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New Leadership

Whenever a young person initiates conversation I take note.

It is noteworthy for two reasons. First, connecting with young adults interested in church is not all that common. Second, finding young adults not intimidated by position or status is significant.

In these situations, I always feel I am in conversation with either an existing leader or a potential leader. I want to understand as best as I can what is being articulated, how it is being articulated, and what it tells me about how young leaders think.

One of those experiences happened recently. As I left an event looking at the impact of human activity on our environment, a young voice behind me asked, “were you at Mennonite World Conference this summer?” I swung around and faced a smiling young adult. “Yes,” I said. “You must’ve been there too.”

We chatted about the experience. We shared stories. We agreed the thrill of meeting Mennonites/Anabaptists from around the globe was inspiring. “I was baptized earlier in the spring, so thought I should go to World Conference,” explained the young adult.

It was an interesting alignment – one I would not have immediately expected. For this young leader, baptism was clearly a family event; it was a public entry into the family of faith. And to learn the extent of this new family was truly inspiring.

Meeting new leaders always reminds me that the Spirit of God is very active. The tendency can be to look for those who are like what you see in the mirror. But that would be a pretty limiting expectation of God. Perhaps the better place to locate new leadership is look at the places that appear the least like present leadership.

I am confident that the church is in good hands, even if those hands do not yet recognize that they are holding it. God’s Spirit is at work. Hearts are being stirred. Imaginations are unfolding. Yearnings are being strengthened.

I pray that new leaders will be met with all that is needed to give their dreams and visions wings.