

January 7, 2010 News Releases from Mennonite Church USA

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### **Mennonite Church USA announces installation plans for new executive director**

HARRISONBURG, Va.—The installation service for Ervin R. Stutzman, the next executive director of Mennonite Church USA, is planned for 4:30 p.m., Sunday, March 7 at his home congregation, Park View Mennonite Church, Harrisonburg, Va. The public is invited to attend.

Executive Board member Terry Shue of Kidron (Ohio) Mennonite Church is chairing the program committee for the installation service. Others on the committee include Owen Burkholder, conference minister for Virginia Mennonite Conference; denominational minister Linford King of Lancaster, Pa., Phil Kniss, Park View pastor; and Sara Wenger Shenk, president-elect of Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, Ind.

John 15:1-5 and its reference to the vine and the branches has been chosen to guide the planning. The metaphor of the vine will be woven through the service. “Three elements of this image—roots, branches and fruit—represent God’s faithfulness in the past, present and future, both in Ervin’s life and in the church,” Shue says.

For the service Mennonite Church USA congregations have been invited to write prayers for the church. These will be joined together in a worship visual at the front of the sanctuary.

“The installation of Ervin Stutzman as the new executive director will be an important milestone in the life of Mennonite Church USA,” says moderator Ed Diller, Fort Thomas, Ky. “Ervin’s great gifts and wonderful experience will help our church follow its vision to be a vehicle for God’s healing and hope to the world. We ask that all members of the church be in prayer for Ervin and Mennonite Church USA at this very important time.”

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New executive director of Mennonite Church USA shares some of life, faith story

By Laura Lehman Amstutz

“I intend to lead the church, not as a business or a political entity, although it is both of those, but first and foremost as a faith community. We are God’s community. We need to ask how God is speaking to us.” – Ervin Stutzman

HARRISONBURG, Va.—Ervin Stutzman, the new executive director of Mennonite Church USA, has been a hobby woodworker for most of his adult life. He learned early on that a tool is only as useful as the person who wields it.

Stutzman brings a number of tools with him to his new position as executive director, a position he begins this month. Growing up in a Beachy Amish community, he developed some of his most useful tools very early.

Stutzman chronicled much of his childhood in two books, *Tobias of the Amish* and *Emma, Widow of the Amish*. He and his twin, Erma, are the youngest of six children. Their father died when the twins were three. Afterward, his mother moved the family from Kalona, Iowa, to Hutchinson, Kan., where her family lived.

“Our relatives surrounded my mother and cared for her after my father died,” he says. “At that time, the Amish Mennonite Church had many people who had returned from I-W service after World War II. The leaders of the congregation had seen the world in ways their parents had not. That congregation had a sense of mission in the world, and it encouraged young leaders. Lots of church leaders have come from the congregation. It gave me a place to grow.”

Stutzman had many opportunities to exercise leadership. At 22, he and his wife Bonita (Haldeman) Stutzman led a voluntary service house in Cincinnati where he was also co-pastor of Mennonite Christian Assembly. At 29, he and Bonnie moved their young family to Lancaster, Pa., where he was associate pastor at Mount Joy Mennonite Church. Soon afterwards he was asked to be the bishop of the Landisville District of Lancaster Mennonite Conference.

The responsibility Stutzman was given early on spurred him to find ways to help other congregations mentor and encourage young adults in ministry. While dean of Eastern Mennonite Seminary in Harrisonburg, Va., Stutzman wrote part of a grant for a Culture of Call program which encouraged young adults to consider ministry and prodded congregations to provide mentoring experiences for young people.

Stutzman’s early years at Center Amish Mennonite Church and the community near Hutchinson, Kan., also gave him a basis for faith and practice.

“The community I grew up in was a community whose faith was central to who they were,” says Stutzman. “We tried to be nonconformed to the world, and the reason was always that we were set apart for God. It is a very normal thing for me to think that I don’t always do things the way other people do them. I never grew up thinking that doing it like everyone else was the best way to please God.”

He learned that simplicity is opposite the American dream. This emphasis on nonconformity translates to a call to discipleship for Stutzman.

“I love the Mennonite Church because it has people who have taken the gospel seriously and have been involved in mission and service in the world,” says Stutzman. “I intend to lead the church, not as a

business or a political entity, although it is both of those, but first and foremost as a faith community. We are God's community. We need to ask how God is speaking to us."

Stutzman hopes to revive the value of reading scripture together.

"We have a communal hermeneutic, a way we gather around the scripture as a community and study it together. That is our primary business as a church. I also feel that in our discipleship, in both the most conservative wing of the church and the most liberal, we place too much emphasis on what we can do that pleases God and not enough emphasis on receiving God's grace. That is an element of faith I struggle with, and I see it in others too," he says.

Stutzman describes himself as a lifelong learner. Ervin and Bonnie passed their love of learning to their three children—Emma, Daniel and Benjamin, now adults. Ervin Stutzman translated his love of learning into a love of teaching. As a seminary professor and dean, he enjoyed teaching someone something they really needed at the moment.

"I call this 'just in time' learning, when someone can immediately benefit from something they've learned. That's why I enjoy teaching preaching because it is something pastors often feel they need."

Learning from others is one of the tools Stutzman brings with him to his work with Mennonite Church USA.

"My experience as moderator for the Executive Board at the time of the merger has really shaped me. I enjoy working with people from diverse backgrounds, and we have much to learn from each other," he continues. "We would be a much stronger church if we recognized the strengths that our diversity brings us instead of getting caught up in our differences."

Stutzman has spent several years learning Spanish as one way of communicating with parts of Mennonite Church USA. He spent a summer sabbatical at SEMILLA, the Anabaptist seminary in Guatemala.

Stutzman is also intentional about his spirituality.

"I talk with God every day," says Stutzman. "There is not a day that goes by that I don't have a sense of what God might want me to do that day. I desire that personal sense of God's will enlarged for the whole church," he continues. "When we come to God together and listen, God speaks to us."

Stutzman also lives his life with purpose, based on his personal purpose statement:

In response to God's love expressed in Jesus Christ, by the power of the Holy Spirit, I purpose to follow after God with all my heart and serve as a faithful steward of all the resources he has generously entrusted to me, so that God may be glorified in my life at all times and in every way. Since God has called me to be a leader in the church, I shall give priority to the cultivation of a meaningful personal walk with God, the proclamation and demonstration of the kingdom of God and the equipping of faithful men and women for ministry.

"What I'm doing as executive director is not in discontinuity with anything I've done before," says Stutzman. "The role of visioning, working with people to develop their strengths, helping an organization achieve its mission as a Christian community—these are all things I've done before. Only now it's a

bigger task.

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### **Peter J. Dyck gets “Home Before Dark”**

Herald Press author dies Jan. 4 at age 95, prayer granted

WATERLOO, Ont. and SCOTTDALE, Pa. -- “Lord, let me get home before dark.”

That was the prayer of Peter J. Dyck, asking God to let him die before age robbed him of his ability to be kind, trusting, loving and generous.

“Grouchy old men and women make life difficult for others and themselves,” he wrote in his book of meditations about aging gracefully, titled “Getting Home Before Dark” (Herald Press, 2000).

“Once they were young and strong, kind and loving, but something happened. Their generous spirits shriveled, their minds became suspicious, and they became something we thought existed only in horror stories, not in reality. ... O Lord, please, don’t let that happen to me. Let me get home before a darkness like that overtakes me.”

Dyck, who passed away Jan. 4 in Scottdale, Pa., at the age of 95, had his prayer answered.

“Peter continued to be a supportive presence at church,” says Donna Mast, co-pastor of Scottdale Mennonite Church, where he attended. “Even though he was living with pain, he continued to be positive and encouraging, and his mind was clear.

“He got home before dark.”

Dyck’s son-in-law, Jack Scott, echoed that sentiment.

“There were some difficult days, but he didn’t succumb to darkness,” he says. “He sometimes struggled with memory, but he was able to recognize family and friends. He was gracious right to the end. He had a peaceful passing.”

In addition to “Getting Home Before Dark,” Dyck also wrote children’s books for Herald Press. But he is best known for “Up from the Rubble,” which he coauthored with his wife, Elfrieda, who died in 2004. That book, which sold over 18,000 copies, details their experiences of helping Mennonite refugees to escape war-torn Europe to find new homes in South America and Canada.

“He was an outstanding and influential Christian Mennonite,” says former Herald Press editorial director Levi Miller. “He had a deeply committed and authentic Christian faith. The staff at Mennonite Publishing Network loved him for his stories and also for his active personal selling of his books when he was out speaking.”

In “Getting Home Before Dark,” Dyck wrote, “I’m not afraid of death. I have peace with God. I can say with Paul, ‘I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith’ (2 Tim. 4:7).”

“Getting Home Before Dark” and “Up From the Rubble” are both available from Mennonite Publishing Network, the publishing ministry of Mennonite Church USA and Mennonite Church Canada, at [www.mpn.net](http://www.mpn.net).

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### **New book offers fresh voice about men’s spirituality**

**Under Construction: Reframing Men’s Spirituality** explores new images that go beyond warriors and monks

By John Longhurst

WATERLOO, Ont. and SCOTTDALE, Pa. --When it comes to male spirituality, men seem to have only two choices for models.

“They are told to be strong and take charge like warriors or to be silent and alone like meditating monks,” says Gareth Brandt, author of the new Herald Press book *Under Construction: Reframing Men’s Spirituality*. “Being aggressive or passive seem to be the only options out there.”

For Brandt, who teaches spirituality at Columbia Bible College in Abbotsford, B.C., those images—made popular by some Christian men’s movements—are too limiting.

“When I started examining the subject, I thought there must be other images we could use to help us define what a Christian man looks like,” he says. “I was sure that not every man wants to go into battle or to withdraw from others.”

He decided to test his idea by inviting some male friends to participate in a discussion group exploring different images of male spirituality. “Within 24 hours, the group was full,” he says. “It showed me that I wasn’t alone in feeling this way.”

Brandt, a member of Emmanuel Mennonite Church in Abbotsford, sent each chapter out in advance to the group, which then met to talk about it. The result of those meetings is *Under Construction*, which uses the story of Joseph in the book of Genesis to explore other images of male spirituality.

“The discussion helped me refine the book and made it a group project,” he says.

Brandt selected stories about Joseph for the book because “he was an ordinary man who experienced a lot in life—tragedy, shattered dreams, temptations and fulfillment in life and work,” he says. “Yet he was strong and gentle, showed a love for God and was able to forgive and be reconciled with those who had harmed him.”

The desire to be a peacebuilder and to promote God’s shalom in the world are key elements of male spirituality for Brandt.

“Male spirituality reaches its height when it shows compassion to all people, beginning with those close to us,” he says. “It’s about being part of building God’s commonwealth of love and justice, having the

courage to face the wounds of our past and building a marriage, a family and a career while empowering others to build with us.”

As for the topic itself, Brandt acknowledges that it can be tough to get men interested in reading about spirituality.

“That’s why I call this a ‘men’s book for those who don’t read men’s books,’” he says. “I didn’t read men’s books either until I began to research for this project, but I have become convinced that we need to talk about our unique spirituality as men. I just don’t think the resources out there up to this point tell every man’s story.”

Plus, he adds, “It would be good for us to do some humble self-examination and explore some healing and holistic metaphors of spirituality.”

Under Construction: Reframing Men’s Spirituality was made possible through the generous support of Mennonite Men, an organization of the Mennonite Church that promotes and develops resources for men. It is available from Mennonite Publishing Network at [www.mpn.net/underconstruction](http://www.mpn.net/underconstruction) or by calling 1-800-245-7892 (U.S.), 1-800-631-6535. Cost is \$13.99 USD/\$16.99 CAD.

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New book aims to help people avoid contagious virus

Hugo and Doreen Neufeld want to help people deal with affluenza
By John Longhurst

WATERLOO, Ont. and SCOTTDALE, Pa. -- Last year many North Americans worried about getting H1N1 influenza. Fewer worried about catching a different kind of virus—affluenza.

That worries Hugo and Doreen Neufeld, authors of “Affluenza Interrupted: Stories of Hope from the Suburbs” (Millrise Publishing), a new book available through Mennonite Publishing Network (MPN).

“Everyone was talking about influenza, but we don’t hear much about affluenza,” says Hugo of the illness, which is described as “a painful, contagious, socially transmitted condition of overload, debt, anxiety and waste resulting from the dogged pursuit of more.”

Citing climate change, environmental destruction and the growing number of impoverished people around the world as symptoms of the illness, the Neufelds ask, “What is God trying to say to us about the affluent way of life that propels people to want to acquire more and more, while at the same time the planet and people in poverty around the world are suffering?”

“Affluenza Interrupted” is a follow-up to the book, “The North End Lives” (Herald Press), which describes the joys and challenges the couple faced while ministering to people living below the poverty line in Hamilton, Ont., from 1971 to 1989. In their most recent book, they use stories and first-person accounts to reflect on the challenges of living as Christians in the suburbs.

“Poverty is a challenge for people in Canada’s inner cities, but affluence is a challenge in the suburbs,” says Hugo.

“When we lived in the inner city, we thought we had everything we needed,” says Doreen of the 18 years they spent codirecting and copastoring Hamilton’s Welcome Inn Community Centre and Church, a Mennonite Church Eastern Canada-sponsored ministry in that city’s north end. “But when we moved to Calgary’s suburbs, what we thought was enough when we lived in the inner city didn’t seem like enough anymore.”

The stories in the book are about the “moments of insight that come to all of us at different points in our lives,” says Doreen, noting that they also speak about “moments where God affirms our good use of resources, encouraging us to celebrate, and moments where God interrupts our relentless push to acquire, inviting us to stop and rethink our priorities.”

“Our concern is not only the abundance of possessions that come with suburban living,” adds Hugo, “but also the pressure of over-busyness, the ‘fences’ that limit relationships and the fact that so much of our identity rests on what we have.”

Dealing with affluenza isn’t easy.

“We haven’t solved this thing for ourselves,” says Doreen. “We’re not trying to make people feel guilty. We just want to share some of our experiences and thoughts with others who might be struggling with affluence.”

“We have to ask ourselves again and again, ‘Do we really need all these things?’” says Hugo of the many times they are tempted to buy more and more stuff.

Reaction to the book has been positive.

“Many people tell us, ‘That’s my story, too,’” says Doreen. “I’m happy to hear them say that. We wanted to write the book in such a way that people could see their stories in our story.”

Now retired from long-term ministry, the Neufelds are available for speaking/storytelling engagements and facilitating discussion groups around themes related to affluenza.

“Many of us struggle with how to make good use of our resources and how to live as Christians in a world where so many have so little,” says Hugo. “As people read our stories, we hope they will be helped to find ways to be content with ‘enough.’”

“Affluenza Interrupted” is available from Mennonite Publishing Network at www.mpn.net/affluenza for \$14 USD/\$15 CAD. To arrange for the Neufelds to speak at your church or group, visit <http://www.hugoanddoreen.com>