-absorbent ego.” Yet he continued to struggle to come to terms with his own rich reservoir of resources when compared to the ordinary people of the country in which he grew up.

In the “Introduction,” Nickel lays out the scenario in stark terms with a representative story of a charitable non-governmental organization (NGO) coming into a poor village to start a medical clinic. The problem comes when the NGO’s actions squeeze out a local medical provider who has left a comfortable life in the city to go back and help his village. Since the local provider can’t compete with all of the outside resources, he closes his practice and moves back to the city. After a few years, the new clinic flounders and the NGO decides to invest its resources elsewhere. The result leaves the village with no medical providers and in a worse situation than where they started.

In the first several chapters, Nickel introduces us to the book’s overriding metaphor, *rhythms*, and its central goal, *compassion*. What does it mean to show compassion in the midst of the rhythms of life and the “Rhythms of Poverty” from the “big village” of 10 million people that is the capital of Kinshasa to the small remote villages in this vast expanse of land?

Nickel realizes that often affluent Westerners have responded with pity rather than compassion. Pity starts with a “deficit model” of poverty. I have resources and you don’t; therefore, I will share out of pity for your deficit. In contrast, Nickel describes compassion as recognizing that everyone has something to offer. In every situation, there are resources; there are assets. Problems are addressed not by pouring in resources from the outside to deal with the deficits, but rather by cultivating the inherent assets of the community itself to address their own felt needs.

This approach of “Asset-Based Community Development” has been popularized in the U.S. through the work of John McKnight and John (“Jody”) Kretzmann at Northwestern University. During the 1981-82 school year, I was part of a group of seminary students challenged by McKnight to explore the relationship of this budding “asset-based” movement to Christian faith. For me, Jesus’ words in John 15:15 (NRSV) are key: *I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father.*

McKnight later went on to challenge the Christian community in *The Other Side* magazine with the provocative title, “Why ‘Servanthood’ is Bad.”¹ He pointed out that the common Christian servanthood stance is really a disguised form of the old master-slave relationship. Since I as the affluent Westerner and the educated professional have the resources and the knowledge that you don’t have, I have power over you to “minister” to your deficits.

Nickel struggles with this reality throughout *Rhythms of Poverty*. “Where are the assets?” he asks, as it relates to the stark reality he finds in the Congo today. It is one thing to affirm in theory that people in a rural village in the Congo have dignity and worth and even resources to share, but quite another to mobilize those assets, deal with the urgency of extreme poverty, and share as equals in the relationship.

Thus, in the middle section of the book, Nickel explores the Golden Rule and the many forms of compassion that he sees from his experience of working in the Congo. These form an arc in intensity and commitment as evidenced by his chapter titles: Fleeting Compassion, Committed Compassion, Strategic Compassion, Sharing Compassion. Then the arc comes crashing down with Chapter 8, “Burnt Out Compassion.”

Along the way, the reader gets mentally involved in the many fascinating stories that Murray has to tell. We follow him on the intellectual journey of understanding the pitfalls that accompany each attempt to do good. We see his journey of attempted partnership with Dr. Delphin Kapasa in the poor Kinshasa neighborhood of Camp Luka. We gain understanding from Murray Nickel’s own research and experience in the history and background of the places he takes us.

In the end, Nickel cites three qualities that characterize Christian compassion: justice, mercy, and humility. He discusses various notions about justice from Socrates to Liberation Theology. He describes the horrible situations of war and violence in central Africa and yet lifts up stories of mercy in the midst of the chaos. He talks about the meaning of humility and the use of power.

Although professing a profound ambivalence about the affluent Western obsession with “methods” in dealing with poverty, Murray Nickel nevertheless discusses methods at the end of the book. Without being able to go into much depth, he nevertheless gives a helpful analysis of methods ranging from needs assessment survey to Result-Based Management to consultative meetings.

In the end, he focuses on what it means to create true and viable partnerships in the developing world. He stresses the need for a shared vision, strong and respectful cross-cultural relationships, and careful attention to the real results of our actions.

The final chapter comes back to the “rhythms” metaphor to ask the big question: Is there transformation taking place? Or is it merely adaptation to a new set of circumstances? The parable of the mustard seed forms the paradigm for this notion of transformation.

Rhythms of Poverty is a sobering reminder of how human pride at many levels can subvert and destroy God’s movement for peace and justice, for health and wholeness in our world today. While his ideas are not new, Murray Nickel has helpfully brought together many important ideas and movements which have informed a more complete and wholesome view of medical mission and Christian community development in the 21st century. I commend the book to anyone interested in the ongoing struggle to develop a truly compassionate response in the midst of the issues of affluence and poverty in our world.

¹ (McKnight, 1989)

Rhythms of Poverty: Reconsidering our Affluent Approach to the Poor by Murray Nickel is available in paperback or electronic format on Amazon.

Citations:

McKnight, J. (1989, January-February -). *"Why 'Servanthood' is Bad"*. (Reprinted with permission from *The Other Side*, Jan-Feb 1989) Retrieved January 31, 2014, from DePaul University: <https://steans.depaul.edu/faculty/docs/mcknight.pdf>



Murray Nickel, MD, is President of International Mennonite Health Association ([IMHA](#)) and an emergency physician living in Abbotsford, British Columbia, just outside of Vancouver. He spent six years in Congo in association with Mennonite Brethren Mission and now travels back and forth between Congo and Canada two or three times a year. He has a special interest in human development and transformation in the context of the poverty.



Paul D. Leichty, M.Div. is Executive Director of Mennonite Healthcare Fellowship (MHF). Paul has served as a pastor, church musician, computer support person, disabilities advocate, and administrator/organizer of a number of church-related ministries. In addition to responsibilities at MHF, Paul is Executive Director of Congregational Accessibility Network and Director of User Services at Mennonite.net. He is also active in music at Berkey Avenue Mennonite Fellowship in Goshen, Indiana where he lives with his wife, Twila Charles Leichty.

International Events in 2015

Special Report from Mennonite Healthcare Fellowship



On July 21-26, 2015, **Mennonite World Conference** (MWC) will hold its **Global Assembly** at the Pennsylvania Farm Show Complex in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. This is the first time since 1990 that this Assembly will be held in North America. Mennonite and Brethren in Christ congregations in and around Harrisburg will have a unique opportunity to host visitors from dozens of countries around the world.

Past MWC Assemblies have also provided opportunities for Mennonite healthcare professionals from many countries to meet together and learn to know each other. Mennonite Healthcare Fellowship (MHF) wants to take advantage of this historic opportunity in an area where many of our members live and work!

To enable these connections to take place, the MHF Board has decided to hold its **Annual Gathering 2015** in the Harrisburg area on the weekend prior to the opening of the Assembly. This will allow our North American members the opportunity to attend both the Annual Gathering and the Mennonite World Conference Assembly without having to travel to two parts of the country. It will also allow MHF to invite international guests from around the world to both events as well.

Planning has already begun on **Annual Gathering 2015**. The MHF Board has appointed Stan Godshall and Beth Good as co-chairs of a special committee to not only plan the MHF Annual Gathering but to coordinate MHF's activities with the larger Assembly and to cooperate with Assembly events which involve healthcare and healthcare workers. Stan and Beth will be seeking the support of additional committee members as well as overseeing any sub-committees as needed. If you have interest in serving on such a committee or sub-committees, please [write to the MHF Office](#).

Here are some additional ideas for what you can do now:

1. **Make your plans early!** If you plan to come to the Global Assembly, plan to come for the Annual Gathering 2015 beforehand. Exact dates will be announced, likely to be July 19-21, 2015.
2. **MWC Housing.** If you live within one hour of the Pennsylvania Farm Show Complex in Harrisburg and have space for guests, you can be a Host Family. In addition to other lodging, Mennonite World Conference is looking for lodging for 1000 people in private homes. By expressing your interest in hosting healthcare professionals from overseas, you may be able to host them for the Annual Gathering as well. Sign up to be a Host Family on the MWC website. **Then, please send a note** to the [MHF Office](#) to let us know that your home is available for the MHF Annual Gathering as well.
3. **Medical volunteers.** MWC is also organizing a corps of medical volunteers that will provide non-emergency services to assembly attendees. If any individuals who are members of Mennonite Health Fellowship would like to volunteer they should go to the

volunteer link on the Pennsylvania 2015 webpage of the MWC website to register as a volunteer. When asked for your interests, indicate that you are a medical professional.

4. **Finally, be in prayer** for this huge opportunity to worship, share, and encourage each other in the furtherance of God's Reign in the world. The host countries in countries such as Paraguay, Zimbabwe, and India have been tremendously gracious for the most recent Global Assemblies. Let us in North America do the same as we welcome our brothers and sisters in Christ from around the world!

Upcoming Events Spring 2014



Mennonite Health Assembly (MHA) 2014 will be held **March 6-8, 2014**, at the Kansas City Marriott Downtown, in **Kansas City, Missouri**, under the theme of "**Pioneers, Partners, and Pathways.**" MHF will have a display in the exhibit area. On Friday afternoon, March 7, 4:00-6:00 p.m. **Joseph Duerksen, MD**, will be giving a presentation on his work in India and on the formation and ongoing work of Emmanuel Hospital Association. **More information** on the [MHF website](#).

Regional Meetings Coming Up

- **Iowa City, Iowa** - Wednesday evening, **March 5**, 6:30-8:30 p.m. at First Mennonite Church of Iowa City, 405 Myrtle Ave. All area Mennonites who work in the field of healthcare are invited for an evening meal, sharing about their own work and a brief presentation about MHF by Paul Leichty, Executive Director. The meal will be provided, but to get a seat at the table, please RSVP to Nyle or Lauralee Kauffman by phone at 319-354-3304 or email nkauff224@yahoo.com.
- **Newton, Kansas** - Sunday evening, **March 9**, 4:00-6:00 pm at Shalom Mennonite Church. Matthew Schmidt, LSCSW, Executive Director of Health Ministries Clinic, will be the featured speaker on the subject "**Integrated Health Care: One Mind, One Body, One Patient.**" Refreshments: zwieback, meat and cheese plus tea and coffee following the presentation. For more information, contact Sondra Leatherman, dslthrmn@embarqmail.com.
- **Harrisonburg, Virginia** – Friday, **March 21**, time and place to be announced. Beth Good, from MCC, will speak about her work with HIV/AIDS in Africa. More details soon.
- **Kidron, Ohio** - Saturday evening, **March 29**, 7:00-8:30 pm at Kidron Mennonite Church. MHF Board members will be present. Presenters include Nathan and Rochelle Beachy speaking about their work in Cleveland.

One Short Step to Happiness President's Column by Joe Longacher

Much has been written about happiness and how to achieve it. Happiness is even mentioned in U. S. Declaration of Independence. The pursuit of happiness was considered important enough to include as a basic human right, or need, in the formation of the country. A casual observation of our peers would suggest that many of them give nearly their full time and energy to this pursuit. "Pursuit" is all they are able to manage; happiness itself is elusive.

During a recent television program I viewed, a psychiatrist gave a simple formula for achieving happiness: maintain good relationships, exercise regularly, and share with others. A brief perusal of the Internet reveals many such formulas, sometimes with a score sheet to rank one's level of happiness. Years ago, I watched another TV show using such a scale, and the Amish scored the highest of all those tested.

Several weeks ago, I experienced unexpected happiness in my interaction with Mennonite Healthcare Fellowship, which did not involve exercise but otherwise supports the comments of the psychiatrist on television. I would like to share what happened to me in the hope that others may decide to replicate the experience.

I was in the process of renewing my annual MHF dues. (I hope you will also do the same; it will bring happiness to those of us working to increase our membership!) I noticed a box to check in order to provide a gift membership for another person. I realized that there was someone for whom I could take such action, my sister-in-law, a retired nurse educator and former member of the Mennonite Nurses Association. So I added the necessary amount to my check.

It then occurred to me that I also know a freshman medical student in Florida, whom I have never met but with whom I have corresponded by email. So I increased the amount further to cover his dues as well. And when I wrote my check it was a simple matter to add a modest amount to round up the total to an even number, sending along with it a message to Paul Leichty, our Executive Director, to "use the excess where needed, perhaps for another gift membership."

Very shortly thereafter Paul received a communication from a healthcare worker in India who was very interested in MHF and its mission and activities. The timing was just right for Paul to send word that funds were available to cover his membership dues. Thus, MHF added to our group someone involved in church-related healthcare work in an international setting. Building such relationships is one of MHF's priorities.

The unexpected part of this sequence of events was the sense of satisfaction, even pleasure, which I gained by simply responding to a form letter appeal. I experienced not just the benefits of altruism, but the joy of new or enhanced relationships. Now if I can just exercise a bit, I will have achieved the trifecta!

I share this story partly because I think it is interesting, but also to encourage others to do the same. As you renew your own dues (or if you have already done so, after the fact), think about persons for whom membership in MHF would connect them with other Anabaptist healthcare workers in new and meaningful ways. Consider adding \$50 to cover the first year of their dues. Or, if you can, give more, and invite Paul to use those funds as an unexpected resource for others who would enhance our organization by their presence.

I hope to see many of you at Laurelville on June 13 for our Annual Gathering, which is shaping up to be very interesting and meaningful. (See the rest of this issue of *Mennonite Health*

Journal for more details.) If you can attend, plan to share with me there your stories about gift memberships you may have provided.



Joe Longacher, MD, was elected President of Mennonite Healthcare Fellowship in September 2012. He retired at the end of 2012 from a practice in gastroenterology in Richmond, Virginia and moved to Harrisonburg, Virginia in 2013. Joe was part of the Implementation Team that gave leadership to the [formation of MHF](#).

