Anabaptist Witness

A Global Anabaptist and Mennonite Dialogue on Key Issues Facing the Church in Mission

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The co-editors make a public call for submissions for each issue of the journal, soliciting contributions that facilitate meaningful exchange among peoples from around the world, across professions, and from a variety of genres (sermons, photo-essays, interviews, biographies, poems, academic papers, etc.). All submissions to *Anabaptist Witness* undergo a double-blind peer review process. For full details of the current call for submissions, visit www.anabaptistwitness.org. Questions or comments about the journal's print or online content may be directed to the co-editors:

Jamie Pitts
JPitts@AMBS.edu

Jamie Ross
JamieR@MMNWorld.net

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Anabaptist Witness
Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary
3003 Benham Avenue
Elkhart, IN 46517 USA

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ARTICLES

REVIEWS

Editorial

It was God who invented dirt, onions and turnip greens; God who invented human beings, with their strange compulsion to cook their food; God who, at the end of each day of creation, pronounced a resounding "Good!" over his own concoctions. And it is God's unrelenting love of all the stuff of this world that keeps it in being at every moment.

- Robert Farrar Capon,
The Supper of the Lamb: A Culinary Reflection

Episcopal priest Robert Farrar Capon eloquently writes of the relationships between theology, food, and life in his 1967 *The Supper of the Lamb: A Culinary Reflection*. Capon believes that food and cooking are not low subjects, somehow beneath our time and consideration, but worthy of astonishment, awe, and elaborate attention to detail. Even as Capon revels in the delight of food and its preparation, he contends that it is in gathering around the table that joy is made complete. It is there that we get to know others and have opportunity for worship. It is in the act of extending the table that we welcome Christ in our midst, through our friends, family, the weary, outcast, and the hungry. It is at the table that God is made known.

And it is in this extending of the table that we so often build and nurture relationships within and outside the church, and around the world. These relationships extend to those seated next to us, but also to those who planted the seeds, watered the plants, harvested the grain, and packed and shipped our produce. These relationships connect us to the animals we consume, and the farmers who care for them. These relationships even reach deep into the firm soil beneath our feet.

In this issue of *Anabaptist Witness*, we will travel the world and reflect together on how we have and might continue to witness to God's reconciling and creative work through our relationships to food and those we share it with. We will explore the history of food in the Anabaptist movement in the UK, and stories of constructive dialogue in Indonesia between Mennonite communities and Hezbollah. We will think about seed saving and how to create hospitality, of community kitchens and outreach. We might recall times of abundance, but also recognize that many go without. You will not only read about food in stories and articles, but also have the opportunity to visualize it—playing with the

images that come to mind as you reflect on the paintings and poetry within, for what you have in your hands or on your computer screen is truly a savory feast.

Weaving personal narrative with an exploration of the history of food in Anabaptism, Andrew Francis opens the issue by telling how shared meals in the UK brought him and so many others to a rediscovery of Anabaptist values and literature—how they "ate [their] way into Anabaptism." While others reflect on the power of food to unite, Lois Siemens examines through calligraphy how big divisions can come from small differences, as illustrated in a brief statement about Zwiebach found in the 1962 *Mennonite Treasury of Recipes*: "some prefer to dunk them, others believe dunking spoils the taste."

Moving from Russian-Mennonite culture to Latin America, Elizabeth Miller documents the early history of the Mennonite Brethren churches in the Chocó region of Colombia, and records how these believers incorporated images from their daily lives, and primarily images of food, into their self-theologizing. The Chocoano Mennonite Brethren understood relief from hunger as part of the good news preached by Jesus, and included stories of finding food to eat in some of their conversion narratives.

The articles and creative reflections in this issue illustrate how deeply we are connected to that which sustains us. Even more basic than our hunger for daily bread is our thirst for and dependence on water. Reminding us that water runs through us all, poet and theologian Harold Recinos also recalls the power that places have to connect us with those who came before.

Agnes Chen and Paulus Hartono share a powerful story in which Gereka Kristen Muria Indonesia (GKMI) decided to help form an interfaith committee with a vision to transfer the turbulent city of Solo into a center for peace. This committee has supported food distribution and trained peace-builders. Their efforts have additionally increased communication over shared meals with Islamic paramilitary groups, resulting in the prevention and transformation of conflict.

Both of the next two pieces, a poem by Lois Siemens and a reflection by Kaylene Derksen, explore the importance of what can be passed from parent to child. "My Mother's Mirror" provides a glimpse into Siemens' rural childhood, of family circled together shelling peas; the author remembered this scene when she encountered shelves of canned produce in a cellar. Derksen also recalls her childhood and lessons remembered, this time in the presence of an empty bowl. She has found this object represents for her the worthy cost of hospitality, as modeled by her parents.

Sarah Werner examines how commitments to nonviolence and social nonconformity inform North American Mennonites in their food consumption

habits and decisions. She presents Mennonite cookbooks and Oakleaf Mennonite Farm at Berea Mennonite Church (Atlanta, GA) as evidence that growing and eating food are sacred acts and ways of living out our faith.

Traveling next in our issue to India, Marlene Epp explores food rituals and finds similarities between the northern European tradition of making peppernuts and the Indian Mennonite women's practice of making anarsa (a sweet, rice-based treat). She shares of the "human yearning" to express our faith in everyday life, a yearning that finds an outlet in connecting holidays with food practices. As with peppernut preparation, anarsa is usually made around Christmas, and there are a variety of recipes. Epp connects members of the Anabaptist-Mennonite church, particularly women, around the world through stories, suggesting that it is in table exchange—even of these sweets—that intercultural dialogue thrives best.

Just Food: Right to Food from a Faith Perspective is a collaboration between eighteen artists from around the world. The artists were divided into groups and asked to create two artistic responses to two texts: a human rights declaration paired with a passage from the Old Testament. The four pieces included in this print issue are by Gen Tsuboi, of Japan, and Alejandro Aranda, of Mexico. Tsuboi's entries are a form of paper-cut art, *kirie*, and reflect on statements made by Mennonite Central Committee in the 1970s in the *Resolution on the World Food Crisis*, and passages from Daniel. Aranda's two linocuts respond to United Nations statements and passages from Amos. The cover of this issue is also a part of the exhibit. That piece, by Rhonda Harder Epp, interacts with passages from Leviticus. You are encouraged to view the rest of the exhibit in full-color online at www.anabaptistwitness.org/journal_entry/just-food/.

Anna Marie Geddert paints just as lively a picture as she shares the story of Jubilee Mennonite Church Community Kitchen, in Winnipeg, where on any given Tuesday afternoon you will find women from various cultures chatting and learning to cook wholesome food for their families, all while surrounded by youngsters running about. The Community Kitchen brings together church members and neighbors—immigrants, single moms, and those just looking to build community. Its organizers share the conviction that Jesus calls us to feed the crowds and to eat with our neighbors. They invite others to "Come, Cook with Us."

Kate Wentland teaches and builds relationships in China. She, like many of the other authors, finds that relationships grow naturally when they involve preparing food together. Wentland explains how her Anabaptist commitment to nonviolence extends to animals and the earth, resulting in a commitment to vegetarianism. Rather than finding this commitment an obstacle as a frequent

guest in homes, as so many warn, she finds that it allows families to serve her more simple and home-style meals, relieving them of the stress involved in hosting expensive and elaborate dinners. Her stories of eating simply illustrate how her commitment has opened doors for meaningful relationships, rather than being a hindrance.

The feast of writing and artwork continues on our website and blog at anabaptistwitness.org. Please do send us an email with your thoughts or questions, photos or possible blog posts. We are always accepting submissions for consideration and we'd love to have you join the conversation.

Jamie Ross, Co-Editor

Food in the Contemporary UK Anabaptist Movement

Andrew Francis[1]

Food and the generous sharing of it have been central to the development of the Anabaptist witness, theology, and influence in the UK during the last seventy years. This has been but one of a few decisive factors that have seen Anabaptism take a renewed and respected place within the UK's spectrum of Christian faith. Post-World War II, a Mennonite witness was re-sown in London. A generation later, many of us wrestled privately with John Howard Yoder's *The Politics of Jesus*,[2] Ronald Sider's *Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger*,[3] or Donald Kraybill's *The Upside Down Kingdom*,[4] wondering where and how we might find others to discuss them with. Peacemaking, social justice, and community all required something more than dry-as-dust historic denominationalism, as 1970s Britain descended into greater individualism at a personal level, but increasing secularism and a corrosive collectivism due to both political and Trade Union militancy. Whether as students or as believers in a radical Jesus, we had questions and hunger for a different kind of discipleship: "We would eat together, and enjoy extending hospitality. We would help each other to grow in understanding of social and political realities"[5]—often explored together over meals.

A Personal Journey

By the end of the 1970s, I had resigned from my career in industrial relations to attend an ecumenical seminary, and found myself at a south-coast student conference. I opted to accept a northward lift home. Our Baptist driver suggested

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1 *Andrew Francis is a UK-based community theologian, whose Princeton doctoral dissertation used Mennonite theology to reflect upon Christian practices of hospitality. His published work includes* Anabaptism: Radical Christianity *(2010),* Hospitality and Community after Christendom *(2012), and* What in God's Name Are You Eating?: How Can Christians Live and Eat Responsibly in Today's Global Village? *(2014). He has served as the Executive Vice-Chair of the UK's Mennonite Trust, as the first UK Anabaptist Development Worker, and now co-convenes the UK Anabaptist Theology Forum.*

2 John Howard Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972).

3 Ronald Sider, *Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger* (Leicester, UK: IVP, 1972).

4 Donald B. Kraybill, *The Upside Down Kingdom* (Scottdale, PA: Herald, 1985), 4.

5 Anne Wilkinson-Hayes, "I Have a Dream for My Church," *Anabaptism Today* 12 (June 1996): 5.

that we pause at the Mennonite Centre as we wove our way through north London. What? Who? I quickly forgot that Centre's welcoming mugs of tea with home-baked cookies and the surprising interest in my Churches of Christ background. But a few months later, a church history lecture made me realize that my Campbellite[6] roots were in Anabaptism, and I hurried to learn more. It was several more years before the writings of Richard Hughes[7] and others, as well as my personal discovery of Anabaptism, could affirm my journey.[8]

The relevant core details of that personal journey emerge as this article unfolds. When my ministry took me to the Southeast of England, I was able to join the master's program in Anabaptist Theology at Spurgeon's College in South London. Later, I joined the doctoral summer schools program at Princeton Theological Seminary to help prepare for my (successful) thesis on the shared, missiological use of food.[9] While all this academic study was occurring, I was increasingly being drawn into the UK's growing Anabaptist movement and seeing an increasing use of food and shared meals across the breadth of my ministry within local congregations.

Biblical study at both academic and pastoral levels revealed so much. From Eden's provision (Gen 1 and 2) through Jacob's duping of his father (Gen 27), Passover (Exod 12), the "wilderness provision" (Exod 16 and 17), and Belshazzar's Feast (Dan 5), to the Psalms (e.g., Ps 23) and the Prophets (e.g., 1 Kgs 17, Isa 25:6 and 55:1), the Hebrew narratives of the Old Testament are woven through with the sharing of food. God's promise is affirmed by ongoing provision of at least enough, and often plenty. The Gospels record seventeen episodes of Jesus and the disciples sharing food, but these are also recounted in twenty-eight different accounts. Apart from the Crucifixion and Resurrection, only the Feeding of the Multitude and the Last Supper feature in detail across all four Gospels. "The meal became the cornerstone of the community. Jesus'

6 Alexander Campbell was one of the founding fathers of the Believers' Baptist-styled movement, which later became known as the Churches of Christ or Disciples of Christ, seeking to restore patterns of New Testament Christianity. They formed part of the nineteenth-century Restorationist movement, and local congregations were initially known as "Campbellites" (in similar fashion to "Mennonites").

7 C. Leonard Allen and Richard T. Hughes, *Discovering our Roots: The Ancestry of the Churches of Christ* (Abilene, TX: Abilene Christian University Press, 1988).

8 Andrew Francis, "A Sort of Homecoming," in *Coming Home: Stories of Anabaptists in Britain and Ireland,* eds. Alan Kreider and Stuart Murray (Kitchener, ON: Pandora, 2000), 57.

9 Andrew Francis, "How Then Shall We Eat?" (DMin thesis, Princeton Theological Seminary, 2010).

teaching and example were at its core."[10] I believe that those serious about the biblical witness, Jesus's teaching, or *nachfolge*[11] cannot fail to ignore the communal sharing of food as part of our discipleship practice.

Sadly, denominational Christianity in Britain faced increasing pressures in many ways as congregations generally diminished the challenge of discipleship, allowing a dissatisfying Sunday "churchianity" to develop. It was hardly surprising that, from the 1960s onward, new forms of home-based and North American-style megachurches began.[12] Surprisingly (to me), neither the historic nor the emerging strands of UK Christianity seemed to use meals as part of their strategic practice and mission. It was only within Anabaptist circles, or within the emerging *ALPHA* course practice,[13] that sharing meals was seen as vital to developing discipleship. I doubted whether these two patterns of mission (Anabaptist and *ALPHA*) could be seriously combined.[14]

My life journey was taking me into Anabaptist life and communities while I was studying both the Bible and church history. What I encountered, alongside many others, were the diverse levels of the Anabaptist Network, the open-door hospitality and burgeoning ministries of the London Mennonite Centre, and shared lunches at the anonymously-Anabaptist Workshop Course. Together, all these brought many to accept Anabaptist discipleship, ecclesiology, and mission as decisive contributions to the UK spectrum of discipleship. The question of "How much is that contribution to be?'" is still unfolding.

History and Tradition

Within Britain, until the late Middle Ages, the vast majority of permanent places of worship were part of abbeys or monasteries or manorial estates.[15] All were places of protection, welcome, and hospitality and therefore of food. Logic implies that if the populace traveled some distance to corporate worship, the

10 Noel Moules, *Fingerprints of Fire, Footprints of Peace* (Winchester, UK: Circle Books, 2012), 170.

11 *Nachfolge*: German for "following after"—the term normally used to describe Anabaptist-style discipleship.

12 Andrew Walker, *Restoring the Kingdom: The Radical Christianity of the House Church Movement* (London: Eagle, 1998).

13 Nicky Gumbel, *Telling Others*: How to Run the Alpha Course? (London, UK: Alpha International, 2010).

14 Andrew Francis, "*ALPHA*: Is It an Anabaptist Way of Mission?" *Anabaptism Today* 18 (Summer 1998): 3–9.

15 J. R. H. Moormann, A *History of the Church in England* (London: A&C Black, 1953), 68ff.

sharing of food would be a natural part of both the journey and the gathering of the faithful: consider Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*. Bede[16] records the Northumbrian king, Oswald, feeding the faithful as they gathered for worship.[17] This pattern of gathering either pilgrims or populace for worship was replicated across Europe until well after the first millennium.

The pattern of sharing food was also natural within dissenting, radical communities all across Europe both before and after the Reformation.[18] The Waldensians and Franciscans have practiced the communal sharing of food since their pre-Reformation beginnings. UK county records document meetings of both English Independents and Quakers involving food; often upon interruption by the persecuting state authorities, they could claim they were just friends sharing a meal.

Therefore, when we come to consider the Anabaptist history of the Radical Reformation, it would be a surprise if the sharing of food and meals together were not a part of our history and practice. A brief history of our movement as it is oriented toward food sharing should be helpful. Our movement has polygenetic roots.

It is hard to imagine, and consequently fair to assume, the group convened by Ulrich Zwingli in Zurich—made up of highly educated humanists and church attendees—regularly meeting without eating. They followed the collegial patterns of the intellectual liberal circles in Strasbourg, involving Erasmus. How could men who could afford books or copies of the New Testament not afford the wine or bread-and-cheese platters for the guests in their home? When in 1525 George Blaurock, a traveling preacher, attended one such meeting and pleaded, "For God's sake, baptize me," he was baptized, and so were several others. This was an act of sedition—it would not have happened if the participants did not have strong enough relationships to trust each other with their lives. Except in extreme moments of warfare, it is again hard to imagine that trust-building could have taken place without sharing regularly around a table in Bible study, prayer, and food. But in those moments, the Swiss Brethren formed (if only in later scholars' minds), and one part of that movement became known by their opponents as the *Wiedertaufer*, or Anabaptists.

Within the South German and Austrian history of our movement, itinerancy and exile became part of its fabric. Hans Hut was a traveling evangelist

16 Bede, *A History of the English Church and People* (London: Penguin, 1977), 150.

17 Andrew Francis, *Hospitality and Community after Christendom* (Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster, 2012), 21.

18 Ibid., 22–29.

for Anabaptism under the cover of itinerant bookselling before being accused of his Anabaptist beliefs, followed by torture and death. He likely relied on the hospitality of supporters for the provision of shelter, food, and conversation, for this was the recognized regional practice of itinerant merchants and sellers. As persecution of the newly forming Anabaptist groups grew, they fled eastward toward Moravia. Cornelius J. Dyck refers clearly to the spreading of cloaks on the ground to display material goods that the "less fortunate" could take and utilize[19]—'community of goods' was a natural part of this grouping.[20] It was hardly surprising that when and where they could settle peaceably, they lived communally. "Eventually they were to move to where the community owned everything and gave each person their tasks to perform as well as their food, clothing and housing."[21] In this communality, we see both the developments of the Hutterian Brethren then and the roots of the later Bruderhof. The sharing of food, which began at an individual level, grew into an integral part of the communal nature of such distinctive Anabaptism. While I have no desire to airbrush Münster's aberration[22] from our history, it has no real place in this brief survey of our historical roots except to warn against the excesses of power and wrongly enforced communality.

The Netherlandish spread of our movement relied on hospitality and generosity to at least the same degree as in South Germany or Austria. This is not the article to retell or formally assess the relative contributions of Melchior Hoffman or Dirk and Obbe Philips, although the theology and writings of the first two require serious assessment. Following Dirk Philips's example in particular, the ministry and mission of the Catholic-priest-turned-Anabaptist Menno Simons becomes our first Dutch focus. Like Hut, Simons relied in his itinerant ministry upon the protection and hospitality of key supporters, as well as their money to keep his wife and children from penury; one such benefactor was Tjard Reynders, until his eventual arrest and execution. This left Simons

19 *Cornelius* J. Dyck, *An Introduction to Mennonite History: A Popular History of the Anabaptists and the Mennonites* (Scottdale, PA: Herald, 1993), 73.

20 James M. Stayer, *The German Peasants' War and Anabaptist Community of Goods* (Montreal: McGill-Queens UP, 1994), 105.

21 Dyck, *Mennonite History*, 74.

22 The Westphalian city of Münster was declared to be an Anabaptist city by its dictatorial and apocalyptically charged leaders of Jan Matthijs and Jan van Leiden from 1534 to 1535. Their ultra-revolutionary vision, which enforced both polygamy and total communalism, was violently suppressed by the regional authorities, with the named and other leaders being executed. To this day, Münster remains a stain on Anabaptism's character.

so dangerously exposed that William R. Estep's and Bender's[23] sources about the persecuting authorities can be summarized thus: "All persons were enjoined against giving Menno food or shelter.... Complete pardon for any crime committed was promised to anyone delivering the renowned heretic into the hands of the authorities."[24] The authorities hated both Menno and the spread of biblical Anabaptism, persecuting both leaders and supporters. But for our purpose, note that it was sufficiently common for the nascent Anabaptist community to share food—if only as hospitality to visiting leaders, and my perception (after talking with those who have studied Dutch civic records) is that it was a much broader, if not commonplace, practice among the *Doopgezinde*.

These biblical Anabaptists became known as Menists, then later as Mennonites. Initially their heartland was the tidal marshlands of northern Friesland, but there is clear evidence that Menno preached not just in the northern cities of Groningen and Leeuwarden but as far south as Amsterdam. There, a focus of missionary activity was Jan Munter's bakehouse, where enquirers and potential converts shared in the life and work, as well as the meal table and conversation around it. It was in Munter's bakehouse that John Smith and Thomas Helwys lodged and worked while working out their Baptist principles; they returned to England to found what has become the Baptist Church in Britain.[25] "The witness by lifestyle attracted many new converts but exasperated the authorities."[26]

Another part of the Anabaptist story continues in the raid of a house in Aldgate, London, on Easter morning 1575. There, an expatriate group from Flanders had gathered to pray and read the Bible; would they have eaten together as well? We have no evidence for any assumption, but they were successfully prosecuted for being some of those "dangerous radicals" known as Anabaptists. A few weeks later, two were burned horribly at the stake, both as a punishment to themselves and punitive warning to others.[27] But extant

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23 Harold S. Bender, "The Anabaptist Vision," in *The Recovery of the Anabaptist Vision: A Sixtieth Anniversary Tribute to Harold S. Bender*, ed. Guy F. Hershberger (Scottdale, PA, Herald, 1957), 33.

24 William R. Estep, *The Anabaptist Story* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1963), 122.

25 Roger Hayden, *English Baptist History and Heritage: A Christian Training Programme Course* (Didcot, UK: BUGB, 1990).

26 Stuart Murray, "Introducing the Anabaptists," *Anabaptism Today* 14 (February 1997): 13.

27 Alan Kreider, "When Anabaptists Were Last in the British Isles," in *Coming Home: Stories of Anabaptists in Britain and Ireland*, eds. Alan Kreider and Stuart Murray (Kitchener, ON: Pandora, 2000), 176ff.

county records demonstrate that "'despite this, the majority of Dutch migrants were Anabaptists and by 1587, these migrants constituted the majority of Norwich's population.' Extant historical records from this era point to the presence of Anabaptists in [many towns] . . . as well as London. However, the slur of Münster and ongoing persecution meant that most English Anabaptists went 'underground' joining Brownist congregations. The latter were an English Separatist movement."[28] Although in the longer term they may have suffered some earthly privation, it was better to be a Brownist or an English Baptist than a declared but hated Anabaptist!

What the non-British reader now may not appreciate is how little of this past history was generally known in recent years, except to Reformation scholars. Very few church history books even carried this article's level of Anabaptist history. Most focused on the Münster aberration and consequent general pejoration of the Anabaptist movement. The decisive 1572 Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England still condemns Anabaptists: "The ryches and goodes of Christians are not common, as touching the ryght, title, and possession of the same, as certayne Anabaptistes do falsely boast."[29] When I entered an ecumenical seminary in 1979, this remained the common approach. Even reputable church history books[30] dismissed Anabaptism within a few paragraphs.

It is hardly surprising, given the Tudor Church of England's vitriol toward the whole concept of Anabaptism, that its trail went cold for over 350 years. It was not until after 1647 and the ending of the English Civil War that the Church of England even had to concede that radical (and even more established) Christian movements such as the Independents (Congregationalists), Presbyterians, Baptists, and later the Quakers, had some rights of co-existence.[31]

In summary, the sharing of food was both a natural and essential part of our historic tradition. History is not always proclaimed by the winners but can only be told by its survivors. Every history is nuanced by what its protagonists want to emphasize. Therefore a reading of early Anabaptist history that considers its use of shared meals is appropriate—as would a history told from a different stance of, say, peacemaking or ecclesiology, et cetera. Using either known

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28 Andrew Francis, *Anabaptism: Radical Christianity* (Bristol, UK: Antioch, 2010), 11.2. The internal quotation is from George Huntston Williams, *The Radical Reformation,* 3rd ed. (Kirksville, MS: Sixteenth Century Journals, 1992), 1205.

29 *The Book of Common Prayer* (Westminster: Church of England, 1928), 606.

30 E.g., Owen Chadwick, *The Reformation* (London: Penguin, 1990).

31 See Andrew Bradstock, *Faith in the Revolution: The Political Theologies of Müntzer and Winstanley* (London: SPCK, 1997).

Anabaptist history or sociological sources[32] about general practices in Northern Europe allows appropriate recognition that practices such as the sharing of food within literate circles or the provision of hospitality for trusted itinerant contacts would have naturally occurred within Anabaptist contexts, too.

The Contemporary UK Growth of Anabaptist Influence

During the rise of Nazi Germany, various Bruderhof communities went into voluntary self-exile. One group ended up in middle England, and by their own hard labor, earning agricultural wages they purchased a series of neighboring small farms in rural Shropshire. During the war years, the Bruderhof became renowned for its food production, even if some of the local populace could not understand their pacifism. This very fact enabled some single men, who were Conscientious Objectors to war, to join them. In the 1950s, the remnant of this group moved several times, finally relocating to a former isolated tuberculosis hospital at Robertsbridge, near the Sussex coast. But in both Shropshire and later, Sussex, the Bruderhof's community of goods and refectory meals spoke clearly to and attracted Quakers, anarchists, and radical Christians. At the time of this writing, three English Bruderhof communities still continue; each witnessing their communal life to their local contexts, which includes the daily sharing of meals.

Alongside the impact of the Bruderhof, North American Mennonite relief work during the mid-Second World War saw John Coffman distribute aid in North London. But after that disastrous global conflict, wealthier North American Mennonites adopted a long-term strategy of support, both financial and through staff appointment, across several impoverished European nations. So in the early 1950s, to help counter innate racism, the Mennonite Board of Missions and Charities opened a student hostel for overseas students in a newly purchased house—only yards from Coffman's former base in North London. This became the London Mennonite Centre, placed under the leadership of Quintus and Miriam Leatherman, who utilized food sharing to establish its ministry. "Miriam cooked countless meals for students—her Sunday dinners were legendary. She also presided properly at tea-time, which became another Centre institution…. They entered into a national Friday ritual by taking the bus . . . to buy fish and chips. They . . . enabled the Centre to become a kind of international village; smells of Ugandan, Chinese and Indian cooking waft-

32 E.g., Johan Huizinga, *Dutch Civilisation in the 17th Century* (London: Fontana, 1968).

ed from the Centre's various kitchens."[33] As part of Quintus Leatherman's ministry, a London Mennonite Fellowship began, predominantly attracting residential students. This continued upon the Leathermans's retirement, with the Mennonite Board of Missions and Charities sending Menno and Shirley Friesen to replace them in 1969, with afternoon tea and international cooking remaining fully part of the Centre's menu.

Since the late 1970s, there has been further quiet growth of UK interest in Anabaptism. Much of this has originated from that changing witness and hospitality of the London Mennonite Centre. In 1974 the US Mennonite Board of Missions sent Alan and Eleanor Kreider as missionaries—he a church historian, she a liturgist and musician—to be based at the London Mennonite Centre.[34] This large, North London house, near Highgate tube station, was fast becoming a center of study, welcome, and hospitality.

After Alan Kreider became program director—bringing his courageous teaching and willingness to share of the Centre's growing library—most British students continued to learn of Anabaptism's reality through contemporary human encounter and the experience of that hospitality. In many ways, this was advantageous, as we were learning from a living tradition rather than from knowing much history—for we certainly did not know which sympathetic-to-Anabaptism books to read. Looking back, we can recognize that central to all of this have been the ministries of key individuals, firstly the Coffmans, Leathermans, and Friesens but particularly the life and work of Alan and Eleanor Kreider and the volunteer North American host couples who worked with them.

From the 1970s, many were drawn to the London Mennonite Centre, including radical young UK Christians who continued to form a residential community, sharing meals, daily prayer, and witnessing together to core Anabaptist values such as peacemaking. Now under the Kreiders' tutelage and gracious leadership, the Center's visitor numbers grew and daily gatherings of visitors, residents, and library users cohered around morning coffee and those afternoon tea times. This nurtured conversations and diverse friendship, fostered networking, and modeled patterns of discipleship and community. The Kreiders' personal friendship with and influence upon many of us have been life-changing. Some of that influence is visible in the leadership of new forms of inde-

33 Alan Kreider, "The London Mennonite Centre's First Fifty Years," *Anabaptism Today* 32 (February 2003): 3.

34 James R. Krabill and Stuart Murray, eds., *Forming Christian Habits in Post-Christendom: The Legacy of Alan Kreider and Eleanor Kreider* (Scottdale, PA: Herald, 2011).

pendent congregations that are rediscovering believers' baptism and community for themselves. One such leader, Roger Forster, led the South London Ichthus Fellowship.[35] As his speaking ministry grew (among a very different, predominantly evangelical constituency), he often bore personal testimony to Anabaptist history and witness.

By the 1980s, the London Mennonite Fellowship had covenanted together as a congregation, meeting at the Centre on Sundays for worship and tea and increasingly during the midweek for meals. Sharing food became integral to the Centre's life, witness, and hospitality in North London, for holidaying Americans—those living or regularly worshipping there—as well as the more occasional visitor.

Alongside these developments, the Himalayan-born Noel Moules had been so inspired by "Jesus the peacemaker" and the witness of radical Christians and their ongoing diaspora communities[36] that he founded a leadership and discipleship training course called Workshop. As this grew, Moules's friendship with the Kreiders and his personal study and prayer all led to Workshop developing as a year-long, non-residential, weekends-only course in various UK locations each month, that was totally oriented to Anabaptism. At each course, weekend participants shared lunch together and regularly celebrated a Jesus-style "peace meal." Over the course of twenty-five plus years, many hundreds of people attended Workshop, including elders and other leaders from the congregations that I was then serving as pastor. Attendees' testimonies acknowledged that it was *both* Moules's teaching *and* the sharing of food that helped them grow toward a fuller understanding of church—effectively toward an Anabaptist ecclesiology.

The Kreider-led development of the London Centre's Cross Currents teaching program of Saturday and weekend seminars was enhanced by the provision of generous meals and home-baked cookies for participants by those volunteer North American host couples. We ate our way into Anabaptism—cornbread, white bean soup, great salads, vegetarian enchiladas, shoofly pie, lemon drizzle bars, conversion cake—as we learned how to make this flavored discipleship work in our own lives and locations!

Alongside these developments, the London Mennonite Fellowship had morphed into the Wood Green Mennonite Church, becoming increasingly independent but still using the Centre's facilities for its communal meals and

35 Icthus Christian Fellowship, accessed October 16, 2015, http://www.ichthus.org.uk/.

36 Noel Moules, *Fingerprints of Fire, Footprints of Peace: A Spiritual Manifesto from a Jesus Perspective* (Winchester, UK: Circle Books, 2012).

fortnightly Bible studies. The church also gained numbers via London-based enquirers about Mennonite values and witness.

One such person was Alastair McKay, who by the mid-1990s had founded a neighborhood mediation service, then undertook a conflict transformation master's degree at Eastern Mennonite University before returning to develop the Centre's Bridge Builders conflict transformation and training unit.[37] Like many others, I still benefit from and continue to use skills gained from their weeklong training module in "transforming congregational conflict," led by Richard Blackburn of the Lombard Mennonite Peace Center in Chicago. But what also enhanced that course as a rich learning experience for many was the hospitality, welcome, and food provided by the hosts and volunteer team of the London Mennonite Centre, where the course was based. This "enhancement" was recorded annually in the course appraisals of participants. Initially, many of the Bridge Builders' course participants were drawn from the UK's burgeoning Anabaptist Network; now, senior denominational leaders and local pastors from many traditions form the majority of their clientele, all experiencing that Anabaptist-style hospitality.

The Anabaptist Network was launched in 1991 following the model of informal conversations, shared meals, and discussions that was initially facilitated by Alan Kreider at the London Mennonite Centre. Those involved included Moules, Stuart Murray—a writer and church-planter from East London—and David Nussbaum, a theologian and accountant, who was part of the Wood Green Mennonite Church's leadership. They formed a national steering group and encouraged the formation of independent regional study groups. Because of the distances involved, nearly all of these initial groups met over the meal table before sharing study and prayer.

When the Kreiders moved in 1991 to a teaching role at Manchester's dissenting ecumenical seminary, Luther King House, their London Centre successor, Nelson Kraybill, worked with Murray to start the thrice-yearly journal, *Anabaptism Today*. Kraybill worked in the Kreider mold but with a penchant for theological networking that frequently helped to lift the Mennonite cause into the media's positive attention. Kraybill's own brother, Ron, was the founding Director of the US Mennonite Conciliation Service, who came to London to lead a one-off conflict mediation course; it was this that inspired McKay's 1990s vision (see above). Kraybill was responsible for enabling the initial fund-

37 Alastair McKay, "Conflict in the Church: Threat or Opportunity?," *Anabaptism Today* 27, (Summer 2001): 19–23.

ing of both Bridge Builders,[38] supporting its staffing, and helping facilitate McKay's training.

During my 1996 sabbatical, which focused on spirituality and community, I stayed for a few days at the London Mennonite Centre and was never without an evening meal invitation from one of the staff or other residents. Kraybill met with me personally over a lunch of his home-cooked soup as we talked through an "Anabaptist vision for the UK"; I still have my notes from that day. Now that Kraybill is the Mennonite World Conference President, we need to never let go of his desire to provide hospitality and be the humble host, in true Jesus pattern. He offers such a central example to all our ministries and witness.

The Network sponsored biannual Saturday conferences, during which networking and fellowship were key priorities. As the friendships grew during the 1990s, I recall personally several such conferences ending with a group of us going out to eat together before traveling home. On a few occasions, the Network also coordinated a pattern of weekend group visits to stay in the (then, only) UK Bruderhof at Robertsbridge, sharing fully in its communal but gender-segregated lifestyle, yet learning more of our broader Anabaptist tradition of community, including eating and working together.

Stuart Murray was now teaching at Spurgeon's College and co-leading the master's program in Anabaptist theology, in which I participated as a student. All master's students were invited to lunch together before each of our two long, afternoon seminars; somehow this humanized the punishing demands that absorbed much of my weekly day off. I had come home, finding an academic counterpoint to the two Anabaptist cells to which I then belonged—but all involved food and eating together.

In 1997 I was appointed as the Network's first Development Worker, dovetailing the Network-funded few days each month into my ongoing United Reformed Church (URC) ministry; it was symbiotic and creative. As I visited regional study groups, I often stayed and ate with these groups and other local Christian leaders, answering questions, explaining our cause; it became just as important to share the community aspects of Anabaptist life as to witness to our other values or tell of our history. I was then also part of the Network's national Steering Group, now under Murray's chairmanship, which met three times per year but always and necessarily included a meal for us all. As one of my URC colleagues remarked, "Anabaptists do church in different ways."

38 Nelson Kraybill, "Conflict and Church Decision Making," *Anabaptism Today* 11, (February 1996): 18–22.

The book *Coming Home: Stories of Anabaptists in Britain and Ireland*,[39] published in 2000, still acts as a useful calibration of Anabaptism's growing influence. A core of this book is fifty-plus testimonies from individuals nationwide. Nearly all name the community aspect, study-cell groups, and literature as reasons for their own involvement, but only about ten mention meals and food directly. Since then, I have met and talked with about forty of those contributors, and *Coming Home* and other favorite books are well-mentioned during these times. When I have quizzed them about the importance of "eating together," most have responded that it was so much their usual pattern of Anabaptist gathering that it seemed unnecessary to use precious words on it. Biblically, I reflect how little the pattern of Acts 2:42–47 is mentioned across the New Testament Christian communities; perhaps we all forget to state the obvious.

Sharing food is central to our contemporary UK Anabaptism—whether in the London Centre's life (including Cross Currents), the nature of the regional Anabaptist study groups and conferences, or the "education" patterns of both Bridge Builders and Workshop. Within Anabaptism, people are "tasting and seeing" a different pattern of witness for both the sharing of discipleship and the nature of church.

A Developing Anabaptist Diaspora

In the intervening years, many of *Coming Home's* contributors have noted the importance of eating together and hospitality to their own personal rediscovery of Anabaptist values and literature. I was able to experience this in my travels as the Anabaptist Network's Development Worker, and draw from such testimonies for my successful doctoral thesis at Princeton.[40] Now, Murray and I rarely find ourselves teaching or encouraging newly forming Anabaptist-oriented groups without using the "no meeting without eating" mantra.

There have been many changes, but the number of individuals who identify themselves as Anabaptists is growing. The influence and acceptance of our movement is broadening, but the task here is not simply documentary or formal consideration of economic and political influences but noting the movement's use of food. It is easy when reading this type of essay to forget how few of us UK Anabaptist/Mennonites there are, but space precludes proper analysis of how indicators of post-Christendom, such as increasing secularism and changing UK ecclesiologies, have contributed to people's search, re-discovery, and acknowledgement of Anabaptist influences.

In the past twenty years, there has been a distinct blurring between some

39 Kreider and Murray, *Coming Home*.

40 Francis, "How Then Shall We Eat?"

of the Anabaptist Network's study groups and their role as home-based worshipping communities. Groups began writing their own meal-based liturgies and sharing them with increasing regularity. Involvement in campaigns for justice or peacemaking led some individuals to an increasing dissatisfaction with their rooting in traditional denominationalism. For several of us, the wrestling involved in daily recommitting oneself to praying and publicly witnessing with those who oppose Anabaptist values, becomes ever harder. The life and relationships of a local Anabaptist cell becomes the seed-bed for the Spirit's creativity and a more vibrant spirituality. Wanting to spend time in those renewing contexts leads many into groups that eat, pray, and work together with increasing frequency.

In the late 1990s, the largest study group was in the West Midlands, which often met in three distinct locations, forty miles from each other for a midweek meal, study, and prayer, creating more localized informal communities. They included a former Bruderhof couple, former Quakers, new and disaffected Christians, as well as those who took the Anabaptist leaven into the lump of historic congregations, but they also met all together for summer grills, Christmas parties, and seasonal study days. But death and diverging professional demands mean that particular corporate life has gone, evolving into several smaller and different groups.

Leatherman's wisdom in forging the London Mennonite Fellowship was complemented by the discernment of Kreider and then Kraybill in their advocacy to resist forming further Mennonite congregations and therefore needing another denominational structure. What they and their successors did was far more powerful in affirming the ministries of particular worshiping groups across Britain. Glasgow's Monday-night "Bert" congregation—whose meetings over thirty years have included food—has increasingly found itself identifying with the values of Jesus as emphasized by Anabaptism, and enabling its members to import radical Christian values into their professional lives.[41] During the past decade, South Birmingham's "PeaceChurch" has evolved in three locations, with their fortnightly meetings wrapped around a shared Sunday lunch, when often children can outnumber adult attendees. Contemporary UK Anabaptism is reaching toward the next generations. Murray's forthcoming book, *A Vast Minority: Church and Mission in a Plural Culture*, will serve as an encouraging reminder of UK Anabaptism's nature.[42]

41 Francis, *Hospitality and Community*, 67.

42 Stuart Murray, *A Vast Minority: Church and Mission in a Plural Culture* (Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster, 2015).

Challenge arrives in the advent of new groups, however. The gathering of an independent African Mennonite congregation in Northwest England (most often in Liverpool) tells of Anabaptism's global spread. A predominantly Brazilian, Portuguese-speaking Mennonite congregation has planted itself near England's south coast; some of their participants travel fifty miles from London for their weekly gatherings. They share our Anabaptist distinctives, including eating together, but language is one of the main barriers precluding greater fellowship. But across England and South Wales, study groups have formed, met, eaten, prayed, and learned together over years, then faded away as professional relocation or life-demands upon participants changed. New study groups are gradually and gently emerging.

The needs of the global Mennonite family have affected the Anabaptist cause in the changes surrounding the London Mennonite Centre. Each successive director has brought new and enriching developments but in an increasing time of northern hemisphere austerity. North American Mennonite subsidies and grants were (rightly) slashed year-upon-year, with the result that the maintenance-and-renewal budget of the aging four-story quadruple-fronted London Mennonite Centre, with its high city taxes, was compromised. The building was becoming totally unaffordable just as the need for greater hospitality (more cookies, more meals!), more subsidized programs, and staff time were needed as more people became interested in Anabaptism's witness. The Centre was approaching bankruptcy, and I was invited to join its Board of Trustees on the same January 2009 night as the last director's contract was not renewed. Within weeks, I accepted becoming the (honorary) Executive Vice-Chair, and began working closely with our volunteer host couple, Ed and Phyllis Shirk (now back in Denver, CO) and our English staff team to "save the Centre." We received the prayerful, unstinting support of the trustee board. As subsidized residents left, we sold in advance holiday bed-nights to future North American Mennonite tourists, who would buy the very beds that they would sleep in with the dollar deposits that they sent in advance.

During the 1970s, the Centre developed a bookstore called *Metanoia*, with sales at the door, at conferences, and by post. Over its thirty years, the accredited figures show that the two consistent best sellers were John Howard Yoder's *The Politics of Jesus* and Doris Janzen Longacre's *More-with-Less Cookbook*.[43] Two points should be made here. First, the sales figures echoed the UK practice of Anabaptist discipleship as that was often expressed around the meal

43 Doris Janzen Longacre, *More-with-Less Cookbook* (Scottdale, PA: Herald, 1990).

table, using meals tasted at the Centre or regional conferences. Second, other lifestyle books[44] and cookbooks[45] sold just as much as, if not more than, books of Anabaptist history. This fact points to the practicality of UK Anabaptist discipleship, mission, and learning.

By 2000 *Metanoia*'s profit had become a vital and major part of the Centre's UK-based income, but by 2010 the corrosive power of discounting global online booksellers had destroyed it, to the despair of its long-serving manager, Will Newcomb, who was also one of the Centre's accomplished cooks (and who has now retired to China).

The years 2009 and 2010 provided halcyon summers, with many visitors, book sales, and shared meals, but the London Mennonite Centre could not remain a tourist hotel without significant investment, nor maintain its significant subsidy and grant to Bridge Builders. To protect the latter's interest, McKay worked hard with committed supporters and the Centre's staff and board to enable Bridge Builders to become an independent charity. Now, having moved to its own offices, it continues to widely provide conflict mediation services to congregations, and training in those skills to denominational leaders—both such activities continue to be rooted in the sharing of fellowship meals, demonstrating broader practical application of Anabaptist values.

A June 2011 Thanksgiving service and grill, shared by visitors from across Britain and Ireland, as well as guests from Europe and North America, preceded the board's closure and sale of the Centre. But the message was one of hope and expansion—even for the Wood Green Mennonite Church, which lost their midweek meeting and meals venue. All UK groups had to look toward their own particular Anabaptist expressions to declare the future—and that involved many without previous responsibilities joining in the conversation, often meeting for meals to pursue the vision. The Mennonite Trust sought to relocate a "mother house" in a strongly Quaker neighborhood in south Birmingham. The initial ministry there was led by the Shirks' volunteer successors, Darrell and Barbara Jantz (now retired to Newton, KS), who welcomed many for meals and conversation. Together we planted a vegetable garden, led worship in local churches, and helped develop a network of student houses in Birmingham. Alas, new zoning planning laws disallowed the economic redevelopment of

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44 E.g., Art Meyer and Jocele Meyer, *Earthkeepers: Environmental Perspectives on Hunger, Poverty, and Justice* (Scottdale, PA: Herald, 1991); Doris Janzen Longacre, *Living More with Less* (Scottdale, PA: Herald, 1980); or Athol Gill, *Life on the Road* (Scottdale, PA: Herald, 1989).

45 Phyllis Pellman Good and Louise Stoltzfus, *The Best of Mennonite Fellowship Meals* (Intercourse, PA: Good Books, 1991).

guest accommodation at that new Menno House there, while new UK immigration criteria ended the Mennonite Trust's use of volunteer hosts on three-year contracts from North America.

Now that my four-year term as a trustee has finished, my ongoing colleagues use the Trust's resources in new and dynamic ways to help build an Anabaptist diaspora across Britain. As an example, two leaders from Urban Expression, an Anabaptist-oriented church-planting charity, have been provided with low interest loans or low-rent homes to create places of welcome and hospitality in different locations. Another Birmingham property, "Kreider House," is used also as a place of welcome and hospitality as well as to accommodate the Anabaptist Network's national outreach worker and visiting educators from the global Anabaptist family. The sharing of meals is still at the heart of Anabaptist witness and expansion.

In recent years, the Bruderhof, now with their three distinct southern England communities, have chosen to be far more expansive in their hospitality and involvements. Their upgrading of the style of their international *Plough* publication books has brought them more publicity, sales, and interest. This new interest echoes the broader interest in the Amish after the 1985 Peter Weir film, *Witness*,[46] starring Harrison Ford, was released. Increasingly, the Bruderhof send strong representatives to national Anabaptist events, who are both good ambassadors for their own tradition and for the wider movement. This often results in non-Anabaptists asking to stay for residential visits with the larger Bruderhof communities, where the communal refectories and shared labor tell of their alternative-valued life together.

As a separate and independent development from the Centre and the Network, the Anabaptist Theology Forum is nearly twenty years old and endeavors to meet biannually and residentially. The sense of intermittent community has been important in the development of this ad hoc group of academics, writers, educators, and study-group leaders. Over the years, this forum has met in a variety of venues, including Anglican retreat houses and the Baptist International Mission Centre; each time, the dialogue over meals with the other guests at each venue has almost been as important as the seminars shared within the forum's program.

Increasingly, Murray and Moules are convening various configurations of Anabaptist personnel to facilitate formal discussions with different groups in the development of Anabaptist values in the UK. Recently, one such gathering involved leaders from the UK Churches of Christ to explore our shared—or not

46 *Witness*, directed by Peter Weir (Paramount Pictures, 1985).

shared—peace-making traditions. The day was built around a "Peace Meal" and lunch, using a liturgy that Moules devised with participants from Workshop and a local Sheffield group of which he is a part. This pattern of fellowship is atypical of how the UK Anabaptist movement seeks to proceed in informal conversation and more formal dialogue with others.

Last fall (2014), the new Centre for Anabaptist Studies, under Murray's leadership, opened at the Bristol Baptist College. Six thousand books from the former London Mennonite Centre are on designated shelves in the library there and available for on-site research. It has been humbling to receive such open welcome to use their facilities and to participate in college lunches (for a modest price) by arrangement. Again, conversation over lunch with visiting Anabaptists is increasing respect for our values as well as our influence.

The contemporary UK Anabaptist movement owes a huge debt to the life, witness, and leaders of the London Mennonite Centre, including the traditions of shared meals and open hospitality, as well as the provision of both staff and finance from North American Mennonite agencies for over fifty years. This contemporary UK movement is now moving into its own value-laden maturity but with the tradition of shared meals and open hospitality as a necessary and central part in its developing witness. The common usage of Mennonite cookbooks and particular food styles, predominantly vegetarian, is marking the Anabaptist "community" in specific ways: as "earth-friendly," ethical, etc.[47]

In Conclusion

It is vital to reiterate more fully the introduction's caveat, that the spread of UK Anabaptism owes a huge debt to the practice of eating together in many different contexts—but it is not the whole narrative. The equally important contributions of several key individuals or the life and work generated at the former London Mennonite Centre as well as the winsome witness and welcome of regional groups or the growing corpus of UK-generated Anabaptist literature would all find their rightful place in differently themed issues of *Anabaptist Witness*. Acknowledgement has already been made of North American Mennonite agency provision of both staff and financial support. All have been instrumental in the development of the present UK Anabaptist diaspora.

Across (at least northern) Europe, we are witnessing post-Christendom, which is different from postmodernity. What we can see is that nations that formerly identified as Christian, and often had state churches, are finding that Christianity is being pushed to the margins, while only 5 to 10 percent of their

47 This writer's own book *What in God's Name Are You Eating?* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2014) has already been used by various groups to help redefine such ethical eating.

inhabitants profess any form of active Christian belief. The right not to pay church taxes to the Lutheran Church in Germany, or the separation of church and state in France in 1912, are but two examples. Britain is another, with its multifaith society, which has more Muslims than Church of England members, and rising secularism, particularly in education and the popular media.

Britain needs to urgently find ways of being and doing church differently. The multi-voiced[48] Anabaptist community declares that it can be part of that difference within the broader catholic spectrum of reexploring hospitality against the UK's increasingly post-Christendom environment, in which the search for a coherent spirituality becomes vital. People need to "taste and see," to experience such vibrant community around the meal table. "For many Anabaptists, the kitchen or the dining table, rather than the sanctuary, is the iconic meeting place."[49]

One Anabaptist initiative led by Murray is the organization and editing of a set of "After Christendom" titles. In one volume, the Kreiders wisely write that "many outsiders find it easier to cross the threshold of a home-church, where Jesus' presence is acknowledged in a meal . . . than it is to enter a church building for a gathering of a Christian congregation."[50] In another volume, I explore both how others are unwittingly rediscovering such practices, and how Anabaptist groups, as well as home-produced liturgies, can encourage others in this opportunity.[51]

Let me offer…

Three distinct conclusions:

1. Anabaptism, historically and contemporarily, has distinctive communal dimensions in the expression of discipleship. One of those dimensions is the "community of goods" that commonly finds its expression in the sharing of meals.

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48 Sian Murray Williams and Stuart Murray Williams, *The Power of All: Building a Multi-Voiced Church* (Scottdale, PA: Herald, 2012). Williams and Williams define the "multi-voiced church" as one that operates with "an expectation that the whole community is gifted, called, empowered, and expected to be involved in all aspects of church life" (21).

49 Stuart Murray, *The Naked Anabaptist: The Bare Essentials of a Radical Faith* (Scottdale, PA: Herald, 2010), 105.

50 Alan Kreider and Eleanor Kreider, *Worship and Mission after Christendom* (Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster, 2010), 215.

51 Francis, *Hospitality and Community*.

2. During the last four decades, Anabaptism in Britain has been enriched by the exemplary life, witness, hospitality, and shared meals of London Mennonite Centre, learning to emulate this practice in order to foster, encourage, and nurture the growth and development of the movement.
3. And Anabaptism has a distinctive multi-voiced approach in expressing community to find greater acceptance within post-Christendom Britain.

Two clear cautions:

1. Christendom's developments were/are not all bad (such as the canon of scripture), and its demise is a predominantly North European phenomena.
2. And we need to recognize that UK Anabaptism is a miniscule Christian community but with a disproportionately big voice

And four objectives for ongoing witness and growth:

1. We need to recognize the importance and opportunity of a diaspora model within advancing post-Christendom.
2. We must pray and strategically plan for developing the UK witness of Jesus-shaped, Anabaptist-style discipleship, which needs to build on the lessons of our past.
3. We should seek to nurture a network of table-based UK Anabaptist home churches.
4. And, finally, we must acknowledge that "the emphasis on community, eating, sharing together and valuing each other as a base for mission represents . . . the essence of church."[52]

It is my contention that there is a growing diaspora of Anabaptists gathering in pockets or cells in these islands. An overwhelmingly majority base their life and witness around the meal table as an intrinsic part of their study, prayer, and expression of nascent community. Britain's multicultural nature and changing ecclesiologies mean that the developing UK Anabaptist vision is sufficiently coherent and multi-voiced to attract more participants and new listeners within post-Christendom Britain.

Learning from our history and roots, we can recognize that *nachfolge* discipleship must have a communal dimension in both its sharing and serving.

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52 Linda Wilson, an Anabaptist Network participant quoted in Murray, *Naked Anabaptist*, 48.

The opportunity for further growth and strategic planning now rests in an indigenous and independent contemporary UK Anabaptist stream. "Because hospitality is basic to who we are as followers of Jesus, every aspect of our lives can be touched by its practice"[53] in every local Anabaptist cell.

In the sharing of food, we declare what we believe about the world and about Jesus: "Hospitality shapes not only the life of those who accept an invitation to a meal, Hospitality re-shapes the group which makes the invitation."[54] And we are continuing to repeatedly learn this in UK Anabaptist circles.

53 Christine Pohl, Making Room: *Recovering Hospitality as a Christian Tradition* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999) 150.

54 Francis, *Hospitality and Community*, 48.

How to Eat Zwiebach

Lois Siemens[1]

One day, a friend in my congregation was visibly upset after worship. It was then that I learned that not everyone attending my church felt like I did. The worship that morning emphasized our heritage without taking into consideration those who have joined us because of our theology, not our reputation for cooking good food. My friend was not an ethnic Russian Mennonite and didn't cook Borsht or bake Zwiebach (a bun with a second smaller bun on top).

In reading through some of "The Mennonite Treasury of Recipes,"[2] a book created by the Ladies Aid of the church I grew up in, I came across a statement about some people preferring to dunk their Zwiebach and others believing that dunking spoils the taste. This is a seemingly small statement that, I imagine, had many strong conversations behind it, pulling it into the writer's focus. It is the small differences, like how one might eat Zwiebach, that often become a source of painful division. Zwiebach became a source of community for me as this same friend and I silently swallowed buns later at a mutual friend's funeral.

Mostly this piece of calligraphy is about hospitality. Sunday *Faspa*, in particular, is when my family had company at a meal: from the poor person down the road to the pastor. When mother called us to the table, we walked from all rooms of the house to gather. The floor patterns expressed in the "tablecloth" around the edge of this piece come from every room in the house. They are patterns of painted floors found on the floors of Mennonite homes in the historic town of Neubergthal, Manitoba.[3] Reflecting on this piece, I recall the image of Isaiah where different nations whose diverse tastes currently cause dissension will one day *Faspa*/feast together at the Lord's table.

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1 *Lois Siemens is half-time pastor at Superb Mennonite Church near Kerrobert, Saskatchewan, Canada, and can't imagine life without photography and calligraphy. Calligraphic medium: Parallel Pen on Hot Press 140 lb Arches paper.*

2 "Some prefer to dunk them, others believe, dunking spoils the taste." From *Mennonite Treasury of Recipes* (Steinbach, Manitoba: Derksen Printers, 1962), 2. Used with permission.

3 Floor patterns can be seen in *Neubergthal Mennonite Street Village Catalogue of Exhibition June 27–October 11, 2010*.

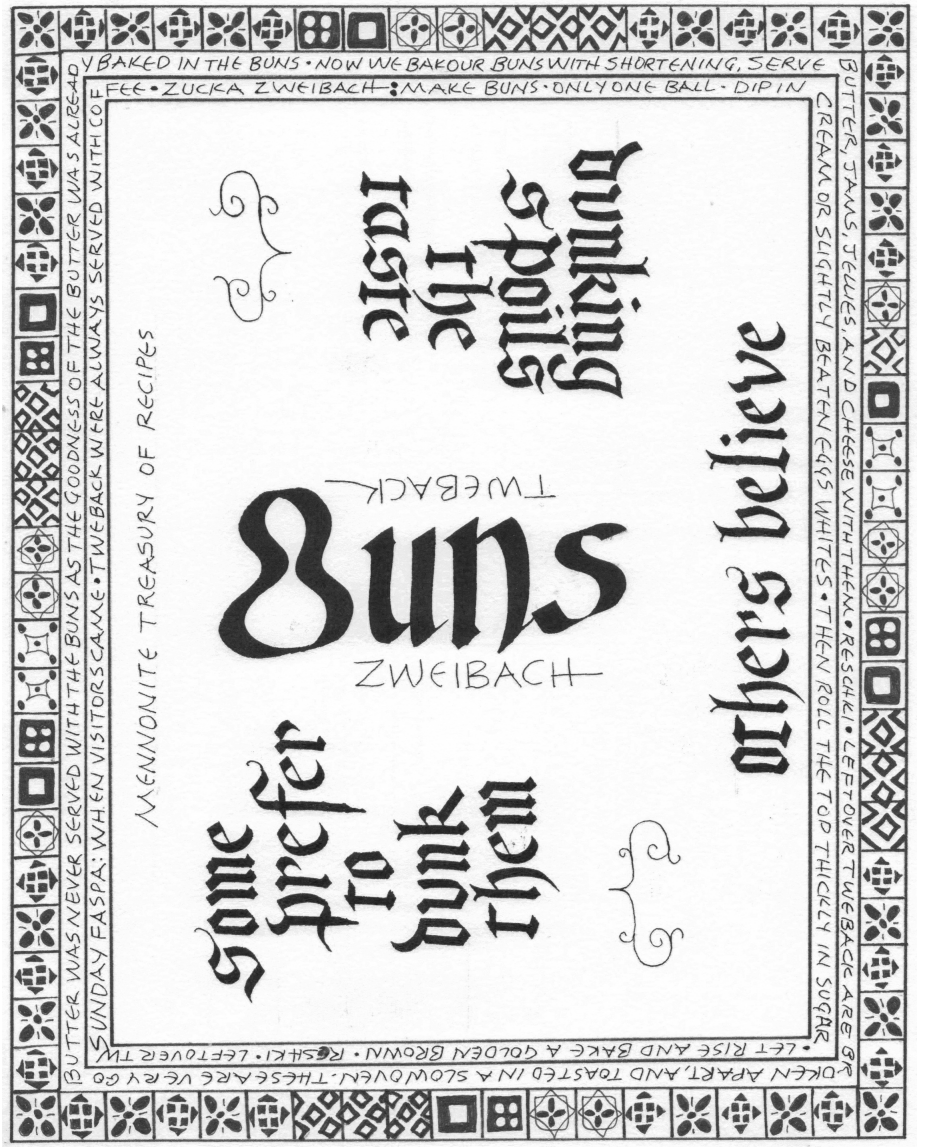

Image 1. Lois Siemens. **How to Eat Zwiebach,** *2010. 8.5 x 11 inches. Pen on paper.*

Just as I don't know how many times I eat:

Mennonite Brethren Self-Theologizing in Chocó, Colombia

Elizabeth Miller[1]

Mennonite Brethren Beginnings in the Chocó

The early history of the Mennonite Brethren churches in the Chocó region of Colombia reveals a church struggling to adapt and live the gospel in a context marked by systemic poverty and isolation, thick relational networks, and a strong communal orientation. Bound by the western cordillera of the Andes to the east and the Pacific Ocean to the west, the Chocó's geographic isolation has been compounded by centuries of neglect, first by colonial Spain and then by the independent Republic of Colombia. Today the region has the highest rates of poverty in the entire country[2] and, increasingly, some of the highest rates of violence, due to the presence of illegal armed groups. Throughout their history, the Mennonite Brethren in Chocó have also faced additional challenges as a church body, first as a marginalized and oppressed religious minority during Colombia's decade-long civil war known as *La Violencia* and then when their denomination restructured in the 1960s, leaving the Chocó churches with significantly fewer resources and institutional support.

As Chocoano[3] Mennonite Brethren accepted the gospel and applied it to their particular context, they began to do their own theological work, eventually departing from interpretations privileged and taught by the missionaries. In this process, they used the material of their everyday life—most significantly food—to explain what Christian conversion and practice meant for them. Food became a resource for their self-theologizing and maturation as a faith com-

1 *Elizabeth Miller worked with Mennonite Central Committee in Colombia from 2009 to 2013 as a historian focused on the history of the Colombian Mennonite Brethren and Mennonite churches.*

2 Jacob Stringer, "Colombia Poverty Figures Show Harsh Regional Inequality," *Colombia Reports* (January 3, 2013), accessed March 22, 2015, http://colombiareports.co/colombia-govt-poverty-figures-show-harsh-regional-inequality/.

3 In this paper, *Chocoano* refers specifically to Afro-Colombians from Chocó.

munity, allowing them to profess and maintain a nondualistic theology that informed and honored the experience of their daily lives, despite widespread theological polarization in Latin America during the 1960s and 1970s.

Far removed from Colombia's central highlands, the young Russian-Canadian Mennonite Brethren who arrived in the lower San Juan region in 1947 were at first seen as a curiosity. The region was predominantly Afro-Colombian and indigenous, with few Colombian *mestizos* and even fewer foreigners. As white English-speakers, the Mennonite Brethren missionaries were a novelty in the region. Despite the interest their presence generated, initially there were few indigenous people whose curiosity led them to join the missionaries' faith. The general reluctance the missionaries encountered was due to numerous contextual factors: a historical lack of equitable relationships between blacks and whites, dissonance between a matrifocal Chocoano society and a patriarchal missionary culture, and rising anti-Protestant sentiment in the 1950s.[4]

During the colonial period, the Spanish sent African slaves to the Chocó to extract the region's vast gold deposits. Unlike other Spanish mining operations in Nueva Granada, the owners of the Chocó mines did not live on site, choosing to manage the rudimentary mining operations from afar.[5] Mining profits were immediately extracted from the Chocó, resulting in "small and ill equipped" mining towns in the Chocó itself.[6] Because the Chocó was considered a frontier territory, settlement patterns were very different than in other regions; there were few Spanish settlers and no large urban centers in the Chocó during the colonial period.[7] This arrangement led to a population that was heavily African-descendent and indigenous, unlike other regions where there was much more intermixing with the Spanish.[8] During the colonial period, slaves and free blacks maintained a system of alternative economic activities that constituted a significant form of resistance to the slave system.[9] After emancipation these economic patterns continued; even into the 20th century

4 For discussion on matrifocal nature of Chocoano society, see Aquiles Escalante, *La Minería del Hambre: Condoto y la Chocó Pacífico* (Barranquilla: Colombia, 1971); and Peter Wade, *Blackness and Race Mixture: The Dynamics of Racial Identity in Colombia* (Baltimore, MD: The John Hopkins University Press, 1993).

5 Escalante, *La Minería del Hambre*, 29; Wade, *Blackness and Race Mixture*, 99.

6 Wade, *Blackness and Race Mixture*, 99.

7 Caroline Williams, *Between Resistance and Adaptation: Indigenous Peoples and the Colonization of the Chocó, 1510–1753* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2005), 156.

8 Wade, *Blackness and Race Mixture*, 99–100.

9 Mario Diego Romero and Kris Lane, "Miners & Maroons: Freedom on the

blacks in Chocó preferred to spend their time working in subsistence agriculture and mining, rather than working for whites.[10]

The Catholic Church did not really establish a presence among Afro communities in the Chocó until 1878 when the Capuchins arrived.[11] Catholicism was slowly accepted thereafter, and many African elements were woven into popular faith expressions.[12] The first Protestants to start formal mission work in the Chocó were the Gospel Missionary Union (GMU), who began in the department capital of Quibdó in the early 1940s. In the San Juan region south of Quibdó, however, there were no formal Protestant missions or churches before the arrival of the Mennonite Brethren in 1947, although colporteurs—peddlers who sold Bibles, Bible portions, and evangelical tracts—had passed through the region on occasion. Since the GMU was already working in Quibdó and nearby villages, the Mennonite Brethren looked further south to the San Juan River basin, eventually settling in Istmina. Although Istmina itself was a town of less than 3,000 people, there were around 19,000 people living in the rural regions and villages within the municipality, a fact that would drive extensive evangelism efforts along the region's more remote tributaries.[13]

The Chocó is crisscrossed by a web of rivers that are the center and sustenance of daily life there. Before slavery was abolished, runaway slaves established and lived in dispersed communities along river tributaries deep in the forest.[14] Even in the 20th century, most subsistence occupations took place in the river, or at least alongside it. Nearly all transportation—with the exception of foot travel—also happened by river. For many, the river was the primary

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Pacific Coast of Colombia and Ecuador," *Cultural Survival* 25, no. 4 (2001), accessed January 26, 2012, http://www.culturalsurvival.org/ourpublications/csq/article/miners-maroons-freedom-pacific-coast-colombia-and-ecuador.

10 Wade, *Blackness and Race Mixture*, 104.

11 Ibid., 108.

12 See "Ritual Mortuorio en el Pacífico Colombiano," in *Tradiciones religiosas afrocolombianas: Celebrando la fe desde la cultura*, eds. Ayda Orobio Granja et al., (Popayán, Colombia: Corporación Centro de Pastoral Afrocolombiana, CEPAC, 2010); and Ivonne Maritza Sánchez Yap, "'Id y haced discípulos a todas las naciones': Estratégias de trabajo, evangelización, crecimiento y aceptación del protestantismo: Explorando el caso de las iglesias protestantes de Quibdó" (master's thesis, Universidad de los Andes, 2005).

13 Republic of Colombia, "Censo de Población de 1951: Departamento del Chocó," (Bogotá: Departamento Administrativo Nacional de Estadística, 1955), 10. The census report was created by Jorge Saenze Olarte, Jesús Megarejo Rey, and others.

14 Wade, *Blackness and Race Mixture*, 102.

cultural and social focus.[15] Given the general lack of roads in the region, Istmina's strategic location at the confluences of the San Juan and San Pedro Rivers guaranteed the Mennonite Brethren access to communities downriver all the way to the Pacific Ocean.[16] By the 1950s the Mennonite Brethren and their ministries were known up and down the San Juan River and its tributaries, even beyond what could be traveled in a multiple-day canoe trip.

Photo 1. The village of Belén de Ocampadó in Chocó. By 1964, a church of twelve believers had formed here. *Photo courtesy of Mennonite Library and Archives at Fresno Pacific University.*

La Violencia: Mennonite Brethren Faith in the Context of Civil War

Despite a widespread appreciation for the missionaries and their work, the first decade of Mennonite Brethren presence resulted in few conversions.[17] Instead, the earliest years of Mennonite Brethren history in Colombia overlapped with a ten-year civil war known as *La Violencia* (1948–58). Traditionally understood as a conflict between Liberals and Conservatives, *La Violencia* was notable for the high degrees of brutal violence that erupted in the Colombian countryside. Protestants, however, are most likely to remember *La Violencia* as a period

15 Ibid., 128.

16 J. J. Toews, *The Mennonite Brethren Mission in Latin America* (Hillsboro, KS: MB Publishing House, 1975), 88.

17 Early converts were predominantly male, a fact which perhaps demonstrated a lack of resonance between the Mennonite Brethren message and matrifocal Chocoano society, especially considering that most religious movements count a higher percentage of female participants in the initial stages of growth.

of religious persecution. Catholicism had been the predominant religion in Colombia since the colonial period and, during *La Violencia,* was relied on to unify Colombians across political lines. The flip side was that Protestants were marginalized and discriminated against to a heightened degree during the same period.

Although the Chocó was mercifully spared much of the physical violence associated with *La Violencia*, Mennonite Brethren believers and missionaries dealt with interruptions of their services, school closures, mild stonings, harassment, and anti-Protestant processions. Such opposition led to small, slow-growing communities. The Mennonite Brethren mission newsletter regularly reported on individuals who, although sympathetic to the gospel, struggled to make a final decision because they were afraid of the priest and their neighbors.[18] Those who did make a public decision of faith often faced ridicule and ostracism. In 1950, for example, hundreds of people turned out to mock the five believers from Istmina who entered the waters of the San Juan for baptism.[19]

These experiences were shared by Protestants across Colombia, but in 1953—five years into *La Violencia*—the government designated the Chocó as a "mission territory" through a formal agreement with the Vatican. The Treaty of Missions designated the most unpopulated regions of the country—geographically large but representing a small percentage of the population—as Mission Territories under the direction and control of the Catholic Church.[20] In addition to the opposition and social marginalization that accompanied conversion, the Treaty of Missions forced Chocoano believers to negotiate an array of ever-changing legal restrictions. Through a series of circulars released between 1953 and 1955, the Treaty of Missions evolved to ban Protestant education, outlaw Protestant meetings in homes and church buildings, and forbid foreign missionaries from meeting with Colombians.[21] Mennonite Brethren believers and missionaries in the Chocó navigated this constantly changing legal landscape by frequently adjusting their worship times and practices, their meeting places, and their degree of involvement in the community at large. These years functioned as a crucible for the Mennonite Brethren church in

18 For one example, see *Colombian News and Views* 1, no. 3 (December 1950).

19 *Colombian News and Views* 1, no. 3 (December 1950).

20 Juana B. Bucana, *La Iglesia Evangélica en Colombia: Una historia* (Bogotá: Asociación Pro-Cruzada Mundial, 1995), 134.

21 James E. Goff, "The Persecution of Protestant Christians in Colombia, 1948 to 1958, with an Investigation of Its Background and Causes" (ThD diss., San Francisco Theological Seminary, 1965), 237; 170–79.

the Chocó, refining and focusing the core of their ecclesiology and expanding Chocoano leadership within the church.

The most difficult year was arguably 1956, when religious meetings of all kinds were not just restricted but outright banned. In April of that year, all evangelism activities were suspended, the chapels closed, and foreign missionaries prohibited from meeting with Colombians. Activities in all areas were affected: Mennonite Brethren were forced to stop preaching in Condoto, prohibited from continuing with the building of a new chapel in Istmina, and threatened at knife point to stop building plans for chapels in nearby rural communities.[22]

Despite the new restrictions, Mennonite Brethren in the Chocó refused to comply with government mandates. Even though meetings were prohibited, believers continued to gather for worship and study, albeit behind closed doors. Instead of gathering in the church chapel with missionaries present, Chocoano believers hosted and led meetings in their own homes. Since homes were the domain of women, this situation increased female leadership and participation as well; during this period, women who hosted home groups for worship were known to lead group discussion based on the scripture.[23] In Istmina, believers met in each other's homes for Sunday morning worship, in four or five different locations all over the town.[24] A few months later, a missionary reported that "the national Christians were encouraged to meet in their own homes and soon very interesting reports came in."[25] Occasionally the total combined attendance in the home meetings topped the former attendance in the chapel, suggesting that intimate worship spaces with Colombian leadership—and more female leadership—were more attractive to Chocoanos than the public missionary-led services.[26]

"Hungry for the Word": Home-Based Services and Chocoano Theologizing

It is in the context of home meetings that we see some of the first examples of Chocoano theologizing emerge; the opposition that believers faced forced

22 "Minutes of the Meeting of the Missionary Council," June 11–14, 1956, Mennonite Library and Archives, A250–13 Missionary Council 1954–1956.

23 Carmela Mosquera de Martínez, interview by Elizabeth Miller, January 26, 2010.

24 "Minutes of the Meeting of the Missionary Council," June 10–15, 1957, Mennonite Library and Archives, A250–13 Missionary Council 1957–1960.

25 Ibid.

26 Ibid.

them to identify and claim the beliefs and practices that were most central to their faith, allowing more peripheral ones to fall by the wayside. When asked to account for their faith before local authorities, believers used food as a resource to articulate their emerging ecclesiology as a community. One Sunday morning in 1956, two policemen interrupted a worship service at a home in the neighborhood of Pueblo Nuevo in Istmina and ordered everyone to leave. In response, a believer stepped forward and told the policemen that the group had gathered "not because they were invited with church bells like in the Catholic church but because they were hungry for the Word," and that they would not be intimidated. Next the policemen questioned Francisco Mosquera, who was on the church council at that time. They asked him if he ever had services in his home, and Mosquera answered, "Yes, every day." When further questioned on how many such services he had hosted, he said, "My family is evangelical, and just as I don't know how many times I eat, I don't know how many times I have conducted a service in my home. We have them every day." The policemen then left but only after threatening to shoot should they encounter the group gathered a second time. Despite these threats, the group continued to meet regularly in direct resistance to the persecution enacted against them.[27]

Photo 2. Mennonite Brethren home meeting in Istmina, Chocó. Esquiviel Mosquera is speaking from behind the table. *Photo courtesy of Mennonite Library and Archives at Fresno Pacific University.*

27 Ibid.

The testimony of Francisco Mosquera and other believers in Pueblo Nuevo gives us an insight into an ecclesiology that was being forged amid difficult circumstances. They gathered not because they were compelled by outside forces—in fact, much of their environment was designed to *prevent* their gathering—but because they desired, even needed, to do so. Mosquera likened their worship to eating, a daily practice necessary for survival, while the other believer described the impetus as a "hunger." Amid persecution, Mennonite Brethren in the Chocó came to see the gathering of believers and the sharing of the Word being as necessary for their survival as the fish and plantain they ate daily. Secondly, their hunger and need was defended and practiced in a communal context, just as daily meals were eaten and shared within the family. Believers "ate" the Word together, gathered in homes sometimes filled to bursting. The communal aspect of their practice was significant, especially given the context of persecution in which individual Bible study would have drawn relatively little attention. Finally, their willingness to meet and satisfy their hunger in a variety of locations, including riversides and members' homes, decoupled worship from any particular place and reaffirmed an understanding of the church as the gathered community.

Leading up to 1957, the presence of resident missionaries in the region prevented much indigenous theologizing. Because of the legal restrictions enacted by the Treaty of Missions and the leadership roles assumed by Chocoano believers in this period, however, the home meetings provided a unique environment for theologizing apart from missionary input. In fact, the testimony of the believers in Pueblo Nuevo is one of the first examples we have of Chocoanos theologizing, defining the contours of their faith in their own language. Significantly, the language they chose to use to describe the faith before local authorities was the language of food and daily sustenance, something all people would be able to relate to. Following the most intense period of persecution, Francisco Mosquera became the first Chocoano pastor of the Istmina church. His role as a house church leader and his experience in defying official mandate to maintain—and thus define—the community's faith practices led to a new era of Chocoano leadership and indigenous theologizing within the Mennonite Brethren church in the Chocó.

Shifts in Mennonite Brethren Mission Strategy

As *La Violencia* drew to a close toward the end of the 1950s, religious opposition to Mennonite Brethren in the Chocó rapidly declined, and believers in the Chocó welcomed their new religious and civic freedoms with open arms. Just as the political environment became more stable, however, changes in the structure of the Mennonite Brethren mission brought new challenges that im-

pelled believers to more fully develop the theological conclusions they had drawn during *La Violencia*. For the first eleven years of Mennonite Brethren history in the Chocó, the mission's institutions and outreaches defined Mennonite Brethren identity and activities in the region: medical dispensaries in Noanamá and Istmina, traveling medical services in the countryside, lumber mill, mechanics shop, employment opportunities in the mine in Andagoya, and alternative educational options for Mennonite Brethren children.

Many of the mission's projects were also intentionally designed to generate jobs for evangelicals in the Chocó, and many early converts received jobs through the mission. As a young man, Mennonite Brethren elder Dagoberto Minota worked in the mechanics shop. In his words, "My career comes precisely from the gospel."[28] Minota's wife, Ruffa Gutiérrez, started her nursing career by working at the mission's dispensary. Missionary John Dyck was particularly interested in improving the economic situation of the people in the churches and was renowned for either directly employing believers at mission institutions or finding work for them at the Chocó Pacific Mining Company.[29] Many of those living in the rural regions surrounding Istmina, which was historically a mining region, were still involved in subsistence mining in the mid-twentieth century. By the time the Mennonite Brethren arrived in the late 1940s, however, international mining companies had been in the region for over thirty years. Dominating the economic landscape, the Chocó Pacific Mining Company extracted and exported resources from the Chocó at an incredible rate. There were few accompanying investments, however, and the region surrounding Istmina remained economically disadvantaged and underdeveloped, despite decades of gold and platinum extraction worth millions.[30] In the 1940s and 1950s, however, the mine was one of the largest providers of steady employment in the region. "[John Dyck] had a very good relationship with them [the miners] and so, for many here—I remember around six people that were believers—he influenced the mine so that they would give them [the believers] work," recalled Victor Mosquera, a church member in Istmina. "So they were given jobs, and they worked there until they retired."[31]

Among the many institutions founded by the mission in these early years, the most significant was arguably the medical dispensary in Istmina. Estab-

28 Dagoberto Minota, interview by Elizabeth Miller, January 29, 2010, translated from Spanish by the author.

29 Victor Mosquera, interview by Elizabeth Miller, January 26, 2010.

30 Wade, *Blackness and Race Mixture*, 45.

31 Victor Mosquera, interview by Elizabeth Miller, January 26, 2010.

lished in 1947, the dispensary provided an alternative option for quality health care at a low cost and improved the reputation of Protestantism in that region. Since the mission subsidized the cost of drugs and paid the living expenses of the missionary nurses, a consultation at the dispensary was available for a minimal fee of ten centavos.[32] And although the dispensary benefited the evangelicals in Istmina, especially, many more non-evangelicals sought health care there. During four months in 1955, for example, the dispensary saw 737 patients from a total of fifteen different villages; in 1960 it served 8,926 patients.[33]

Photo 3. Carmen Dorila Martínez tends to a foot wounds in the Mennonite Brethren dispensary in Istmina, Chocó. *Photo courtesy of Mennonite Library and Archives at Fresno Pacific University.*

Although the dispensary was closed by the government multiple times during *La Violencia*, the missionaries made it a priority to reopen the clinic whenever possible. Through a variety of adaptations, single female missionaries and Colombian women worked to provide consistent health care to residents in and around Istmina, despite restrictive legislation and frequent government closures. Missionaries sought to fulfill ambiguous federal requirements, while local women working as nurse aids oversaw daily operations and treatment.

32 Dagoberto Minota, interview by Elizabeth Miller, January 29, 2010.

33 "Minutes of the Missionary Council," June 11–14, 1956, Mennonite Library and Archives, A250–13 Missionary Council 1957-1960; and "Minutes of the Missionary Council," July 4–8, 1960, Mennonite Library and Archives, A250–13 Missionary Council 1957–1960. The population of Istmina was less than 3,000 in these years.

In the most dramatic examples, these women—missionary and Colombian alike—maintained a schedule of secret, underground home visits that were intended to preempt another government shutdown. The dispensary was widely perceived as a service of the church, and the energy those women dedicated to keeping the dispensaries running testified to a faith that was not based just on words but also on action in the community at large. Indeed, the dispensary is one of the most revered and frequently cited ministries of the church by elderly Chocoanos with memory of that period.[34] Hernán Mosquera described the dispensary in the following way: "In Istmina there was a dispensary or pharmacy. And the people needed medications . . . but the goal was to enact the gospel."[35] Mosquera's comment makes clear that believers understood the dispensary to be a legitimate and central expression of the gospel and the church's practice of it, something worth maintaining, even in times of opposition.

Many older evangelicals in Istmina look back on this period as the church's "golden" period, when part of the church's mission was to work for the economic betterment of its people. Yet there were drawbacks to linking so many heavily funded institutions and projects to the nascent churches. These institutions had the tendency to join conversion with economic gain, they mimicked a mission station model that imposed an all-encompassing foreign structure on a local system, and they were completely unsustainable from a financial perspective; there was no way the small churches in the Chocó could provide the finances needed to maintain the institutions. Ultimately, they were institutions created by foreign outsiders, not believer-driven projects that were conceived and designed by the communities themselves.[36] Over time these weaknesses became apparent. The mission slowly came to realize that it would not be able "hand over" the institutions that it had built, due to the high financial investment required to maintain them.

Partially as a result of these challenges, the mission decided to overhaul their organizational and administrative structure, shifting the center of Mennonite Brethren mission and denominational administrative activity from Chocó to Cali, the capital of neighboring Valle del Cauca. Growth in the

34 See interviews with Victor Mosquera, Dagoberto Minota, Luzmila Rumié, and Hernán Mosquera.

35 Hernán Mosquera, interview by Elizabeth Miller, January 28, 2010, translated from Spanish by the author.

36 Vernon Reimer, "Mennonite Brethren Theological Education in Colombia, 1946–1969," (paper prepared for J. J. Toews for textbook on Mennonite Brethren missions, January 1970), Mennonite Library and Archives, A250–13 Vernon Reimer, 1966–1977, 7.

Chocó had been minimal—there were only thirty-two members in Mennonite Brethren churches in the Chocó in 1957—while Cali was growing at an incredibly rapid pace.[37] In order to take advantage of Cali's rapid urbanization and encourage the growth of national leadership and a more sustainable church structure in the Chocó, beginning in 1957 the mission decided to scale back investments in the Chocó and centralize efforts in Cali. Over the next few years, the mission institutions—including the medical dispensary—closed, all resident missionaries left, and attendance declined in the churches in Chocó. These changes were preceded by an almost complete turnover in missionary personnel between 1955 and 1957, including the sudden and tragic death of missionaries John and Mary Dyck in a plane crash, leading to very little consistency in the mission's approach to its relationships with the churches in Chocó and a general lack of firsthand experience of the Chocó and its context among the Mennonite Brethren missionaries.[38] Meanwhile, new evangelical groups moved into the region, more and more Chocoanos were choosing to live in town centers, and the big mining companies shut down. The changes within both the San Juan region and the Mennonite Brethren mission had a significant impact on the churches in the Chocó—they went from being the only evangelical denomination in the region to being one of many, from being the center of the Mennonite Brethrenan epigram to being on the periphery, from having personal relationships with mission institutions and resident missionaries to institution-mediated relationships.

Theological Polarization and the Mennonite Brethren Churches in Chocó

These new circumstances profoundly challenged the theology and practice of the Mennonite Brethren churches. They still had a "hunger for the Word," but their faith was now unmoored from a mission structure that provided believers with employment and other material benefits that could help assuage their physical hunger as well. In this uncertain period, Chocoano Mennonite Brethren began to articulate a holistic theology that defied the theological polarization of the 1960s and 1970s. Just as it had served as a sustaining metaphor during the years of religious oppression, Chocoanos now turned to food as a

37 Ibid.

38 Reimer, "Mennonite Brethren Theological Education in Colombia, 8; see also "Missionary Council Minutes," Nov 25–28, 1957, Mennonite Library and Archives, A250–13 Missionary Council Minutes 1957–1960. By November of 1957, only three of the Mennonite Brethren missionaries working in Colombia had been with the mission previous to that year and had experience living and working in the Chocó.

source for articulating a holistic theology that reflected their understanding of the gospel and of their faith in Jesus Christ in light of their own context.

The close link between the churches and the mission's socioeconomic initiatives before 1957 led to a particular understanding of Mennonite Brethren faith in the region. Gabriel Mosquera remembers how the mission's approach, primarily directed by John Dyck, was perceived in those years:

> [John Dyck] had an unusual vision. He said, "Wherever the gospel is, there should also be a school, a workshop, a medical center, and at least [some] agriculture." So this vision was revolutionary. Of course! It was surprising. The people had never seen someone, even the government, arrive with a similar idea in their head. So he came to Istmina to start a school. That was his dream, and he did it. And he had a mechanics shop and said, "The young people are going to learn mechanics or nursing, something that serves the Chocó." Then John Dyck died, and it was a hard blow for the Chocoanos, even for non-believers. Look what he did. In this period there were no cement foundations [for buildings—everything was wood or dirt], and he constructed a number of these. He created transportation, health [services], a different vision.[39]

Despite some of the critiques of the early mission structure, the believers in Chocó reclaimed the dispensary, mechanics shop, and other projects as evidence that the gospel had something to say about earthly poverty and physical well-being. From their interactions with these institutions and projects, Chocoano believers had drawn theological conclusions about what it meant to be Mennonite Brethren in the Chocó. Precisely because of institutions like the medical dispensaries and schools, material matters of health, education, food, shelter, and occupation had become intimately connected to the presentation and reception of the gospel. To believers in the Chocó these institutions demonstrated that physical and material well-being mattered and were part and parcel of the gospel. This conviction was strengthened during the persecution years, when ministries like the dispensary were maintained despite great personal and financial cost. Just as it was worth resisting the religious opposition they had faced during *La Violencia*, many concluded, so also was it worth resisting the forces of poverty and inequality in their communities.

During the transition period toward centralization in Cali, however, the mission began to define such theological conclusions as dangerous to the success of the church. Gabriel Mosquera remembers:

> After [John Dyck's death] a very intelligent young missionary arrived,

39 Gabriel Mosquera, interview by Sarah Histand, April 19, 2007, translated from Spanish by the author.

> [with] a much more conservative North American vision. He didn't agree with what John Dyck had done, so things began to change. He only focused on evangelism and the gospel, nothing else mattered.[40]

Yet many Chocoanos had originally been attracted to the gospel precisely because they perceived it had something to do with the needs of their context, with the matter of daily bread. The conflict between these two approaches produced a theological crisis for many within the church. The missionary who replaced Dyck was Alvin Voth, who moved to the Chocó as a resident missionary with his wife in 1961. Voth was tasked with streamlining the mission's role in the Chocó. In documents, Alvin Voth revealed that one of their main goals and struggles was to "correct" the connection between evangelical faith and economic benefits that had developed in the region.

> We will have to say no, to those who come with outstretched hand and say, "Give me, lend me, help me. I want to join your faith, but help me feed my family, educate my child in your schools, give me a job, give me free drugs for my sick wife and child:". . . Almost every week we offend believers and church members, because we have to say *no* and point them to the Lord instead.[41]

Voth perceived that an unhealthy economic dependence had developed between foreign missionaries and Colombian believers, and he saw the roots of this dependence to be spiritual. In a presentation before the Missionary Fellowship in 1963, Voth compared the Chocó churches to the believers on the road to Emmaus. Just as those on the road to Emmaus expected Jesus to redeem Israel, said Voth, so the Chocoanos expected their faith to redeem the Chocó.

> The great expectation in the Chocó is for a national and social Christ and a Gospel to match. Few have been the disciples who have looked beyond this life level and really grasped the spiritual implications…. We cannot meet the social needs of the area. That is impossible. We cannot expect to establish a church that will meet all the needs of a people needy in every area of life. If social services displace, even in the smallest measure, the basic ministry of preaching and teaching the Word of God, a weak and materially dependent church will develop.[42]

In order to reconcile the reality of great need with the changing mission policy, missionaries like Voth began to argue that true Christian faith was primar-

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40 Ibid.

41 Letter from Alvin Voth to Marion Kliewer (Hillsboro, KS), January 28, 1964, Mennonite Library and Archives, A250–13 Alvin and Vera Voth 1964–1966.

42 "Missionary Fellowship Minutes," Jan 7–8, 1963, Mennonite Library and Archives, A250–13 Missionary Fellowship 1961–1965.

ily spiritual and divorced from the material needs of earthly life. From the mission's perspective, the integration of spiritual and material distracted the church from its true purpose.

This was not a perspective unique to the Mennonite Brethren missionaries. Rather, it echoed a rising religious polarization in Latin American in the context of the Cold War that separated evangelism and other spiritual activities from social action and ministry. Following the Cuban Revolution in 1959, Latin America became divided between those who saw the revolution as a "symbol of justice and liberation" and those who saw it as a "symbol of tyranny and . . . chaos."[43] At the same time, traditional Liberalism in Latin America died out, leaving Protestants without their longtime political allies. Meanwhile, Latin American societies underwent rapid secularization and industrialization, often resulting in greater economic dependence on the North and greater economic disparity at home.[44] Adrift in a polarized political landscape, Latin American Protestantism itself began to divide between "those who felt that the ministry and preaching of the church should still be what it had been for generations" and those who "insisted that the new revolutionary times required that the church be present in the revolutionary process."[45] Some ended up concluding that the church should separate from the world, while others advocated for more intensive social involvement.[46] It was a politicized, contextualized version of the dualism debate that had engaged the Christian church for centuries.

"I asked the Lord to provide me with food to feed my children": A Holistic Theology Emerges in the Chocó

Despite the pressure within Latin American evangelicalism to define the gospel as primarily oriented to either spiritual or social concerns, Mennonite Brethren in the Chocó embodied and articulated a Christian faith that refused to separate the spiritual from the physical. Given the very real pressures of poverty in their context, food—obtaining it, eating it, and sharing it—became both a metaphor of holistic faith in Jesus Christ and a concrete and physical profession of that same faith among Chocoano Mennonite Brethren.

Victor Mosquera joined the Mennonite Brethren church in the village of

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43 Idina E. González and Justo L. González, *Christianity in Latin America: A History* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 234.

44 Pablo Alberto Dieros, *Historia de Cristianismo en América Latina* (Buenos Aires: Fraternidad Teológica Latinoamericana, 1992), 779, 799.

45 González and González, *Christianity in Latin America, 234.*

46 Dieros, Historia de *Cristianismo*, 800; González and González, *Christianity in Latin America*, 249.

Noanamá, although he later moved to Istmina and spent the majority of his years as a member of the church there. Like many who remember that period, Mosquera divides the first twenty years into pre- and post-John Dyck eras, because of the shifting emphasis to a "purely spiritual" gospel.

> Because after John died in the plane accident, another missionary came who didn't share the same vision [Dyck had]…. I continued with the church, not because of who [the missionaries were] but because of the Bible. He [the missionary] told them that they followed the church because of food. Ha! So many left, because those opportunities weren't there anymore.[47]

Far from affirming this shift, however, Mosquera laughs, suggesting that it was foolishness to try and separate believers' physical needs from their spiritual ones. In Mosquera's analysis, it was not necessarily an indictment that some followed the church "because of food." People came to the church because they found food there—literal food, as well as the health, education, and meaningful work—to feed their bellies as well as their souls. Mosquera admits that some may have joined the church because it was economically advantageous, but he also implies that the content of the gospel as preached by the missionaries had changed in the wake of Dyck's death and centralization in Cali. A gospel that could not take into account the daily needs of Chocoanos was simply less attractive and relevant for many.

Over time, a practical theology emerged in the Chocó that joined the material and spiritual together into one gospel. In some cases, believers even included stories of material providence—of finding food to eat—as part of their conversion narratives. Eduardo Córdoba first came to hear the gospel from his brother, who had joined with the Mennonite Brethren church in Andagoya, a village downriver from Istmina. Córdoba made a decision to join the church and had even started to go through the pre-baptismal classes, but he still found himself wrestling internally with this new faith.

> [We were going through] a very hard time of famine, and one night I asked the Lord to provide me with food to feed my children . . . and I began to go to the church early each morning at 5:00 to pray. And so I was walking through the street on the way to the church [and I ran into something] plastic and I picked it up. It was still dark, so I didn't open it up to see what it was.
>
> When I arrived at the church, I said to myself—well, at this time I was

47 Victor Mosquera, interview by Elizabeth Miller, January 26, 2010, translated from Spanish by the author.

> working for the Chocó Pacífico mine, but for the past four or five months they hadn't paid me. And there was so much hunger, so much, and when I opened [the package], I looked and saw what the Lord had done for me because of my prayer; it was more than a month's salary, a little bit more. And I was afraid to spend it, because I said, "Maybe someone lost this." So I asked a vendor who was across the street from me if he had lost anything, and he told me no. So I said, "Well, this is a gift from God, and he has provided me with the money, more than one month's salary." This was the first miracle after I had identified myself with the gospel.[48]

Córdoba claimed that the miracle of finding money to feed his children had reaffirmed his faith in a time of questioning and doubt. For him, and for many others, there was no way to "look beyond this life level" and "grasp the spiritual implications," because the physical hunger of their children and an unjust work situation were indeed profoundly spiritual matters. Until Córdoba was able to affirm that the needs of his family for daily food and monthly salary were considered by this new faith he had claimed for himself, he was not able to fully embrace it.

Américo Murillo, a young man in this period, became the pastor of Bebedó in 1965. Reflecting on the gap between missionary approaches in the 1960s and the daily reality of many believers, Murillo reflected:

> For all the years that the missionaries were here, they could have done more to strengthen the national leadership, but . . . I don't know, they lacked the vision [of the kind of] holistic gospel that we needed. Like what you see today, there is more energy [in that direction], towards the community, because Jesus said, he produced a whole gospel. He gave health and food as part of the goal of his mission, of salvation. That salvation includes health, food, and all that [we need].[49]

Here Murillo articulates that it was not only that Chocoanos needed a holistic gospel that took their hunger into account but also that Jesus himself had preached and lived such a gospel, that food is part of the salvation Jesus offers. Murillo's reflection, offered with the benefit of forty-five years of hindsight, exemplifies the kind of theological work that emerged from this period.

In the years following this shift, there was a bit of a vacuum in the Chocó. One model—a model with admittedly many problems—had been removed, but believers did not find its replacement satisfactory. Initially, churches saw their

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48 Eduardo Antonio Córdoba Guebara, interview by Elizabeth Miller, January 27, 2010, translated from Spanish by the author.

49 Américo Murillo, interview by Elizabeth Miller, January 29, 2010, translated from Spanish by the author.

attendance drop, sometimes dramatically. Victor Mosquera remembers a period in the 1960s when the core group in Istmina numbered only six men and women. But, recalls Mosquera, "We said to ourselves, 'We cannot allow the church to die.' . . . We took charge of the missionary house, and every Sunday, however few there were, we gathered and studied the Bible together. And from there on out, well, people became more and more encouraged."[50] As they regrouped, the congregations in Chocó began to create their own practices for expressing a holistic faith grounded in the congregation rather than the mission. In these years, the sharing of food both attracted people to the church and evolved as an outreach ministry in many congregations.

Pastora Torres Murillo was a young woman living in the rural village of Bebedó in the 1960s. Although there had been a Mennonite Brethren community in Bebedó for many years by this time, it was not until Torres heard a presentation by a female Chocoano missionary in 1967 that the church caught her attention. Soon after, she started associating with the women's society and was baptized a number of years later. When asked how she came to know the gospel, Torres recounted the ways in which the church enacted community.

> There was good organization, true fellowship in the church. The church worked together; if there was a believer that needed work, the church would help out with that. There was a unity, a fellowship. If I was in need, if I didn't have anything to eat, if I needed bread, this believer would notice that I was lacking and would go and give me help. The church would extend a hand if I or any other believer was sick; the church was always there to help that believer get to the doctor.[51]

Torres encountered the gospel as both deeply spiritual and material, without any division between the two. Unlike earlier periods, however, her experience of a holistic gospel came through participation in her local congregation rather than through mission institutions or projects. Torres, in turn, helped initiate a food basket ministry in the village of Bebedó during her years on the congregation's leadership team. The way church members shared their food with each other drew her into the church initially, as a testament to the holistic nature of the gospel, and eventually became a way that Torres ministered to others.[52] The ministries of the congregation did not end with food, however. In the 1970s, for example, the church formed a cooperative that distributed loans to members

50 Victor Mosquera, interview by Elizabeth Miller, January 26, 2010. Translated from Spanish by the author.

51 Pastora Torres Murillo, interview by Elizabeth Miller, January 27, 2010, translated from Spanish by the author.

52 Ibid.

and initiated the construction and operation of a day care center, where mothers could safely leave their children while they were mining out in the river.[53] Bebedó and other Mennonite Brethren churches emerged from the 1960s and 1970s with new practices that authentically reflected their understanding of a holistic gospel, one that was embodied within the gathered community rather than mission institutions.

When the first Mennonite Brethren missionaries arrived in the Chocó, they presented a gospel wrapped in all the trappings of their own culture. Yet Chocoano believers received the message by passing the message back and forth through the lenses of their experience and of scripture. In this process they often used food, a mundane necessity of daily life, to test and articulate the gospel's resonance in their lives, slowly constructing a theology that would be able to stand up to the poverty and injustice of their context. When cut off from all institutional support by religious persecution during *La Violencia*, Chocoano believers used food as a metaphor to resist armed police authorities and to define the essential practices of their faith community. Later on, when the mission advocated a dualistic gospel that reflected widespread polarization within Colombia and Latin America, food served as both evidence and metaphor in their emerging theological constructions. It appeared in their conversion stories, in their reflections on the meaning of the gospel, and in the congregational ministries that evolved to reflect their theological convictions. Although disadvantaged and severely limited by a historical lack of access to many of the state's resources, the Mennonite Brethren communities in the Chocó used the most common of daily experiences—experiencing hunger and eating food—to articulate a holistic theology that spoke to the spiritual and material needs of their context. Their "hunger for the Word" led them to see Jesus's salvation as a whole gospel that, in Américo Murillo's words, includes "food and all that we need."

53 Américo Murillo, interview by Elizabeth Miller, January 29, 2010; Executive Committee Meeting, Acta No 008, December 12, 1975, Office of the Igleisa de los Hermanos Menonitas de Colombia, Colegio Américas Unidas.

The Well

Harold Recinos[1]

By the ancestral well tucked
in the forest deep, that place

where the innocent were slain,
history shuffles toward truth.

Birds above our heads today
sit on the wild branches of old,

speaking of the earliest cultures
now gone that we come to weep.

This well taught us how to live,
sing, dance, and mourn. With every

drink it gave the earth, the sky,
the sun, the moon became the sacred

world to us. Here awake this
night, we eat and drink beside it,

still.

1 *Harold Recinos is Professor of Church and Society at the Perkins School of Theology at Southern Methodist University. His first poetry collection,* Voices on the Corner*, will be published by Wipf and Stock in 2016.*

Transforming Conflicts through Food:

A Surakarta Case Study[1]

Agnes Chen and Paulus Hartono[2]

It is well known that the Indonesian city of Surakarta is not short on food—cheap, delicious food. Residents and tourists alike find this city, located in the middle of Java, brimming with busy mobile food stands (called *angkringan*) selling wrapped rice, fritters, and satay; and *wedangan*, where mats are sprawled out for people to sit on and enjoy their meals. From the coconut milk-infused rice of the traditional *nasi liwet* to the more recent addition of Western food found in Mister Burger franchises along busy streets, Surakarta, better known as Solo, clearly celebrates food anywhere and at any time.

Since activities nearly always revolve around food in Solo, it is not surprising that Mennonites and other faith groups have discovered that coming together over a meal is a powerful way to prevent and transform conflicts in the city. Furthermore, for Mennonites in Solo, food has served as a platform to witness the presence of Jesus Christ and to invite everyone to commit to the simultaneously Christ-centered and universal values of justice, peace, truth, love, and creation care.

In addition to its culinary reputation, Solo is a city that historically has been a center for supporters of various ideologies, such as nationalism, communism, and Islamic militancy. The convergence of these strongly held ideologies has often led to destructive encounters between supporters of opposing factions. In Solo, which is known as the "city with a short wick," even a little ethnic, religious, or sectarian friction might set off a full-blown conflict across the city.[3]

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1 Some parts of this article are adapted from the authors' earlier publication, Agus Suyanto and Paulus Hartono, *The Radical Muslim and Mennonite: A Muslim-Christian Encounter for Peace in Indonesia* (Semarang, Indonesia: Pustaka Muria, 2015).

2 *Agnes Chen is a volunteer with Mennonite Diakonia Service and Lembaga Perdamaian Lintas Agama dan Golongan (LPLAG, the Peace Institute across Religions and Groups). Rev. Paulus Hartono is a pastor at GKMI Solo (Gerjea Kristen Muria Indonesia, or Muria Christian Church in Indonesia) in Central Java, Indonesia. He founded and currently serves as the director of Mennonite Diakonia Service, Christian Radio Immanuel FM, and LPLAG.*

3 The Indonesian translation is "kota bersumbu pendek."

Such an incident occurred in the 1980 razing of Chinese-owned homes, shops, and offices in Solo, spurred by a personal conflict between a Chinese-Indonesian and students of a local school for gym teachers.[4] Because of the underlying tension of competing ideologies, Solo suffered twelve large-scale conflicts from 1911 to 1999 that generally involved mass riots, the razing of properties, and even death.[5]

The most recent riot of 1998–99 was triggered by the 1997 Asian financial crisis and the collapse of Suharto's military dictatorship. Toward the end of Suharto's regime, university students took to the streets to advocate for democracy. During this time, controversial riots were stirred among the urban poor across major Indonesian cities against predominantly ethnic Chinese communities, leading to severe human rights violations. In addition to the loss of human lives and the raping of ethnic Chinese women—which are only now being acknowledged and processed in the nation's collective memory—the riots led to the looting and destruction of many ethnic Chinese homes, properties, and businesses. In Solo alone, the riots destroyed 60 percent of its buildings and other infrastructure.[6] Additionally, the upheaval ushered in a period of unemployment and a shortage of food and other basic needed resources, particularly for those in the lower classes of society.

In the wake of the devastation created by the 1998–99 riots, some faith communities led by Mennonite pastor Paulus Hartono of the Gereka Kristen Muria Indonesia (GKMI, or the Christian Muria Church in Indonesia) Synod, decided to take action.[7] A number of religious representatives formed an interfaith committee—intentionally including individuals across ethnic lines—to pursue humanitarian projects together. As USAID relief arrived in the very practical form of rice, the Interfaith Committee (IFC) was tasked to distribute this food to local families. For a year following the riots, USAID and IFC

4 Ayuk Ningrum, "Analisis Kerusuhan Etnik Cina dan Pribumi (Jawa) Pada Tahun 1980 di Surakarta Dengan Sumber Wawancara," *Ilmu Sejarah*, November 15, 2013, accessed June 23, 2015, http://ayukoye.blogspot.com/2013/11/analisis-kerusuhan-etnik-cina-dan.html.

5 "GKMI Menjadi Gereja Transformatif di Surakarta," *berita* GKMI 40, no. 482 (November 2007): 63; Musni Umar, "Dr. Musni Umar: Partisipasi Masyarakat Solo dan Demokrasi (Bagian ke IV)," *Musni Umar Website*, March 7, 2011, accessed June 20, 2014, http://musniumar.wordpress.com/2011/03/07/dr-musni-umar-partisipasi-masyarakat-solo-dan-demokrasi-bagian-ke-iv/.

6 Paulus Hartono, interview by Agus Suryanto, Surakarta, Indonesia, 2014.

7 There are three Mennonite synods in Indonesia: Gereja Injili Tanah Jawa, Gereja Kristen Muria Indonesia, and Jemaat Kristen Indonesia.

partnered to distribute rice to 12,000 families in Solo. The collaboration proved to be a success. Both the community and USAID praised the way in which the committee distributed the rice efficiently and with integrity.[8]

But IFC did not stop there—they felt compelled to respond further, especially as religious extremism rose across the country. In the early 2000s, Islamic paramilitary groups bombed Western nightclubs in Bali, the Marriott Hotel in Jakarta, and Christian churches throughout Indonesia. In response, IFC developed their programs in interfaith and intergroup dialogues, alongside a capacity for political analysis and movement building.

IFC's vision to transform Solo from the "riot city" into a center for peace also led them to establishing a forum. FPLAG (Forum Perdamaian Lintas Agama dan Golongan, or the Peace Forum across Religions and Groups)[9] seeks to develop a network of peacebuilders in five districts in Central Java among those who form the (often overlooked) backbone of their societies—including women, youth, and religious communities. Their second goal is to support their network in peace education in Asia and beyond. This group has sent Indonesian peacemakers, with the help of Mennonite Central Committee, to share and gain peacebuilding tools at Mindanao (Philippines) Peacebuilding Institute (MPI) and the Summer Peacebuilding Institute (SPI), housed at Eastern Mennonite University (Harrisonburg, VA). The Forum has also strived to increase their communication and cooperation with Islamic paramilitary groups[10] and other parties that have used their religious and political identities to justify violent acts.

Shortly after its formation, this Peace Forum had an opportunity to cultivate reconciliation in the city through a partnership with Joko Widodo, the mayor of Solo during this turbulent time. Widodo was deeply passionate about extending his relations across sectarian lines and sought FPLAG leaders' insight on how to strategically build peace. The Forum suggested to Widodo that sharing food was the key to building relationships. These leaders recommended that he gather various faith and political representatives for a meal and as a time for conversation, relationship building, and decision making. This was a successful practice they had learned from Chinese leaders in Solo who used

8 Paulus Hartono, interview by Agus Suryanto, Salatiga, Indonesia, 2014.

9 The Forum later turned its legal status and name into Lembaga Perdamaian Lintas Agama dan Golongan, or the Peace Institute across Religions and Groups.

10 Peacebuilders in Central Java are careful not to label militant groups as *terrorists*, *radicals*, or *extremists*. These words are politically loaded and have triggered interreligious conflicts in the past. Neutral terms such as the Indonesian word *lascar* (front or army) are preferable.

meals as a time for conducting business transactions.

Following FPLAG's suggestion, Widodo invited local religious and political leaders from moderate to militant camps to eat together once every three months. At each meal, the mayor would give an introduction and then open the table for discussion on how peace might be built in Solo. Every guest was given space to contribute, and this time allowed a diverse gathering to share about their respective work and communities in an informal and intimate setting. Over time, these meals built interreligious communication, respect, and trust. For many, these gatherings were a form of catharsis and helped prevent conflicts. The peace values cultivated at these dinners helped Joko Widodo become recognized as a credible leader on a national level; he eventually became the governor of Jakarta and now serves as Indonesia's seventh president.[11]

Shared food also paved the way for constructive dialogues in Solo between the Mennonite community and an Islamic paramilitary group called the Hezbollah Front. Like many other Islamic fronts, this group was birthed in Solo and has contributed to anti-Christian wars in Central Sulawesi and church closures in Central Java. Paulus Hartono, one of the two authors of this paper and founding leader of FPLAG, mediated a radio dispute between the Hezbollah Front and another Islamic radio station in 2003. After this encounter, Hartono audaciously showed up at the Hezbollah headquarters to have tea and build *silaturahmi*, or fraternal ties, with the Hezbollah commander Yanni Rusmanto. The first time Hartono visited the command center, Rusmanto told him, "Anyone outside of the Islamic community and creed is a *kafir* (infidel). You are an infidel! And because you're an ethnic Chinese, your blood is *halal*." Adding salt to the wound, Rusmanto added, "It is *halal* for us [Muslims] to kill you."[12] Yet Hartono's persistence week after week paid off. By the time of Eid al-Fitr, Rusmanto had finally warmed up to Hartono, and they spent the next couple of years gathering frequently to chat informally over tea.

The friendship that developed between Rusmanto and Hartono eventually helped defuse the religious tension surrounding Solo in the aftermath of the

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11 Joko Widodo also used informal meals as a way to negotiate support for his proposed business and economic reforms in the city. See Rushda Majeed, "Defusing a Volatile City, Igniting Reforms: Joko Widodo and Surakarta, Indonesia, 2005–2011," *Innovations for Successful Societies* (Princeton University, July 2012), accessed April 13, 2015, http://successfulsocieties.princeton.edu/publications/defusing-volatile-city-igniting-reforms-joko-widodo-and-surakarta-indonesia-2005-2011.

12 Sumanto Al Quturbi, "Engaging Extremists Key to Peace," *The Jakarta Globe*, January 29, 2013, accessed June 20, 2014, http://www.thejakartaglobe.com/archive/engaging-extremists-key-to-peace/.

Bali, Marriott Hotel, and Indonesian church bomb attacks. During the time when IFC members were strategizing about how to respond to the bombings, Hartono decided to invite the Hezbollah commander to a dialogue with Christian pastors regarding the alarming rate of forced church closures. Rusmanto accepted the invitation and found himself gathered with two hundred Christian pastors at a restaurant in Solo. In this dialogue moderated by Dian Nafi, a leader from Nahdlatul Ulama—the biggest moderate Islamic group in Indonesia—Rusmanto explained that the churches that were closed lacked proper building permits. The pastors then explained the difficulties in processing church permits in their neighborhoods. Some pastors asked, "Do mosques and *musholas* (Islamic prayer rooms) require building permits? If they don't, why are churches being targeted for their lack of permits?" These questions caused Rusmanto to reflect,[13] and marked the beginning of a journey that eventually brought him to embrace peace-oriented Christians.

Gathering together around the same table, like in the stories above, is important for Mennonite and Christian witness in religiously pluralistic societies. The life and teachings of Jesus reveal to us that mission is more than simply "winning souls" and trying to increase church membership within a congregation. We are called as Christians to emulate Jesus as the definition of peace, modeling his gracious and expansive engagement with people from diverse backgrounds. It is Jesus "who made both groups into one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall" between Jews and Gentiles (Eph 2:14). He reconciled genders, races, cultures, and nationalities and called Christians to do the same. Mission has to be understood as being more holistic, consisting of building relationships and radically breaking down barriers that distinguish "us" from "them," just as Christ sought to reconcile humans with God.

When Mennonites engage other faith communities, even Islamic militant groups (like Hartono), we must be clear that we are coming from a Christocentric framework. This clarity helps provide an honest foundation on which healthy relationships can develop. Yet the belief in Jesus as Messiah should not be used as the parameter for unity with other faith communities. In a country where proselytization is a sensitive issue and "Christianization" is a fear held by a growing number of Muslims, Mennonites in Indonesia must actively encourage others to adopt universal yet Christological values of justice, peace, love, truth, and creation care, because the values of Jesus Christ are not simply for those who attend a Christian church. Although conversion from these interfaith dialogues could occur, it is not the purpose of these encounters.

13 Paulus Hartono, interview by Agus Suryanto, Salatiga, Indonesia, 2014.

These experiences of Mennonites utilizing the communal nature of food in Solo teach us not to underestimate the power of eating together. They teach us that breaking down barriers is possible, that conflict can be transformed into peace, and that we have been blessed with the opportunity to help usher God's shalom into our own communities through the power of the Holy Spirit. We hope that this shalom will be just as abundant, accessible, and commonplace in the city as the busy mobile food stands (*angkringan*) and the mats (*wedangan*) where people gather to enjoy their meals.

My Mother's Mirror [1]

Lois Siemens[2]

Behind a muted paisley curtain in her dark cellar
geometric strong wood planks hold rows of canned promises
rounded softness of golden ripe peaches, plump cherries reach Heaven-ward
red tomato juice strained (no sign of seeds), half-size jam jars gelling sweet
combinations of gooseberry strawberry apricot plum.

One shelf dedicated to pickles, imprisoned
olive green fingers wear dill rings, accepting vinegar
into soft flesh swollen until crunchy. Served
at almost every *faspa*, my father's favorite
pink pickled watermelon alongside.

Aluminum slightly rusted washtub sits pregnant
with unshelled green peas. The family circles
one bowl on each lap, snap end, stained tired thumb push
round pebbles to dance into bowl settle
down. Laughter holds us inside our work.

My mother's aged face reflects from pressure sealed
glass jars. Endless love served to cavernous mouths.
We chew. Words and prayers tightly packed
among bean and beet. We swallow.
We eat my mother's mirror.

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1 Reprinted with permission from *Pearls 19 Spring 2000 Creative Writing by Douglas College Students* (Douglas College, 2000), 122.

2 *Lois Siemens grew up on the Manitoba prairie where the colors in the ditches inspired her to observe the infinite variety of life. She is presently pastoring half-time at Superb Mennonite Church in rural Saskatchewan, and can be found on her quiet days roaming the countryside looking for photo opportunities.*

An Empty Bowl

Kaylene Derksen[1]

> *Everything in the world is about to be wrapped up, so take nothing for granted. Stay wide-awake in prayer. Most of all, love each other as if your life depended on it. Love makes up for practically anything. Be quick to give a meal to the hungry, a bed to the homeless—cheerfully. Be generous with the different things God gave you, passing them around so all get in on it: if words, let it be God's words; if help, let it be God's hearty help.*
>
> - I Peter 4:7–10, *The Message*

These verses are pretty standard Anabaptist stuff. The world won't last, so keep praying. Love and serve others (especially food) as if your life depends on it, because it's God's way of building God's kingdom. This is hospitality 101. It's what I cut my teeth on. My parents made it look easy and even exciting.

Growing up in my family of ten, you would have thought there were enough mouths to feed, bodies to clothe, stories to listen to, and people to love. But apparently it wasn't so. Though my family was not wealthy by anyone's imagination, we always seemed to have extra—mostly extra food and space at our table. This is where learning hospitality began for me. And this is where I began to see that hospitality is hard.

My quintessentially hardworking Mennonite farmer parents were lovers of God and lovers of people, and in that order. They believed that God had called them to love those around them. Their neighbor could be anyone, and hospitality was to be shown to all.

Our farm was set along a country road and butted up against a small forest. It was just a dairy farm of no great consequence, with about a hundred head of cattle, fifty chickens (depending on the time of year), a dog or two, and some feral cats. We had pigs, but they were not regular guests. The odd sheep, ducks, and even a horse graced the farmyard when I was a youngster.

We were pretty much like our neighbors, though Mennonite and surround-

1 *Kaylene Derksen is the Development Director at Eastern Mennonite Missions. She has been learning to live missionally all of her adult life in Europe, Central America, and in the United States. She and her husband have one young adult daughter and enjoy living in a row house near the train station in Lancaster, PA.*

ed by Catholics. We and our neighbors had the same kinds of animals, same plantings of crops, same kind of manure, same weather, and the same smells. But there was one noticeable difference in our house. People would stop in. They would drop by unannounced. They came in cars, on bikes, and even on foot. And it never seemed to matter what was going on when they arrived, because my dear parents would roll out their version of the red carpet.

I often heard Dad say, "Mother, let's set another place at the table," or, "Didn't you just bake bread this morning? I'm sure there's an extra loaf." Mom never just cooked for the ten people she loved the most. She always planned ahead for more. "Why would you make *just* enough?" This is red carpet talk.

If anyone came by on a Saturday, they could expect pancakes and eggs for breakfast, thick and hearty potato soup for dinner (what others might know of as *lunch*), and homemade deep-dish pizza for supper. We were rural people—there were no light meals in our home. Proper stomach-filling dinners were never questioned, and the calories were easily metabolized in time for a sure-to be-hearty supper. Afternoons were often interrupted with cookies, glasses of milk, or coffee. But rolling out that red carpet takes lots of time and is mostly inconvenient. Farms are busy places, especially with that many children!

Though Mom and Dad were both raised in fairly conservative traditions, they never let their backgrounds keep them from friendships beyond their borders. I remember the particular warmth shown to a couple that visited fairly often on weeknights. Though the house was always crazy with children and the day's work had all but exhausted my parents, a quick salad dressing cake would miraculously appear, still warm in its pan. Fresh coffee was brewed, cream and sugar came out, and alongside it all, an empty bowl.

This empty bowl was a sign of welcome on the part of my father, and compromise on the part of my mother. John and Frankie came to our home because they knew that they would be welcomed and that the little empty bowl would be waiting for them.

As soon as their car was heard pulling into the driveway, Dad would go out to meet John and Frankie in his line-dried clean jeans and a t-shirt worn butter-soft with use. They only lived three miles away, but they were greeted as if they'd traveled the entire day.

John was a lanky Elvis-type guy with tight jeans, pointy black boots, and a pompadour, while his wife wore stylish open-toed platform heels. I could see her red toenails and tanned feet. Frankie was bottle-blond, tanned, lipsticked, and had the best posture I'd ever seen. This pair could not have been more different from my parents if they had tried.

"Come in, come in." "Oh, Rhoda, you shouldn't have!" And off to the din-

ing table they went. I always watched from the sidelines, partly because I was in awe of the ease my parents had with these flashy people who talked a lot and looked so glamorous, and partly because I wanted cake.

They began to talk and laugh. John, teasing my Mom that cake is the only reason he came to visit; Frankie, defending my mom and asking Dad for house-building tips. Such fun they were.

I never observed any discomfort on anyone's part. Even when the visitors were lingering in a chocolate cake coma over their coffee and their cigarettes came out. The conversation went on as our house filled with second-hand smoke and the little bowl filled with butts. They knew this was not my parents' style, but they were welcomed, nevertheless. No wonder they came.

Every time after they left, there was much cleaning to be done. Smoke removal is not easy. Mom fussed over the smell. Dad looked helpless. Hospitality is hard.

That small farm tucked along a forest's edge is no longer my home, and I no longer live in the country. None of my trappings are similar to the simplicity of the pasture full of Holsteins, a backyard full of tall pine trees, or a night sky unmarred by too much electric light.

I live in a city now, and I've been a city dweller for most of my adult life. However, even in my world of higher convenience and less space, I do have the ability to cook, and I have embraced the importance of the table. Mom and Dad instilled in me their love of God and their love of people, and I am learning the courage it takes to be truly hospitable. I believe that God has asked me to be available to love whomever is placed in my path. I am learning the surrender that such love entails.

This love and level of hospitality that my parents modeled involves hosting guests who have no respect for my personal space and no concept of their own. It involves the smell of body odor, cigarette smoke, and shoes removed too late in the day. Sometimes it means having a visitor at my table who refuses anything green or healthy, unintentionally insulting me and my endeavors to prepare and serve whole foods. Sometimes this hospitality leaves me exhausted from the late nights, many questions, and hours of listening. And sometimes it means I try too hard.

When I get to the point of being entirely poured out, I read further in 1 Pet 4:12, "When life gets really difficult, don't jump to the conclusion that God isn't on the job. Instead, be glad that you are in the very thick of what Christ experienced. This is a spiritual refining process, with glory just around the corner."

Daily, I put out my own empty bowl on my dining table, as a sign of wel-

come and of compromise. As a sign of the difficulty and also the joy I experience on this journey toward hospitality, on this journey of learning to love those around me.

Peace and Agriculture:

Local Food in a Mennonite Context

Sarah Werner[1]

This paper examines how the concepts of nonviolence and social nonconformity inform decisions about consumption of food by Mennonites in North America. It also places these commitments in the larger context of secular Western culture to demonstrate how nonviolence and nonconformity can help Mennonites better participate in local food movements. *Nonviolence* provides a vision that contributes to local food movements, helping us understand that growing, buying, and eating food can be ways of practicing peace on a daily basis. *Nonconformity* provides an alternative vision that redefines buying and owning less, not as a sacrifice but as a way toward freedom from possessions through a deepening of relationships with other people in local communities and landscapes.

The church has the ability and calling to model an alternative reality, one that points in practical ways to these kingdom values of nonviolence and nonconformity. Mennonite theologian Duane K. Friesen calls the church to engage "focal practices," which include ways of being, living, and behaving that model expressed beliefs in practical disciplines in a worshipping community over time.[2] As I will explore below, growing, sharing, and eating food in community are all examples of focal practices that bind members of a community to one another as well as to the land. Local economies are made sustainable in this binding, a process that we will explore in the example of Oakleaf Mennonite Farm later in this paper.

Many Mennonites also practice nonviolence and resist consumerism through responsible preparation of food. Consequently, cookbooks are popular Mennonite resources that reinforce eating as a way of living out faith. These resources do more than help us cook yummy desserts or prepare nourishing salads; they also help us practice our peace theology through our global food connections and how we build community. Mennonite cookbooks, as explored

1 *Sarah Werner has a PhD in religion from the University of Florida. Her research focuses on Mennonite environmental initiatives in North America.*

2 Duane K. Friesen, *Artists, Citizens, Philosophers: Seeking the Peace of the City; An Anabaptist Theology of Culture* (Scottdale, PA: Herald, 2000).

below, provide an alternative narrative to overconsumption, offering ways to engage nonviolence and nonconformity through our preparation and consumption of food. Let's explore these Anabaptist values together.

Changing Perspectives on Nonviolence and Nonconformity

Anabaptist groups since the Radical Reformation have held the conviction that being a true Christian involves living out the gospel teachings of discipleship without conforming to the secular world. This led to their persecution and marginalization both in Europe and the Americas, and it remains a central doctrine for all Anabaptist denominations. Nonconformity for many acculturated Mennonites who no longer live in rural, ethnic Mennonite communities has shifted from an emphasis on outward appearance (plain dress and agricultural life) to inward ethical commitments to nonviolence and resisting consumerism. These two commitments have also begun to be translated into a care for the land.

The twin doctrines of nonviolence and nonconformity have their origin in the beliefs of the early Anabaptists, but the interpretation of the words and works of these early Anabaptists has evolved throughout the course of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Leo Driedger, Donald Kraybill,[3] and Ervin Stutzman[4] have all argued that nonviolence and nonconformity together play a central role in the theological positions of Mennonites, though Mennonite interpretation is diverse given the diverse theological convictions of Mennonites globally. Driedger and Kraybill examine the changing nature of these doctrines in *Mennonite Peacemaking: From Quietism to Activism*. They note that in many Mennonite publications nonconformity and nonresistance, or nonviolence, are referred to in tandem as the distinguishing tenets of Mennonite identity. Driedger and Kraybill define nonconformity as the sectarian stance of Mennonite groups that is "expressed in a cautious social distance from the outside world."[5] Nonviolence is the refusal to use force against another person even in self-defense; Dreidger and Kraybill explain that this posture affects both interpersonal and collective relations.[6]

Mennonite perspectives on nonviolence and nonconformity have evolved in the last hundred years as a result of changing cultural circumstances. New

3 Leo Driedger and Donald B. Kraybill, *Mennonite Peacemaking: From Quietism to Activism* (Scottdale, PA: Herald, 1994).

4 Ervin Stutzman, *From Nonresistance to Justice: The Transformation of Mennonite Church Peace Rhetoric, 1908–2008* (Scottdale, PA: Herald, 2011).

5 Driedger and Kraybill, *Mennonite Peacemaking*, 49.

6 Ibid., 32–33.

interpretations of the Bible and Anabaptist history have grounded these changes, and confessions of faith are one source for examining current doctrine. The *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective* is a joint statement of faith written in 1995 by the General Conference Mennonite Church and Mennonite Church denominations that later joined to form Mennonite Church USA and Mennonite Church Canada. In Article 21, "Christian Stewardship," caring for and working for the renewal of the earth is directly linked with the call to "live simply, practice mutual aid within the church, uphold economic justice, and give generously and cheerfully."[7] Stewardship of the earth is also linked with the biblical idea in Leviticus of the Sabbath of the land and the Jubilee year as well as the vision in Revelation of the new heaven and new earth. By making explicit the expectation that Mennonites live simply, the confession highlights resistance to consumption as a necessary quality for living faithfully. Such a theological foundation for nonconformity and nonviolence can ground resistance to consumerism and strengthen commitment to live simply in biblical tradition and Mennonite theological perspectives.

Mennonite theologians continue to flesh out the doctrines of the confession of faith and examine how the theological ideals of Mennonites should influence the church's actions in the larger world.[8] Mennonite beliefs and practices have been shaped through engagement with Western culture, and this has led Mennonites to engage with modern Western culture in distinct ways that are formed through their theological commitments. In the work of these theologians and scholars, two important ideas help frame Mennonite views on consumption and nonconformity: the idea of the church as an alternative society, and the economic vision of such an alternative society.

The first relevant aspect of Mennonite theology as it relates to nonconformity is the idea that the church should provide an alternative vision of society outside of the Western secular individualist model. Duane Friesen, in *Artists, Citizens, Philosophers: Seeking the Peace of the City,* explores this concept in his assessment of Anabaptist theology in light of Western culture. He argues that Christians engage culture as artists, citizens, and philosophers, and he describes how each of these modes of engagement is a form of social responsibility to the larger culture. He frames his argument around the passage in Jeremiah where the prophet encourages the Jews then in exile in Babylon to "seek the peace of the city where you dwell" (Jer 29:7). Friesen is concerned with how

7 General Board of the General Conference Mennonite Church and the Mennonite Church General Board, "Article 21," *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective* (Scottdale, PA: Herald, 1995), Kindle edition.

8 Friesen, *Artists, Citizens, Philosophers: Seeking the Peace of the City*.

Christian existence is lived in creative tension between being part of the world and part of God's kingdom, which he calls living on the border between "the world into which we were born and another country, another city."[9]

Friesen alludes to the transformation of Christianity once it became the official religion of the Roman Empire, often called "Constantinian Christianity" or the "Christendom model." He argues that once Christianity became dominant during the reign of the Roman Emperor Constantine, it lost its ability to be committed to an alternative cultural vision, of which nonviolence was a key testimony. Friesen relates this to Jeremiah by arguing that "the church is in exile like the Jews in Jeremiah's time because it is a minority community that cannot and should not attempt to dominate or control the world like it did after Constantine."[10] The age of Christendom is over, and no Christian denomination dominates culture. For many Anabaptist scholars, this is a positive development because it allows Christianity as a whole to model an alternative vision of culture that challenges the materialistic capitalist society rather than identifies with it.[11]

Friesen argues, "Consumer capitalism and a market economy has had the effect of 'socializing' us to think in terms of calculating self-interest," which cultivates an individualism that "erodes commitment to the weak and the marginalized and to the larger common good."[12] The role of the church, then, is to provide a moral community that challenges this erosion and cultivates a different vision for consumer culture. Mutual aid and commitment to nonconformity are both ways that Mennonite communities can resist the culture of economic self-interest.

One of the ways churches can model this alternative vision of society is through what Friesen calls "focal practices." These are ways of being, living, and behaving that embody such an alternative vision in practical disciplines and the liturgical rituals of the church.[13] These practices are defined by a church community over time, and they are ways that communities tangibly express their beliefs.[14] Food is one example of this tangible expression of belief, both through the sacrament of the Lord's Supper and everyday eating. Friesen argues that focal practices "are 'bodied' in visible, concrete ways of living that

9 Ibid., 24–25.

10 Ibid., 37.

11 Ibid., 38.

12 Ibid., 135.

13 Ibid., 139.

14 Ibid., 67.

can be observed and evaluated by others, even those outside the circle of the community of faith."[15] As demonstrated below, growing, sharing, and eating food in community are all examples of focal practices that bind members of a community to one another as well as to the land.

Food and Gardening as Sacrament

Friesen's concept of sharing food as a focal practice is particularly relevant for considering the relationships between people and the land. Agrarian scholars Norman Wirzba, Fred Bahnson, and Wendell Berry all argue that growing and eating food can be considered sacred acts. Friesen argues that food is a tangible way to express belief, and agrarian scholars further demonstrate that this power of eating is an act that connects humans with the land. Wirzba in *The Paradise of God: Renewing Religion in an Ecological Age* describes the current environmental crisis as nothing less than a crisis of culture, if culture is understood from its Latin roots to pertain to the cultivation and care of the conditions humans need to thrive on the land and with one another.[16] The root of this crisis of culture is human pride and greed that arose out of our attempt to separate ourselves from dependence on each other and the natural world.[17] He argues that "an appreciation for the doctrine of creation will lead to a meaningful, wholesome reconnection with the wider social, ecological, cosmological, and divine contexts in which we necessarily live."[18] This involves action to "recover the art of being creatures" through an appreciation of the ways our lives are dependent upon the land and by gaining practical skills to act on this appreciation.[19]

This reconnection with the land must begin with a process of reconciliation. In *Making Peace with the Land,* Bahnson and Wirzba argue that "Christian reconciliation is about bringing all bodies into a peaceful, life-promoting and convivial relationship with each other."[20] They affirm that God cares for embodied souls, not disembodied ones, and scripture promises the renewal of all creation. Wirzba writes, "Human life simply makes no sense apart from the

15 Ibid., 139.

16 Norman Wirzba, *The Paradise of God: Renewing Religion in an Ecological Age* (New York: Oxford, 2003), 2.

17 Ibid., 5.

18 Ibid., 15.

19 Ibid.

20 Fred Bahnson and Norman Wirzba, *Making Peace with the Land: God's Call to Reconcile with Creation* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 2012), 24.

life of all creation."[21] People in our time have become separated from the land, both physically and existentially, which has led to widespread environmental destruction as well as alienation from the natural world.[22] It is only in reconnecting physically with the land that we can be brought into relationship with it, not merely by having bodies but by living through our bodies.[23]

To illustrate how the Christian community, in being reconciled with the land, can do good work, Wirzba cites the example of church-sponsored community gardens in North Carolina that feed hungry and homeless people. In addition to this, he argues that "gardening is also the form of work that best describes God's relationship to creation."[24] God is continually present in creation, working in it as a gardener rather than watching from above. Gardens also provide fresh, healthy food directly from the land. Wirzba argues that eating is a crucial part of reconciling with creation, and it starts by appreciating where our food comes from and examining the destruction industrial agriculture has wrought on the land in order to provide cheap, fast, food. He notes that many of Jesus's lessons were centered around food and eating, which he states is the "daily enactment of our dependence on other people, the land and ultimately God."[25]

Eating connects us to the whole complex web of ecological relationships that make our food possible, and it is in the growing and preparing of food that "we bear witness to God's desire that all creatures taste life fully."[26] Wirzba concludes by stating that "the redemption of humanity and the earth depends on the forsaking of all arrogance and the taking up of our rightful place as 'gardeners' who in serving the needs of creation bring blessing to it and glory to its creator."[27]

Wendell Berry also extols the virtues of gardening as a sacred act that makes eating meaningful. He believes that eating is both a pleasurable and an agricultural act but that this is compromised by the industrial food system that distances people from their food. Berry argues that "the industrial eater is, in fact, one who does not know that eating is an agricultural act, who no

21 Ibid., 24.

22 Ibid., 32.

23 Ibid.

24 Ibid., 80.

25 Ibid., 114.

26 Ibid.

27 Wirzba, *Paradise of God*, 117.

longer knows or imagines the connections between eating and the land."[28] Berry claims instead that eating should be "an extensive pleasure," by which he means that "people who know the garden in which their vegetables have grown and know that the garden is healthy will remember the beauty of the growing plants, perhaps in the dewy first light of morning when gardens are at their best."[29] Like Wirzba, Berry believes that growing and eating food connects humans with the land in a way that is reciprocal and mutually sustaining.

Local Food and the Bioregion

If eating can be considered a sacrament, as the above scholars propose, it is also a tangible way to become part of one's local ecological community. Bioregionalism is one form of local food movement that is concerned with living within the ecological limits of a particular place—one's bioregion or watershed. A bioregion is defined by features of local geography and the biotic community. A watershed is the most common way of delineating a bioregion, which is "the area covered in the water's journey from its origination in the hydrological cycle to its end point in a particular body of water such as a pond, lake or ocean."[30] Its boundaries are natural rather than political. Wes Jackson, David Landis Barnhill, and others call the effort to live in one's bioregion "becoming native to place," which indicates a commitment to learn the natural cycles of one's local biotic community as well as to promote the well-being of the local human community as it attempts to live within these natural limits.[31]

Bioregionalism encompasses both the natural ecosystem and local human culture and economy. Jackson argues in *Becoming Native to Our Place*, "Our task is to build cultural fortresses to protect our emerging nativeness. They must be strong enough to hold at bay the powers of consumerism, the powers of greed and envy and pride."[32] He is not advocating for a nostalgic return to an earlier period; "change is the rule" he argues.[33] Instead he advises a cautious way forward that would enable communities to remove themselves from the "extractive economy" of fossil fuel and cheap consumer goods, and for him "it

28 Wendell Berry, *Bringing It to the Table: Essays on Food and Farming* (Berkeley: Counterpoint, 2009), 228.

29 Ibid., 233.

30 Ched Myers, "From 'Creation Care' to 'Watershed Discipleship': Re-Placing Ecological Theology and Practice," *Conrad Grebel Review* 32, no. 3 (2014): 258.

31 See David Landis Barnhill's anthology, *At Home on Earth: Becoming Native to Our Place* (Berkeley: University of California, 1999).

32 Jackson, *Becoming Native to This Place*, 97.

33 Ibid., 112.

is the wholeness of community life and the need for community life that are on the line."[34] For Jackson, the well-being of the community and the well-being of the land are dependent upon one another. The local economy should be the tool that binds the human community together itself as well as with the land.

This idea of local economy and local community as being mutually important directly ties in with the emerging concept of watershed discipleship. Scholar and activist Ched Myers is a key player in the emerging watershed discipleship movement and newly formed watershed discipleship alliance. He is part of the Bartimaeus Cooperative, a community concerned with learning about, living within, and restoring the Ventura River watershed in central California. He explains that watershed discipleship is a phrase that has multiple meanings and serves as a useful framing idea. First, the term "recognizes that we are in a watershed historical moment of crisis" that calls for Christians to make environmental and social justice integral to everything they do as inhabitants of particular places.[35] Second, "it acknowledges the inescapably bioregional locus of an incarnational following of Jesus," which means that the life of the church must always take place in the context of a particular watershed.[36] Third, it "implies that we need to be disciples *of* our watersheds" by learning the resources and limits of the particular watersheds we inhabit.[37] This is a way of connecting bioregionalist ideals with the Christian notion of care for the land as a form of discipleship.

Understanding one's own local landscape is a crucial aspect of "becoming native" to a particular place as well as discerning the best course of action to prevent or restore the ecosystem of one's area. It also coheres with the twin doctrines of nonviolence and nonconformity by calling on people to identify with their local landscape rather than a political entity. The identity of Mennonites is one of belonging to God and to a particular piece of God's creation. Eating food grown within one's own watershed is important because it provides a tangible connection to the local ecosystem.

Secular scholars of environmental ethics and advocates for bioregionalism provide a larger context for framing Mennonite relationships with the land because they emphasize some of the same concepts that are important to Mennonites: the need for strong local communities, the idea that the ecological crisis is at its base a moral one, and the notion that humans are one creature among

34 Ibid.

35 Myers, "From 'Creation Care' to 'Watershed Discipleship,'" 266.

36 Ibid.

37 Ibid.

many who are all subject to a higher authority, whether the earth as a whole or God. The two examples of Mennonite production and preparation of food described below can be framed in the context of eating within one's bioregion.

Faith in Practice: Oakleaf Mennonite Farm at Berea Mennonite Church

The commitment to owning less stuff and purchasing goods that are produced and traded ethically is difficult to uphold. Focusing on our interactions with food is a good starting place for this effort, and it is perhaps the most important because it is something we consume daily and is necessary for survival. The local food movement has made eating ethically and locally more feasible for many North Americans, though clearly there is much work yet to be done so that all have access to fresh and responsibly farmed food. Mennonites also have a long history of agriculture and foodways to draw upon in this effort, as well as theological convictions that value social justice and care for the earth. Oakleaf Mennonite Farm at Berea Mennonite Church in Atlanta, Georgia, serves as an example of how growing and eating food is both a sacred and peaceful act. The farm provides locally grown produce to those in their community who would otherwise have little access to fresh food. This demonstrates Wirzba's assertion that growing and sharing food reconciles people with the land as well as with one another.

Anabaptists have a long history of involvement in agriculture that stems from the early years of the movement when they were forced into rural areas due to religious persecution. Until the latter half of the twentieth century, most Mennonites lived in rural agricultural communities and made their living through farming. Oakleaf Farm is an example of how this agricultural legacy has taken new forms in the twenty-first century when most Mennonites in North America live in urban areas and work in non-agricultural professions.[38] As an urban farm, Oakleaf provides the members and visitors of Berea with a first-hand experience of farm life as well as a regular supply of food to their neighbors in need. Urban agriculture is a growing movement in North American cities as consumers are increasingly interested in buying local food. Oakleaf combines this cultural shift with their Anabaptist roots to form a new type of relationship with the land.

Berea Mennonite started the farm in 2009 as a way to reclaim their nine-acre property, a project initiated by Pastor John Wierwille and two seminary students. Wierwille had become tired of mowing the extensive piece of land and trying to keep away criminals and drug dealers who had used the property

38 Conrad L. Kanagy, *Road Signs for the Journey: A Profile of Mennonite Church USA* (Scottdale, PA: Herald, 2007).

and broken into the church for years. In starting the farm, the church hoped to become better neighbors by establishing a stronger presence and initiating activities to benefit the wider community.[39] The church had dwindled to only fifteen members at the time Wierwille came to Berea, but it has since experienced a resurgence as young people and members of the local community have joined the church, in part due to their interaction with the farm.

Oakleaf Farm currently runs a Community Supported Agriculture program (CSA) where families can purchase a share of the produce on a yearly basis in exchange for receiving a box of farm products each week, including eggs, fruits, and vegetables. Part of the farm is designated for providing food for people in the community who do not have enough to eat. This is an important ministry as their neighborhood is in a "food desert," an area without a grocery store or access to fresh produce. In addition to growing fruits and vegetables, the farm is also home to sheep, chickens, goats, and a pig. The church employs a farmer who is in charge of the daily operations of the farm as well as the CSA program. Long-term and short-term volunteers work on the farm, and the church also hosts large groups of college students who work on the farm as well as at other social service organizations in Atlanta for a one-week period.

The church also provides a way for people who have been disillusioned by Christianity to return to the faith by helping them participate in sacraments by interacting with the landscape. Wierwille believes that when the church can say that the grapes and wheat for the Lord's Supper came from just outside the door, the church will truly be living its call to care for human bodies and the land.[40] This ties in with Friesen's concept of communion being a focal practice that binds the members of the church community together. In making communion "local," Berea hopes to be a model of an alternative society that is built on fresh, fair food that nourishes both the bodies and the spirits of those gathered. This is a witness to those outside of the church, as Friesen and Wierwille suggest, because the church is living its commitment to care for the people in their community and to be stewards of the land they have been given.

The farm as a ministry to the community is an example of the renewed social activism of Mennonites in the twenty-first century recorded by Driedger and Kraybill.[41] The members and volunteers at Berea are concerned with the welfare of their neighbors, and the farm is a way for the church to use their assets to address a situation of need. Farming in this context is a nonviolent

39 John Wierwille, interview by author, 2013.

40 John Wierwille, interview by author, 2015.

41 Leo Driedger and Donald Kraybill, *Mennonite Peacemaking*.

practice for two reasons. First, the farm improves the land by using animal manure and compost as fertilizer, which adds nutrients to the soil rather than depletes it. Before Oakleaf started, most of the land owned by the church was a large lawn. It was mowed regularly but served no purpose and did not support biodiversity. The farm now is made up of forest, pasture, and row crops. There is no need for mowing, which burns fossil fuel, and it provides habitat area for small mammals and birds. The farm is also a responsible way to use the land because it provides food that would otherwise be trucked in from an industrial farm in another state, which burns fuel and is potentially detrimental to farm workers and animal habitat. Oakleaf Farm is a way that Berea can spread the "gospel of farming" to people who come to visit or volunteer.

In addition to being a ministry, the farm also serves an educational purpose for visitors, students, and members of the congregation. Education about caring for the earth is interwoven with Anabaptist history, nonviolence, and the agrarian themes in the Bible. Wierwille expressed a desire for his church community to engage in this farm work as a way to practice their faith in a tangible manner. He argued that faith should be incarnational, "work-ship" in addition to worship. He noted that both children and adults in the congregation can learn the gospel through tending the land, resulting in a more intimate understanding of the agrarian context in which the four Gospels were written. The church sponsors a "Peace and Carrots" camp each summer where children of the church and children from the surrounding community learn together about nonviolence in the context of farming. Wierwille feels that nonviolence is one important aspect of the Anabaptist tradition that Mennonites are losing in assimilating into secular American culture, and he hopes that religious education can prevent this in the younger generation of Mennonites.[42]

Nonviolence is a daily commitment for the people who work on the farm, and it is a value that is also instilled in young people through religious education and in volunteers through work experience. The leaders at Berea have extended the historic Mennonite doctrine of nonviolence to include nonviolent action towards the land, and they are using their farm as a way to educate others about the power of nonviolence. The agrarian context of the Bible is also manifested in the work of the farm, from the grapevines on the front lawn to the sheep in the pasture. Oakleaf Farm is an example of how Mennonite environmental initiatives draw on the Bible and the doctrine of nonviolence to educate people about caring for the land.

Most of the people that come to volunteer and live at the farm are there

42 Wierwille, interview by author, 2013.

only for a short time. They have taken a week or a month from their lives to experience a different mode of living that occurs in close community. Oakleaf Farm is a place where these visitors can learn more about Mennonite nonconformity and nonviolence in practice. Secular North American society places a high value on individual freedom of choice rather than compromise and community. Experiencing a different way of life even for a short while helps visitors gain a new understanding of how they might begin to question the values of consumer culture in their own lives. In this sense Berea, through the farm, is acting as a conduit to spread knowledge about Mennonite practices to other Christian groups as well as non-religious people. This demonstrates that Mennonite ideals are relevant not only to other Mennonites but are also applicable to other Christian groups as well.

Eating Locally and Responsibly as Nonconformity

In addition to growing food locally, preparing food is also a sacred act that reconciles people with the land. Many Mennonites are practicing nonviolence and resisting consumerism through their food preparation and consumption. Cookbooks are one popular Mennonite resource that reinforces eating as a way of practicing one's faith. The consumption of food has been a way Mennonites have begun to make changes in their lifestyles that are less destructive to the land and other people. Many Mennonites in North America retain strong, if indirect, connections to the land, and Mennonites in urban areas have a growing interest in urban agriculture and community gardens.[43]

Wendell Berry states that "the economic system that most affects the health of the world and that may be most subject to consumer influence is that of food."[44] Eating responsibly not only affects the well-being of the earth but can also prevent the exploitation of farm workers and ease the suffering of farm animals. Farm worker justice, the fair trade movement, and eating locally grown food are all issues that urban and suburban Mennonite congregations in North America are engaging as they seek to retain their historic ties to agriculture. Berry writes, "Eating with the fullest pleasure . . . is perhaps the profoundest enactment of our connection with the world."[45] Food connects us to a whole network of other people as well as the natural world. The work of Doris Janzen Longacre and the World Community Cookbook series published by Menno-

43 The Mennonite Creation Care Network provides numerous examples of such projects on their website: http://www.mennocreationcare.org/.

44 Wendell Berry, *Sex, Economy, Freedom and Community* (New York: Pantheon, 1992), 41.

45 Berry, *What Are People For?*, 152.

nite Central Committee (MCC) are publications that have been immensely popular in advocating for simple living in a way that respects the needs of people throughout the world to have enough to eat.

Cookbooks have been important resources in Mennonite life for several hundred years. Churches have published their own cookbooks that reflect the traditional foodways of their communities, while other Mennonites have published cookbooks that were meant for a wider audience. MCC first published *More-with-Less Cookbook* by Doris Janzen Longacre in 1976. It quickly became popular with both Mennonites and simple living advocates, and has continued to be influential for new generations of Mennonites. Though it is a cookbook, *More-with-Less* includes much more than recipes and diet advice. In the revised edition, Mary Beth Lind affirms Longacre's belief that "we are what we eat, and what we eat shows our theology."[46] Lind also argues that food in North America has become a commodity that is genetically engineered, manipulated, and fast. The way to get beyond this destructive idea, Lind contends, is to reclaim the idea of food as an integral part of life and home, which then in turn becomes part of our theology and allows us to be "co-creators with God and stewards of God's garden."[47]

In her cookbook, Longacre spends the first fifty pages urging North Americans to think differently about the kinds of food they eat and their consumption of food as it relates to the global poor. She connects the excess consumption of food, particularly meat and sugar, to both widespread diet-caused health problems in North America as well as a failure to be good stewards of food resources.[48] She acknowledges that the immensity of the problem of world hunger can seem too large for one person to counteract even in a small way, but she affirms that the call of Christians is not to be successful but faithful: "Our directions come from the way Jesus told us to live, not from what we think will work."[49] Longacre does not end with this abstract call to consume less of the world's food resources, however; she also offers concrete ways to achieve this through examples of low-sugar, meatless meal plans and comprehensive information about how nutritional needs can be met with less processed food and less meat.[50]

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46 Longacre, *More-with-Less Cookbook*, Kindle edition, vi.

47 Ibid., viii.

48 Ibid., 15–18.

49 Ibid., 23.

50 Ibid., 32.

These meal plans are mostly meant for people in the North American context who overconsume meat and sugar. Longacre promotes cooking more simply with beans and grains, which is already the primary daily subsistence diet for many people in non-western countries. It is also important to note that cooking food from whole, raw ingredients rather than eating fast, processed food takes more time than many families with multiple jobs or in single parent homes may have. She nevertheless takes great care to demonstrate that cooking in this way can save families a substantial amount of money, and she provides tables that compare the cost of different types of meat with beans and dairy—non-meat sources of protein.

Theology is an implicit part of Longacre's cookbook, and several recent articles on the importance of Mennonite cookbooks as cultural artifacts and sources for theological reflection provide context to Longacre's "more-with-less" theology. Malinda Elizabeth Berry argues in "The Gifts of an Extended Theological Table: MCC's World Community Cookbooks as Organic Theology" that the World Community Cookbook series published by MCC is a reflection of the organic theology of the Mennonite Church. She notes that cookbooks are cultural artifacts that help "subgroups define themselves within and even over-and-against dominant culture," and they also contain ethical and theological resources that have been neglected by church scholars.[51]

Malinda Berry argues that in *More-with-Less Cookbook* and *Living More with Less,* Longacre "set the stage for thinking about peace theology both in terms of international relations and community-building table fellowship."[52] Berry differentiates between systematic theology done by theologians in an academic context and organic theology formed by communities in light of their shared experiences and struggles. She cites Latin American liberation theology as one example of organic theology. Both types of theology are necessary, but organic theology is often neglected at the expense of the shared wisdom and faith of the church community.[53]

Berry argues that by "beginning with the basic unit of our social fabric, the household, MCC called Mennonites—and many others—to live a connected life from our roots, through the trunk, and into our branches," a tree that rep-

51 Malinda Elizabeth Berry, "The Gifts of an Extended Theological Table: MCC's World Community Cookbooks as Organic Theology," in *A Table of Sharing: Mennonite Central Committee and the Expanding Networks of Mennonite Identity*, ed. Alain Epp Weaver (Telford, PA: Cascadia, 2011), 284.

52 Ibid., 285.

53 Ibid., 287–88.

resents the whole of the Christian community.[54] She argues additionally that Longacre blends prophetic witness and pastoral concern for neighbors throughout the world. Longacre's books frame issues of food and cooking within a global context, and Longacre always recognizes that God does not live only in North America. Longacre also connects the Mennonite doctrine of nonconformity to her prophetic witness, and Berry argues that "at the heart of nonconformity is the need for us Christians to avoid being defined by the priorities of broader culture that do not renew us or our communities."[55] Nonconformity means more than separation from the dominant culture; it involves living in culture without being defined by its standards or expectations.

Eating brings people together in both practical and tangible ways as well as in a way that has the potential to be "a renewal of our sense of peoplehood while at the same time extending the table for new and revolutionary changes to who we will be as people of faith and what we will do as followers of Christ."[56] Berry views food in the same way as Friesen: eating is a focal practice done in community that represents the community's beliefs. By participating in the fair trade movement, urban Mennonites affirm the idea that where their food comes from matters. By farming in a food desert, Berea Mennonite Church is living out their calling to feed the hungry by providing a sustainable source of food. Cookbooks are not the sole source for these initiatives, but the implicit theology within them supports the emphasis on social justice and care for earth's resources.

Cookbooks also have the power to become alternative narratives to the dominant narrative of consumption. Rebekah Trollinger, in "Mennonite Cookbooks and the Pleasure of Habit," examines the messages of Mennonite cookbooks regarding social justice and world hunger, arguing that calls for social justice are best motivated by a sense of pleasure rather than a sense of guilt. She focuses specifically on the MCC series of community cookbooks, of which Longacre's is the first. Trollinger finds that the language of addiction is a useful way to understand the compulsive relationship North Americans have with food.[57] She explains, "Consumer capitalism's main rallying cry is freedom of choice. Yet, it is precisely this freedom that necessitates advertising

54 Ibid., 293.

55 Ibid., 295.

56 Ibid., 178.

57 Rebekah Trollinger, "Mennonite Cookbooks and the Pleasure of Habit," *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 81 (October 2007): 536.

that encourages compulsion and even, at times, mocks choice."[58] Consumers are compelled to buy certain products, especially food, as a result of advertising. Consuming food is supposedly part of the freedom to choose, but Trollinger sees it instead as a trap in which North Americans are enticed to eat too much. She argues that the alternative to compulsion is habit and that this was what Longacre is trying to promote.

The emphasis on fair trade and eating locally are also becoming popular in North America more broadly, which is evident in the rapid growth of community farmers' markets throughout North America, as well as in the diverse array of products that claim to be fair trade certified. Mennonites place these practices within a particular theological and social context that gives them more force within their communities. The authors described above name theology, Christian discipleship, and nonconformity as being influential in Mennonite food traditions. Friesen argues persuasively that eating is a focal practice that is developed in community, and so eating locally and ethically supports Anabaptist principles regarding social justice and the responsible use of the bounty of the land. It is for this reason that food can be considered an aspect of nonconformity. In connecting Anabaptist principles with the larger phenomenon of local food movements, Mennonites demonstrate in practice the idea that growing and eating can be considered sacred acts. This can give these practices more staying power in the long term and serve to further reinforce Anabaptist beliefs.

Conclusion

Nonviolence is a useful lens through which to view the production and consumption of local fresh food because it recognizes that these can be sacred acts that reflect one's beliefs about the beauty and value of the created world. The Mennonite emphasis on nonviolence as an aspect of eating adds another layer because it recognizes that eating food produced within one's bioregion can be considered a peaceful act. Peace and food are not often discussed in tandem in local food movements, but practicing nonviolence is not limited to Mennonites or even Christians. Viewing the production and consumption of local food as a way to live more peacefully can enhance the goal of local food movements in North America to protect local bioregions.

In addition to nonviolence, nonconformity is an ever-evolving theological doctrine and social practice that represents an alternative vision for modern society. Nonconformity is a powerful witness against overconsumption and emphasizes how living simply can be joyful rather than a sacrifice. Global con-

58 Ibid., 538.

sciousness of resource use by affluent countries, a commitment to nonviolence, and a resolution to cherish the natural order of creation are all aspects of nonconformity that Longacre, Kraybill, and other Mennonite theologians have explored in Anabaptist environmental literature and as discussed above.

In the twenty-first century, humans throughout the world are feeling the effects of global climate change as well as the more localized effects of environmentally destructive resource extraction. It is now clear that those with the fewest resources globally are disproportionately affected by climate change, which is caused by the overconsumption of fuel resources by the affluent countries of the global North. Different Anabaptist groups express nonconformity in a variety of ways, and though eating locally and refusing to buy certain material goods may seem to have little effect on such a global problem, every action matters. Mennonites are a minority in North America, but the popularity of *Living More with Less*, *The Upside-Down Kingdom*, and other works by Mennonite scholars attest to the wider ethical witness that Mennonites offer to North American culture. Nonconformity provides an alternative vision that redefines buying less and owning less not as a sacrifice but a way to freedom from possessions. Eating and growing food locally within one's own community is another way to challenge overconsumption. Berea Mennonite Church is an example of a congregation that is attempting to provide an alternative vision of society by feeding the hungry and caring for the land in their own neighborhood. Eating local and sustainable food is one way of practicing peace and nonconformity that many Mennonites in North America are engaging. Community gardening, urban farming, and reclaiming small rural farms are all methods for putting theological ideals into practice.

Peppernuts and Anarsa:

Food, Religion, and Ritual

Marlene Epp[1]

I recently learned to eat anarsa—a sweet, rice-based treat—while traveling in India visiting with Mennonite women, and learning about their religious lives and food practices. It was late February, but I was told that Christians in India normally prepare anarsa at Christmastime as a seasonal and festive treat. I couldn't help but reflect on the similarities between this Indian specialty and peppernuts, one of my own culture-based Christmas foods. I concluded that the ingredients, preparation, and taste of the particular foods that I—a Canadian Mennonite woman—and my Indian Mennonite counterparts eat are quite different, as are many aspects of our cultures, but that the purpose and meaning surrounding such foods actually hold much in common.

Anyone who is part of a faith community knows that food is involved at some point in the community's life together, whether it is the community-building that happens at potluck meals, the daily or seasonal religious rituals that are central to faith practice, or the living out of beliefs through food charity. Food-focused religious rituals and practices are central to many of the world's faith traditions: a few examples include Muslims fasting during Ramadan and eating halal; Jews partaking of the Seder meal and eating kosher; Buddhists offering food gifts to fill themselves with the divine presence; Hindus placing restrictions on eating beef; and the Jains' extreme non-violence in their food habits. Because food preparation often takes place within the female realm of household activity, food-related rituals can provide women with a special and sacred space and role within their religious community.

I have sometimes bemoaned the fact that my own faith tradition, in its desire to simplify, or indeed eliminate religious ceremony altogether, did not have any faith-based food rituals. Of course, there was the communion meal—in my experience celebrated just twice a year and excluding unbaptized "members" of the community, particularly children. These little bits of bread and sips of grape juice just didn't really feel like eating and seemed quite unlike the first

1 *Marlene Epp is professor of history and peace and conflict studies at Conrad Grebel University College at the University of Waterloo.*

Lord's Supper.

Yet in our human yearning to express our spirituality in everyday practices, and vice versa—to sanctify our daily tasks—we have managed to connect certain moments in the Christian year with the customs and practices of our cultural foodways.[2] These subtexts in the Christian message have, I think, given women a sense of presiding over the sacred, especially in the past when their ecclesial roles were limited. This reminds me of Easter when my mother bakes Paska—that egg-based sweet bread from Eastern Europe that symbolizes the breaking of the Lenten fast (although we neither fast nor avoid much at all during Lent!).

During the Christmas season, my mother has always made peppernuts, a traditional northern European cookie that is small and spicy, either hard or soft. My grandmother made them too. One of my male colleagues bakes them in mammoth batches, and as a seasonal workplace custom, they are eagerly anticipated by all of us—Anabaptist, neo-Anabaptist, and non-Anabaptist alike. This year I too made them and learned that there are as many different ways to make peppernuts as there are bakers and recipes. These Christmastime peppernuts carry no explicit religious meaning nor is their consumption required of a practicing Mennonite, but they do link me to the cultural and also religious past of my grandparents in Ukraine. Norma Jost Voth's *Mennonite Foods and Folkways from South Russia* offers several stories that highlight not only the cultural but also the religious meaning that was implicit in peppernuts.[3] When Mennonite refugees, mostly women and children, fled their homes in the Soviet Union in the midst of the Second World War and found temporary safety in Berlin, they were fearful and hungry. However, Mennonite Central Committee workers were able to arrange for ingredients and the use of an oven so that women could prepare more than a thousand little sacks of peppernuts for the gathered refugees on Christmas Eve. It was a sign of hope in the midst of despair, and that God had not abandoned them. Apparently among some Mennonites in Paraguay, peppernuts cut with a thimble were even used during the communion service.

During my brief tour of Mennonite communities in India, in addition to experiencing a wide array of delightful dishes and warm hospitality, I discovered that anarsa, like peppernuts, is made for special festive times of the year, especially Christmas. I first learned about anarsa from a group of women in

2 Food studies scholars frequently differentiate "foodstuffs"—the things we eat—from "foodways"—the attendant practices and customs.

3 Norma Jost Voth, *Mennonite Foods and Folkways from South Russia*, vol. 1 (Intercourse, PA: Good Books, 1990), 364–402.

the Bihar Mennonite Mandli in Jharkhand state. Lily Kachhap described the time-consuming process of making anarsa that begins with several days of soaking raw rice, then drying and grinding the rice finely to powder; then it is mixed with sugar or jaggery (unrefined cane sugar), and optional ingredients like coconut, nuts, or dried fruit. The mixture is formed into flat or round shapes and then fried in oil. I learned quickly that, as with peppernuts, there are many variations according to the style and preferences of the cook. In fact, the debates I witnessed about preparing anarsa were as animated—if not more so—as the discussions about the "authentic" way to make peppernuts at my Mennonite workplace.

One woman declared that every Christian home would have anarsa at Christmas, while another said that when Mennonite women began making it in the weeks of Advent, their non-Christian neighbors began to come around hoping for a taste. (This past Christmas, I brought peppernuts to my Palestinian Muslim neighbors in reciprocity for the many Arab snacks they have brought to my door.) Some sources say that anarsa is a traditional Hindu food associated with the festival of Diwali (festival of lights), which normally occurs in mid to late autumn. It was interesting to ponder the migration of this special treat from Hindu kitchens during Diwali to Mennonite kitchens just a few weeks later at Christmas. These Indian Mennonite women came to associate their anarsa-making with a religious season, just as I did with my peppernuts.

While peppernuts and anarsa are different in their cultural origins, taste, and ingredients, they are very similar in meaning for Mennonite women of different ethnicities. There are other shared food practices that highlight the central role that women have in the life of their congregations. Mennonite women of my ancestry have long prepared food for weddings and funerals in their churches, brought special "horn of plenty" food offerings at Thanksgiving, and held bake sales to raise money for the local or wider church. I found this is also true of Mennonite women in India and a common ritual there called *Mutti Daan* (handful offering), whereby women would set aside a handful of uncooked rice while preparing the family meal; those handfuls would accumulate until the women brought them to church, where their collective offering of rice would be sold to raise funds for activities in the congregation. The regularity of the offering and, as one woman said, the prayerful way in which this was enacted, put women into a sacred space within the spiritual life of the congregation. (More recently, the collection of rice has been replaced by the collection of monetary donations.)

I think that sometimes in our effort to find unity in Christ, we of the Anabaptist-Mennonite global church are uncomfortable talking about the unique

and disparate cultural traditions that are embedded in all of our daily lives and also infusing our worship and religious practices, of which foodways are one example. While there may be huge divergence in the ingredients of prepared dishes, shared meaning "at the table" could well be the place where intercultural dialogue thrives the most. Furthermore, the preparation of special foods at holy times and in service to the church imbues (traditional) women's work with an implicit sacredness. This was especially true in eras when women were denied access to many officially recognized ecclesial roles.

For faith groups that are tied to particular cultural traditions, whether contemporary or ancestral, food holds extra meaning as a material and spiritual entity that ties us to our religious beliefs and our cultural identity. The preparation of both peppernuts and anarsa carries this purpose and conveys love—for God, for the birth of Jesus, for the labor of his mother, Mary, and for the people that we share these Christmas treats with. It may not have been a coincidence that shortly after I first learned about anarsa, while traveling the jam-packed roads of Jharkhand state in India, I saw a large truck with this slogan in large letters on the back: "Cook Food. Serve Love." Looked pretty Anabaptist-Mennonite to me.

Just Food:

Right to Food from a Faith Perspective

Ray Dirks[1]

The *Just Food* exhibition explores the right to food, and was created by the Mennonite Committee on Human Rights, based out of Winnipeg, Manitoba.

Eighteen commissioned artists from Canada and around the world were asked to interpret the meaning of the human right to food in two pieces of original art specifically created for this exhibition. The artists were divided into six groups of three, with one Canadian and two international individuals in each group. The groups were asked to create artistic responses to two different texts—six human rights declarative texts each paired with a different passage from the Old Testament.[2]

The artists represented a wide range of cultural, economic, and faith backgrounds. One artist, Jossias Sitoe from Mozambique, lived on the street when he was a child. The content of his art comes from a place of having known extreme hunger and need. Alejandro Aranda has worked on behalf of marginalized groups in one of Mexico's poorest states, Guerrero, for years. Bert Monterona is motivated by justice issues in his Philippines homeland. Tibebe Terffa was imprisoned, tortured, and deprived of food under the previous Mengistu dictatorship in Ethiopia. Isam Aboud comes from the Sahara Desert of northern Sudan, where temperatures hit fifty degrees Celsius in the summer. He knows the harshness of an unforgiving climate. Hashim Hannoon, a refugee from Iraq, knows the affect war has on food production and security. Annelies Soomers is a Dutch artist who has advocated for the least among us for years through her art. Jairo Alfonso Castelanos, from Cuba, understands what it's like to live with ration cards. Ovid Charlette is a First Nations person of Canada, and discovered his artistic talents in prison. From a rich traditional

1 *Ray Dirks is the Mennonite Heritage Centre Gallery curator. The gallery is a self-funded program of Mennonite Church Canada located on the campus of Canadian Mennonite University in Winnipeg, Manitoba.*

2 Works from two of the eighteen commissioned artists are featured below. More reproductions of the exhibit can be found online at www.anabaptistwitness.org/journal_entry/just-foods/ and the complete exhibit can be found at Mennonite Committee on Human Rights, *Just Food Art*, accessed June 14, 2015, http://justfoodart.com/.

base, he explores important issues with pain, skill, and raw openness.

The art presented in this exhibit challenges viewers to discover, contemplate, and explore food-related issues from a myriad of cultural, faith, political, and economic perspectives, sometimes in literal terms, sometimes more abstractly, some holding close to the quotes, some unveiled with broader brush strokes, but all created with integrity using the universal language of art.

Just Food exhibit sponsors included Mennonite Central Committee Canada, Canadian Foodgrains Bank, Canadian International Development Agency, Friends of the Mennonite Centre in Ukraine, and Mennonite Heritage Centre Gallery, among others.

Image 1: Alejandro Aranda. *La Busqueda (The Search)*

Sources of inspiration

Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 25
Amos 5: 11-12, 14

Artist's Reflection

My hands, your hands: our hands interconnect, brown, white, black and yellow. Weathered, hard & callused, tired and worn out hands, constantly moving, offering and working, looking for tortillas, wheat and rice.

Hands that plough the land; hands that with every seed plant life into the centre of the earth. Hands that water and care for the fruits.

Hands in solidarity that share, help, teach; that build a better world.

Hands that don't close in fists in order to punch, that don't pull the trigger to kill, that don't sign the papers for war, that don't contaminate the air, the land, the water. Hands that don't hurt others because of ideology, belief, prejudice or the color of one's skin.

Yes to the hands that come together as brothers and sisters, those who struggle together for the common good, those who organize in the face of misfortune, those who rise up before injustice, who give spirit and hope. Yes to those who place a hand on your shoulder and encourage others to keep going, who suggest that it is possible to live in a world that is different, to live in a world without hunger or thirst.

Image 1. Alejandro Aranda. Mexico, **La Busqueda (The Search),** *2010. Linocut, 20 x 28 inches. Artist copyright.*

Image 2. Alejandro Aranda. Mexico, **La Oración (The Prayer)**, *2010. Lino cut, 20 x 28 inches. Artist copyright.*

Image 2. Alejandro Aranda. *La Oración (The Prayer).*

Sources of Inspiration

Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 25
"Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services."

-Adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations, 10 December, 1948

Amos 5: 11-12, 14

Artist's Reflection

In *el troje* or the barn, my feet feel the corn. I step on the corn, sink and get lost in the corn. Jumping I make pirouettes and lie down and dream that I am the corn. A child of the corn: made of corn meal, color of a tortilla. I leave with my kite tied to a string of stars, the backbone of a giant animal. Above the moon is serene.

I am not cold or hot or thirsty. I'm not envious or bitter, nor do I feel pain or hate or fear. I am nothing, naked like the first man made of corn, open to be happy.

Image 3 and 4. Gen Tsuboi. *God's Plan 1* and *God's Plan 2.*

Sources of Inspiration

Hillsboro resolution
"The peace of the world may rise or fall on the solution to the hunger problem in the developing countries." MCC resolved "to acquaint the churches of our constituency with the relationship between over-consumption on the part of North Americans and its effect upon needy people in the developing countries."

-Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Resolution on the World Food Crisis, Hillsboro, Kansas, January 1974

Daniel 1:1-21

Image 3. Gen Tsuboi. Japan, **God's Plan 1**, *2010.*
Kirie (Paper cut), 31 x *21.5 inches. Artist copyright.*

Image 4. Gen Tsuboi. Japan, **God's Plan 2**, *2010.*
Kirie (Paper cut), 31 x *21.5 inches. Artist copyright.*

Come, Cook with Us:

Food, Friendship, and Faith in a Community Kitchen

Anna Marie Geddert[1]

It's a feast for the senses: the smell of savory spices; the taste of fresh, healthy food; the sounds of children playing and women chatting; the touch of supportive embrace; the sight of women and children of different cultures, economic statuses, and age; the sense of God's Spirit moving. This is what you will find on a Tuesday afternoon at Jubilee Mennonite Church Community Kitchen in Winnipeg, Canada, and this is how we experience and demonstrate God's presence. One volunteer, Hedy, said, "At a time when I question the relevance of the Church, I am realizing that we have a role to play as Jesus-followers in the lives of our neighbors, and a responsibility to facilitate relationship with them."

It started by accident when, seven years ago, our church basement flooded. The resulting renovation included upgrading the kitchen as well as the basement for the daycare that was renting the space. But when the renovations were complete, the daycare decided to stay at their temporary location. What was God calling us to do with our upgraded kitchen?

The answer came in a phone call from the local Donwood Public School. Some parents were in conflict with each other and no longer thought the school was a safe space in which to work out their differences. A few of the children of these parents attended Jubilee's neighborhood children's club. Might Jubilee be a safe place for parents to develop better relationships? Might cooking together be a community-building activity? Would our kitchen be available?

A partnership was formed. Donwood Public School provided a staff member and a financial contribution, while Jubilee provided the space, staff support, volunteers for watching children, and donations of food. This partnership fit with our commitment to be present in our community. We started in May of 2010.

Jubilee Mennonite Church is a congregation of about 125 worshippers, and situated in a neighborhood that is economically and culturally diverse. Alongside middle-class detached homes, there are three low-income housing

1 *Anna Marie Geddert is Community Ministry Director at Jubilee Mennonite Church in Winnipeg, Manitoba.*

developments within three blocks. Our neighborhood includes immigrants from many countries, aboriginal people, single moms, and about 700 children. Some of our neighbors contend with issues of poverty, inadequate housing, addictions, poor mental health, and racism. Four years ago, Jubilee decided to support a half-time Community Ministry Director to lead engagement with our neighbors in projects like a children's club, youth activities, soccer and hockey clubs, a community garden, community meals, and of course the community kitchen.

One mom's experience at the first Community Kitchen Day showed the possibilities that might come from this project. She arrived, and after welcoming her, we told her we would make shepherd's pie. She responded by saying, "I can't make that. I have never made a home-cooked meal." We reassured her that it would be okay and that we would make it together. At the end of the afternoon, she held up her shepherd's pie and said, "I did it! I did it!" with a beaming smile. She took her first homemade meal back to feed her family.

We meet each Tuesday with ten to twelve women, cooking together for an hour and then providing a workshop on anything from self-esteem to nutrition to human rights. We eat a nutritious snack and share about our lives. After a ten-week series, we take a break and then resume.

In the community kitchen, women have found a place to belong, find and offer support, love and be loved, weep and laugh. Food is the equalizing force. Relationships can be built and flourish around food, for we all need to eat. The participants talk about being "blessed . . . by learning different ways of preparing meals, and sometimes the culture it comes from." Participants and leaders celebrate meeting and making new friends, and they say the program lets them be more involved with the church. Several of the women have become followers of Jesus, eventually leading to baptisms.

Two volunteers plan the meals and prepare the snacks. Hedy attends Jubilee, and Jody, who had no previous connection with Jubilee, volunteered when she heard about the program. In a recent evaluation, Jody reported that she started volunteering as a way to help others and that she has developed a deep love for women she would otherwise never have met. "Many of the women started off at Community Kitchen very shy and closed off, but most have opened up in ways that are so beautiful. I hear them talking about how they help each other and look out for each other. We all have struggles, but knowing we have the support of other caring woman can make all the difference!"

Kristine, another volunteer, commented, "I have been blessed by witnessing a small church do an amazing thing in a very direct and personal way for these women in the community. These women don't get lost in the crowd, and feel

very comfortable coming for the help and support of others."

The weekly workshops are led by Doris, a life coach who heard about Community Kitchen through a friend and asked if she could get involved. She has since made Jubilee her church home. "Community kitchen has contributed to my life," she said. "It's given me the opportunity to find my voice alongside other strong courageous women. Even though we are a diverse group of women, we share many of the same difficulties and challenges. We have learned how to reach out to one another in those hard times. We are learning how to ask for help and give help."

Volunteers from the congregation care for the children during Community Kitchen. "The children are so active and excited about the toys, the tricycles, and the other children," says Hanna, a great-grandmother who helps. "Each child is unique. Some of them can sit and play quietly, while others are constantly running around. But each one is loveable and beautiful. The children are such a gift and inspiration to me." For many mothers, this is the only time in the week when they are free from minding their children.

Jubilee Community Kitchen continues to evolve. Donwood Public School changed its priorities and is no longer a partner in the community kitchen. But other contributors have come forward, including government grants, community organizations, local businesses and individuals. Without these partners we could not sustain the program.

The initial conflicts that concerned Donwood School have been resolved. New conflicts have come up, but within the relationships we have built, they too can be reconciled. Other initiatives have grown out of identified needs. A multi-week support group for abuse survivors was co-sponsored and led by Mennonite Central Committee staff. A breadmaking workshop included training in home business management and led several women to start a baking business.

Manija is a Muslim woman who recently emigrated from Afghanistan; she teaches us how to make her traditional foods and bakes naan for community meals. Two women make extra meals to deliver to the ill or bereaved. Many Community Kitchen participants volunteer at the church's annual community Christmas dinner. Some also participate in the community garden, farming thirty plots where neighbors and church members grow organic vegetables to feed their families and to contribute to community meals. Additionally, participants in the program have begun to make their own contributions to the surrounding neighborhood. They organize and run a clothing fair each spring and fall, where neighbors can purchase a garbage bag of donated clothes for only $1.00.

Jubilee church continues to see God's hand weaving opportunities to be present in our neighborhood. This did not happen because of our strategic plan; this was God already at work in the community bringing together those who live and work here. Through prayer, listening, discerning, and experimenting we are discovering a new way of being the local church. We look at the assets we have received in our church and in our neighborhood, and we look for ways to use those assets to partner with God for the greater good. We don't suggest that every church should have a community kitchen; you need to discover your own opportunities and calling. This is our calling—to bring experiences of healthy eating, dignity, life skills, and improved relationships in our neighborhoods.

Faith, one of the participants, caught the essence in a note to the leaders: "Community Kitchen changed me in ways that made me a better person inside and out of Jubilee Church. It's not just a place you go to cook. It's a place you go to learn, listen, receive the opportunity to build new friendships, and to give and get the support you may need."

God surprises and leads us as we continue to look to Jesus and follow his example—feeding the crowds and eating with all kinds of people—and his teaching to love our neighbors. When we look back and all around us, we see that it is God's grace, the good news of God's love, and the pleasure of sharing food we prepared together that continue to inspire us. So we move forward and take the risk of being present in our community by saying, "Come, cook with us."

Vegetarianism:

Opening a Door for Authentic Relationships

Kate Wentland[1]

When I was in seminary, I was told countless times by professors that I couldn't and shouldn't maintain my vegetarian commitment abroad, especially in mission encounters. They insisted that to be polite one needs to eat everything offered. But I've been a vegetarian for eighteen years, and even though I've lived abroad several times and traveled extensively, I haven't needed to give up that dietary commitment when connecting with people in other countries. I will share a few of my stories about how cooking and having an interest in food have helped me develop relationships with many Chinese families, demonstrating how my commitment to vegetarianism has resulted in deeper and more authentic encounters.

Short-term mission trips have certainly become more popular. On these brief trips, the visitors are usually hosted royally and treated to grand feasts. There generally isn't time to develop close relationships with the hosts, so it can be awkward to mention a dietary difference. However, that short-term model is not the kind of mission that I engage in China, where I serve with Mennonite Central Committee and Mennonite Partners in China. When I'm a dinner guest here, the hosts are friends who know me well. Because of our friendship, they already know I'm a vegetarian, and meals have never been awkward. In fact, I'm often told that I'm appreciated as a vegetarian because I'm a cheap guest.

I've been teaching at the national seminary here in China for the last three years, and my students are the top theological students in the country, coming from all regions. My Mennonite sending agencies stress the relationship-building aspect of my job as much as my hours in the classroom, and I take this seriously. I've built countless close relationships here with the students, many of which have developed through all of the cooking groups and cooking parties that I've initiated on campus. Additionally, I travel all over China to visit my students in my free time, usually living in their homes for several days to a week

1 *Kate Wentland teaches at China's national seminary in Nanjing, serving with Mennonite Central Committee and Mennonite Partners in China. Her home church is Peace Mennonite Fellowship in Claremont, California.*

or more. I get to know their parents more closely and learn more deeply about their home church contexts. I've already visited a majority of the provinces across this large country.

Many families have told me it was honestly a relief for them to host a vegetarian. It's so much cheaper for them because they don't need to fuss over me with lobster, shrimp, fish, and other animal-based delicacies. We eat simple food, often stir-fries with cheap seasonal vegetables. In a way, I feel that this lifestyle actually draws me closer to the families because they're not cooking special feasts for me but their daily standard fare. While many visitors to China will come away saying most of the food is meat-based, it is because they are eating special dishes, but in most homes locals eat much less meat than a tourist will consume.

Because I love cooking, I always enthusiastically ask host families about local cooking methods. Besides enjoying ourselves, spending time in the kitchen with families also helps break down cultural barriers. Sometimes my students' parents seem nervous when I arrive, not knowing what to talk to me about, as I am an obvious foreigner being both tall and blond. I think my curiosity about food creates an easy way to connect. My hosts are usually surprised that I have questions about their cooking methods, because to them it's all so easy and obvious. But China is a large country with several distinct regional cuisines, and even dishes with the same names are cooked differently from town to town. So I always feel I have more to learn, and I'm always curious. My hosts like that.

Photo 1. Author enjoys preparing a meal with her host. *Photo provided by author.*

Once, in southwest China, I spent a week in a student's home that was so remote and surrounded by mountains that they had only had contact with the outside world for the last twenty years. I was told that I was the first foreigner to visit some of the surrounding villages. Because of the mountainous landscape, at least half of the items at the market were wild vegetables foraged from the steep slopes. My student's mom told me it was a relief to host me as a vegetarian because not only did she not have to buy expensive meat every day but she could also show off the rich local variety of wild greens. We ate about twenty different wild greens at our meals that week. Most of them didn't have names—they are simply called "ye cai" or "wild vegetable"—but the locals could tell by sight if the flavor would be sweet, bitter, garlicky, or reminiscent of parsley.

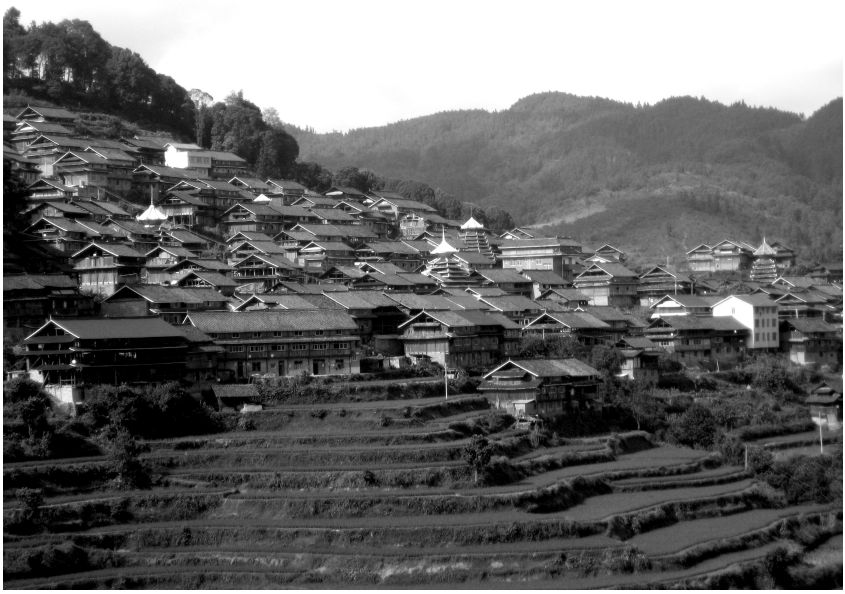

Photo 2. Beautiful terraced mountainside in China *Photo provided by author.*

On another trip I stayed in a remote wooden village where I had to fetch drinking water from a spring and wash my hair in a river. My student's parents had built their wooden home themselves. They asked me to pray at each meal. At the end of my stay, the father remarked that all of my prayers had been about gratefulness, and he was moved that I could be grateful for such simple vegetarian meals in their rustic home.

Last year I spent two weeks in the far northern city of Harbin, residing in a North-Korean Chinese home. There is a sizable Korean community in Harbin, mostly North Koreans who moved there two or three generations ago. My

student's mom and I bonded closely because we spent that time together in the kitchen cooking. She cried when I left and told me that I was like a daughter to her. Over those two weeks she had taught me to cook a mixture of simple and delicious northern Chinese and Korean dishes, and we made vegetarian dumplings together during the Chinese New Year. She also pulled me into her afternoon mahjong group, teaching me to play by local Harbin rules. After several afternoons of playing mahjong with her and her close friends, who were also Chinese-Korean, they opened up to me about the prevalence of domestic violence in Korean culture—the kind of conversation that doesn't normally happen with outsiders.

Last month in Shanghai while I was making steamed dumplings with my student's mom, she told me she's almost a vegetarian—what I would call a "flexitarian" back home in California. She asked me why I became a vegetarian, and I talked about factory farming, which isn't good for the animals, the earth, or consumers. I explained that most Mennonites aren't vegetarian but that I want to extend my Anabaptist commitment of nonviolence to include animals and the earth. She told me she visited a farm as a child and that she didn't like how the animals were treated. Because we had just been talking about Chinese astrology, I knew her age. I asked if she was sent to a farm during the Cultural Revolution, and her husband jumped up, beaming. "Wow! You know Chinese history!" I don't normally ask people of her generation about the Cultural Revolution, since most don't even talk about it with their own children. But our conversation about food had opened the door for me to do so, and she shared about working on a farm in Jiangxi Province during that dark period of history. She reminisced for the rest of the evening, concluding that people in China have more now but that their lives are more complicated, and they aren't necessarily happier.

These are just a few stories of how cooking and an interest in food have helped me connect with many Chinese families. My commitment to vegetarianism has resulted in meaningful conversations and relationships, allowing my hosts to share more deeply about their lives, and me to honor my values and commitments.

Book Reviews

Andrew Francis, *What in God's Name Are You Eating?: How Can Christians Live and Eat Responsibly in Today's Global Village?*, Cascade Books, Eugene, Oregon, 2014. 168 pp. $20.00. ISBN: 9781620325735.

In *What in God's Name Are You Eating?*, Andrew Francis connects the urgent crises that our planet faces (climate change, famine and overproduction, mass poverty, etc.) with some of our most basic personal choices—the ways in which we nourish ourselves. As he puts it, "The key issue in reading this book is to realize that *everything* you buy, prepare, and cook for your family and others and then put in your mouths raises sustainability issues" (29).

To support his argument, Francis expounds on the depth of present worldwide problems, links these to unsustainable patterns of food consumption in the global North, and provides his readers with theological reflection and suggestions as to how we might eat responsibly. Happily, he still finds time to dwell on the joys of eating together. (The word "company," he likes to point out, comes from the Latin term for sharing bread together.)

What I appreciate most about this book is that it de-trivializes what we put on our plates. By sharing a variety of stories (both critical data—which reflect the earth story—as well as personal narratives), Francis restores an awareness of where our food comes from and the ways in which global issues and the habits of eating are closely interrelated. We can't underestimate how critical this work is. The technologies of food production and the obscuring power of corporate advertising and news media disconnect most of us food consumers from food producers and the very land itself.

Will it surprise many of Francis's readers to find that their food patterns are directly contributing to some of the most urgent problems threatening creation today? Given the urgency of these matters, Francis does not mince his words when he addresses his audience: "The very fact that you are holding this book in your hands shows that you are part of a Western privileged elite with enough leisure time and health to read rather than be scratching for subsistence, every hour of every day" (10). And a little later, when writing about world hunger: "People are starving while you read this book, or while [you] eat your next meal and discuss the merits of my narrative with your friends" (24). The tone is confrontational, but it does raise important questions: not simply, How many people starved while I was writing this review? but also, Why do these particular privilege and power inequities exist and persist, and what might I do to resist them?

Francis relates these issues to religious traditions, pointing to the centrality of

sharing meals, of hospitality, and of feeding the hungry in the Old and New Testaments. He points out that following Jesus in our ways of eating today does not mean adopting "the diet of a first-century Mediterranean peasant," which is neither sensible nor possible for the majority of world Christians. Rather, he presents our food choices as acts of faith and argues that each Christian, no matter in what context they live, "can allow Jesus' values in his respect for the planet, his advocacy of 'care for the neighbor,' and his reliance on sharing food to shape the way we grow or produce, shop, then cook and share our food" (45).

An extensive list of seventy-five practical suggestions near the end of the book provides readers with potential starting points in adopting what Francis calls "a Jesus-shaped diet." Many of these suggestions will likely be familiar (eat less meat and dairy products, eat local whenever possible, eat seasonal, buy fair trade, compost, grow your own food). As the book was written with a broad audience in mind, and practical steps are very different in different locations, it is understandable that the level of its suggestions remain rather general. Francis is to be commended for doing what many justice-oriented books fail to do—offering his audience practical starting points that can serve as trajectories for additional individual research.

Personally, I was encouraged by Francis's call to commit to making changes—even if we start small, and perhaps for a limited period of time (like Lent). Such changes can then grow into more permanent features of our lifeway and be followed by other changes. I have been a vegetarian for over half of my life. In reading *What in God's Name Are You Eating?*, I have decided to more consistently adopt a vegan diet to further reduce my carbon footprint.

Francis is right—those of us who have the ability to choose what we eat enjoy an immense privilege, and if we are to take seriously that Jesus said, "I came that the world might have life—in all its fullness" (John 10:10, author's paraphrase), we "can do no other than change our ways that the world might have life—and not our leftovers" (32). Although he writes from an explicitly radical Anabaptist vantage, Francis's short text is an important read for a wide church audience. I hope many do read it, and then eat and drink accordingly.

Laurens Thiessen van Esch *is a Quaker, originally from the Netherlands and currently living in Winnipeg, where he attends Hope Mennonite Church.*

Ragan Sutterfield, *Cultivating Reality: How the Soil Might Save Us,* Cascade, Eugene, Oregon, 2013. 121 pp. $12.80. ISBN: 9781597526562.

Though Ragan Sutterfield never says it in these words, *Cultivating Reality: How the Soil Might Save Us* is about the practical and spiritual implications of eating, whether the food eaten is a nuked Pizza Pop on the run or a leisurely family break-

fast of pasture-raised bacon and free-range eggs from a trusted farmer down the road. What we eat affects the earth and our souls.

Eating is our most significant intersection with the earth. If we take responsibility for this connection, whether as farmers or "proxy" farmers, we can be enriched spiritually. A good measure of a life, Sutterfield contends, is whether our actions build or destroy soil. And so the church needs *agrarianism*—a "habit of mind" rooted in our dependence on dirt (2–3).

When he wrote the book, Sutterfield was involved in a small-scale farm in Arkansas, though he refers to his own experience less often than he might. The book adds to a mini-genre of writing that contrasts the virtues of agrarianism with the evils of "industrial" agriculture. That genre—which includes contributions from Wendell Berry, Amishman David Kline, Gene Logsdon, and Fred Bahnson, as well as Michael Pollan, Barbara Kingsolver, and Henry David Thoreau if you stretch the boundaries—faces a difficult task. Its authors swim against the tide of progress and civilization.

In her 2007 book, *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle*, Kingsolver refers to a powerful societal "presumption that education is a key to moving away from manual labor and dirt—two undeniable ingredients of farming."[1] Like Kingsolver, Sutterfield is pushing against not only the weight of education but also the entire trajectory of history, which is headed toward the bright lights. The task at hand is to chip away at what I would call the urbanization of the collective imagination.

Cultivating Reality sets about this task not by prescribing exactly how people should eat or by calling for re-ruralization but by examining worldviews. Sutterfield uses a good portion of his book to trace the anti-agrarian notions of individual greed and utilitarian disregard for environmental health back to thinkers like John Locke, René Descartes, and Francis Bacon. Along the way he makes many and varied stops to discuss fasting, celebration (aim not only for that which is sustainable but that which calls for joyous observance), Genesis (be a servant rather than steward of the land), the Sabbath (not just a day to rest so we can work harder in the week to come), convenience (beware), agrarian farms as a monastic-like foothold in a culture adrift, the fault of liberalism (it's bent on "coercion"), "shit," and the gift of dependence.

The latter is the point I will call to mind most often after reading the book. Sutterfield observes that his infant daughter will become more dependent, not less, as she grows up. She will become intertwined in "the expanding network of creatures and people upon which she relies" (19–20). And that is a gift, Sutterfield says.

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1 Barbara Kingsolver, *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle: A Year of Food Life* (New York: Harper Collins, 2007), 9.

As an aspiring small-scale farmer myself, I resonated with many of Suttefield's reflections, especially those on gift, satisfaction, and, particularly, humility. I know that every plant, with the possible exception of nodding thistle, is a gift. I know the bone-tired, soul-quenching satisfaction of manual farm work. I know the humility of battling weeds and shoveling stinky stuff. I know the humility of transplanting a tiny oak seedling, aware that I will have returned to dust by the time it is anywhere near as big as the three giants that anchor the yard we momentarily inhabit.

Soil, Sutterfield says, can offer the church humility; the church is to be "brought low, close to the earth" (112). This humility is a spiritual gift of a practical reality. As Thoreau wrote from his cabin in the woods, "Humility, live darkness, reveals the heavenly lights."[2] Such darkness is hard to find in cities.

But here I come to a danger that Sutterfield also faces—dichotomization. The city is not all bad and the country not all good. Likewise, the "industrial" farmer is not all bad and the "agrarian" farmer not all good.

The step beyond *Cultivating Reality* is to bring in the reality that cities, which will not go away, depend on land controlled by big farmers. Ultimately the food system cannot change without them and their land. You can't grow potatoes in the pages of a book, only in soil.

Condemnation is too easy. Dichotomization itself partakes of the worldview that Sutterfield identifies as problematic. The big farmers—my neighbors—must be brought into the conversation, not categorically condemned. We're all on this earth together, and we need to make it work.

Sutterfield brings in some of this nuance in his one-page epilogue when he confesses the compromises in his own life, a life which he says is "lost in plastic wrap and gasoline" (115). Then he comes full circle back to his starting point that the church needs agrarianism. Agrarianism, he says (not quite in these words), needs the church, which for Sutterfield is the only context in which to work through the contradictions and compromises of life.

Somewhat ironically—or not—Sutterfield is now training to be an Episcopal priest. In an email, he shared that he thinks churches should raise their own grapes and wheat for communion, and gather holy water from local streams.[3] Sutterfield believes this would help us "understand the ecological connections of Christ's body," bringing us back to the dirt upon which our bodies and souls depend.

Will Braun *lives with his family on an old farmyard near Morden, Manitoba, on the Canadian Prairies.*

2 Henry David Thoreau, *Walden; or, Life in the Woods* (New York: MacMillan, 1918), 331.

3 Ragan Sutterfield, email to author, June 22, 2015.

Virginia D. Nazarea, Robert E. Rhoades, and Jenna E. Andrews-Swann (eds.), *Seeds of Resistance, Seeds of Hope: Place and Agency in the Conservation of Biodiversity*, University of Arizona Press, Tucson, 2013. 298 pp. $60.00. ISBN: 9780816530144.

From Chiapas to Japan to the southern United States, farmers, seed keepers, and gardeners—whose identities are often intrinsically linked with the land—are creating community that reflects their cultural identity. *Seeds of Resistance, Seeds of Hope: Place and Agency in the Conservation of Biodiversity* connects the lives of these people around the world engaged in the same loving struggle to resist homogenization and cultivate a world where diversity can flourish.

The book's central argument is that conservation is not only *possible* in conditions of marginality; it *thrives* there. Where memory is threatened—whether through the nonconsensual encroachment of genetically modified corn, the mass migration of people from one continent to another, or the long and ongoing assertion of colonial domination over indigenous peoples—memory keepers step up to preserve the cultural and biological fabric of their communities. It is unplanned and beyond design, but in the mess there is a kind of magic.

While the conservation of biological material can be complemented by preserving landraces[4] in faraway gene banks or supporting small-scale farmers through government- or NGO-led initiatives, the heart of conservation work is happening invisibly because of local people who are committed to carrying cultural memory. Cultural memory provides people with "a sense of belonging and a feeling of broader membership in a real or imagined community" (Susannah Chapman and Tom Brown, "Apples of Their Eyes: Memory Keepers of the American South," 54). Seeds are perfect vehicles for transporting cultural memory from one time or place to another, because they arouse in their look, smell, and texture a set of stories that can help us locate ourselves in relation to our roots, no matter where they are planted. Each of the chapters demonstrates in its own way how seeds play this role in diverse contexts.

One chapter looks at a project in Chiapas, Mexico, initiated by the Zapatistas—global leaders in self-organization and asserting self-determination. Learning that GMO corn was threatening to contaminate their corn seed provoked anger and uncertainty. "For us, the indigenous, corn is sacred. If these agrochemical companies are trying to get rid of our corn, it is like wanting to get rid of a part of our culture which we inherited from our Mayan ancestors" (Peter Brown, "Maya Mother Seeds in Resistance of Highland Chiapas in Defense of Native Corn," 158). Corn plays a role in their cultural memory as the crop that kept them strong in all of

4 A landrace is a local variety of a domesticated plant or animal species that has developed largely by adaptation to the natural and cultural environment in which it lives.

their struggles. So when the corn was endangered, they stepped up to protect it as it had protected them. They engaged in extensive field-testing to determine the scope of the problem. They froze non-contaminated seed as a precaution. And they sent corn seed packages to a network of trusted seed keepers throughout the world for safekeeping and safe planting. GMO corn might take over their land, was the thought, but the seed will always be safe, and its sacredness will never be compromised.

Protecting seed is not just a matter of keeping high-yielding varieties or maintaining a connection to the past. It is about generating and regenerating identities that are rooted in place and culture. When forces attempt to marginalize those identities, the result—as in the case of the Zapatista seed keepers—is often a renewed community commitment to strengthening them again. This commitment comes not out of an angry reaction to a threat. It comes from a place of resilience. A movement born out of that kind of conviction will undoubtedly be around to stay.

Nazarea writes: "If we dismantle our rational frameworks and do away with our formulaic approaches, what are we left with? Can we imagine knowledge systems that are mutually respectful and permeable, social movements that are not primarily political and angry but sensual and celebratory? Can we spend more time in listening than in positioning, dwelling a little bit more and controlling a little bit less?" (13).

There are examples all around us of people taking paths that defy conventional norms, choosing to value diversity over convenience, identity over rationality. These paths are not motivated by anger but by a will to preserve and celebrate that which makes us who we are. They find ways to succeed regardless of the challenges that face them. What would it look like for our churches to set out on a path like that?

The stances we take (or fail to take) often come from a position of fear—of losing control, of making someone angry, of saying the wrong thing. What if we let go of that fear and surrendered to the joy in diversity that has always been our primary source of innovation as a church? What if we let voices at the margins define our actions? What if we looked for the work already being done in our communities to protect and restore our connection to place, and found ways to support it? Nurturing this kind of mindset would extend well beyond food systems and into all social justice work; we often find ourselves called to this work but are unable or unwilling to act courageously in it.

In his chapter on place and indigenous biodiversity conservation, Tirso Gonzales writes about decolonization: "For some . . ., this process will be a strengthening of their places; for others it will be a process of moving out of their 'violent environments' and becoming native to their places" (Tirso Gonzales, "Sense of Place and Indigenous People's Biodiversity Conservation in the Americas," 97). Colonialism has attempted a widespread erasure of place and the people connected to those

places. The church has played a role in this erasure. But if done right, decolonization can embrace all of us—indigenous and nonindigenous people—as we each ecologically, culturally, and spiritually strengthen the places we have come to call home. All we have to do is listen for ways that restoration of space and cultural memory is taking place around us, and jump in. The diverse voices that make up *Seeds of Diversity, Seeds of Hope* provide a helpful push.

Kaitlyn Duthie-Kannikkatt *is a graduate student at the University of Winnipeg, currently living with and learning from Adivasi seed keepers in southern India.*

Leslie A. Robertson and the Kwaqu'l Gixsam Clan, *Standing Up with Ga'axsta'las: Jane Constance Cook and the Politics of Memory, Church, and Custom*, UBC, Vancouver, 2012. 596 pp. $39.95. ISBN 9780774823852.

In the summer of 1914 in 'Yalis (Alert Bay) off of northern Vancouver Island, G̲a'a x̲sta'las, or Jane Constance Cook, served as a Kwakwala–English interpreter at the McKenna–McBride Royal Commission on the distribution of reserve lands in British Columbia. Half of the Kawkwa̲ka'wa̲kw applications for lands that had been used for centuries for fishing, berry picking and shellfish harvest were dismissed on the grounds that the land was already being used "productively," predominantly by white farmers. Within weeks of G̲a'a x̲sta'las's swearing-in, my great-grandfather, newly arrived from England, received a certificate of preemption to homestead a lot less than 100 km south of 'Yalis.

One hundred years later, as I read and write about G̲a'a x̲sta'las, her descendants, my Anglican clergy colleagues, and members of the church to which we both belong, are among the survivors, family members, chiefs, elders, and witnesses attending ceremonies in Alert Bay for the demolition of St. Michael's Indian Residential School.

"Mrs. Cook" (1870–1951), in archival documents, or "Granny Cook," to her family, was a controversial and influential woman who had a public voice and active role in Kawkwa̲ka'wa̲kw social and political life for decades. The dominant historical, anthropological, and community records depict her one-dimensionally as colonized and inauthentic, a half-white, missionary-raised Christian who supported the potlatch ban.

Potlatch, where the word potluck comes from, means "gift" in the Chinook trade jargon and refers to different west coast ceremonies that include a feast, dances, and gifts of food and goods to guests. Some people I know call these "give-aways," "feasts," or "winter dances." More than an important ceremonial practice, potlatch is a legal, governance and economic system pertaining to land distribution for fishing and food-harvest, transfer of leadership, marriage alliances, wealth, welfare,

rank, and family. The practice was outlawed by the government of Canada from 1885 to 1951.

In *Standing Up With Ga'axsta'las*, Granny Cook's descendants, members of the Kwagu'l Gixsam Clan, seek to "set the record straight." They have collaborated with anthropologist Leslie Robertson to place Ga'axsta'las's memory in its social, economic, political, family, and cultural context, paying attention to what she stood for as well as what she stood against. The book shows Ga'axsta'las's family "standing up" in another way as well. It documents the Kwagu'l Gixsam Clan's recent revival in the Big House of those treasures—names, positions, dances, masks, rights, and responsibilities—that were cut off in 1888 when Ga'axsta'las, a noblewoman of high rank, renounced the potlatch, a requirement for Christian marriage.

Preparing to review this book, I alternated between feeling uniquely equipped to comment on it and barely qualified to read it. On the one hand I am a member of the same church as Ga'axsta'las, I have visited Alert Bay, I know individuals and families mentioned in the book, and my familiarity with the trajectory of Anglican-Indigenous relations on Vancouver Island is well above average. On the other hand I have studied neither history nor anthropology, under the disciplines' former claims to document and preserve objective fact, or under their more recent assertions about the cultural production of meaning. I have some experience of West Coast First Nations' cultural and ceremonial practice, but what is reinforced for me with every exposure and invitation is that the more I learn about indigenous ways of knowing, the more I realize how little I know and how much of what I think I know is actually intercultural translation or approximation. I see through white eyes.

While clear that there is much that will remain unknown, *Standing Up With Ga'axsta'las* succeeds in presenting a multidimensional portrait of its protagonist: mother of sixteen who raised both children and grandchildren; member of a high status family; midwife; translator; activist and spokesperson for land claims and healthcare; correspondent of colonial agents; advocate for economic support of women and children; Anglican Women's Auxiliary president; organizer in early native fishing unions; and the only woman on the executive committee of the Allied Indian Tribes of British Columbia. The book engages important questions about race, gender, history, anthropology, marriage practice, collective identity, the relationship of scholars to communities, and how the past and present interact. Yet I found it disappointing in a couple of ways.

My first criticism comes from a faith perspective and might not be noticed by the majority of readers. In this personal history, the authors do a very good job of addressing both "memory" and "custom" with depth and complexity, but their approach to "church," the third element of the book's subtitle, seems less engaged and was less engaging for me as a reader. Ga'axsta'las taught and preached in the

church, corresponded with bishops, attended synods and church meetings, and led the Anglican Women's Auxiliary for thirty years. Her granddaughter Christine Zurkowski describes her activism as rooted in her Christian faith, "motivated into mercy and justice," yet she was stalwart in her practice and defense of traditional indigenous values around food, family, land, and fishing. Unfortunately the depiction of G̲a'ax̲sta'las's Christianity—built from her own writing, historical documents, and commentary by Robertson and relatives who do not identify primarily as Christian—feels flat and leaves the false impression that a Kwakwa'ala Christian is an artifact of the past.

My second criticism will be relevant for more readers. This book is not easy to read. Nearly a decade in the making, it is scholarly in tone and nearly six hundred pages long, with more than one hundred pages devoted to notes, maps, genealogies, and photographs. Despite the wealth of information provided, prior knowledge is assumed, and contemporary individuals, historical figures, key events, and cultural practices are brought into the narrative with minimal introduction. Although it moves roughly from the time from G̲a'ax̲sta'las's immediate ancestors in the early 1800s to her death in 1951, the narrative is not linear or chronological; the book is framed by transcripts from a potlatch in 2007, and within chapters, contemporary voices and events are juxtaposed with the past. Some parts of the text are anonymized, many individuals have more than one name, every chapter includes Kwakwala vocabulary, and some people and places are named in both English and Kwakwala, a language that has been textualized in different ways at different times. There is a lot to keep track of.

Pearl Alfred, granddaughter of G̲a'ax̲sta'las, initiated this project with the intention that "nothing is to be written . . . at the expense of anyone else" (10). The authors' commitment to this responsibility through a complex web of careful deference protocols is evident. But this highly relational writing, coupled with an understanding of history that refuses "definitive" statements, makes the project feel at times like amorphous information with little in the way of tools or direction for evaluation and interpretation.

Still, I learned from and was challenged by this book. It named a kind of mental shorthand that I fall into, imagining indigenous people, especially in the past, as existing on a continuum from traditional to assimilated, and it exposed my unexamined emphasis on cultural and ceremonial practice as an indicator of identity. It reminded me that intersectionality—the coming together of culture, economics, politics, race, gender, family, and other factors applies as much to the past as the present. I learned more about the long history of white interest in and attempts to control native women's sexuality, mobility, marriage, and economic activity. I learned that I didn't know as much about potlatch and feasting as I thought I did.

The book brought into sharp focus the role of my church in the early industrializa-

tion and resource capitalism of British Columbia: Anglican missions and churches owned lumber mills and fish salteries, and industrial training was core to the ideology of Residential Schools. As an Anglican priest who works on justice issues with indigenous partners, I was particularly sobered by the role of church agents and structures. At face value, the provision of medical resources and education was a response to the clear requests of indigenous people with whom they had relationships; indeed they made space for indigenous voices. In the broader context they were party to the transfer of land and water from Native to white control, devastating epidemics of European diseases, and an education system that fits the UN definition of genocide.

Standing Up with Ga'axsta'las made me ask as a reviewer, What makes a good book? Challenging content, good research, readable prose, responsibility to community, integrity in writing? I am curious as to whether Ga'axsta'las's descendants feel that their book has or will achieve what they intended.

Questions aside, *Standing Up with Ga'axsta'las* is an important book. For scholars in Northwest Coast culture and history, including church history, it is essential. For anyone connected to 'Yalis or the Anglican Church on northern Vancouver Island, and for those involved in indigenous and gender studies, it is a valuable resource. For others, the fact that the book has been written may be sufficient.

Laurel Dykstra *is an Anglican priest, community-based activist, and scholar living in unceded Coast Salish territory (Vancouver, BC).*

Mitri Raheb, *Faith in the Face of Empire: The Bible through Palestinian Eyes*, Orbis, Maryknoll, 2014. 166 pp. $20.00. ISBN: 978162980655.

"Why can't they just get along?" "How can we solve the conflict between Israel and Palestine?" "If only they could understand the other side." These are questions and comments I often encountered when interacting with North American members of our constituency who visited Palestine while I was working with an international Anabaptist aid organization. It was difficult to explain the situation, since a lot of them came with assumptions about what was happening in the Middle East—assumptions that had been shaped by television, churches, and books from North America. These assumptions blinded them to the systemic power imbalance and the structures of imperialism that continue to haunt the region. I wish I could have handed them a copy of Mitri Raheb's *Faith in the Face of Empire: The Bible through Palestinian Eyes*, a book full of insights about the web of connections linking the empire Jesus experienced to the experience of many people in current-day Palestine.

Raheb, a Palestinian theologian who serves as the pastor of the Lutheran Christ-

mas Church in Bethlehem, offers a glimpse into Palestinian interpretations of empire within the Bible. In the first half of the book he describes a biblical account of empire and uses that account to explain what empire looks like in Palestine today. Raheb does this by explaining the context of the geo-politics of the Middle East and exploring how Israel imposes mechanisms of empire on Palestinians. In the second part, Raheb gives an account of how people of faith can respond to empire. Raheb looks at who and where God is in the context of empire, how Jesus is our teacher for resisting empire, and how the Spirit is our sustaining energy in our struggle.

Although it is not explicit in this regard, the book seeks to dialogue with a Western audience. Having engaged many church delegations from North America, Raheb has written a book for those who are trying to understand what is happening in Palestine. He specifically explores the ways in which facets of "Imperial thought" influence our interpretive moves and processes. It is this infiltration of the imperial mind that prevents many American Christians from seeing the blatant injustices taking place in the Occupied Territories. Moreover, the imperial mind often impacts those of us who consider ourselves allies.

As an example, Raheb describes a woman who, in her frustration with how the state of Israel was treating Palestinians, quoted Exodus 22:21, a passage that offers clear direction on how strangers are to be welcomed. I have often cited this same passage in speaking to Christian Zionists, but as Raheb points out, this use of scripture ignores Palestinians' inherent and natural connection to the land. "I am not the stranger! Nor are my people," Raheb responds. "We were made strangers" (37). This story warns against the ease with which North Americans are caught up with imperial and colonizing logics as we position indigenous peoples as strangers in their own land—as if military power and European statecraft is determinative for deciding who belongs where, for deciding which people group belongs in a given region of the Middle East.

To live under empire is to live a life of struggle. As Palestine approaches sixty-seven years of occupation, the situation for Palestinians continues to deteriorate. Settlements are expanding, the wall is being expanded, land continues to be confiscated, the number of political prisoners is increasing, youth are being shot, Gaza remains under siege, lynchings are occurring in Jerusalem, and leaders are being exiled from their communities. The dominion of empire relentlessly pervades every aspect of Palestinian life. After living in Palestine it is easy to feel hopeless, yet Raheb provides his readers with hope. We live in hope because of our faith, Raheb explains; because in the life and teachings of Jesus, we experience faith as resistance. Not faith as waiting for the Last Days but faith as action, faith as the power of the Spirit of Jesus to move mountains.

One of the cruelest aspects of empire is that its structures are built by those it

subjects. Raheb reminds his readers of the Herodian Mountain near Bethlehem, built and created on the backs of exploited and colonized native subjects between 23 and 15 BCE. Similarly today, the separation wall and the Israeli settlements on Palestinian land are often built in part by Palestinians who have no other means of employment. And yet Raheb continues to have hope despite his context and despite the overwhelming dominion of empire. And he finds this hope rooted in the wager that if empire can be built by the colonized subject, it can also be dismantled by those same subjects. He believes this is the faith that can move mountains. Having faith in one's community to be able to stand against empire is a faith of resistance.

Raheb exposes readers to the systemic violence of empire that is being experienced in Palestine. Sadly though, in many ways what is happening in Palestine is not unique but has already been experienced throughout history. Indigenous peoples throughout the world know the violence of empire, and many have had to endure—and continue to endure—similar forms of settler colonialism rooted in and justified by Christianity. Exploring these connections would strengthen Raheb's argument and would help us strengthen our struggle against empire wherever we find ourselves.

Rachelle Friesen *worked with Mennonite Central Committee in Palestine for four years. She is now enrolled in graduate studies in Social and Political Thought at York University, Toronto, ON.*

Todd Hartch, *The Rebirth of Latin American Christianity*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2014. 278 pp. $24.95. ISBN: 9780199843138.

While Christianity declines in Europe and North America, it experiences remarkable growth in the global South. That growth is undoubtedly present in Latin America, a region that is "neither newly Christian nor truly 'non-Western'" (2). Hartch's monograph studies the multifaceted revitalization of Christianity in Latin America, a revitalization that cannot easily be subsumed under the headings of liberation theology or Pentecostalism. Having spent a portion of my life relating to the church in Latin America, I find a lot of useful history here.

One of the most obvious changes in Latin American Christianity over the past century is the arrival of Protestants. Hartch, himself a Roman Catholic, argues that Protestantism forced the Catholic church to revitalize its own efforts at mission: "Although Protestant evangelism had made Latin America more Protestant . . . it also, in a sense, made Latin America more Catholic" (55). Hartch repeatedly points out that Catholic efforts at evangelism and catechesis often introduced a faith that differed from indigenous religion or folk Catholicism as much as Protestantism. Protestantism cracked open the door to new religious options that could just as well include orthodox doctrinal Catholicism, in which converts remained

"Catholic."

I previously lived in Honduras where Pentecostal and Charismatic expressions were so powerful that they profoundly influenced the Mennonite churches I knew. Even though the Mennonite church in Quito, Ecuador, is not charismatic, some of our members come from this background. Hartch challenges us to take the growth of Pentecostalism and the Catholic Charismatic Renewal seriously.

Hartch claims that Pentecostalism brought Gabriel García Márquez's[5] "magical realism" into the everyday lives of believers (208–9), rapidly growing in newly formed shantytowns outside Latin American cities. Yet in terms of numbers, there are even more Charismatic Catholics than Pentecostals. Though Hartch might have examined the Catholic Charismatic Renewal even more, he made clear this was "the most successful Latin American Catholic movement of the twentieth century" (126).

Although Pentecostal and Charismatic churches are often criticized for having little social engagement, Hartch argues that these movements represent a major religious change for many people and thus have inevitable impact for Latin American culture and politics (111–12). Granting that, the theological question to follow will be how these social impacts extend (or not) the kingdom of God.

Hartch also outlines the emergence of liberation theology, the importance of the Second Vatican Council in the 1960s, and the bishops' conferences of Medellín (1968) and Puebla (1979). Even with sharp disagreement between progressives and conservatives, the Catholic church came to an irrevocable commitment to stand with the poor and promote social justice. The period of military dictatorships and human rights abuses challenged Christians to answer the questions: "Were Christians serious? Did they really believe what they said they believed?" (89).

The Base Ecclesial Communities (CEBs) became the most well-known outgrowths of liberation theology's commitment to the marginalized. At their best, CEBs "acted as both spiritual communities and activist groups, with Bible study and liturgy inspiring and reinforcing commitment to concrete actions for their locales" (78). Hartch shows that CEBs often played major activist roles, while prayer and Bible study remained important forms of lay empowerment. Yet in many cases, CEBs gravitated more toward traditional religiosity than proponents had hoped.

Hartch also rightly brings to our attention less familiar stories of New Ecclesial Movements, associated more with the middle and upper classes. The Focolare movement, for example, was about community, wealth-sharing, and entrepreneurship. CEBs and New Ecclesial Movements together provided multiple religious

5 Gabriel García Márquez (1927–2014) was a Colombian novelist, short-story writer, screenwriter, and journalist.

options from within Catholicism.

Hartch's portrait suggests that oppressed and under-resourced Latin Americans are often more interested in vibrant religious experience than in political involvement. While I certainly have seen a desire for vibrant spiritual experience in the communities where I have lived in Latin America, in my own context working with Colombian refugees, it is clear that a denouncement of injustice is needed. Justice is understood as an integral aspect of Christian proclamation of the kingdom of God.

Perhaps the most important concept of Hartch's volume is "universal Christianity"—that is, Christianity that is translatable to any cultural context, as opposed to faith traditions that are tied to local geography and social order. For Hartch, many indigenous religious traditions are "local" in this sense. Meanwhile, the spread of devotion to the Our Lady of Guadalupe, which Hartch surprisingly declares more influential than liberation theology (196), shows that even *guadalupismo* can be universalized.

It is exciting to see that Latin America has moved from being a region that receives missionaries to a region that sends them. Latin America's exports are not all equally encouraging. One of the most successful is the Brazilian neo-pentecostal *Igreja Universal do Reino de Deus*. Its lack of concern for cultural sensitivity did not impede explosive growth among the poor in 136 countries, because of its confident proclamation of prosperity and freedom from spirits.

It is evident that Hartch is an advocate for "universal Christianity"—no more at home in one culture than another: "Clearly some forms of universalism could devalue the local and the particular, but in the Christian case the logic of sin, incarnation, and redemption and the practice of translation tended to revalorize formerly despised cultures" (170).

Hartch repeatedly highlights negative aspects of traditional religion in his stories. Those who see indigenous religion as an integral part of indigenous culture and identity (and even a potential gift and challenge to Christianity) may push back. Other readers may resonate with Hartch's description of "universal Christianity," a faith that is able to deeply embed itself within local cultures. Drawing on Lamin Sanneh's work, Hartch emphasizes that Christian faith must be practiced in the group's mother tongue, with no assumed priority of the Christianity of either gringos or mestizos.

Anabaptists can affirm and learn from Hartch's case for translation. But this is not new. Mennonite mission in the Argentine Chaco has carefully considered how to accompany indigenous communities as they discover the gospel from the logic of

their worldview(s).[6] The Mennonite Church in Ecuador has emphasized the need to squarely face the social and cultural reality of our context, while maintaining an Anabaptist identity. We also must ask how Anabaptism intersects with the spiritual needs of Latin American communities.

Hartch's volume presents a balanced picture of the multifaceted renewal of Latin American Christianity. This is recommended reading for those who want to ponder what forms of mission allow the gospel to be rooted in new cultural contexts, and how Roman Catholics and Protestants can work together. It would be helpful to read Hartch alongside differing perspectives on the intersection between local religious traditions and "universal Christianity." Latin America deserves attention as it potentially becomes "a theological and philosophical leader for both the global South and the developed world" (18).

Caleb Yoder *recently completed a term of service with Mennonite Mission Network in Quito, Ecuador.*

6 See Willis Horst, Ute Mueller-Eckhardt, and Frank Paul, *Misión sin conquista: Acompañamiento de comunidades indígenas autóctonas como práctica misionera alternativa* (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Kairós, 2009).

A Call for Submissions for the October 2016 issue of *Anabaptist Witness*:

Gender and Mission

Submission Deadline: April 1, 2016

The esteem of being identified as a "missionary" was generally reserved for ordained men in the early years of the modern missionary movement. Stories of commitment and years of service of the many women who gave of their lives were often left for the margins, the footnotes, and the letters now buried in shoe boxes and archives, waiting for us to breathe life into these memories once again. The Co-Editors of Anabaptist Witness invite you to help resuscitate these stories for the October 2016 issue on Gender and Mission.

Of course, highlighting stories of women in mission would leave any issue on gender limited. How has engagement in mission shaped our understandings of masculinity? What ministries or networks have been birthed to help address gender-related needs or struggles? And how does testifying to the good news of Jesus the Christ challenge our understandings of gender today, particularly as we engage those from different cultural backgrounds, with different understandings of gender norms? While we welcome contributions from all faith backgrounds, we especially welcome contributions that are grounded in Anabaptist thought and practice.

Co-Editors welcome submissions from a variety of genres including photo-essays, prayers, poems, interviews, biographies, and academic papers. We also encourage submissions in languages other than English, particularly in French and Spanish.

Address all correspondence to Anabaptist Witness Co-Editor, Jamie Ross (jamier@mmnworld.net). For additional information on guidelines and deadlines, please visit out website: anabaptist.org/calls-for-submissions/

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