

Partnership and Capacity-Building

The ideas of partnership and capacity-building are rooted in creation, when God created Eve to be a partner for Adam, and gave them not only the responsibility but also the capacity to care for the garden. The theme continues in the New Testament. In his letter to the Corinthians, Paul describes the importance of the each member of the church contributing his or her unique gift by comparing us to the parts of the body. Paul concludes, “If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together” (1 Corinthians 12:26)—a wonderful picture of true partnership. In Ephesians 4, Paul points out that the gifts given to Christians by God are to “equip the saints for the work of ministry” (v. 12), and ends by describing how the whole body (the church) will grow when each part is working properly and using his or her gifts (v. 16). Again, the idea of partnering with each other and building each other’s capacity within the church is central.

My work with Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) has made me think a lot more about the meaning of partnership and has introduced me to a term I had not known before—capacity-building. MCC works in more than 50 countries around the world, responding to human need “in the name of Christ.” Rather than

create large building complexes and programs that assume large numbers of North Americans to sustain them, MCC prefers to work with local partners (churches, other non-governmental organizations, etc.) to develop local capacity to address local needs. Capacity-building is one of MCC’s four priorities for the way it works (the others are relief, peacebuilding and connecting people).

Partnership and capacity-building imply some kind of mutuality. This is in contrast to the more colonial, hierarchical or patronizing approach that has often characterized relationships between those who have more resources and want to help, and those who lack resources and need help. Creating genuine partnerships in situations where there appear to be innate inequities requires much intentional work to identify, value and use the strengths that each partner brings to the process. This is true not only in international capacity-building work, but also in our homes, churches and work situations.

In a recent meeting at MCC, where MCC’s many partnerships around the world were the focus of discussion, the following list of foundational principles for effective partnerships was distributed:

- Shared vision and mission

- Shared value systems as they relate to development
- Mutually-agreed to terms of engagement as they relate to decision-making processes
- Agreed-up information-exchange system
- Concurrence to a long-range plan
- Continuing dialogue, inquiry and reciprocal feedback
- Commitment regular review of relationships and outcomes
- Openness to learning from each other, other people, groups and the environment

While this list was developed with international partnerships in mind, one can easily extrapolate similar principles for marriage partnerships, business partnerships, or other relationships where genuine success depends on reciprocity and mutuality. So, while this edition of *Shalom!* rather frequently mentions MCC’s capacity-building work in various places, it also features articles about partnerships closer to home.

Topics for 2002:

- Spring, “Leadership”
- Summer, “Language and Communication”
- Fall, “Grief and Loss”

If you have ideas for articles or would like to write for any of these issues, please contact the editor. ☺

Harriet S. Bicksler, editor

A River Runs Through It

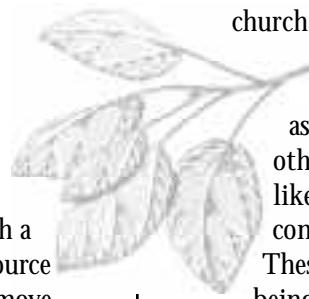
By Kirsten Reinford

The Susquehanna River flows southwest in Central PA, creating a natural border between Dauphin and Cumberland Counties—the East Shore and the West Shore, respectively. Harrisburg Brethren in Christ Church, a growing congregation of 200, is located on the East Shore in the capital city of Harrisburg, close to the neighborhood known as Allison Hill. According to the U.S. census estimate of 1997, 40 percent of children in Harrisburg Schools live at or below the poverty rate. However, the street where the church is set is well-kept and neighborly, and summer evenings find people on their front porches with the aroma of charcoal and barbecue sauce wafting in the air. Over the last decade of the church's existence, it has been very intentional about building relationships in the immediate vicinity of the church, and currently about 30

percent of the church family lives within walking distance. Christmas caroling, an annual block party, a newly-formed food pantry, and outreach to children and youth are helping the church to establish a solid role as a community resource and are enabling the church to move toward its vision of being a diverse congregation reflective of the local neighborhood.

On the West Shore, about ten miles away, another Brethren in Christ Church is also engaged in ministry to its neighbors. Grantham BIC has a long history in Cumberland County, and its close proximity to Messiah College and Messiah Village has directed ministries toward those age groups. In recent years, the growth of local developments has brought an influx of young families to the church. Discipleship and missions have long been priorities at Grantham, and their 1998 move to a new facility has expanded the opportunities for ministry.

To the untrained eye or to someone eager to build bridges, abundant similarities can be found between these two churches. On any given Sunday morning, the same song might be sung in worship in either church. A number of Messiah College students may be visiting, and the announcements may even be similar—youth group on Sunday nights, Church Council in the fourth week of January. However, the distinctions between the churches are also plentiful. Narrow one way streets contrasted by winding country roads hampered by construction projects. Urban revitalization vs. farmland development. Average tithe of \$1332 per member at Harrisburg compared to \$2248 per member at Grantham¹. City



church, suburban church.

What can two congregations as different as these learn from each other? What would it look like for these churches to combine their resources?

These questions and more are being answered through the development of a partnership between Harrisburg and Grantham Brethren in Christ Churches.

Seeds of partnership had been germinating in both congregations long before they came together. Part of the HBIC vision statement, developed in 1998 by Pastor Woody Dalton, reads:

“... I can envision a congregation that helps urban and suburban churches partner with each other in ways that enable each group to share their rich resources with each other. We hope, as God leads us, to be a training center where black and white and Hispanic congregations come together and learn what God is teaching us as we are reaching out.”

On the Grantham side, the movement toward an urban partnership has been building for many years as various individuals participated in urban ministries for the homeless, health clinics, prison ministry, and support of urban church plants. The movement gathered momentum when the Commission on Mission, Peace, and Service identified an urban partnership as a specific goal and began to explore relationships with urban congregations. A Sunday evening workshop on “Envisioning an Urban Church Partnership” aided in the identification of principles and purposes for joint ministry. The “aha!” moment came when Lenora Stern, chairperson of the Grantham Commission on Mission,

Shalom!

Shalom! A Journal for the Practice of Reconciliation is a quarterly publication of the Brethren in Christ Church. Its mission is to educate and stimulate Christ-like responses to the needs of society by providing biblical, theological, sociological, denominational and personal perspectives on a variety of contemporary issues.

Editorial Committee:

Ken Hoke, General Secretary,
Brethren in Christ Church
Lois Saylor, Elizabethtown, PA
Janet Sherk, Mechanicsburg, PA
Joel Wenger, Greencastle, PA

Editor: Harriet S. Bicksler,
127 Holly Dr., Mechanicsburg, PA 17055;
(717) 795-9151;
e-mail: bickhouse@aol.com

Please direct all correspondence, including changes of address, to the editor. A third class nonprofit mailing permit is held by the Brethren in Christ Church, P.O. Box 390, Grantham, PA 17027. *Third class postage paid in Grantham, Pennsylvania.*

¹ Determined by total tithes and offerings divided by church membership as found in the 2000 Minutes of the General Conference of the Brethren in Christ Church.

Peace and Service, phoned Woody Dalton, pastor at HBIC, to see if he could point them to an urban church that could partner with Grantham. Woody promptly took her request as an invitation and suggested that Harrisburg BIC just might be the church they were looking for.

A steering committee was formed to guide the process of building ownership, fleshing out the purpose and specific goals of the partnership, and deciding the parameters so that both churches could maintain their unique identities. Members of the Commission on Missions, Peace, and Service, the pastoral staff from both congregations, and the church board chair from Harrisburg comprise the steering committee. After a joint meeting of the church boards, it was decided that before mutual ministry ventures could be planned, the congregations needed to have some common ground and a basic understanding of each other.

To that end, the first year of the partnership was committed to fellowship activities that would encourage interaction in large and small group settings. A joint worship service was held in April 2001 at the Grantham Church, with both groups represented in the planning and presentation of the morning program. The youth joined together for a lock-in at Grantham in August, and children from both churches gathered for a skating party at the beginning of September. A cool day in October found both churches celebrating during a Fall Friendship Fest at City Island in Harrisburg. Other instances of mutual support have happened on a smaller scale. Grantham has made various equipment and resources available to Harrisburg, musicians have been exchanged, and prayer requests have been shared between congregations.

Another very important part of building a foundation for future ministry has been taking an inventory of resources that are distinct and dreams that are common to each church. Despite clear acknowledgment

that their vision for ministry reaches far beyond their current capabilities, the Harrisburg church has needed time to adjust to the idea of receiving help in reaching those dreams. It has also been essential for the Harrisburg church, which could be perceived to be the main benefactor of the partnership, to identify things that they can contribute to the mix.

One might imagine that two Brethren in Christ churches would be similar enough to make the road to partnership a very smooth one, and for the most part that has been true. However, differences in church structure, the role of the church boards, and the place of pastoral and lay leadership have required careful navigation. While the urban partnership idea was brewing in the Grantham congregation for years, it's a relatively new concept for the Harrisburg church to entrust ministry in their local neighborhood to people beyond themselves. A subtle awareness of turf and power has been demystified by alternating the site of joint events. For example, the joint worship service

in 2001 was held at the Grantham Church, while the next joint service is slated to be at John Harris High School just up the street from the Harrisburg Church.

Over the past year, a solid foundation has been laid and the partnership is ready to move forward. The next step is to decide on specific ministry projects and determine a course of action. It is exciting to think about what God has in store! The Susquehanna River will always run between us, but it is the river of God that brings us together!

"Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations."
(Revelation 22:1-2) ☺

Kirsten Reinford is pastor for children at the Harrisburg Brethren in Christ Church, and a member of the partnership steering committee.

Seasons

Trees grow tall on both sides of the river
and fishermen rest in their shade on
sultry summer days.

When the air turns crisp
and cold weather saturates the leaves with color,
the water becomes a swirling mass of paper-thin vessels
floating toward freedom.

As the shadows of winter deepen,
branches creak with the burden of tight-fitting crystal gloves,
groaning in the wind, shivering in the cold.

And when spring swells the river
and the islands are submerged,
the gnarled roots mediate
in the surging conflict between
snow-melt and saturated soil
until peace is restored.

Kirsten Reinford, January 2002

We See from Where We Stand

by David Diggs

When I was new to Haiti in 1988, half of what I saw made no sense, and the most important things I couldn't see at all.

One thing that made no sense was the fortress-like structure that stood outside the rural community where I lived. Most people lived in two-room mud huts. So this massive concrete edifice seemed conspicuously out of place. Its walls stood 15 or 20 feet high, and it had a single metal gate that was always locked when I passed by.

But then one day, while out visiting some neighbors, I noticed that the gate was left slightly open. I knocked, poked my head in, and announced myself. The only response was the echo of my voice bouncing off the walls. Inside it looked like an abandoned prison with the bars missing. The inner walls were lined with concrete cells that opened onto a central courtyard.

The next time I saw Toto, I asked him about this building. Toto was a neighbor and a trusted friend. Not only did he patiently correct my Creole, but he was helping me see the world through Haitian eyes.

Toto explained that the building was an orphanage of sorts, but children were only there occasionally. The building belonged to a Haitian pastor who had a church up in the mountains above our community. The pastor spoke English and would host short-term mission groups from North America. A few days before a group's arrival, the pastor would fill the orphanage with children belonging to families in his community. The group then came for a few days to paint, build, or give things to the "orphans." When the group left, the children would return to their families. The pastor had grown rich off money the foreigners sent each month for the orphanage.

"But why do people in his community allow him to get rich off of their children?" I asked.

Toto explained that the pastor was a powerful person in his community.

Some people might be jealous, but they wouldn't risk offending him. They were probably trying to stay on his good side, hoping he would help them out if they had a problem or needed a loan. The parents were probably happy enough just to know that their children were eating regularly while at the orphanage.

I was still new to Haiti but had already heard similar stories. There were always three ingredients to these stories: well-meaning foreigners, people in need, and some clever intermediary who was supposedly serving his community.

Friends had told me of a Haitian pastor in their town who owned a private school. He also owned another building that had the same layout as the school, but the walls weren't complete and the building lacked a roof. Visiting church groups would come for a few days and work on the incomplete school building and leave the country eager to fund the remaining construction. The pastor would pocket the money and send them photos of the already-complete school, full of smiling students. The foreigners were happy to have helped. And the pastor was happy too.

Initially when I heard these stories, it wasn't so clear to me what damage was being done. Certainly the pastors were greedy and the visitors gullible, but what real harm had been done?

Over time it became clearer to me. The wealth and power these charlatans accumulated allowed them to build little fiefdoms. They kept the people in their communities almost like vassals. Any attempt the people made to improve their lives by organizing things like agricultural cooperatives, credit unions, or literacy projects was a threat to the feudal lord's control. These individuals, who were supposed to be building the kingdom of God, often worked to undermine the efforts of the poor to improve their lives. It

was especially painful when the local lords bore the title of "pastor." They were a discredit to the Gospel and gave honest pastors a bad name.

As the months went by and my understanding of Haiti increased, I was growing more and more cynical and even found myself arguing that Haiti would be better off if all foreigners left and all aid to Haiti was cut off. It wasn't just money from church groups that caused problems. Some of the greatest damage was done by large projects supported by huge international development agencies. These organizations often seemed to have more money than they knew what to do with and dumped it indiscriminately on hastily designed projects that had little or no local participation. And any time easy money was available, the opportunists would crawl out of the woodwork.

After nearly two years in Haiti I was on the verge of complete despair, but then I had the opportunity to visit several communities in some remote parts of Haiti. I went to the Central Plateau, where I spent time with a group of Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) volunteers, and I visited a Brethren Volunteer Service (BVS) volunteer on Lagonav Island. They had all made commitments to understanding the people they were serving, and were, therefore, living in very simple conditions alongside those people.

Progress was slow, and there weren't any large buildings to show off, but if you knew what to look for, the results of their work were impressive. With remarkably little money, the MCC group was undergirding the efforts of several hundred farmers' groups. The farmers were learning techniques that allowed them to produce more food and reduce soil erosion. They were also learning how to free themselves from

the control of powerful speculators and middlemen who kept them from getting a fair price for their crops. The BVS volunteer was helping an association of community organizers build a viable literacy program for adults. The very efforts that the local feudal lords were trying to crush were the efforts these people supported.

I've heard it said that a cynic is a frustrated idealist. The simple idealism that had taken me to Haiti had soured into cynicism. But visiting these communities where Haitians and foreigners were living and working together in genuine partnership restored my idealism—an idealism now tempered with the realization that good intentions could never be enough. The desire to help others had to be matched by a desire for ever-greater understanding.

There is a Haitian proverb that says, "We see from where we stand." The volunteers I met were successful while others failed because they had invested the time and effort needed to begin seeing the world from the perspective of the people they were hoping to help.

Any authentic partnership is always like this. A marriage only works to the extent that each partner is able to see from the perspective of the other. Partnerships across cultures and economic divisions are especially complicated.

The visiting work groups usually came to Haiti with a simple picture of

what the problems were and how they could help. The volunteers I met had a far more complex and complete view of things. By living in the community with the people, they saw that many of their needs arose out of unjust structures that served the interests of the privileged in Haiti and in wealthier countries.

These volunteers could see beyond the neediness of the people in the community. They saw their many strengths and their spiritual wealth. Likewise, these volunteers recognized their own neediness and spiritual poverty. They were looking for meaning and significance. They were looking to escape from the anxiety that often accompanies affluence and the materialism that drains and deadens life in our society.

Shortly after visiting Lagonav island, I saw a quote hanging on the wall of a Port-au-Prince office. These words, spoken by an anonymous Australian aborigine woman, captured what I was beginning to understand about partnership. "If you have come to help me," she said, "you are wasting your time. But if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together."

We see from where we stand. The challenge of partnership is to move to where we can see from the place of another. The challenge is great, especially when the partnership spans different cultures. But the rewards of

authentic partnership are great as well.

In Haiti I learned that we are all in need, rich and poor. The poor know they are in need. By contrast, we, the wealthy and powerful of the world, are often oblivious to our needs. We frantically try to fill our emptiness with more and more things, more and more activity, but without satisfaction. Like the rich young ruler who couldn't give up his wealth to follow Jesus, our attachment to material wealth is a sign of our spiritual poverty.

But making a commitment to understanding the poor by being *with* them—as opposed to merely doing things *for* them—is the beginning of a truly liberating partnership, a partnership through which we can together work against both material and spiritual poverty. We see from where we stand, and, for many of us, to stand with the poor is to begin to see ourselves for the first time. ☺

David Diggs is on staff with Beyond Borders, a ministry that promotes justice and peace in the name of Christ by building understanding across cultural and economic lines. Beyond Borders provides volunteer opportunities and hosts travel seminars to Haiti. Learn more at www.BeyondBorders.net or contact David at ddiggs@beyondborders.net or 202-686-2088. David volunteered this article when a colleague with Brethren in Christ connections saw the list of upcoming topics and suggested he contact the editor.

Partnering to Heal a Traumatized Community

By Lou Astuto

On September 11, 2001, an army of firefighters, police and emergency workers rushed to Lower Manhattan in response to the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center. Fire Lieutenant Bob LaRocca, a devout Christian whose life was providentially spared that day, reports that emergency service vehicles were backed up on the West Side of Manhattan as far as the eye could see. Hundreds of these men and women died, attempting to help save the lives of the thousands of people working in the Twin Towers that day. In the days

subsequent to the attack many more lives were saved as a result of the rescue effort. Emergency workers from New York City's uniformed services were joined by steel workers, heavy equipment operators and construction workers to painstakingly comb the site, which was now dubbed "Ground Zero." Days passed and gradually the rescue effort for survivors became a recovery effort for those who died there.

On a separate track another army was forming. The Ground Zero Clergy

Task Force quickly formed, mobilized and began ministering to the rescue workers and the "and the tens of thousands of individuals from across the nation and around the world who descended on Lower Manhattan to find their loved ones, who are missing." They prayed, gave care, offered solace and answered questions like "Why?" "Where was God when all this happened?" and "Where do we go from here?" The Task Force quickly became a conduit through which emergency

continued on next page
Winter 2002 • Page 5

supplies, sent from churches across the country, were distributed to emergency workers. These men and women from across ethnic, cultural and denominational lines set up shop in and around Ground Zero and ministry was made available around the clock to anyone who was there. St. Paul's Episcopal Chapel, located adjacent to the Twin Towers and which became known as the "Little church that stood," was converted into a respite center for the rescue workers and home base for the Clergy Task Force.

In times of crises, ministry often needs to be given in ways that are not familiar to even the ministers. Pastors from Pentecostal and Baptist traditions found themselves administering Last Rites to Catholics. A crisis has a way of moving us out of our "box." As always there is a story behind the story. The groundwork for the task force was laid years before when organizations like New York City Concerts of Prayer emerged as a unifying force among the fragmented and often turf-protecting churches in the greater New York City Metropolitan area. Earlier in 2001 World Vision moved into New York with its "City Vision" program. Both of these organizations provided financial and human resources as well as organizational expertise to the Task Force. Pastors Marcos Rivera and Rick Del Rio along with their spouses became co-leaders and spokespersons for the Task Force. Rivera and Del Rio who pastor churches on the Lower East Side and Greenwich Village respectfully are

known as the "Odd Couple." Pastor Marcos is as distinguished and buttoned down as Pastor Rick is rough and tumble as he rides through the city on his "Harley Davidson Sportster."

The Anabaptist churches in the area also became part of the recovery effort. Through Mennonite Central Committee, Mennonite and Brethren in Christ Churches in New York City have received grants to aid in the healing of those who have been traumatized. Persons from local Mennonite and Brethren in Christ congregations have been trained in giving care to those who are hurting.

The Brethren in Christ Church from outside the NY metropolitan area has helped in a significant way as well in the ministry of the Task Force. Pastor Carlos Ortiz, a licensed Brethren in Christ pastor, serving in bi-vocational ministry at Elim Christian Assembly, joined the Task Force early on. Pastor Carlos began to see the toll that serving at Ground Zero was taking on clergy and other church workers. With Christmas fast approaching and increased work in their congregations, many of the pastors and other church workers were headed towards burn-out.

Carlos contacted Keith Tyson of the Atlantic Conference Board for Brotherhood Concerns, and a fund was established to provide respite for those whose work load had been significantly impacted by the events of 9-11. The

fund would give "care for the caregivers" by providing respite for beleaguered workers and their families. Many in the larger church community in the New

York City metropolitan area have expressed their appreciation for the insight and pro-active stance of the BIC in response to this need among those who are giving care. Kenbrook Bible Camp, Camp Tuscarorra, the Willow Valley Resort and the Sandy Cove Retreat Center were contacted

and agreed to host church workers at reduced rates. Kenbrook Bible Camp has also been in dialogue with Pastor Carlos regarding ministry to children who were impacted adversely by 9-11.

We as Christians should be pleased about the response of churches, from many denominational church backgrounds, to the crises brought about by the events of 9-11. Many of those who were brought together by the tragedy have forged relationships that will last a lifetime. The response of Christian organizations, the clergy and other church workers have once again proven that we can work together and touch our world in the name of Christ. ☺

Lou Astuto, former associate pastor at the Harrisburg Brethren in Christ Church, recently moved to New York City to help the Elim Christian Assembly join the Brethren in Christ Church. Following that assignment, he and his wife Ann Marie will move to Reading, PA to do church planting.

Partnering in Short-Term Missions

By Chick Babcock

When my wife and I first moved to South-Central Pennsylvania, I had no idea what the word Anabaptist meant or what it meant to be an evangelical Christian. I also had never been exposed to a tradition of Christian service. While my wife had been on a short-term missions trip while in high school, I didn't know anyone who had served as a missionary, lived abroad or

even anyone who had performed more than a few hours of Christian service. However, shortly after beginning to attend the Grantham Brethren in Christ Church, I met many who had served as missionaries in far off lands and under difficult situations. I learned to know people my own age who grew up as the children of missionaries and others who had set aside their careers to pursue the

work of God.

Despite our lack of experience, we were asked to join a "team" from our congregation participating in Sharing With Appalachian People (SWAP). SWAP is a short-term missionary service program administered by Mennonite Central Committee. SWAP strives to provide housing improvements for the people of Letcher and Harlan Counties

in Kentucky. Work groups from throughout North America come to southeastern Kentucky to perform home remodeling work for the elderly and the poor. SWAP crews work in one week shifts in the spring, throughout the summer, and again in the fall.

SWAP is served by a director on a multi-year voluntary service assignment with MCC. The director determines the needs of the community in conjunction with local government agencies and churches as well as aid agencies and word of mouth. The director also raises funding for projects. Seasonal volunteers provide project leadership and cooking help. Typical types of projects have included constructing a new porch, adding two bedrooms to a small house, constructing a new roof over a trailer, installing windows, repairing plumbing or electrical service and painting.

Teams working at SWAP are composed of Christians from all denominations and, consequently, many differing views, values and beliefs. In the five trips I've made to Kentucky, I've shared work and worship with Presbyterians from North Carolina, Mennonites from Colorado and New Jersey, Catholics from Pennsylvania, independents from Michigan. It has been my experience that these differences did not divide us, but instead added a depth to our interaction with one another and the people we had come to serve.

Since the short-term members of the team change each week, the group dynamic is constantly changing. This provides unique opportunities and challenges for the one-week volunteers and the longer-term staff. They come with differing ideas about service, poverty, teamwork, from different socio-economic backgrounds; and different goals and expectations. However, they are bound by one common thread – the love of Jesus Christ.

Building effective ministry teams from such diverse groups in just a few days is quite different from a long-term missionary program. Each week, the team's turnover is as high as 90 percent as groups from individual churches come and go. At the same time projects are being completed so the client list and project needs are also constantly changing. Despite this constant

turnover, and in some ways because of it, SWAP is a very effective program for sharing the love of Christ with those in need in a setting away from home.

My nine years of exposure to SWAP and other short-term missions has given me a more complete image of the life Jesus would have me live. It has also helped me appreciate the ideals and practicalities of long-term missionary activities. I have had some of the most fulfilling experiences during these trips but have also had some of my most challenging times as a Christian. Some of my observations include:

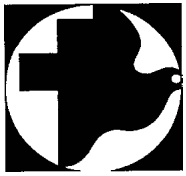
- Short-term missions trips permit Christians new to the traditions of peace and service a glimpse of these traditions. Without moving overseas or giving up their families and homes, they have a chance to learn what it means to serve and how missionaries can affect the communities in which they work. For those of us without an Anabaptist background or a tradition of service, it can be an introduction to a life of service and possibly lead to a commitment to a long-term assignment.
- Participants in short-term missions projects must focus on the goals of the overall program. Part of the idea of service is not only to serve the immediate community needs but to serve the needs and goals of the long-term program. Long-term staff knows the history of where a program has been and the vision of where it is headed.
- It is important to keep one thing in mind – Jesus laid down his life for us and there is no greater love than to lay down our lives for one another – one minute at a time. By keeping Christ clearly in sight we are trained on the one thing that brings groups together and not on our denominational or cultural differences. During SWAP trips we have focused on sharing God's love with one another and with the program's clients. We have acknowledged the differences in our forms of worship, etc. while keeping Jesus as our focus.

- Differences will occur, whether the team is together for a day or a summer. Conflicts should be resolved while the team is still together. The Lord tells us to go to our brother or sister and be reconciled there before coming to him. Our nature is, however, to put off the difficulty at confronting each other in love. We tend to stall, postpone and delay reconciliation. In a short-term missions trip it is easy to see the end of trip and avoid the tough part thinking the hurt feelings will go away when the group parts ways. Unfortunately, the only thing that goes away is the opportunity to forgive and be forgiven by one another.
- Short-term missions trips have a lasting impact. I'm sure the porch I helped construct in 1992 will not with stand the test of time. However, I am certain that the relationships I developed with people in my church while working on that task are for life. I have been reminded each time I return how we improved the lives of people struggling in this world. I don't know of anyone that we brought to the Lord while there, but I have come to understand that my role may be to sow and someone else's to reap. I have also seen the confirmation of my own daughter's conversion through her participation in SWAP.

Through SWAP I have not only been introduced to teaming with others to carry out the will of the Lord, but have become one of the missionaries I never knew.

We know love by this, that Jesus laid down his life for us—and we ought to lay down our lives for one another. How does the God's love abide in anyone who has the world's goods and sees a brother or sister in need and yet refuses to help? (1 John 3:16-17) ©

Chick Babcock is a member of the Grantham Brethren in Christ Church, where he teaches children's Sunday school and leads the Grantham Church's biennial trip to SWAP. He is an engineer by profession.



focus on Mennonite Central Committee

MCC's Capacity-Building Priority in Rural Cambodia

By Harriet Sider Bicksler, with help from Anand Stephen

In August 2000, I visited the Mesang District, in rural Cambodia, about 150 kilometers from Phnom Penh, the capital city. My visit was one part of the "exposure tours" that Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) board members take periodically to international program locations. I traveled with Ed and Louise Janzen; Ed had just recently retired as executive director of MCC British Columbia. Our host for the visit to Mesang was Andy Miller, a young SALT volunteer from Lancaster County, Pennsylvania.

As we traveled out from Phnom Penh in a brand new MCC Land Rover, Andy remarked on how delighted he was to be the one to break in the vehicle on the roads to Mesang. He also told us about how the government, in cooperation with local communities, had repaired the roads. We might not have known this just by looking, because they were still not very good! In and around the village as we drove around visiting various projects, we bounced up and down in the Land Rover through deep ruts and huge mud puddles. Sometimes I wondered whether we would make it, especially when we crossed a narrow dirt bridge and met another vehicle coming



A backyard fish pond in Mesang Village, Cambodia.



Demonstrating fish-catching techniques. Fish caught in this pond are used to feed the family as well as to sell for income.

the other way.

In more conversations with Andy, he talked with pride about the people in the village, the family with whom he had lived for almost a year and built a close relationship, and the MCC staff, most of whom were Cambodian. He had about a year left in his term at the time, and he said that his goal was to work himself out of a job so that by the time he left he wouldn't need to be replaced with another North American MCCer. With a college degree in agriculture, Andy's primary role was to help increase the villagers' capacity to grow their own food.

Recently, I read a report from Anand and Warsha Stephen that provided an update on what I observed when I was there a year and a half ago. Anand and Warsha are MCC volunteers from Calcutta, India, working as unit co-coordinators for MCC in Mesang. They reported that everybody in Mesang had been complaining about the roads and the difficulty they had in traveling and transporting their products to market. MCC conducted some training on community development, and the village people decided to work

collaboratively and repair the road themselves. Anand reported, "Every family worked hard, and after about two months they rebuilt the road connecting Mesang village to the main road. Now they have a good road to travel and transport their produce to the market. They have also learned the lesson out of their own experience that if they work together for a common goal, they will achieve success."

In this same report, Anand referred to another capacity-building project I had seen firsthand when I was in Mesang. One morning, while Andy was doing some other work, a Cambodian MCC staff person drove Ed, Louise and me out of town to visit a fish hatchery. The idea behind the fish hatchery is the proverbial, "Give people fish and you'll feed them for a day; teach them to fish and you'll feed them for a lifetime," except this was more along the lines of "teach them to raise fish..." The staff at the fish hatchery not only hatched the fish, but also then trained townspeople to raise fish in ponds at their homes, which they could then use not only to feed their own families but also to sell and make money to buy other needed commodities.

We also visited a family with a pond in their backyard where the man of the house was raising fish. We walked through briars (that I can still find remnants of on the dress I wore that day!) around the pond, and the gentleman demonstrated his fish-catching techniques.

In Anand's report, he tells about one of these "farmer promoters" (perhaps the same one we visited): "Mr. Chang Chorn is 52 years old and has seven members in the family. He started raising fish in 1999 after he received training on fish raising techniques by the MCC fish trainer. The year 2001 has been a very good year for his fishery.

His family has been regularly eating fish from the pond and so far he has sold 170 kilograms of fish, fetching him more than 500,000 riel (Cambodian currency, equivalent to about \$128). He is very optimistic about next year. He feels that he will get even more in 2002. Besides, raising fish, he has also joined in other MCC activities, such as growing rice and vegetables. Mr. Chorn was selected to be a farmer promoter in his village. He works hard

on the farm and wants to do research with new techniques in farming development. He usually spends time extending fish raising techniques to others, and this year there are 28 families raising fish in his village.”

To us in North America, repairing roads and teaching fish-raising techniques may seem small and insignificant when compared to the great need in countries like Cambodia. Yet these projects not only represent real

needs in the community but also are on a scale that the local community can sustain on their own if and when expatriate MCC workers leave. In short, they build local capacity. ☺

Harriet Sider Bicksler, besides editing Shalom! each quarter, serves as the Brethren in Christ representative on the boards of Mennonite Central Committee and MCC U.S. She chairs the MCC U.S. board.

Partnership: The Great Gender Divide

By Lois Saylor

John Eldredge claims that “in the heart of every man is a desperate desire for a battle to fight, an adventure to live, and a beauty to rescue.” As a woman reading a book for men, I recognized the genre immediately. “Can this be true?” I thought, “that at the heart of every man is a romance novel with a self-styled Fabio on the cover?”

In *Wild at Heart*, Eldredge not only claims the battle, the adventure and the beauty as each man’s desire, but says it is a *God-given* desire that the wounds of this world and the wimpy teachings of Christians have damaged. For his model of who God is and who men are as beings created in God’s image, he looks at the Bible and sometimes chastises theologians and the church.

In an attempt to secure the sovereignty of God, theologians have overstated their case and left us with a chess-player God playing both sides of the board, making all his moves and all ours too. But clearly, this is not so. God is a person who takes immense risks. No doubt the biggest risk of all was when he gave angels and humans free will, including the freedom to reject him – not just once, but every single day (p. 30).

This is much in alignment with my own gut reaction to who God is. I often think the bravest thing God ever did was to create free-willed beings. But still the image of an army of Fabios is

not pretty. How do I cross the gender divide and understand what Eldredge is really calling men to be?

Eldredge often equates the battle or the adventure with risk taking; and that the church telling men they need to be “nice guys” undercuts their true identity. He equates “nice guys” with passivity, and says men were made to “explore, build and conquer.” He looks to the Garden of Eden and the mission God gave to Adam. “Here is the entire earth, Adam. Explore it, cultivate it, care for it—it is your kingdom.” He

invites men to leave the safety of the boring lives that entrap them and accept God’s mission for their particular life.

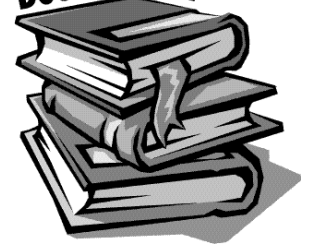
He says to ask “what” God wants, but not “how” to accomplish it.

“How” is God’s province, his job; and for men “the how” is a step of faith. It is Abram leaving Ur not knowing

the route or the destination. It is a risk, and there, according to Eldredge, is the adventure, and the battle.

The battle he describes is often in the spiritual realm. He writes that men don’t fight this battle because men don’t believe the spiritual battle is real. Men struggle to maintain a “quiet time.” “But if you saw your life as a great battle and you knew you needed time with God for your very survival, you would do it.... Time with God each

Book Review

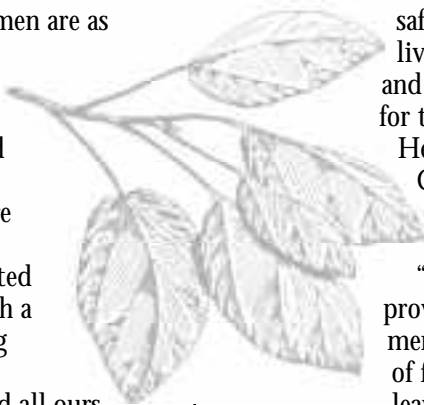


day is not about academic study or getting through a

certain amount of Scripture... It’s about connecting with God.” Talking about the armor of God listed in Ephesians he writes, “It means that God has given you armor and you’d better put it on. Every day.” It means you are in a battle, a real battle.

In writing for and about men, Eldredge is not silent on women. Remember the beauty needing rescuing? It is not a popular modern day image, but he uses it interestingly enough. As with men he starts in the Garden of Eden and recognizes Eve’s uniqueness. She is “ezer kenegdo” a difficult phrase to translate that is far more powerful than the usual “helper.” It means something closer to “lifesaver” and “is only used elsewhere of God, when you need him to come through for you desperately.”

As for the fall, he describes Eve as being deceived by the serpent, but Adam as knowingly choosing Eve over God. Once Eve took the fruit, she separated herself from Adam and God. Adam’s decision was to choose union with God or union with Eve. He chose Eve. This, he says, is a sin repeated by men ever since. Eldredge calls men not to find in women a substitute for God. He calls men to take their needs first to God, to find their strength in him; and then find right relationship with “the



beauty.”

Eldredge talks a lot about the wounded state of men and how to find healing. He refers to the wounds that fathers inflict on their sons and their daughters. Understanding how wounds inflicted at young ages shape our views of ourselves he writes, “a wound you think you deserve cannot heal.” He calls on men to understand their wounds and find healing, and to understand they can do battle for their wives in their woundedness too.

Using the fairy tale motif, he says too many men today want to win the prize of the beautiful princess in the tower, but aren’t willing to fight for her or aren’t willing to fight for her again and again. The tower can be real defenses she has built up to protect herself from harm. The dragon that guards the tower can be the same dragon we read about in Revelations, the enemy himself. Too many men, he

says, don’t even believe the dragon exists. But he does and the battle must be joined.

Throughout the book Eldredge uses many other resources and quotes. Every chapter begins with several quotes from famous authors, song lyrics, movies, and the Bible —everything from Shakespeare to the Dixie Chicks. Through all this he follows recurrent themes played out in different forms that adds an interesting depth to his explanations of “the secret of a man’s soul.”

In many arenas, men and women must partner together not the least of which is marriage and parenting. There is a distinctness created into the masculine and the feminine and it has caused a gender division ever since the fall. I doubt Eldredge gets it all correct. His choice of words and metaphors to describe what he has found may fall short too, like all those before him and

those to come who choose to write about the mysteries of the human heart – male and female. There were, no doubt, times I saw myself in the book – the far too careful mother, the wife blaming a husband for a wound inflicted by the enemy – but the greater fun in reading the book was trying to cross that gender divide and understand what it means to be a man. It was foreign territory for me, but according to Eldredge it may be foreign territory for some men too. And that is Eldredge’s adventure – to call men to their God-given desires. ☺

Lois Saylor is a member of the Elizabethtown (PA) Brethren in Christ Church. She reviewed Wild At Heart: Discovering the Secret of a Man’s Soul, by John Eldredge, Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2001.



Passing the baton

I remember beginning to pen my first “Midnight Musings” column in the parking lot of WalMart. Cars and people swarmed around me. But for some reason, this chaotic setting spawned reflection. As I think about it, these are gifts *Shalom!* gives to us as writers and readers: reflection and inspiration in the midst of the chaos of our lives. Not many of us have the luxury of extended solitude. We may find an hour here or there. But in these pages, we may pause and ponder important issues of faith, peace, justice, and reconciliation.

I look forward to opportunities to pause and reflect in the midst of busyness. Writing and editing have filled my life lately. Right now, I am in the thick of co-editing *Celebrating Women’s Stories: Faith Through Life’s Seasons*. Writing this column has been a meaningful experience, but I need to take a break. With this issue of *Shalom!*, I am passing the “Midnight Musings” column to Megan Davis Scott. I look forward to continued involvement with *Shalom!* as a reader and occasional writer. I am grateful for the opportunity to share part of the journey with you these past two years.

–Rebecca Ebersole

Our Marriage Partnership

By Megan Scott

The original intent of our marriage was to maintain our independence, to give each other the space to grow in individual fields. We believed that spending months at a time apart would only strengthen our partnership – I would spend two months a year in

Virginia working on my graduate degree, David was constantly on the road with his band. We even found a romantic description of this ideal – a passage from Rainer Maria Rilke that was read at our wedding:

The point of marriage is not to create a quick commonality by tearing down all boundaries; on the contrary, a good marriage is one in which each partner appoints the other to be the guardian of his solitude, and thus they show each other the greatest possible trust. A merging of two people is an impossibility, and where it seems to exist, it is a hemming-in, a mutual consent that robs one party or both parties of their fullest freedom and development. But once the realization is accepted that even between the closest people infinite distances exist, a marvelous living side-by-side can grow up for them, if they succeed in loving the expanse between them, which gives them the possibility of always seeing each other as a whole and before an immense sky.

The arrangement seemed practical and tempered our initial impractical romance. Implementation of this good marriage proved beyond our capacity, however. We wanted the most for each other but there was never space for the individual. I lost my desire to be fiercely independent – suddenly seeing my

husband as the being intended to fill the voids of my life. I did not desire a guardian for my solitude but a protector from my loneliness. And since we had so naturally reached consensus on theories of independence I assumed we both had meandered to this place where infinite distances would not exist. (If I had reread Rilke then I would not have seen that I was “hemming-in, robbing both of us of our fullest freedom and development.”)

I would still spend my months at school because David guarded them with skill – my chance to develop, to build capacity. But I despised his weeks and weekends away from home – the unpredictable hours, the spontaneous band practices. I believed he could not wait for those months when I was away. I believed his desire for solitude showed his apathy towards me.

Marriage can be the space in which we come to terms with the pain of our childhood, but our partners cannot be the balm for that pain. To be a partner, to guard David’s solitude so that he can reach his capacity allows me to reach my own capacity. As we each give the other the space to grow, we are given more opportunities for our own growth. What will this mean when our pursuits separate us not only geographically but ideologically?

Studying for my Master’s degree in Conflict Transformation at Eastern Mennonite University (EMU) challenges our marriage beyond the pressure of time spent apart. While I am merely supplementing the pacifism of my heritage, the ideas I share with David are often new ways of considering war and violence. He was not raised in a “historic peace church,” but as a Nazarene missionary kid. So while our Wesleyan and holiness traditions overlap, we do not see eye to eye on issues like conscientious objection, and the use of weapons as tools of defense.

Our move to Philadelphia became a testing ground for many of these elements. David had left the band. I had completed my last summer session at EMU. We would be together as much as we chose. As I began to seek job opportunities in the field of peacebuilding, David discovered a martial arts school just blocks from our apartment. He has wanted to train for years, but has never had the time.

I would be lying if I told you I was not instantly aghast at the thought of my husband studying to become a martial arts instructor. I would be dishonest if I told you that I never complain about the time he spends training. But somewhere in this move – perhaps as we unpacked boxes of memorabilia, tripping over our wedding video as one stumbles upon a list of resolutions from college – we began to reevaluate our strategies for partnership and capacity building.

We have been married for just over two years. That includes four months of school and about three months of band road trips. (Does that shorten or lengthen the span of our marriage?) Hearing Rilke speak to us again through the portal of our wedding, I caught the caution in his words on marriage. He gave us a loophole from which we can begin again to guard the other’s solitude, to live side-by-side as peace activist and martial artist.

Young people, it is obvious, can’t achieve a connection like this, but if they understand their lives correctly, they can slowly grow up to such happiness and prepare themselves for it. Those who love must try to act as if they had a great work to accomplish: they must be much alone and go into themselves and

gather and concentrate themselves; they must work; they must become something. When they love, they must not forget that they are beginners, bunglers of life, apprentices in love – they must learn love, and that (like all learning) takes calm, patience, and composure.

I know that I am not a calm person; I am not known for my patience or composure. I am a bungler of life, an apprentice of love. I do think that I have acted for many years as if I had a great work to accomplish, but I am only once more starting to go into myself to concentrate on that task. And I am only now beginning to appreciate that climb back out of myself, where I find David. And we sip cups of chamomile tea, feigning patience and envisioning the other before an immense sky. ☺

Megan Scott is a writer and Restorative Justice advocate. She lives in Philadelphia with her husband David, where they attend Circle of Hope Brethren in Christ Church. As editor, I am delighted that Megan has agreed to write “Midnight Musings” in 2002. Megan was one of my star Bible quizzers when I coached the Grantham Church’s quiz team, and I have enjoyed watching her grow and mature.

Sider Institute Hosts International Ecumenical Conference

The Sider Institute for Anabaptist, Pietist and Wesleyan Studies invites your attendance at an international, ecumenical conference, “(Re)Connecting Spirituality and Social Justice: Christian Visions, Christians Realities,” to be held at Messiah College, Grantham, PA, May 30-June 1, 2002.

This conference will provide the opportunity for scholars, pastors, and other interested persons from various theological traditions to engage in conversations on the relationship between “Christian spirituality” and “social justice.” Keynote speakers include William H. Willimon, Dean of Duke University Chapel, and Charles Marsh, direct of the Project on Lived Theology at the University of Virginia and author of *God’s Long Summer: Stories of Faith and Civil Rights*. In addition, more than 50 papers and workshops will explore topics and issues such as ecclesiology, race, hymnody, contemplation, prayer, the eucharist, and nurturing social activism.

For a detailed program schedule and registration details, visit the Sider Institute website at www.messiah.edu/siderinstitute (click on “News and Events”). For a printed brochure, contact Terri Hopkins at (717) 766-2511, extension 5235, or thopkins@messiah.edu. Registration deadline is May 10, 2002. ☺

Address Service Requested

127 Holly Drive, Mechanicsburg, PA 17055-5527

Women in Business

By Faith Moyo

At an early age I developed an interest in sewing. My mother was a domestic science teacher. She took me with her to school. At the tender age of six years, I could join two pieces of fabric with a needle and thread. Little did I know that this was the prelude to greater things and fortune.

In primary school, needlework was one of my favorite subjects, and I did very well at it. I would sneak and use my mother's hand sewing machine to put together outfits. By secondary school, where we were allowed to use machines, I was discovering my talents and knew I could sew presentable garments. Surprisingly I did not pursue that talent when I left the country for further studies. I did a secretarial course to diploma level. Later I studied business management.

I married a United Nations diplomat. Because of our status, I was not allowed to work formally. Instead I did a lot of charity work. I started a family and did some dressmaking as a hobby. There was no way of escaping the attention of other women in the circles in which I moved. Other diplomats' wives always wanted the outfits I made for myself. I sewed and developed my talent but managed my time well so that none of my responsibilities was neglected.

It was a new revelation to me. By doing what I was good at, rather than struggling with other ventures, I performed at a high level. God reinforced in me that I could use the talent he gave me. I was not to bury it. So from very small beginnings something good developed. I felt that God had set great

plans for my life. At this point my husband was not so keen about my spending so much time sewing. He used to say, "Please take it easy with the sewing."

When we returned to Zimbabwe and I was a full-time housewife, I continued with my hobby. God must have been talking to husband about me because one morning a month away from my birthday, he invited me to go into town with me. We went into a certain office. Handing me some documents, he said, "Happy Birthday, my dear." He had bought me a ladies' wear shop and a sewing factory. I couldn't believe it. The factory was well equipped with machines, and could start business right away. So on March 1, 2000, I became the proud owner of *Elegant Fashion*. I praised God for this gift and asked for wisdom in running the business. I also did not wish to disappoint my husband who had given so generously. He had enabled me to break into the business world, a former preserve for men only. I went full swing into work. I manufacture for bulk sales. The business tag label reads, "Especially made for you by faith."

I have a staff of 12. We have very good working relations. At the start of the day, we gather for prayer. God has blessed this venture. I have learned many things from the Lord since we set up business. Even though our country is going through a lot of problems, we are pulling through. The business is sustaining itself. God has provided in such a way that I have not yet needed to borrow money from the bank.

I work very hard, but I have learned to manage my time. I am with my family after work. We sit at the table together for dinner and then have our prayers before we go to bed. I also help them with homework when they need it. Praise the Lord, one of my children has made in to university in Central Michigan, and, God willing, my last one, the girl, will attend university next year.

There is a lot to be gained from running a business according to Christian principles. Gender issues can become a problem if not controlled. I believe the Bible says we should humble ourselves before our husbands. My business has grown because I always consult my husband if I have a problem. He gives me good advice. Transparency also counts in a family business.

I never forget to give to God what belongs to him. My belief is that my prosperity comes from what I give back to the Lord in tithes and offerings. I am quite involved in my local congregation. I find fulfillment in working for the Lord. He never disappoints me, and I trust in the Lord for every decision I make. I thank God for my mother who inspired me to be what I am today. ☺

Faith Moyo is a businesswoman. She is a member of the Bulawayo Central Brethren in Christ Church in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe. This article is reprinted by permission from the January-February 2002 issue of MCC's Women's Concerns Report on "Women in Zimbabwe: A Gift to the World." Contact MCC U.S. for a copy of the entire issue: (717) 859-3889 or mail@mcc.org