

# Anabaptist Witness

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

VOLUME 5    APRIL 2018    ISSUE 1

# Anabaptist Witness

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

## Editor

Jamie Pitts, Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary

## Editorial Staff

**BOOK REVIEW EDITORS** Steve Heinrichs & Isaac S. Villegas

**MARKETING COORDINATORS** Carmen Andres  
Matthew J. Krabill

**COPYEDITOR** Heidi King

**STUDENT ASSISTANT** Matthew Cordella-Bontrager

**WEB EDITOR** Gregory Rabus

**PRINT DESIGNER** Matt Veith

## Editorial Committee

Sarah Augustine, Suriname Indigenous Health Fund and Dispute Resolution Center of Yakima and Kittitas Counties  
Steve Heinrichs, Mennonite Church Canada Indigenous-Settler Relations  
Matthew J. Krabill, Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, California, USA  
Gregory Rabus, Association of Southwest German Mennonite Churches (ASM) and Mennonite Church Canada, Ludwigshafen, Germany  
Patricia Urueña, Iglesia cristiana menonita de (Bogotá) Columbia  
Isaac S. Villegas, Pastor of Chapel Hill Mennonite Fellowship, North Carolina, USA

## About

*Anabaptist Witness* is published twice a year (April and October) and is indexed in the ATLA Religion Database® (ATLA RDB®), [www: http://www.atla.com](http://www.atla.com). It is a publication of Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Mennonite Church Canada, and Mennonite Mission Network. The views expressed in *Anabaptist Witness* are those of the contributing writers and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the partnering organizations.

## Subscriptions, Additional Copies, and Change of Address

The annual subscription rate is \$20 (US) plus shipping. Subscribers will receive an invoice to send with remittance to Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary. Single or additional copies of *Anabaptist Witness* are available for purchase through Amazon.com. Change of address or questions about purchasing the journal may be directed to the editor at the address below or by sending an e-mail to [subscriptions@anabaptistwitness.org](mailto:subscriptions@anabaptistwitness.org).

## Editorial Correspondence

The editor makes 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](http://www.anabaptistwitness.org). Questions or comments about the journal's print or online content may be directed to the editor:

Jamie Pitts  
[JPitts@AMBS.edu](mailto:JPitts@AMBS.edu)

## Copyright

Unless otherwise noted, all content in *Anabaptist Witness* is licensed by contributors under the Creative Commons copyright license Attributions-NoDerivatives 4.0 International (cc, CC BY-ND 4.0). Under this license, readers may distribute journal content in any medium or format for any purpose, so long as the content is not adapted and so long as attribution is given to the contributor. For more information, see <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nd/4.0/>.

ISSN 2374-2534 (print)

ISSN 2374-2542 (online)



[www.anabaptistwitness.org](http://www.anabaptistwitness.org)

Cover design: Matt Veith  
Cover art: Multi-graphic depiction of the Golden Ratio

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





# Anabaptist Witness

*A global Anabaptist and Mennonite dialogue on key issues facing the church in mission*

---

VOLUME 5

APRIL 2018

ISSUE 1

---

7 Editorial  
*Sarah Werner*

## ARTICLES

---

11 A Personal View from an English Hillside  
*Andrew Francis*

31 A Cooperative Sustainable School Garden for Peace  
*Elizabeth Geijkvoet*

37 Sacred Stones  
*Katerina Friesen*

43 Creating Sustainability in Church Nonprofit Travel  
*Matt Lehman Wiens*

49 Reconciling with Creation  
Calling Us Back to Community with Creation/Creator  
*Wendy Janzen*

## REVIEWS

---

55 Claire Dawson and Mick Pope, *Climate of Hope: Church and Mission in a Warming World*  
*Reviewed by Benjamin Isaak-Krauss*

57 Enaya Hammad Othman, *Negotiating Palestinian Womanhood: Encounters between Palestinian Women and American Missionaries*  
*Reviewed by Andrea E. Stoner Leaman*

59 Vincent W. Lloyd, *Black Natural Law*  
*Reviewed by Chris Lenshyn*

- 62 Kevin J. O'Brien, *The Violence of Climate Change: Lessons of Resistance from Nonviolent Activists*  
*Reviewed by Steve Heinrichs*
- 64 Dan Nighswander, *New Believers Church Commentary: 1 Corinthians*  
*Reviewed by Emily Hedrick*
- 66 Rebecca Todd Peters, *Solidarity Ethics: Transformation in a Globalized World*  
*Reviewed by Drew G. I. Hart*
- 69 Brad Roth, *God's Country: Faith, Hope, and the Future of the Rural Church*  
*Reviewed by Karla Minter*
- 71 Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Empowering Memory and Movement: Thinking and Working across Borders*  
*Reviewed by Mark Rupp*

# Editorial

As I'm writing this, the landscape outside my window is showing signs of the slowly coming spring. Tulips and daffodils are pushing up through the cold earth, and the buds on the Japanese magnolia are about to burst open—evidence of new life after a cold and snowy winter in Ohio. It's a time when my thoughts naturally turn to contemplating the created world, admiring its hopeful beauty beginning to peek out in blooms and thawing earth. This is also the season of Lent, when we trace the journey of Jesus to the cross with gravity and trepidation. This mood of Lent seems appropriate for contemplating the state of the natural world, which is undeniably in peril. Climate change has created superstorms that flood cities and farms, while drought plagues others. The calls of alarm sounded by environmentalists are growing ever more dire as we confront the reality of climate refugees and the mass extinction of species due to habitat loss. Yet, this sober reflection of reality during Lent always takes place at the same time as the riotous color and life of spring are beginning to bring us out of the darkness of winter.

In the midst of the ominous message that we are careening toward destruction, there are signs of hope everywhere in acts large and small that people are taking to mitigate the effects of climate change and restore damaged lands. Jane Goodall has always been a personal hero of mine because of her ability to face the reality of this time of immense environmental destruction while at the same time recognizing there are reasons for hope. In her book *Reason for Hope*, she notes that despair and apathy are the easier path because they keep us from taking action.<sup>1</sup> It is much harder to look at all of the hurt in the world and figure out how to begin making a positive change. The sermons, articles, and essays in this issue of *Anabaptist Witness* represent some of these voices of hope who have taken up the call to make change in the world.

Katerina Friesen's sermon helps us reimagine stones as animate beings that break apart in an earthquake when Jesus dies. The stones are the first to witness the resurrection of Christ within his cave-like tomb. She urges us to see the world as indigenous people do and argues that "renewed imagination is precisely what is needed in this age of climate crisis."

Elizabet Geijlvoet recounts her experience with community gardens in The Netherlands and outlines a proposal for a school garden of hope in Kaxere, Syria. She argues that gardens have the power to bring people from different cultural backgrounds together to tend the earth and provide sustenance for their lives in peace.

---

<sup>1</sup> Jane Goodall and Phillip Berman, *Reason for Hope: A Spiritual Journey* (New York, NY: Warner, 1999), 240.

Wendy Janzen reminds us that we need to be in relationship with creation and that doing so involves closely examining how our everyday lives do harm to the created world. She argues that wildness is something everyone needs in their soul for remembering that they are created beings, not the ultimate creator.

Matt Wiens articulates a practical course of action that nonprofit agencies can take to mitigate carbon emissions resulting from their travel. He proposes carbon offsetting as a viable way that Mennonite Mission Network and others could invest in environmental work in their own communities.

Andrew Francis brings insights from environmental efforts and struggles in the UK Anabaptist community, including land use and housing choices. He notes that orthopraxy is a gift that Anabaptists bring to the theological table—the value of living out faith in tangible ways. He also argues that we need ecumenism among Christians as well as interfaith dialogue among those of all religions in order to have a positive impact on environmental work in our respective countries.

A great deal of ink has been used writing about Christianity and ecology from a wide variety of viewpoints. The burgeoning field of ecotheology is evidence that Christians have begun to take seriously their responsibility for the well-being of the created world. There is a long list of publications on many facets of this task, from biblical perspectives on land use to imagining what Jesus might have to say about the dangers of our consumptive culture in relation to the earth. In this issue of *Anabaptist Witness*, the focus is less on theology than on the actions of God's people out in the world, which is the essence of mission. Part of this involves evangelizing for an ecological vision, and another part of it is doing the work of mission in caring for the earth and humanity simultaneously.

For the most part, the articles included in this issue offer signs of hope through action instead of self-reflective despair. It seems that secular environmentalism can too easily get stuck in this latter mode of being, lamenting the loss of species and habitat and feeling powerless in the face of the immovable force that is global consumer culture. For Christians, this is also the mood of Lent, lamenting an impending loss that we have caused even as we look forward to redemption. This isn't to say that religion is required for hope, but it provides a certain grounding to environmental work that allows us to take a long view, to work even though we might not see the fruits of our labors, because God requires this work of us.

For those in the Anabaptist tradition, a further layer defines our work on behalf of creation; that is, our mandate to cultivate peace. In a world gripped by the helplessness and despair of Good Friday, mourning the pervasiveness of violence and the destruction of the earth, it is good to remember that there are many people working toward healing the small bits of creation in their

own local context. This is happening in school gardens and sacred acts of tree planting. It is happening through the messages we share with each other on Sunday mornings of the need to see the world from the perspective of stones and to recognize our duty to reconcile with our damaging acts against creation. It happens in choosing to live more simply in shared homes and introducing carbon onsetting schemes to mitigate the environmental cost of ministry.

As we enter this season of new life, I invite you to reflect on the ideas and hopes of the authors of this issue and consider how you can work toward the restoration of the land in your own community.

Sarah Werner, guest editor



*Rolling hills outside of Malvern, Worcestershire county, in the West Midlands of England.* IMAGE: INSPIRED IMAGES / CC 4.0 LICENSE

# A Personal View from an English Hillside

ANDREW FRANCIS<sup>1</sup>

Since the United States Department of Agriculture scientist Rachel Carson wrote the book *Silent Spring*<sup>2</sup> a couple generations ago to worldwide acclaim and Alaska began to witness 1989's ongoing environmental disaster of the Exxon Valdez "oil spill," thinking Christians have had to accept that we must witness to good ecology. Environmental protection and good practice go hand-in-hand with any understanding of God as creator. But this is not enough. We have to become demonstrative about good, if not God's ecology, in our lifestyle, in our faith communities, in both worship and practice as well as our wider witness to society.

I rejoice in affirming in worship and life that God is *our* Creator, whether that means using our formal confessions of faith<sup>3</sup> or the classic creeds of our ecumenical partners. Whether God ordered that Big Bang to instigate creation or molded us from dust is almost irrelevant to my faith and knowledge that God saw creation as "good"—and that includes our humanity—in the tribal elders' repeated campfire explanations that are woven into our Genesis narratives.

It is not enough if my and your affirmation of the goodness and importance of God's creation stops at the front door. What I am seeking to do in this essay is to recognize both a plethora of good practice and yet a lack of coherence in the practice of many of us. The obverse question then is whether that lack of coherence diminishes our witness individually as radical Christians and within the broader Anabaptist community; we return to this via specific questions (to

---

1 Andrew Francis was formerly the Executive vice-Chair of the UK Mennonite Trust and previously the first UK Anabaptist Network Development Worker. He is an ordained community theologian, writer, Christian educator, and poet; he holds a Princeton DMin and a University of Wales (UK) MTh in Anabaptist studies. His recent books include *OIKOS: God's Big Word for a Small Planet—A Theology of Economy, Ecology, and Ecumeny* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2017) and *Eat, Pray, Tell: A Relational Approach to 21st-Century Mission* (Bible Reading Fellowship, 2018).

2 Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring* (London, UK: Penguin, 1965).

3 Howard J. Loewen, *One Lord, One Church, One Hope, and One God: Mennonite Confessions of Faith: An Introduction* (Elkhart, IN: Institute of Mennonite Studies, 1985).

*Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald, 1995).

you personally) within the text and in the article's conclusion. My experience of and learning about Anabaptism tells me that our orthopraxy is as vital to our discipleship as our orthodoxy.

Many years ago, I was hiking through Tuscany and came across a ruined church. Among the broken tiles and fallen stone was a chipped stone tablet bearing the words "*Ora pro nobis quid enim vivimus,*" which means, "We pray for what we live for." As I sat on that hillside reflecting on the saying, I realized it was a good way to understand my Anabaptist faith and ministry. As I sit now in my English hillside village home, those words explain how I reflect upon ecology and mission; I believe that since much of our theology is driven by our experiences, it reflects what we spend our time, lives, and prayers upon.

In the interest of essential witness and action, lest I remain in the arena of good intention, I will explore exemplar specifics on the following (inevitably, brevity cause these to be snapshots):

- the Anabaptist community's size
- the reality of the environmental crisis
- the implications of housing choices
- land usage and partnerships
- moving around
- witness and the *realpolitik*

I write this essay from a personal viewpoint, as someone actively engaging with the ongoing UK Anabaptist Network (and as a former national Steering Group member), also previously that Network's first development worker and now cohost of a tiny home-based Anabaptist-oriented group. However, from my contacts and correspondence, I find myself asking questions that are similar to questions that other sometimes-isolated British and European Anabaptists (or at least, sympathizers) also seem to be asking about our ecological witness.

### **"Remember . . . We Are a Small Diaspora"**

Some years ago, while serving as an executive trustee of the UK's Mennonite Trust, I was acting as a volunteer weekend host at the then London Mennonite Centre. One of our European visitors was a well-known published Mennonite leader who sagely reminded a group of us gathered around the large kitchen table: "Remember, we are a small diaspora."

Those statistics can be found via a good search engine. Or a look at the Mennonite websites showing where our coworkers are laboring among localized centers of activity in different countries. The vitality of those European mainland Mennonite "communities" is witnessed globally via the Mennonite press, mission networks, and the internet. But we must acknowledge that, prac-

tically, their witness is small and often limited regionally. How much coherence does it share?

The truth is that across Europe the varied, small, Anabaptist-Mennonite communities and/or dispersed networks of them are numerically small when compared to other denominational groups. Here in Britain, following the demise of London's Wood Green Mennonite Church, the few other appellationed Mennonite congregations are non-English-speaking and draw from expatriate communities in their regions. The story of the contemporary British Anabaptist movement has been documented<sup>4</sup> and is now rooted in networks of individuals (some of whom meet regularly in regional study groups), who support occasional regional conferences, attend the biannual Anabaptist Theology Forum, or undertake academic courses at the Bristol-based Centre for Anabaptist Studies; contact is maintained personally and via an e-newsletter.

The patient Anabaptist resurgence is relatively new. But since the Second World War, Ireland (in both its nations) has welcomed North American Mennonite worker families, often in the field of reconciliation, to exercise widely received ministries. This recent influence meant that at an ecumenical UK conference recently, one Anglican bishop (totally unmindful of our peace witness) told me that “you Anabaptists really punch above your weight in your challenge to the rest of us.” Our Anabaptist community is even tinier when compared to the 5 percent of the British population who regularly attend Christian worship, but we do have insights and witness to share. So, with the temerity of a biblical prophet, I will explore what some of our varying voices from this side of the Atlantic can contribute to the global debate about ecology and witness.

### “Get Real”

To help strengthen Anabaptist insights and witness, we have to “get real” about what the issues actually are. “The first concern of democratic governments is to encourage economic growth, regardless of its environmental costs. It is true that serious poverty is a major cause of environmental degradation and that a certain level of prosperity is necessary if people are to free the energy and resources required to protect their environment.”<sup>5</sup> Regrettably, such conservative philosophies permeate the thinking of nearly all Westernized democracies that see their main goal as simply materialistic through economic growth. As

---

4 Stuart Murray and Alan Kreider, eds., *Coming Home: Stories of Anabaptists in Britain and Ireland* (Kitchener, ON: Pandora, 2000); Andrew Francis, “Food in the Contemporary UK Anabaptist Movement,” *Anabaptist Witness* 2, no. 2 (November 2015).

5 Roger Scruton, *Green Philosophy: How to Think Seriously about the Planet* (London, UK: Atlantic, 2013), 14.

Anabaptists, our commitment to community and biblical justice should cause us to cry out against such blind self-centeredness.

Climate change is happening, whatever President Trump says. And former President Obama was right; his “brave 2015 call to the USA to grossly cut its carbon emissions [recognized] the human arrogance that wants domination over the world that it has marred, not made.”<sup>6</sup> We have to recognize that the truth hurts us in our pockets and our lifestyles. Former Vice President Al Gore never set out to make blockbuster movies, and even though his 2017 “An Inconvenient Sequel: Truth to Power” movie did not gross as much financially from national screenings as his 2006 “An Inconvenient Truth,” we still have global warming.

North American Anabaptist-Mennonite communities and congregations have a rich tradition, both historically and contemporarily, of prophetic discipleship lifestyles—individually as well as corporately. Now, once again, we have to be even more prepared to live and speak counter-culturally. This means doing our homework and sharing good Sunday school, if not worship time, as well as prayer about environmental concerns. We may not all be called to be the next Erin Brockovich,<sup>7</sup> but our belief in a Creator God calls us to be active environmentalists. And that will mean learning about the issues—globally and locally.

Within our Anabaptist multivoiced tradition, we must beware of allowing or simply saying such multidisciplinary study is *only* for our pastors, educators, or Sunday school facilitators; we all have a responsibility to engage. When we do so,

we will discover that the Creation is not in any sense independent of the Creator, the result of a primal creative act, long over and done with, but is the continuous, constant participation of all creatures in the being of God.

We will discover that for these reasons the destruction of nature is not just bad stewardship, or stupid economics, or a betrayal of family responsibility; it is the most horrid blasphemy.<sup>8</sup>

If we do not apprehend some knowledge of the factual issues and comprehend the broader environmental implications, we will not be able to share as richly

---

<sup>6</sup> Andrew Francis, *OIKOS: God's Big Word for a Small Planet: A Theology of Economy, Ecology and Ecumeny* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2017), 65.

<sup>7</sup> *Erin Brockovich*, Sony Pictures Entertainment, directed by Steven Soderbergh, starring Julia Roberts.

<sup>8</sup> Wendell Berry, *Art of the Commonplace: The Agrarian Essays of Wendell Berry* (Washington, DC: Counterpoint, 2002), 308.

(i.e., witness) with our neighbors and colleagues why we care so deeply for the world of the Creator God. To ignore what is happening to the creation around us implies that our own faith is also out of balance.

While I often lament how few church leaders have basic economic textbooks or environmental handbooks on their study shelves, I am encouraged that more thinking UK pastors are picking up on writers like Wendell Berry, or Art and Jocele Meyer,<sup>9</sup> or Doris Janzen Longacre—in part, thanks to the patient witness of UK Anabaptists’ “book-sowing” over recent decades. All these good people are not just advocates and writers but practitioners of “earth-friendly” living, who are seriously challenging those whose lives are less earth friendly.

We are not alone in this call to environmental activism. Those who have committed their lives to Jesus’s call to *shalom*, or to living within a new style of community and family—sharing housing, food production, and transport—are all companions, bread-sharers, in the journey of increasing ecological witness. However, while some can point to the extant writings of theologians such as Teilhard de Chardin or Dorothee Soelle in demonstrating clear ecological witness, much UK environmental thinking has been rooted in the work of secular philosophers and ethicists. For example, in 1983, friends gave me philosopher Robin Attfield’s book<sup>10</sup> as an ordination present because of my long-standing commitment to “green thinking.”

In the intervening thirty-five years, I have watched the avalanche of UK-sourced eco-/green/environmental books grow as well as the commitment, writings, and work of Christians to this cause of “ecology and (our) witness,” because on our crowded islands any “Three Mile Island” event is on everyone’s doorstep (as the Japanese discovered in Fukushima’s 2011 meltdown)! The initially Methodist but now cross-denominational work of the John Ray Initiative (JRI) to “advance study and connection between the environment, science and Christianity” has been influential. Each of their multivoiced annual conferences have had profound effects, inspiring activism, journal articles, and often books.<sup>11</sup> In the London Mennonite Centre library, a much-read copy of the JRI’s 1999 reprinted conference-published papers<sup>12</sup> fell apart from overuse. What many UK Christians have failed to recognize is that the intellectual,

---

9 Art and Jocele Meyer, *Earthkeepers: Environmental Perspectives on Hunger, Poverty, and Injustice* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald, 1991).

10 Robin Attfield, *The Ethics of Environmental Concern* (Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 1983).

11 I was one of their speakers at their 2016 eco-themed national conference.

12 John Ray Initiative authors, *A Christian Approach to the Environment* (London, UK: John Ray Initiative, 2005).

scientific, and theological work about ecology and witness is being done, being published, and available to tap into.

Within the UK, the churches are relatively recent voices into the eco-debates. (Later, I will mention more of the work of *A Rocha*, the Eco-Congregation movement, and other agencies.) Previously, my experience was that environmentally aware Christians often channeled their individual lobbying through the politically nationalist parties such as the Scottish Nationalists or Irish *Sinn Fein* or Welsh *Plaid Cymru* as well as either the Liberal or Green (previously known as “Ecology”) parties.

My contacts with *Die Grune* (the German Green Party) and progressive environmentalist Christians at the annual German *Kirchentag* tell me that UK Christians have much catching up to do. But we are learning that Christian witness occurs in a variety of ways and are recognizing that coherent orthopraxy is important when Christian communities are small; think Acts 2:42–47.<sup>13</sup>

What is clear is that across European nations there is a Christian groundswell of those seeking changes to benefit the world’s ecology. I value those changes and pray for their fruition. We need to learn how to utilize this groundswell in our mission. To “earth” this thinking, I am first focusing upon some of the practical lessons we are wrestling with.

### “The Wise Ones Built Their House upon . . .”

Jesus had very clear thinking about others’ splinters and our own logs (Matt 7:5). Whether as Christians generally or as Mennonites specifically, we would do well to heed his injunction to deal with our own failings before pontificating about others’. When we practically apply our theology and discipleship properly to our everyday lifestyle, this becomes even more necessary. We can begin by talking about domestic choices, since global warming is not only caused by climate change but significantly added to by domestic energy inefficiency.

Most people, unless they are part of a low income family, can choose the homes they live in, whether they are renting or buying the property. The nature of that choice can say much about our faith, our theology, and our environmental witness. Wherever we live, we have to realize that the energy efficiency of (and size of) our homes as well as the number of our possessions has a key environmental impact. As just one example, how much of *your* furniture is made from sustainably sourced timber?

---

<sup>13</sup> Alan Kreider, *The Patient Ferment of the Early Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2016).

How we use furnish and how we use our own homes is an important witness. The Mennonite witness of *Living More with Less*<sup>14</sup> challenged me at many points in my adult life to house-share. Recently, my life partner and I each gave up our separate three-bedroom houses to buy a smaller, more energy-efficient, three-bedroom home to share (albeit with a much larger vegetable garden). We gave away our surplus furniture to a housing charity, gave our excess books and chattels to thrift shops, and recycled our junk.<sup>15</sup> Over the years, conversationally explaining why to neighbors and congregations has become another point of witness. Those of us who are itinerant adult eco-educators have great responsibility in our seminar-leading ministries to exemplarily encourage our hearers toward significant practical domestic change.

Domestic energy efficiency has become part of UK government policy—but without the legislative imprimatur nor financial inducement (such as tax breaks) to make it happen. That hypocrisy is compounded when our elected representatives do not answer the questioning letters that I and others send. One Swedish friend tells me he cannot understand why the British want their weather inside their homes, because nationally we lack serious coherent policies about home insulation, adequate ventilation, better double-/triple-glazing as well as communal- and solar-heating schemes. It would not be impossible for northern hemisphere architects and planners to create building codes and inexpensive designs that would allow for sustainable refurbishment/retrofitting or inexpensive new-build strategies for every size of community.<sup>16</sup> The tenements of Scotland and other Nordic nations prove this to be true, with their central landings, multi-glazed windows, and government-funded roof insulation, which are fast becoming exemplary apartment blocks as one of the best energy-efficient forms of urban housing. Practical theology means following suit by insulating our homes and not burning more fuel. Our choice of home and lifestyle is a matter of Christian witness.

Adopted and adapted from the American model,<sup>17</sup> another growing British movement is “co-housing,” which is proving popular with other than just ageing hippies! Co-housing creates a financial co-operative that builds an intertwined energy-efficient complex of apartments and small duplexes, each with just enough space for independent living by their own residents—whether solo,

---

14 Doris Janzen Longacre, *Living More with Less* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald, 1980), 118–71.

15 Janice Hodby and Andrew Francis, “Living Simply,” chapter 4 of *To Be a Christian* (Imagier: Bristol, to be published in the fall of 2018).

16 Christopher Day, *The Eco-Home Design Guide: Principles and Practice for New-Build and Retrofit: Sustainable Building* (Cambridge, UK: Green, 2015).

17 Kathryn McCamant and Charles Durrett, *Creating Cohousing: Building Sustainable Communities* (Gabriola Island, BC: New Society, 2011).

couples, or families. These complexes are surrounded by shared gardens and also contain communal guest rooms, laundry facilities, and living space where all the residents meet and eat (normally) at least twice per week, creating “community.” Two Anabaptist leaders (a couple) in the northern city of Leeds have become primary facilitators of a local group, working to create a new-build co-housing project. The hope is that this project will be both an example and an encouragement to other groups across the north of England. Often, co-housing projects operate car-sharing schemes as well and are built on urban sites, where they can act as a witness to a new way of living. Perhaps we do not make enough witness of some of our Mennonite retirement villages as a model for more of us during our working lives?

One of the major negative lessons to learn from Britain is about building codes. Increasingly, environmental concern must mean using building materials from sustainable sources, repurposing existing but sound buildings, and re-utilizing brownfield (rather than agricultural) sites while minimizing the use of concrete and even-more-polluting hard materials. North America, the Netherlands, and Scandinavia have far better building codes, including stronger encouragement and practices in their use of timber-framed buildings than do Britain, Ireland, and other parts of mainland Europe. Except in overcrowded downtown areas, sustainably produced, timber-framed buildings ought to become the norm for Christian communities, congregations, and households—as I discovered when traveling among North American Mennonites!

Within the European environmental movement, many have utilized the timber-frame designs of Walter Segal,<sup>18</sup> who is both German and (reputedly) Mennonite in background as well as a professional architect, whose work over time in not utilizing the so-called “wet trades” of bricklaying and concrete foundations has increasingly challenged reluctant town planners. The internationally reported 2017 Grenfell Tower block fire in London, which caused many to die unnecessarily, must act as a warning against inadequate urban building codes, cost-cutting, and low-grade statutory inspections of retrofitted buildings—and that not all buildings can be timber-framed nor clad. Learning from those who do things better (than us) is a matter not just of moral responsibility but also of Christian stewardship.

In my own housing advocacy,<sup>19</sup> I recognize that the charge of hypocrisy can easily afflict some Christians in the sprawling suburbs—with our manicured front yards, multiple cars, and seemingly little environmental concern, just like

---

18 Alice Grahame and Taran Wilkhu, *Walters Way and Segal Close: The Architect Walter Segal and London's Self-Build Communities: A Look at Two of London's Most Unusual Streets* (London, UK: Park, 2017).

19 Andrew Francis, ed., *Foxes Have Holes: Christian Reflections on Britain's Housing Need* (London, UK: Ekklesia, 2016).

everyone else. I remember the concern of our then neighbors when we dug up both the front and back yards to create a vegetable garden. Gradually, as they received gifts of our garden's produce or heard me talk both on the radio and with them personally about the need to eradicate "food miles" from our shopping<sup>20</sup>—localizing our diet and food production—they began to understand. The point is that how we even live in our own choice of home becomes a matter of eco-witness.

### **“Back to the Garden . . .”**

Are you humming a Joni Mitchell tune?<sup>21</sup> The Bible begins with a narrative about the Garden and ends with the Holy City—albeit with the River of Life running through it, shaded by the tree that sheds the leaves of peace. However, the Hebrew and Christian human journeys of the biblical testaments are not just about the pastoral idyll of a “land flowing with milk and honey” nor simply the creation of the Jesus community but also about the realpolitik of human treachery, privation, rape, genocide, slavery, racism, betrayal, torture, and crucifixion. Our very human story echoes the environmental struggle as both people and planet have been raped and are oppressed and exploited in the cause of greed.

The hard facts of this planet's ecological plight are no longer in dispute after the international environmental summits in Rio de Janeiro (1992), Kyoto (1997), Copenhagen (2009), and Paris (2015). However, too many politicians and world leaders believe they can play fast and loose with the Maker's instructions, just as Eve and Adam did, and as a result, they fail to make the right choice. We risk losing the garden entrusted to us because humanity wants to play God for itself.

My own advocacy about growing more of our food and increasing our own food security continues through writing books<sup>22</sup> and presenting seminars; it really is a case of getting Christians back to the garden. Two of my recent books deliberately focus on understanding so-called “green theology” from an Anabaptist perspective, then ensuring this theology forges part of our definitive witness. If God's *shalom* of justice, well-being, and peace counts for anything, it is because we believe in God the Creator as surely as God the Savior<sup>23</sup>—“as

---

20 Andrew Francis, *What in God's Name Are You Eating? How Can Christians Live and Eat Responsibly in Today's Global Village?* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2014), 59–63.

21 In her popular song “Woodstock” (included on her 1970 album *Ladies of the Canyon*), singer-songwriter Joni Mitchell ends each verse with, “And we've got to get ourselves back to the garden.”

22 Francis, *What in God's Name Are You Eating?*

23 Andrew Francis, *Shalom—The Jesus Manifesto: Radical Theology for Our Times*, 106ff.

we pray and work for Jesus' world, as we seek to repair the damage we have done and as we preach the gospel to all creation, we may catch glimpses of how things will be one day"<sup>24</sup> "when the lion and the lamb lie down together and the reign of God's shalom is revealed."<sup>25</sup> Both books survey key strands of theological resourcing, recognizing particularly the input of Roman Catholic, Anabaptist-Mennonite,<sup>26</sup> Orthodox, and ecofeminist theologians upon the UK's Christian environmental movement. What unites much of this ecumenical thinking is appropriate land usage and the justice of sharing earth's resources.

In addition to writing and presenting seminars about going back to the garden, I have helped others make this theology a practical reality; in five of my former ministry locations, we have repurposed underused church backyards as community gardens. Four of these continue today—another ecological witness to community cooperation and localizing food production.

Christian advocacy about appropriate "land use" is another part of witness. Although only 3 to 4 percent of UK land is covered with housing, industry, and roads, development is either not possible or prohibited on a further 55 percent plus, either because of topography, land ownership issues, or preceding designated status as "national park" (or similar). The UK is a small set of crowded islands where one cannot easily escape officialdom's glare. In England particularly, building codes are so stringently applied that illicit developments are bulldozed, owners fined, and the homeless in tented communities are forced to move on. Why is it that in rural France building with used-tire walls rammed with earth is permissible for structural walls yet totally outlawed in Britain?

In Scotland, more relaxed regulations allow crowded city dwellers to put up rural cabins "with the landowner's permission," which are often grouped together creating temporary weekend or summer communities; this is known as "hutting." In recent years, many have been inspired by the satellite programs of the North American "tiny homes" movement, with homes that are usually built sustainably—up-cycling used materials and often off-grid. Yet, in the British versions of networked TV programs of folks building such tiny homes, they have to issue the sternest of legal warnings reminding such UK builders to beware of official regulation. I have Anabaptist-flavored acquaintances in France, the Netherlands, and Scandinavia who have their own complaints as

---

24 Dave Bookless, *Planetwise: Dare to Care for God's World* (Nottingham, UK: InterVarsity Press, 2008), 142.

25 Francis, *Shalom*, 116.

26 E.g., Calvin Redekop, ed., *Creation and the Environment: An Anabaptist Perspective on a Sustainable World* (Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press, 2000); Noel Moules, *Fingerprints of Fire—Footprints of Peace: A Spiritual Manifesto from a Jesus Perspective* (Washington, DC: O Books, 2012).

well as questions and compliments about their legislative restrictions in both land usage and housing developments.

In Britain and the other crowded nations of Europe, we have been greatly helped by Australian thinking, which has often recognized that environmental thinking and practice must form a basis for state legislation and community practice. One key example is the permaculture movement,<sup>27</sup> which has adopted a holistic view for 1) land use and food production, using “no dig” and multi-cropping practices, and 2) community and housing development. Several members of our local Green Party (including our household) with either large backyards or community gardens use permaculture practices as a way to improve the soil’s quality, thereby increasing our domestic food production for our own family and friends, including those at church. One permaculturing UK Congregational pastor of my acquaintance provides all the food—including rabbit and chicken, and apples for the pies—raised on his own land for their church’s annual Harvest Supper; he has even appeared on regional TV to explain theologically why he and they do this as “an ecological witness.”

Permaculture has come to mean more than just food-sufficiency in the household. Self-reliance in food is meaningless unless people have access to land, information and financial resources. So in recent years, it has come to encompass appropriate legal and financial strategies, including strategies for land access, business structures and regional self-financing. This way it is a whole human system.<sup>28</sup>

Those of us involved in the UK permaculture movement easily recognize that there is a more laid-back and integrative approach in Australasia toward healthy ecological practical witness—much more easily accepting of (and hearing) the different voices of native peoples, New Age practitioners, Christians, and those who just enjoy living by alternative and organic values. This is much more my preferred *realpolitik* for all people.

One group, which affirms that questioning, and that has done so successfully is the neo-pagan Lammas Community in West Wales (which is one of the four constituent UK nations and has its own language). In buying poor agricultural land and patiently working to overcome the prejudices of several nearby villagers (who called them “dirty hippies” and much worse), they overcame local bureaucracy, sheaves of building codes, and ultimately statutory principle.

---

<sup>27</sup> Bill Mollison, *Permaculture: A Designers’ Manual* (Tyalgum, AU: Tagari, 1988).

<sup>28</sup> Bill Mollison, with Rena Mia Slay, *Introduction to Permaculture* (Tyalgum, AU: Tagari, 1994), vii.

They have now won the legal right to build low-impact,<sup>29</sup> off-grid<sup>30</sup> domestic homes on their own land. Initially, this code revision was conceded only on the basis that within five years each household would be earning at least 50 percent of their income from the surrounding land. These houses do not have to satisfy all urban building codes, but if they use recycled/upcycled and nonstandard materials, they still cannot get building insurance.

Initially, that code revision was conceded only on the basis that within five years, each household would be earning at least 50 percent of their income from the surrounding land.

Chris Wimbush, one of Lammas's founding and now long-standing residents, told me: "But now, they have realized that before us, the farmer could only let others' sheep graze our land for about £2,500 per year . . . yet within five years, we shall be producing over £100,000 worth of organic vegetables annually to sell in the local markets, as well as what we need for our families." The forty-fold increase in production is due to good husbandry and co-operative working practices. It has also persuaded both the Pembrokeshire county authorities and the Welsh legislature that their legal Institute 52 should be relaxed to enable repeated sustainable developments across Wales.

English legislators, however, seem to have resolutely gone deaf—not even considering similar legislative change. This will be no surprise to North American readers who can witness the life of Alaskan homesteaders, former hippies in comfortable southern state communes, and those hiding away in jerry-built homes in the Midwest, northern states, and Canadian provinces where building codes are different from what is actually enforced. But it should not stop Christians from demanding legislative and building code change for the sake of God's planet.

Is it because of such regulation about almost everything that many UK Christians hardly dare to think outside the box of their movement's traditional forms of worship? Apart from harvest festivals, most British congregations have little relationship with the natural world around them. Some new initiatives, however, are bringing change and new thinking.

One example is the UK's growing Forest Church movement with gatherings across Britain that meet at different times and seasons outdoors, with a strong understanding of God as creator.<sup>31</sup> Their informality and flexibility

---

29 Tony Wrench, *Building a Low Impact Roundhouse* (Hampshire, UK: Permanent, 2008).

30 Nick Rosen, *How to Live Off-Grid: Journeys Outside the System* (London, UK: Bantam, 2008).

31 Bruce Stanley, *Forest Church: A Field Guide to a Spiritual Connection with Nature* (Anamchara online, 2013).

echoes some urban trends of the “emerging church” movement.<sup>32</sup> At the heart of both movements is a clear understanding of the environment surrounding their patterns and places of meeting, which often involve eating and playing together as well as prayer and reflection. Anabaptist history teaches us that our forebears had to have a similar openness to a variety of witness in order to simply survive as well as to share their understandings of the words, works, and ways of Jesus. We have much to learn from these freestyle movements as Anabaptists seeking to develop better understandings of ecology and witness.

Precisely because there are Christians in virtually every neighborhood—whether rural, suburban, or downtown—we can learn from each other and from those we work alongside as environmental activists to offer a coherent vision for the earth and its peoples, plants, and creatures. We as Anabaptist-Mennonite Christians have, in addition, distinctive and strong community perspectives in both *nachfolge*<sup>33</sup> and *gelassenheit*<sup>34</sup> to inform a life together (as Bonhoeffer termed it) and to realize that our ecological witness about housing and lifestyle must increase—and quickly.

## On the Road to a New Future

Many of us as Anabaptists, former London Mennonite Centre coworkers, community gardeners, and radical Christians across the UK have found that low-key, patiently fermented, small pieces of ministry can have significant ecological witness.

In two cities, because of my commitment to biblical justice, the influence of Mennonite friends, and my growing contact with the permaculture movement, I worked with different pastor acquaintances and the then UK charity *Tools for Self-Reliance* to begin Christian projects to refurbish hand and garden tools. Initially, we gathered a group of Christians to de-rust, re-handle, and sharpen gardening tools, some of which we sold to UK community gardeners to pay the transit costs of sending others to projects in the developing world. We extended both UK projects to include refurbishing hand tools, then repaired bicycles on the same principle, sending most refinished work abroad. We also started Saturday morning bike workshops for kids and parents at a church café.

---

32 Eddie Gibbs and Ryan Bolger, *Emerging Churches: Creating Christian Communities in Postmodern Cultures* (London, UK: SPCK, 2006).

33 *Nachfolge* is German for “following after”—a term commonly used in Anabaptism for our personal discipleship in following after the words, works, and ways of Jesus.

34 *Gelassenheit* is German, broadly translated as “yieldedness,” which within Anabaptism refers to our discipleship practice of yielding our personal whims and wants to accepting God’s demands or those of the covenant community we are individually committed to.

At one workshop, we hoisted an embroidered flag outside that said, “Bikes are not just vehicles of revolution but part of a natural cycle,” the truth of which I witnessed as I traveled down the Mekong. As all these projects have evolved, they have remained overtly Christian and continue to be an ecological witness, attracting publicity and media interest.

But Westernized Christians live in a world that is not always so low-tech, and we face many questions about transport practices. If we live in certain cities, we should affirm but not over-romanticize the significant mass-transit systems. The Metro in Paris, *Tunnelbana* in Stockholm, and Underground in London can seem very different for those everyday users of the New York subway, the Chicago “El,” or Toronto’s RT, just as “riding the tram” in San Francisco feels very different from doing the same in the UK northern cities of Sheffield and Manchester. However, it is not just about perception but also about ecology and witness. That must lead us to question not only how much foreign travel, including air flights, we undertake but also our own everyday transport decisions.

Regrettably, in rural Britain and Europe, just as in North America and Australasia, we rely too much on the petrol engine; we must seek ways to reduce our reliance and find alternatives. This can force us to make difficult choices. Some of my annual teaching/speaking engagements in churches, communities or at summer festivals are in places unreachable by public transport (even by bus), so I have to plan my speaking tours and poetry gigs carefully and use a small RV to travel and stay in between those seminars; I have had to make a counter-intuitive choice to my eco-theological beliefs. But another longstanding UK Anabaptist leader now has only electric cars and a solar-powered home, negating his fossil fuel dependency. More locally, how much should we use a handcart or the car to bring home our community garden’s harvest? Such choices easily become further ecological witness. We need to be challenged to make them appropriately.

Many UK Anabaptists gather across cities or rural counties. We do not have identities like “Amish neighborhoods” or known community homesteads like the three Bruderhof communities here and others elsewhere globally. In Britain, we do not have mission-focused Anabaptist congregations nor, any longer, a national Mennonite “mother house.” We must rely on our individual witness in Christian households to make initial impact on neighbors and colleagues—to build friendships, *then* speak of our Jesus-centered faith. In that interim, it will be our lifestyle, however ecologically aware, that will tell of our own vision for God’s world.

## **Witness and the Realpolitik**

Part of the Christian dilemma in becoming involved in the environmental movement’s activism is its realpolitik: there is a hardline, if not ruthless, atti-

tude toward implementing strategies that have little room for grace and forgiveness. The movement pillories companies (sometimes rightly) and outlaws practices too quickly to enable creative societal change. This does not mean that we should not find inexpensive alternatives to fossil fuels *now*, nor tax—even progressively fine—polluting practices of offending companies.

But it is especially our human dealings with others—whether in theological debates, the political process, and even our community activism—that Christians need to focus on, to redefine the way we deal with and listen to each other. As a church historian, I know Martin Luther was a misogynistic anti-Semite as well as a clever, somewhat-expedient theologian, but for Christians involved in the *realpolitik* of the UK’s eco-struggles, Luther’s “Here I stand” stance is a reminder and challenge to maintain our faith’s platform. Through our Anabaptist multivoiced learning, we need to encourage the grace of cooperation and listening to people, groups, and contexts that are different from ours. I am all too conscious, for instance, of the fact that some in the UK Green Party in which I am locally active regard me as some kind of weak individual because I am declaredly a Christian. I am also conscious that Jonathan Bartley—now the national coleader of the Green Party of England and Wales—and I served together on the UK Anabaptist Network’s national Steering Group for several years, but now Bartley’s internet profile has airbrushed much of his Christian commitment away.

Such hardline demarcation between Christians and others does not have to repeat itself in other national debates, providing that Christians demonstrate their eco-credentials, green theology, committed activism, and lack of hypocrisy. Nearly twenty years ago, while serving as a denominational pastor, I was part of a delegation that formed one of the regional Christian and pagan interfaces for dialogue, discussion, and action. Each of us was respected for the stance, faith, and philosophy we held; our differences did not prevent fruitful discussion and shared support for a variety of different neighborhood activities. Today there is a much more coordinated set of networks creating interfaces between Christians and pagans,<sup>35</sup> often involving various forms of ecological witness.

As Anabaptists, we understand both what it means to be a minority and to listen to others to forge ways forward. In this, we can help build a strong ecological witness that we can support—and then it might be our personal

---

<sup>35</sup> I am using “pagan” here in its UK context, not a sometimes devaluing, pejorative North American sense. In Britian, there is a growing Pagan Network, an umbrella organization with various complementary magazines and websites ([www.ukpagan-council.org](http://www.ukpagan-council.org)), supported by earth-believers, non-Christians, and some followers of the hedgerow magic. Recall that *pagani* in Latin simply meant “country dwellers,” who were non-believers.

task to explain that ecology and witness from biblical perspectives. I am aware that many others do not share my Christian faith, but with candor and grace, there can be mutual respect, whether visiting Lammas, working with Forest Church and “emerging church” supporters, pagans, Scottish hutters, various food co-operatives, permaculturalists, community gardeners (allotmenters) and/or members of different housing schemes.

Many of us who are Christian eco-activists are encouraged by and support involvement with *A Rocha*, a Christian organization “engaging communities in nature conversation.”<sup>36</sup> Founded in Portugal in 1983, *A Rocha*’s work has spread to twenty nations worldwide, developing projects, facilitating learning, and providing “a forum for understanding the relevance of the Christian faith to environmental issues.” Through community-based conservation projects, *A Rocha* responds to the global crisis of biodiversity loss, utilizing residential field study centers, site-based projects, and wider advocacy. Utilizing predominantly small-scale projects, such as the Five Loaves Community Garden in Lynden, Washington (USA), they encourage Christians and their neighbors to become involved in community action, demonstrating to the wider populace that ecology and witness go hand-in-hand. Personally, I know Anabaptists/Mennonites in five nations who are involved in *A Rocha* projects. This kind of localized, small-scale witness sits well with orthopraxic Anabaptist discipleship.

Within denominational Britain, an ecumenical eco-congregation movement has grown. Member congregations voluntarily subscribe and self-examine their life and buildings for “their ecological witness.” This engages them in study conferences, worship topics, and the opportunity to receive awards at a variety of increasing levels of eco-credentials determined through a more formalized assessment. Awards are given for sustainable energy sourcing, the use and insulation of buildings (including ancillary land usage), recycling policies, and so forth; the movement creatively challenges not only the congregations but also their individual members domestically.

Many North American Mennonite churches would regard all this as normative, but fewer mainland European ones do. In England and Wales, the Eco-Church movement has 500-plus congregations, now serviced via the *A Rocha*<sup>37</sup> environmental charity, and two executive staff members. Yet in Scotland, with only a national population of 5.5 million people (not even 25 percent are churchgoers), the Eco-Congregation Scotland<sup>38</sup> movement is far more influential, with well over 400 congregations and five executive staff, thanks to the dynamic support of the Church of Scotland and the UK’s United Reformed

---

36 [www.arochoa.org](http://www.arochoa.org).

37 [www.ecochurch.arochoa.org.uk](http://www.ecochurch.arochoa.org.uk).

38 [www.ecocongregationscotland.org.uk](http://www.ecocongregationscotland.org.uk).

Church (both of which include past and current influential radical reformation voices).

A friend of mine, Trevor Jamison, is the full-time chaplain for Eco-Congregation Scotland, and during the drafting of this article, he and I spoke together about the movement's influence. He was healthily reticent about the details of the churches' recent campaigns about unregulated "fracking," the plastic bottle deposit, and other issues. He far preferred to acknowledge the grassroots corporate struggle—by churches of many different sizes—in prayer, study, and activism to witness holistically to the need for a good ecology in which pollution is diminished and corporate practices are environmentally sound. Given the topography and variety of commerce that sustain Scotland, the emphases for constituent congregations vary in the big cities (healthy inward investment), the industrial areas (decreasing pollutants), the fishing ports (clean seas and fish stocks), and the "Highlands and islands" (quality eco-tourism). In many ways, Scotland exemplifies how the different emphases of ecology and witness in grassroots congregational life will vary across Westernized nations. One size (or response) cannot fit all. "Ecology is not just a mark of mission but a mark of discipleship";<sup>39</sup> in our Anabaptist-Mennonite understanding of *nachfolge*, it may take a British Roman Catholic professor of theology to remind us of this in the advancing new ecumenical age.

While researching this article, I tried contacting elected representatives of all our regional governments, requesting their understanding of "ecology and [Christian] witness." One Member of the Scottish Parliament (MSP) told me at Holyrood how he and many colleagues felt well-supported in environmental campaigns, citing Christian support for the ban on "fracking" (hydraulic fracturing for shale gas), the work of Iona Community members, and the recent successful Scottish Eco-congregations' lobby to introduce statutory deposits on plastic bottles. I had a similarly encouraging response from another such MSP when researching a book on UK housing.<sup>40</sup> An elected member of *Plaid Cymru* told me how Christian congregations are a key part of the vanguard enriching the quality of neighborhood life in both de-industrialized Welsh valleys and rural communities. And a *Sinn Fein* member of the Stormont Assembly easily recalled the names and reconciling ministries of Mennonite workers in Northern Ireland.

## Offering a Visionary Agenda

In a crowded Britain, and even a crowded Europe, living within a more isolated worldview is far more difficult for religious communities than in North

---

39 Celia Deane-Drummond, *Eco-Theology* (London, UK: Darton, Longman & Todd, 2008), 181.

40 Francis, ed., *Foxes Have Holes*.

America (where I studied at Princeton, NJ, and traveled among Mennonite acquaintances), or in my travels over a generation in East Asian countries. It struck me that in North America, one could live in a “church bubble,” home educating one’s children (e.g., Amish schools), choosing only non-salacious mass media and Christian colleges. And in Asia, although folk there had global technology, their mindset was normally a decentralized “village mentality.” To have an effective ecology and witness, we must break out of our church bubble or village mentality.

Many internationally recognized humanist and/or atheist philosophers understand Christian (and separately Islamic) theology to hold a credible, transnational view of God’s world that calls for both needed philosophical and practical change to meet the growing environmental challenges. But they often note that such Christian theology has been “very quickly pushed into a subordinate position by the secular law of European states.”<sup>41</sup> If one’s federal legislature becomes dominated by a non-environmental worldview in this way, the Christian witness for ecological justice must work harder to become more effective.

The need for environmental witness is necessarily creating dialogue. Often this dialogue is with those whom the pastors of my childhood would have chided me about, if not disapproved of. It is truly ecumenical, in the sense of God’s *oikos* (household) being recreated in the rethinking of ecology, economy, and ecumeny being totally intertwined.<sup>42</sup>

As I write, I am in my study, looking over the village rooftops, fields, and freeway to the city where I know the imams, Sikh Elders, the bishop, and many church leaders, pagans, and New Agers as well as eco-activists. From here, I see the pollution cloud hanging above the city and know that it demands our collective response. Part of our theological witness will be to determine what we believe “ecumenical” means: does it mean cooperating with only other Christian denominations or acting in concert with “all God’s people”?

A Quaker acquaintance, Alastair McIntosh, the former Director of the UK Centre for Human Ecology, can easily remind me that how we as Christians present ourselves and work in “earth-friendly” ways in “broken neighborhoods” helps with both people’s healing and their ability to see the physical world with fresh vision.<sup>43</sup> Amen to that. The “work of social and ecological witness is

---

41 Roger Scruton, *Green Philosophy: How to Think Seriously about the Planet* (London, UK: Atlantic, 2013).

42 Francis, *OIKOS*.

43 Alastair McIntosh, *Rekindling Community: Connecting People, Environment and Spirituality* (Totnes, UK: Green Books for the Schumacher Society, 2008).

necessarily about protest. Theologically speaking, this makes its prophetic.<sup>44</sup> And we have to be prepared to risk rebuttal to enter today's world of realpolitik.

Anabaptist-Mennonite Christians have a distinctive heritage and witness. Ecology and witness may not have been our historical distinctive. But now we have to live out an earth friendly discipleship to begin witnessing well; learning the theological niceties can follow. As New Testament believers, we have to live as those from virtually 2,000 years ago—risking our lives among the realpolitik of others—if we want to share the broad and deep implications of the reign of God for people and planet.

This means accepting God's visionary agenda that makes our lives distinctive:

If we want to respond to creation differently, with loving care for all that lives on earth, and if we aspire to be what we were meant to be, that is co-creators in God's image, then we must realize that creation refers not only to our origins but to our future as well . . .

. . . The creation, that begins with the first creation, is unfinished.<sup>45</sup>

---

44 Alastair McIntosh, *Soil and Soul: People Versus Corporate Power* (London, UK: Aurum, 2001), 121.

45 Dorothee Soelle, *To Work and to Love: A Theology of Creation* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1984), 163–64.



# A Cooperative Sustainable School Garden for Peace

ELIZABET GEIJLVOET<sup>1</sup>

My name is Elizabet Geijlvoet. I am from the Netherlands. As I write this, I am sitting in a very small garden shed of a member of my church, surrounded by the lilac trees this village is famous for. I feel very blessed to work in the ministry of the Mennonite church here, the Doopsgezinde Gemeente (the Dutch Mennonite church). Besides being a minister of the Mennonite church in Aalsmeer, I am a mother of two children: Rojda and Hozan. The name of our daughter refers to sunrise and the goddess of spring, and followed by the hope of Newroz—the celebration of freedom and peace in Kurdistan. The name of our son refers to the singing of ballads, not only of pain and grief but also of hope and times of change, because a song can be stronger than any lethal weapon. I am also the wife of Kamal of the house of Khouja, a well-respected peace family in Afrin, Kurdish Syria.

I am telling you this because Syria is where I began my pilgrimage toward a “garden of peace.” The seed God planted in me was small, barely noticeable at first. It was the seed of the dream for a garden of peace. The dream was given to me by the same Spirit of God that gave us the dream of a land of justice and peace: the Promised Land. The same Spirit that carries in her the dream of the Garden of Eden, of a past wherein there was a natural communion of people, trees and plants, animals, the earth, and God.

## Old soil, fertilized to become—once more—the garden of paradise

Let me tell you about Kaxere, a little village in Syria in the north, at the border of Turkey. The inhabitants would say they are living in Kurdistan.<sup>2</sup> The Kurd-

---

<sup>1</sup> *Elizabet Khouja Geijlvoet is Minister of the Mennonite Church of Aalsmeer the Netherlands and is married to a Kurdish Syrian refugee. Through visits to her husband's home village for the past 20 years, she has gotten to know the situation of the region and its lovely inhabitants, and her heart aches because of the war and the ecological situation there.*

<sup>2</sup> If in 1916 the Middle East had been divided differently by the French and British in the Sykes Pico Agreement, there would have been a very large country called Kurdistan. As it is, the Kurds are now one of the world's largest peoples without a nation state.

ish people are very sociable; they respect all human beings in fellowship, live in close harmony with nature, and have a great love of nature. In this little village in Syrian Kurdistan, people used to grow olive trees, harvesting the olives and pressing them into olive oil. They also grew fruit trees, tended sheep and goats, and had some land for wheat and lentils and so on. Every household had a big kitchen garden.



*The author with her daughter in Syria.* IMAGE PROVIDED.

Times changed, resulting in better and worse years, but overall there was always more than enough to eat. In the past decennia, however, the climate has changed, and for 15 to 20 years, there has been very little rain in this part of Syria. The rain that has fallen has been hard and has washed away the thin top layer of earth, causing further erosion by wind and rain. Following this, a drought burned the crops in the fields. The country has not been able to support all of the newly impoverished families, and the rural people have gone to the cities to live uprooted lives. Layered on top of these harsh realities is a political system that has excluded many people who were very active in the community, leaving them to live in fear and desolation. Unfortunately, this multi-layered humanitarian situation is not unique to Syria but is, rather, a recognizable worldwide problem.

Each time we've gone to the village of Kaxere, we have seen the effects of the situation worsen. With each passing year, people have grown more des-

perate. The young people have lost belief in a future that could hold a place for them, and their despair has led to their disinterest in everything that one would normally associate with life and prosperity.

Because of the youth's lack of interest, the knowledge of keeping kitchen gardens has nearly been lost. People have stopped growing food to sustain their bodies and families, and they no longer preserve food; they have stopped making pickles, syrups, and dried nuts and fruits. As a result, they've lost not only the feeling of being able to pay a tribute to their own future but also their trust in the life-bringing God—the trust and belief that what one sows will grow into something good in time. They only believe in their reality of grief and despair.

As I started thinking about these realities, I wondered how I could address this profound despair. How could I bring back a notion of hope and the courage to sow the seeds of faith in a life-bringing God? How could I sow the seeds of belief in a future of just peace?

## The Tools of the Mennonite Peace Tradition to Work the Garden of Peace

Our church in Aalsmeer has about 500 members and is one of the three biggest Mennonite Churches in Holland. The Doopsgezinde churches tend to be rather small, perhaps because of their ethical beliefs in the biblical message of nonviolence and restoration of all that is broken and wounded. Not everyone feels at ease with this mission of peace and nonviolence; this is true for those outside the churches as well as for many people inside the churches, even Mennonite churches. Quite often we can feel very ill-equipped for the big issues of climate change, wars far away and nearby, refugees and other immigrants, gender issues, and other hot topics we'd rather not burn our fingers on. Still, there are many brave Christians who want to answer the call for peace in their own human way.

We hold on to the belief that we have a call—for healing and binding and bringing together people in peace and justice. And we, the churches with this old peace tradition, call this *bringing people together in the healing presence of God*, who can be found amid his people, especially among the suffering. Here, I think of the words of the declaration in Kingston, Jamaica, of the Decade to Overcome Violence. There, the gathered peace workers spoke of the following:

We understand peace and peacemaking as an indispensable part of our common faith. Peace is inextricably related to the love, justice and freedom that God has granted to all human beings through Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit as a gift and vocation. It constitutes a pattern of life that reflects human participation in God's love for the world. The dynamic nature of peace as gift and vocation does not deny the existence of tensions, which form an intrinsic element of human relationships, but can alleviate

their destructive force by bringing justice and reconciliation.<sup>3</sup>

In the world outside the churches, we speak in more secular terms of addressing social and environmental issues, well-being, and inclusiveness in speaking and acting in our community. We want to be on speaking terms with others who likewise want to work on these issues. They usually don't speak the language of the churches, but we assume they understand the language of love and compassion, because we share our common ground of being part of humankind.



*The village of Kaxere.* IMAGE PROVIDED.

In the latest decennia in our church, we have tended to speak in terms of “just peace”—a term used by professor Fernando Enns, who lectures at our Mennonite Seminary in the Netherlands. Just peace calls to us from across the broad spectrum of life, bringing together the aspects of peace between people in the community (including people of different ethnic, cultural, and social backgrounds) and peace with creation. Through the idea of just peace with cre-

---

3 World Council of Churches, “Glory to God and Peace on Earth: The Message of the International Ecumenical Peace Convocation,” *Overcoming Violence: Churches Seeking Reconciliation and Peace*, accessed February 7, 2018, <http://www.overcomingviolence.org/en/resources-dov/wcc-resources/documents/presentations-speeches-messages/iepc-message.html>.

ation, we can come to an understanding of what we need as human beings for our well-being and for wholeness in our communities and our world. Gardens of peace bind all these aspects of just peace together.

### **Fertilizing the dream: gardening models**

This dream of a garden in Syria has been fertilized by people I've met who are working with community and school gardens. First, I met Bert Ydema, who for decades has been the teacher of the school garden project of the city of Amsterdam where generations of children have had a little garden plot. He came to our church and told us about his gardens and how he educates city children about gardening, cultivating especially their sense of pride and feeling for nature.

Then I encountered others with visions for gardening. I saw a program on permaculture in Jordan by Geoff Lawton at the Jawasari School Garden Project; the Mennonite Central Committee workers wanted to visit this farm and were thinking of projects like its school garden. In our own village in the Netherlands, a restaurant started a biological greenhouse project to grow their own vegetables, and a school there has a garden in it as well. I also met a Mennonite woman in nearby Utrecht who is a farmer and who, until last fall, had a big biological vegetable farm called *Groene kans*, "Green chance." The ecumenical council in our town started a food bank for people on welfare who depend on social aid, and the *voedselbank*, as we call it, has found a greenhouse to grow fresh vegetables for the food boxes. Many people who are dependent on the food boxes like to work as volunteers for what is called *OostOogst*.

We nearly started a school garden in Kaxere, but then the war started. Despite this, I have learned a lot about garden projects, and I want to share some important aspects of these projects that can be used in future gardens in Syria.

### **Peace Dreams for My School Garden in Syrian Kurdistan**

How will this garden of peace in Syria grow? Although more than five years of war continues to tear the country apart, we are thinking of projects of restorative justice for the future. After the war, the feeling of despair will be even worse, and the damage of a war with a scorched-earth policy might even seem irreversible. For the sake of agriculture as well as for the people of Syria, we must consider how to bring back together neighbors who now are divided through questions of guilt and distrust and grief.

Projects of reconciliation will be needed, but the needs won't stop there. Projects will also be needed to address environmental issues, to build a new society with room for justice, peace, and the abundant grace of our loving God. Thus, I would like to sow a little seed in your hearts, too—the seed of a dream for gardens of peace for Syria.

When I think of peace restored for the kids, I first imagine a school garden like the project of Bert Ydema. I envision a schoolteacher taking the children out to a plot of ground where each of them have their own square meters to sow. And I hear the teacher telling the children about what plants need to grow, how the earth must be fertilized in a way that respects the needs of the earth and the people at the same time. Organic planting and protecting the earth would be not only a part of the lessons of letting food grow but also a metaphor for respecting life and its vulnerability. My hope is that this could restore the children's faith in general as well as in their own lives specifically and make them feel entitled to ask for care and attention for themselves.

Another aspect of this future garden project would be re-owning the inheritance of Kurdish culture and ground. So many times the farmers in that village have faced the threat of their gardens being destroyed or taken away from them by the government; if the Kurdish people could be the rightful inhabitants of their own villages, it would give them a feeling of rootedness.

The first step of the project has already taken place. We have talked to some people who are enthusiastic about the idea, and we have determined that there are enough plots in the village for the school to use. The second step also is taking place—because of the war. Since the government is no longer in charge of the schooling system in the region, the Kurdish people have created their own schooling curriculum for teaching the children about freedom and equality of gender, as well as for giving more attention to the arts. Some of our cousins are actually now teaching at the school. Very idealistic young people are teaching in their mother tongue, and they are open to new ways of schooling the youth about hope and peace.

The next step would be, after peace occurs over the horizon of time, to school some young people in the agricultural ideals of permaculture. The school project in Jordan has an educational program that would be very helpful in building the knowledge needed for this school garden project.

Peace education is another important step (Mennonite Central Committee and Christian Peacemaker Teams now have similar projects in Iraq), and of course the kitchen garden project to deliver the actual seeds would be very helpful.

What can we, far away from Syria, do to help build this dream? We can be part of garden projects in our own communities, and maybe we can start educating the garden workers of tomorrow. Then it could become reality—a school garden for peace in Syria.

# Sacred Stones<sup>1</sup>

KATERINA FRIESEN<sup>2</sup>

At one time, the confluence of two powerful rivers churned with such energy that it created smooth, spherical stones. The Lakota people named one of these rivers *Íŋyaŋwakaŋapi Wakpá*, “Stone-Make-For-Themselves River,” and called the stones *Íŋyaŋ Wakháŋagapi Othí*, “sacred stones.”<sup>3</sup> The Lakotas use these sacred stones in prayer and ceremony and view them, like the river, plants, and animals, as a living part of all relations.

European explorers and colonizers who came to the region also saw and admired the smooth, spherical stones shaped by the churning waters. But instead of sacred stones, they saw stones shaped like cannonballs, like ammunition for war. And so they named that river the Cannonball River, which converges with the Missouri River near Cannonball, North Dakota.<sup>4</sup> Sacred stones or cannonballs? Perspective shapes practice.

This conflict of perspective between Indigenous and colonizer peoples shapes a long history of struggle on and for Lakota land. Take, for example, the 1874 gold mining expedition led by General Custer that catapulted a gold rush of settlers into the sacred Black Hills. Or consider the damming of the Missouri River in the 1950s by the Army Corps of Engineers to create Lake Oahe for hydropower. Lakota burial grounds and fertile land for gathering plant medicines were flooded, and the people say that many elders died of heartbreak from the loss. The more recent Standing Rock Sioux tribe’s resistance to the destruction of sacred sites and contamination of water by the oil-carrying Dakota Access Pipeline represents the latest struggle in this long history. Sacred stones or cannonballs?

---

1 Katerina originally shared this piece as a sermon during chapel at the AMBS Rooted and Grounded Conference, April 21, 2017.

2 *Katerina Friesen lives on traditional Yokut land in Fresno, California. She works with incarcerated people through the Insight Garden Program to build and tend gardens behind bars, and is an Adjunct Instructor of Biblical Studies at Fresno Pacific University.*

3 Jordan Engel and Dakota Wind, “Dakota Access Pipeline Indigenous Protest Map,” *The Decolonial Atlas*, September 16, 2016, <https://decolonialatlas.wordpress.com/2016/09/07/dakota-access-pipeline-indigenous-protest-map/>.

4 I learned these stories in September 2016 when I visited the Standing Rock encampments near the Missouri River as part of a delegation of Mennonites through the Dismantling the Doctrine of Discovery Coalition.

What do we see when we look at stones, at earth? Earth as weapon and tool, earth as a resource for human use, or earth as sacred, alive, and in kinship with us? In the colonized language and imagination, stones are the epitome of dead matter. They can't move on their own. They can't speak. They have no spirit, no sentience. A rock is a rock, right?

Inspired by the Indigenous-led movement at Standing Rock and congregational study about the Doctrine of Discovery, a small group from my congregation—Fellowship of Hope Mennonite Church in Elkhart, Indiana—went to visit the nearest nation of Indigenous neighbors, the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi. We spoke with Marcus Winchester, their Director for Language and Culture, to learn more about Potawatomi ways of seeing the world. Marcus shared with us that words in the Potawatomi language, like many other Indigenous languages, are grouped by inanimate and animate categories.<sup>5</sup> Human-made things, like tables, are among those things considered inanimate. Yet rocks, water, fire, places, and even weather patterns are considered animate. One would not refer to a stone as an “it,” nor by the English-gendered “he” or “she,” but with a Potawatomi pronoun signifying the stone's inherent aliveness. Since learning this, I've been reading Scripture with a new lens, with an eye for how what I once perceived as inanimate is part of the biblical story.

For example, I noticed that the stone Jacob uses as a wilderness pillow is not just any rock but an aid to his dreams that he anoints with oil and declares to be the place of God (Gen 28:17–18). In Deuteronomy 27, we are told that Yahweh's preferred altar is made of “unhewn” stones untouched by human technology. Stones are key witnesses of divine-human encounters and are set up as markers of remembrance, as the song says, “Here I raise my Ebenezer,” (referencing 1 Sam 7:12). Or consider Job 5:23, which says that as a result of God's deliverance “you shall be in league with the *stones* of the field, and the wild animals shall be at peace with you” (emphasis mine).<sup>6</sup>

Before Easter this year, I noticed the stones in the Passion narrative for the first time, especially in the Gospel of Matthew. Just as Jesus breathed his last, the earth quaked violently, and *rocks split* (Matt 27:50–51).

Barbara Brown Taylor writes:

When that Word fell silent on Golgotha—when, after a loud cry, both the high sound of his nervous system and the low sound of his beating heart stopped—the earth shook with grief. Rocks made the only sound they could, splitting open with small explosions that were their best version of tears. . . . The whole inanimate world leapt in to fill that silence, while

---

5 Other Indigenous peoples understand everything as animate, or alive.

6 All Scripture references are from the NRSV unless otherwise noted.

poor, dumb humanity stood speechless before the cross.<sup>7</sup>

In front of the cross, it seems the inanimate world is not so dead after all. The very stones cry out in testimony when we humans do not give voice! The living earth shakes with apocalyptic anger against those who would kill God's son, and the spirit of the rocks cry out when the Crucified One releases his spirit and power. How can they help but split in two when our Lord Christ, in whom all things hold together, is broken on the cross?

Even though the myriad voices of earth cry out, even though Creation groans in expectant longing for the revealing of the children of God (Rom 8:19), many of us are speechless before the cross of our day. We are speechless in the shadow of the cross that now looms over Creation, the cross of climate crisis. As we face this cross, we may wonder, has God abandoned us to sin and destruction? Has God abandoned us to unparalleled desecration and defilement of God's holy Creation? Have the powers of domination triumphed in their all-out extraction of life from this planet as they enslave people and creatures—even water and rocks—for the pursuit of abstract profit and control?

Before this cross, we seek to respond with human words and wisdom, but they seem too little and too late. We find our tongues tied, our technologies inadequate, our weapons powerless, and our fact-altering politicians asking, like Pilate, "What is truth?" (John 18:38). Even our most eloquent theologies seem to shrivel in front of the cross of climate meltdown.

And yet the rest of Creation is not paralyzed. New storm systems fling down their fury, from hurricanes to polar vortexes; Leviathan tightens her vice grip around small island nations with floods and rising sea levels, and all color drains from coral reefs bleached by warming waters. Despite our silence and stunned inaction before the cross, the rocks cry out! Perhaps if we give ear, we might join their lament, might feel our own hearts splitting open, and allow the cracking of control to release us into God's own heartbeat.

After Jesus released control over his own life on the cross, he entered into the tomb for three quiet days, held by stones. Have you ever imagined the perspective of those stones? What was it like to be that cave hewn into the mountain, that slab where the Lord's cool body lay against cool rock with the smell of spices scenting the air? Did the stones cradle him in death, humming the words *Awake, O sleeper!* (Eph 5:14, ESV)? Or, having fallen asleep with him, did they, too, gasp again when God made breath enter this second Adam, firstborn of all Creation who has reconciled all things in himself (Col 1:17)?

Stones are the unrecognized first witnesses of Jesus's resurrection, even before the women disciples. In Matthew's Gospel, an angel of the Lord rolls away the stone from the tomb as the earth quakes. Yet in Mark, the women disciples

---

<sup>7</sup> Barbara Brown Taylor, *When God is Silent* (Cambridge, MA: Cowley, 1998), 46–47.

look up and see that “the stone, which was very large, had already been rolled back” (Mark 16:4, NRSV). Could rolling have been the *stone’s* initiative, a way of bowing down to the Risen One, our New Creation?

Jesus, the transcendent and immanent Resurrected One, invites us to join a living new Creation in Christ. For those of us who seek to live in Christ, the reality of resurrection brings *all* Creation to life in Christ again, not only our own selves stuck in the ways of death and destruction. With resurrection eyes, we begin to see the world anew as a living, breathing whole of which we are honored members who also show honor to the rest. We recognize that the world is “charged with the grandeur of God,” and there “lives the dearest freshness deep down things,” in the words of the poet Gerard Manley Hopkins.<sup>8</sup>

This spiritual cosmology poses tantalizing possibilities for our actions and practices. Take worship, for example. When we come alive in Christ and awaken to the aliveness of the rest of God’s created world, we can see stones and trees as worshippers along with us, and perhaps like early Anabaptists in the 1500s, who were compelled by threat of persecution, we can return to the practice of gathering for worship outdoors in forest chapels or in sanctuaries of caves.<sup>9</sup> Imagine if we shared with land and water a portion of the Eucharist, our Great Thanksgiving, as a sign of shared resurrection life with all creation. Or, in our pastoral practices, what if we made pastoral care visits to sick and polluted rivers in our watershed, along with the human communities nearby? Though practices like these may stretch our imaginations, renewed imagination is precisely what is needed in this age of climate crisis.

The dominant imagination, even in church communities, has been malformed by hundreds of years of looking at earth and seeing cannonballs rather than sacred stones. Our church practices, if renewed by more ancient ways of seeing the world as sacred and alive, can reform communities of witness to resist the powers that would hinder new Creation. Though the way seems difficult and oftentimes too little and too late, we are not without friends and guides in this work.

Against all odds, there is a pope who has taken the name Francis, the Christ-like man who spoke to Brother Sun and Sister Moon. Against all odds, Indigenous peoples who have survived tremendous trauma and loss continue to call those of us in the dominant settler culture to wake up and listen to the voices of life around us, for the sake of the survival of all. And against all odds, Christ is not dead but is resurrected as our *living* cornerstone. The Risen Christ

---

8 “God’s Grandeur,” *Gerard Manley Hopkins: Poems and Prose* (London: Penguin Classics, 1985).

9 See, for example, the Wild Church Network, a network of congregations that meet outside of buildings “to re-acquaint, re-cover, and re-member our congregations as loving participants of a larger community.” <https://www.wildchurchnetwork.com>.

animates us, too, to be living stones, as 1 Peter 2:5 says—*living stones* built into a holy home for God in this sacred temple of Creation.



# Creating Sustainability in Church Nonprofit Travel

MATT LEHMAN WIENS<sup>1</sup>

As Anabaptists work to share the whole gospel with the whole world, they rarely stop to examine the environmental impact of their international presence. Mennonite agencies, especially in North America, assume that air travel is a required part of providing humanitarian relief, education, church plants, and/or economic development for communities around the world. Their travel, however, results in carbon emissions that are detrimental to the environment. Repairing this environmental damage is imperative, from both scriptural and systems-thinking standpoints.

This article serves as a case study in implementing carbon offsetting to offset the negative impact of carbon emissions created by international nonprofit air travel. Mennonite Mission Network (MMN), the mission agency of Mennonite Church USA,<sup>2</sup> is an ideal candidate for the study since the agency is responsible for more than 150 workers in 52 countries and provides service opportunities for thousands of people in North America each year. MMN's stated goal is "to lead, mobilize, and equip the church to participate in holistic witness to Jesus Christ in a broken world";<sup>3</sup> to fulfill that goal, staff and volunteers regularly travel to Europe, Asia, Latin America, and Africa. Their travel supports church growth, pastoral training, discipleship, relief work, and development efforts. Ultimately, the scope of MMN's involvement affects thousands of lives.

The study's conclusion is that agencies like MMN could reasonably offset emissions from their air travel and invest in partner agencies committed to preserving God's creation, by increasing their budgets to account for each flight—currently, by \$20 per one-way domestic flight within the United States and \$70 per one-way international flight originating in the United States.

---

1 Matt Lehman Wiens is Director of Donor Relations for Mennonite Mission Network. He wrote this paper as part of the Collaborative MBA joint program of Bluffton University, Canadian Mennonite University, Eastern Mennonite University, and Goshen College. He lives in Wichita, Kansas, with his wife.

2 Mennonite Mission Network denominational offices are located in Elkhart, Indiana, and Newton, Kansas.

3 "Mission and Vision," Home page, Mennonite Mission Network, last modified 2016, <https://www.mennonitemission.net/about/Mission%20and%20Vision>.

## Background

Anabaptist agencies like MMN who depend on travel by air to carry out their mission are responsible for contributing to greenhouse gas emissions through their travel—most specifically, for creating carbon dioxide, or CO<sub>2</sub>. As a gas, CO<sub>2</sub> allows the visible light from the sun to pass through it. The visible light is absorbed by the earth, which then releases infrared radiation. This is a problem because while CO<sub>2</sub> does not absorb visible light, it *does* absorb infrared radiation. This in turn causes an increase in global temperature,<sup>4</sup> which leads to drought, melting glaciers, rising ocean levels, and erratic weather patterns. As a result, people who are in coastal areas or dependent on agriculture are negatively affected by habitat destruction, property destruction, and reduced crop yields. All of these effects are commonly referred to as climate change.

There are many ways to respond to the problem of carbon emissions; two of these include carbon offsetting and carbon onsetting. Carbon offsetting seeks to withdraw emitted carbon from the atmosphere, usually through planting trees or preserving forests. Typically, organizations that participate in offsetting pay \$12 to \$20 per ton of CO<sub>2</sub>.<sup>5</sup> While this is a low-cost option for taking responsibility for carbon emissions, a single tree may need close to a decade to sequester a ton of carbon.<sup>6</sup> When that tree dies, the carbon it sequestered is released back into the atmosphere through burning or decomposition.

Carbon onsetting, comparatively, seeks to recognize the societal impact of a ton of carbon, should it remain in the atmosphere. Onsetting, which is a relatively new concept, focuses less on an exact accounting of carbon emissions and more on a commitment to invest in causes that benefit the environment and the local community. According to the EPA, one ton of CO<sub>2</sub> will have \$43 of negative impact on society through increased health costs, habitat destruction, and desertification. This cost is predicted to rise each year as long as there is no change in the rate of carbon emissions.<sup>7</sup> After calculating their carbon emissions, organizations who participate in carbon onsetting pay the societal cost per ton of carbon rather than the cost to remove it. This cost per ton is invested in causes like local food co-ops, arboretums, and green initiatives that have explicit positive environmental impacts. These causes don't provide

---

4 J. D. Sachs, *The Age of Sustainable Development* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015).

5 Daniel Greenberg, ed., "What is Onsetting?" Earthdeeds, 2015, accessed December 11, 2016, <http://earthdeeds.org/onsetting.php>.

6 Amy Wotherspoon et al., "Carbon Sequestration Potential of Five Tree Species in a 25-Year-Old Temperate Tree-based Intercropping System in Southern Ontario, Canada," *Agroforestry Systems* 88, no. 4 (2014): 631–43.

7 Greenberg, ed., "What is Onsetting?"

a dollar-for-dollar amount of carbon reduction. Instead, they have an impact in the local community while addressing the social impacts of climate change.

## Application

While an onsetting proposal could include estimates of emissions from vehicle travel, office buildings, and/or supplies, this proposal focuses specifically on air travel. The rationale for this is twofold: (1) travel by plane emits much more carbon than travel by vehicle, and air travel is a significant part of MMN's work; (2) options are limited for taking environmental responsibility for air travel—a company can commit to renting hybrid cars, using recycled goods, or installing solar on office buildings, but few such alternatives exist for air travel.

In terms of strategy for onsetting, the best proposal will be a simple one since, especially in MMN's case, calculating or predicting the exact annual travel by plane is a difficult proposition. Changes in worker assignments, new partnerships, and biannual events mean that the year-to-year travel in miles fluctuates. Keeping exact tallies of all miles flown would require strict accountability from close to 200 workers and staff.

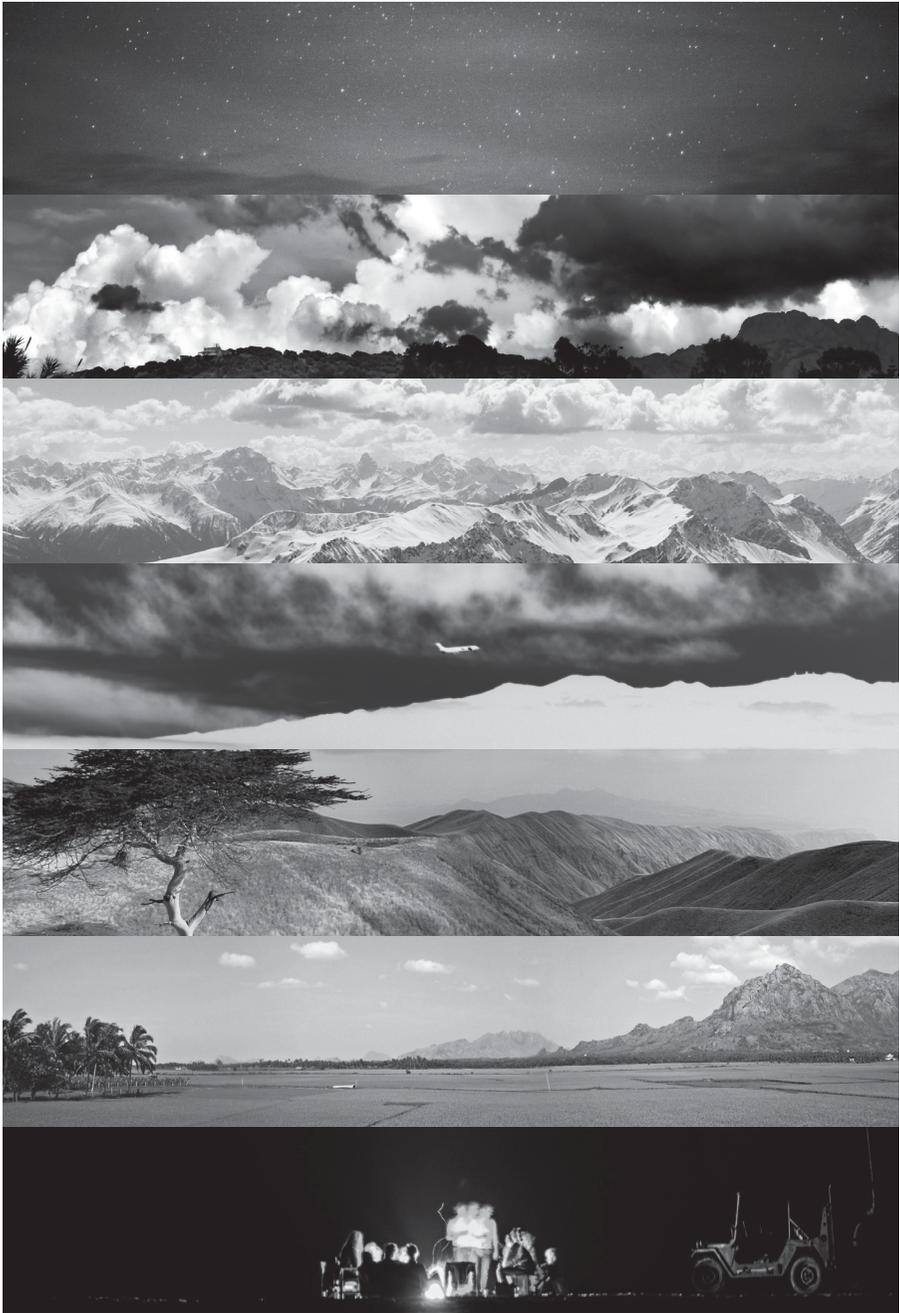
The proposal outlined below works at simplifying through use of averages and estimates. According to a 2014 report from the Bureau of Transportation, the average domestic passenger trip length is 1,424 miles one-way.<sup>8</sup> Passengers traveling internationally from the United States flew an average of 3,294 miles one-way. Since MMN does not often fly to Central America or the Caribbean, the average trip length for an international trip in the proposal has been rounded up to 5,000 miles one-way. (For reference, a flight from Chicago O'Hare Airport to Charles de Gaulle airport in Paris clocks in at 4,200 miles.) Additionally, the miles for domestic flights have been rounded down since the majority of the agency's constituency is located in the Midwest and the number of flight miles is most likely lower than average.

Further information on emissions comes from the United Kingdom. Each year, the UK government puts together a report on conversion factors for CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. For 2016, the report sets the emissions for a short-haul flight (within Europe) at 0.16844 kilograms of CO<sub>2</sub> per kilometer flown. For a long-haul flight (outside of Europe), the average emissions are 0.19162 kg/CO<sub>2</sub> per kilometer flown. And for a trans-oceanic flight, the average emissions are 0.17901 kg/CO<sub>2</sub> per kilometer flown.<sup>9</sup>

---

8 Dave Smallen, "Summary 2014 U.S.-based Airline Traffic Data," Bureau of Transportation Statistics press release, United Bureau of Transportation, March 26, 2015, [http://www.rita.dot.gov/bts/press\\_releases/bts015\\_15](http://www.rita.dot.gov/bts/press_releases/bts015_15).

9 "Greenhouse Gas Reporting—Conversion Factors 2016," UK Government, October 5, 2016, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/greenhouse-gas-reporting-conversion-factors-2016>.



*Points and elevations across earth.* COLLAGE: MATT VEITH / MAGE: PIXABAY - CC 3.0

Averaging these three values gives the reasonable approximation of .17969 kilograms of CO<sub>2</sub> produced per kilometer flown. Conversion to imperial units gives 0.39615 pounds of CO<sub>2</sub> per kilometer flown, or, .63754 pounds of CO<sub>2</sub> per mile.

<b>Onsetting Recommendation for Mennonite Mission Network</b>						
Estimated flight length		CO <sub>2</sub> /person/mile	Emissions per passenger per flight	Moderate outlook cost per ton of CO <sub>2</sub>	Total cost of emissions per journey	Recommended payment per one-way journey
Domestic	1,300 miles	.63754 lbs CO <sub>2</sub>	828.802 lbs CO <sub>2</sub>	\$43	\$17.82	\$20
Int'l	5,000 miles	.63754 lbs CO <sub>2</sub>	3,187.7 lbs CO <sub>2</sub>	\$43	\$68.52	\$70

The simplest path forward would be to apply these onsetting amounts (adjusted as needed to account for the changing cost per ton of carbon emissions) to all future air travel paid for by MMN. Thus, any round-trip flight booked by employees or mission workers within the United States would currently have a \$40 charge added to the overall expense, and international flights would cost an additional \$140. To ensure that these funds would not simply serve to enrich Mennonite Mission Network, they should be placed in a separate fund distributed to partner agencies on an annual basis and reported to the board.

Multiple organizations within MMN’s sphere of relationship and influence would be excellent candidates for the agency’s onsetting investments.

- The Dyck Arboretum in Hesston, Kansas, and the Elkhart (Ind.) Environmental Center both seek to preserve native habitats and to educate residents about the world around them.
- Chain Reaction in Goshen, Indiana, provides people with reliable, green transportation by allowing people in poverty to pay for bicycles through working at the shop. A gift to this agency serves both planet and people.
- The money set aside for carbon onsetting could also be directed toward current projects of MMN. Participants in Mennonite Voluntary Service serve in community gardens and food co-ops; participants in the SOOP program serve in food banks and assist with home repair. Similarly, workers in Ecuador are partnering with local people to help them establish their own eco-tourism venture.
- Finally, there are a variety of organizations within the Mennonite world that work to combat the effects of climate change. Mennonite Creation

Care Network<sup>10</sup> is a collaboration of several Mennonite agencies, including Mennonite Church USA, which seek to bring together faith-based people in creation care. Much of their work is centered on informing and resourcing; they also provide grants for churches to reduce their carbon footprint to zero.

## Conclusion

Responding to the carbon emissions resulting from travel is central to the call of Anabaptist agencies to holistically care for all of creation. Although both carbon offsetting and carbon onsetting can be used to address the negative effects of carbon emissions, carbon onsetting is a more responsible approach as it provides a higher estimate of the social cost of emissions, allows for greater flexibility in response, and is based within local communities. Estimates in this paper have shown that MMN could use carbon onsetting to authentically address their air travel carbon emissions through increasing their budget by \$20 for each one-way domestic flight and \$70 for each one-way international flight. The funds generated would support organizations whose mission is to positively impact the local environment.

As MMN and other Anabaptists work to serve the whole world as messengers of Christ, taking small steps like onsetting could result in air travel that is not only environmentally responsible but also beneficial to the work of partners in mission around the world.

---

10 See Mennonite Creation Care Network at <http://www.mennocreationcare.org/>.

# Reconciling with Creation: Calling Us Back to Community with Creation/Creator

WENDY JANZEN<sup>1</sup>

## Genesis 9:9–17; Colossians 1:15–23

Last spring I spent some time wandering on a piece of land not far from our home in Kitchener. It used to be a little forest along the Spurline Trail that we would pass when walking to school or biking uptown. Though we are fortunate to have pockets of naturalized urban forests here in Waterloo Region, the pockets that are not within city parks are quickly disappearing. We discovered this firsthand when we returned from a vacation a few years ago and found that the trees were all gone in “our” little forest. Someone, presumably a developer, had torn them all down. In the years following, the land has sat vacant, looking empty, battered, and scarred. But that morning last spring, it was a sea of pale-blue forget-me-nots, sprinkled with pinks and yellows and whites of other “weeds” that had taken root, bringing beautiful signs of new life to the broken earth.

God calls all life into being. God’s presence is all around us—every atom is full of God’s energy. Romans 8 tells us that all of creation groans with the anticipation of redemption in God—every created thing *in unison*, both people *and* the natural world. We are God’s creation, created in the very image of God, part of the community of creation that God brought into being with word and breath as described in the two creation accounts in Genesis. But our relationship with creation is broken. We are no longer living in unison with creation. In fact, we have fashioned a society that idealizes civilization and de-values wilderness. We have forgotten our place in creation and our need to be in relationship with it.

I’ve been wondering what it looks like to have a relationship with creation. It seems that in our modern, urbanized world, our lives have become largely removed from nature. We live indoors, we work indoors, we worship indoors,

---

<sup>1</sup> *Wendy lives in the Grand River watershed of southern Ontario together with her husband, Chip, and their two sons. She is a pastor at St. Jacobs Mennonite Church, leads Burning Bush Forest Church (a monthly outdoor worshipping community), and is a partner in the Wild Church Network.*

we study and learn indoors, we often exercise or walk indoors, we shop indoors, we travel in air-conditioned cars, we have domesticated and tamed our yards and our animals. Is nature something we are in mutual relationship with, or is it something we have controlled and commodified? In the process of domesticating the wilderness, have we also ended up domesticating our souls?

Perhaps you are thinking, “What is wrong with domestication? This is called progress. It is what civilization is based on. It is good that we are able to domesticate nature.” Well, yes, to an extent. I’m not advocating for a regressive “back-to-the-land” way of life here. But I *am* encouraging us to consider the cost of taming the wilderness and taming our souls. Our earth needs wild places and wild creatures. It benefits from biodiversity. That is why it is important for us to protect wild spaces and wild species. I believe our souls also need some wildness in them—some space at the center of our being that remembers we are not in control, that we are created beings, part of the created order, and are not God. I suspect that understanding ourselves to have a piece of wild, unrestrained faith helps us to connect with our Creator who created the wild beauty of our world.

Last winter I took an online short course through Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary called “Biblical Foundations for Creation Care.” One of our textbooks had the subtitle *Rediscovering the Community of Creation*.<sup>2</sup> The author, Richard Bauckham, merged the ideas of *ecology*—the interconnectedness of all things, living and inanimate, on the planet—and *biblical theology*, which likewise evidences a strong sense of the interconnectedness of all creatures and relates this to their common dependence on God our Creator.

Through this course, I was reminded that the Bible as a whole offers a vision of creation that highlights our commonality with other creatures—our dependence on them as well as our significance for them. While we humans are created in the image of God, we are still part of a community of creatures, with reciprocal relationships and interdependence. All of creation benefits from the well-being of each specific species and ecosystem. All creatures are created to both glorify God and receive redemption in Christ.

Yes, that’s right: the more-than-human world is also in relationship with Christ. It is indeed the whole world, the whole cosmos, that is made a new creation in Christ. Jesus’s redeeming work offers a new future for the whole of creation, not just for humanity. If this important understanding is true—if all of creation, not just humanity, is in relationship with Christ—we have some reconciliation work to do with creation. For too long we have carried on as if we were all that mattered to God and that as stewards we could place ourselves

---

<sup>2</sup> Richard Bauckham, *The Bible and Ecology: Rediscovering the Community of Creation* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 2010).



*"Prayers from Orbit."* COLLAGE: MATT VEITH / IMAGES: PIXABAY/FREEIMAGES.COM - CC 3.0

above the rest of the created order. We have treated the rest of nature as if it didn't really matter, and for that we need to repent and seek reconciliation.

Let me read some excerpts from what is called the Colossian hymn (Col 1:15–20, excerpts, *The Voice*):

He [Christ] is the exact image of the invisible God, the firstborn of creation, the eternal. It was by Him that everything was created: the heavens, the earth, all things within and upon them, all things seen and unseen . . . He bled peace into the world by His death on the cross as *God's means of reconciling to Himself the whole creation—all things in heaven and all things on earth* (emphasis added).

Describing our relationship with the earth as simply stewardship or creation care does not do justice to the fuller biblical picture. Yes, God created humans with a unique place in the natural order, but God does not exclude the rest of creation from covenant or salvation. We need to begin to understand the biblical sense in which humans are fellow creatures within creation. Just as the Colossian hymn draws the whole creation into reconciliation with God through Christ, Genesis 9 reminds us that God is in covenant relationship not only with us but also with every living creature and with the land itself. We are all partners in God's covenant. These two biblical accounts of God/Christ reaching out in covenant and reconciliation with the more-than-human creation highlight for me the value of re-establishing our connection with creation and seeing ourselves as part of God's wonderfully diverse creation—not separate from it or above it, but in covenant with it through God.

This is where the brokenness of our relationship with the earth and our need for reconciliation come to play. We, as a society at large and many of us as individuals, have forgotten or neglected this relationship. Through our 24/7 lifestyles, many of us have distanced ourselves from the natural rhythms of day and night. Our grocery store offerings deny the seasonal rhythms of local food production. Our increasingly indoor, urbanized lives have limited the possibilities for significant connection with wild spaces and wildlife. When we avert our eyes to the degradation of the earth or throw up our hands in despair in the face of climate change, we do not honor the earth or the fact that our futures are interdependent.

Reconciliation is about restoring good relationships between two parties. Reconciliation can be tricky at the best of times. When something is broken, it is not always clear how to bring it back to wholeness. When the relationship in question is something as complicated as the human relationship with creation, what might reconciliation look like?

One way to approach the question is to ask ourselves additional questions to first help clarify where we have wronged creation and how we can possibly work toward reconciliation with creation. Here are a few to begin with:

- What actions have we taken that contribute to the harm of the land or its creatures? Can we admit how we may have wronged creation?
- Once we have identified an area where we have caused harm, can we ask for forgiveness? What would it look and feel like if we actually asked the land, or the trees, or the local creek, or the eagle for forgiveness? How do you think God would feel if we did this?
- Is it possible to make restitution? What would that look like? What changes can we make to patterns or habits or choices that negatively affect creation? What steps can we take to restore a healthy relationship with creation?
- What is God's desire for creation? What is God's desire for us? Can we exist in a harmonious, restored relationship that honors God's desire for all?

I would like to reiterate that one of the key things I believe God is calling us to is to remember our place in creation. We are not demi-gods with the power to create. We are people of the earth—*adam*—humans who ultimately belong to the wilds of creation and Creator. We are creatures, created by God to be in relationship with the created order, caring and listening and tending and asking for forgiveness when we cause brokenness. We cannot love or be in relationship with that which we do not know.

Last May I traveled to Colorado to attend a retreat led by Seminary of the Wild. It was a wild and wonderful experience, deepening my relationship with both Creator and creation. We spent most of our time outdoors in the mountains until a late-spring snowstorm forced us indoors! However, through practices and invitations to engage our souls while engaging in wilderness, I experienced a profound sense of God's love and a fuller awareness of my interconnectedness with creation.

We learned practices that had us interacting with nature in such a way that we opened ourselves to allowing nature to mirror an inner truth to us. An example of this is the "wild beauty walk," a practice that I then led the teenage girls in from our church youth group upon my return. Taking them to a local park with a forested area, I invited them to wander through the park individually, each paying attention for something of wild beauty. Once that something caught their attention—a flower, plant, tree, or animal—they spent time admiring its beauty and allowing it to mirror both their natural beauty and the nature of God back to them.

On this walk, it was a dandelion-seed head that caught my attention. Many of you may not find dandelions beautiful! But it captured my attention as it held its seed head up above the grass and caught the sun. Tall and wild and free, it stood in praise to God by exhibiting its full dandelion-ness. It held its feathery

seeds lightly, ready to let the breeze catch them and carry them off with the promise of new life. Each of the girls in the youth group also found something of beauty that spoke to them and offered them insight into how God created beauty in them as individuals.

Like the dandelion, which is not domesticated, our God who created these abundant flowers is a wild and creative God. Try as we might to control dandelions, they spread with wild abandon. I've been reading *The Chronicles of Narnia* with my two sons for the first time. Aslan, the Christ-figure lion, is beautiful and compassionate and full of love but not tame. Aslan is also mysterious, wonderful, wild, and beyond human understanding. Our encounters with the wild otherness of nature can be a way of encountering the greater otherness of God.

As we deepen our relationship with creation, our eyes are opened to the nature of our Creator. We regain a childlike wonder for nature and a respect and love for our fellow creatures. We are reminded of the sacredness of all of creation. We begin to see that due to our interconnectedness, what we do to creation we do to ourselves; the whole community of creation suffers when one part suffers. We recognize the places of brokenness in creation and our need to work toward a restored relationship—toward a way of living more lightly on the earth and with more respect for the whole of creation and its well-being. We see where we may need to change our ways—our heavy dependence on fossil fuels, our consumption habits, our destruction of wildlife habitats for further development—so that nature may continue to even exist.

I leave you with an invitation. Sometime this week, take some time to go to a natural area near you. As you are walking or sitting in creation, watch for a place, plant, tree, flower, or animal that draws your attention. Sit with it, and contemplate some of these questions:

- What drew you to it?
- What unique or wild beauty does it exhibit?
- What does it mean to be in covenant relationship with it?
- Does it give you any insights into the nature of God, our Creator?
- Are you able to offer words of gratitude or reconciliation?

May we continue to be agents of reconciliation in our world, with our neighbors and with all of creation. Thanks be to God for this holy calling!

# Book Reviews

Claire Dawson and Mick Pope, *Climate of Hope: Church and Mission in a Warming World*, Dandenong, Victoria, Australia, 2014. 298 pp. ebook \$5.95. ISBN: 9780994202321.

*Climate of Hope* is, surprisingly, a hopeful book. While the title should give as much away, hope characterizes the entire text in a way that is refreshing for a book on climate change—a topic that typically evokes doomsday metaphors. At the same time, *Climate of Hope* does not shy away from talking about the real dangers climate change poses; Dawson and Pope honestly wrestle with the current ecological crisis. Yet they also turn our trust toward a God who creates, redeems, and sustains the world—a God who calls the church to turn away from consumerism and denial to living in “climate truth.”

The book is also hopeful in its ambition. It is directed at evangelicals—perhaps the most entrenched demographic in denial about both the reality and danger of climate change. Dawson and Pope, climate scientist and theologian respectively, are themselves evangelicals based in Australia, and as good communicators, they’ve consciously adjusted their content to speak to their audience. They engage many of the deeply held beliefs that evangelicals often use to deny the reality and gravity of climate change: God’s sovereignty, dispensationalism, young-earth creationism, and the emphasis on salvation in the (often-nonmaterial) afterlife.

The structure of the book itself seems to follow a familiar revivalist pattern—biblical theology (section one), apologetics (sections two and three), testimonies (section four), and finally an altar call (section five). This familiarity in style is not to be misunderstood as accommodation. Rather, it helps the reader ease into the theological content, which seeks to turn standard evangelical theology on its feet and to provide a clear mandate to turn away from complicity in the destruction of God’s good creation.

The theology of climate change presented in the book contextualizes the insights of missional theology to the ecological crisis. In other words, how does the whole church live out the life-giving mission of God in the face of climate change? Center stage is a critique of consumerism and the obsession with economic growth that is driving human-made climate change. The authors identify capitalism, especially in its current neoliberal version, as an imperial regime that colonizes land and resources as well as minds. Dawson and Pope present two countercultural alternatives that might even be attractive to non-Christians whose passion for the earth is ultimately spiritual in nature: “resisting” consumerism through a simple lifestyle and building communal resilience. Section four, titled “Stories of Hope,” expands this missional strategy of building hospitable community modeling a post-carbon

future. Testimonies of neighborhood gardens, green investment, and political campaigns “fuel the imagination” beyond the constraints of individualism and neoliberal market-based solutions, providing examples to draw from if one chooses to follow the altar call to “live in climate truth.”

I appreciate this theologically grounded and pragmatic introduction to creation care. Yet I wonder whether it is enough. Despite Dawson and Pope’s critique of the way neoliberalism has conditioned us to think only of individuals, the main avenue for change that they sketch seems to be for middle-class individuals to make better consumer choices and petition governments to change. While they name other avenues, I fear these are lost to readers unfamiliar with the topic because of the offhand way they are lifted up. For example, they briefly mention using civil disobedience campaigns to hasten transition to green energy, but then they continue to use the term “resistance” primarily as a call for shopping less.

While I was reading *Climate of Hope*, tropical storms destroyed Puerto Rico and Houston (Texas), and a fire fueled by drought burned for weeks in California. Yet the media commentary seldom connected these events to climate change. This shows the necessity of talking about climate change, including what is most needed to address it. I do not believe mere individualistic self-restraint is enough. We need collective resistance to the fossil fuel industries, demanding a just transition to green energy. And we need it now.

*Climate of Hope* may not go far enough in addressing this need, but nevertheless, it is an important book. With its accessible language and helpful summaries at the beginning of each chapter, it is ideal for Sunday schools or small groups beginning to wrestle with the reality of climate change. Dawson and Pope address their text specifically to Australian evangelicals, but the message is just as applicable to their North American or European sisters and brothers. Anabaptists will resonate with the book’s emphasis on communal discipleship and “living more with less.” Yet we should also ask how our imaginations are captive to individualism and economic privilege, and pursue ways to participate in the movement to end fossil fuel extraction. We must also resist the false dichotomy between ecology and “just work” for all, and seize the opportunity of transitioning to green energy as an avenue for creating more equitable economic structures as well.

*Climate of Hope* has inspired me and given me hope; it’s encouraging to see that this debate is happening in parts of the evangelical community. Personally, it’s helped me reflect on how I talk about climate change to “the unconverted,” whether Christian or not. And I’m reconsidering how my choices line up with my values and how they point others to a post-carbon future. While our individual choices are not enough, and only collective resistance to fossil fuel extraction and collective pursuit of a green transition stand a chance, it remains true that example inspires

more than words. May the church hear the groaning of a creation and heed the call to “live in climate truth.”

*BENJAMIN ISAAK-KRAUSS, originally from Germany, studies theology and peace studies (MDiv) at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Elkhart, Indiana, and bikes most places to offset flying home over Christmas.*

**Enaya Hammad Othman, *Negotiating Palestinian Womanhood: Encounters between Palestinian Women and American Missionaries, 1880s–1940s*, Lexington Books, Lanham, MD, 2016. 217 pp. ISBN: 978-1-4985-0923-7.**

Anyone with a passing knowledge of Ramallah in West Bank, Palestine, will be familiar with the Ramallah Friends School. An internationally respected institution, it now serves almost 1,400 students in grades pre-K to 12. Enaya Hammad Othman’s book focuses on the school’s history from the 1880s through the 1940s, particularly on the Friends Girls’ School as a site of interaction between the American Quaker missionary women and Palestinian female students and staff. She examines the ways this education influenced gender expression and national identity.

The author grew up in the Ramallah area and graduated from nearby Birzeit University. There is great value in a book about Quaker mission in Palestine being written by a scholar with firsthand knowledge of Palestinian life and culture; because of her background, Othman is able to share a perspective and understanding that similar works lack. As a researcher, Hammad Othman does not inject her personal perspective; however, her background allows her to be aware of avenues to pursue that may not have been clear to other researchers whose perspectives align with those of the mission workers.

A focus of the Friends School was to enhance the students’ skills in the domestic sphere—to be effective wives and mothers. In the late 1800s, this domestic focus clearly depended on the superiority of Western ways. Missionaries described Palestinian homes as dirty and dim, with little understanding that the thick stone walls of traditional homes were intentionally built to endure the hot climate. They also described traditions as strange and food as unappealing. In addition, they taught and lauded a wide variety of sewing skills without realizing that sewing, as evidenced by the long tradition of detailed regional embroidery work, was a skill already prized and taught by the Palestinians.

In 1889, a Syrian Arab woman, Katie Gabriel, was hired as a head teacher and served as mediator. Former student Anisa Ma’louf said of the position: “This was not an easy task; it was a very difficult one because of the constant differences among the foreign employees within the mission, every newcomer mistakenly tried to implement (his/her) ideas in the new position. So it was up to Katie to fix these mistakes and ease the missionaries’ method of interaction with the nationals” (50).

Arab culture is very gracious to the guest. I wonder if the missionaries were aware of this work that Gabriel did on their behalf.

By the 1920s, missionaries were better prepared culturally, mentally, and with language training. They now admired and found appealing the same foods, dress, and traditions that earlier missionaries had scorned. Such a change was facilitated by the ability to see value in something different rather than holding one's own culture as the standard and finding anything different to be lacking. When you have declared something lacking, you become certain of your right to change it.

Over time, the Quakers, as well as some other Protestant mission groups, came to decide that in Palestine success could not be measured by converts (who were very few). Hanan Ashwari, a graduate of the Friends Girls' School, relates what her mother told the mission workers when they came to her door: "You didn't have to come here. We don't need missionaries to come all the way from the United States to Palestine. We are the ones who know Christianity directly, culturally, historically. Jesus was born here, right next door" (12). Mania David, a 1925 graduate of the school, noted that "[the Friends'] manner of worship and teaching is that of simplicity and informality . . . do not appeal to the oriental mind which is inclined to formal and gorgeous worship" (121).

Instead, success would be measured through "the way they shaped the character of their students who absorbed the Quakers' ideals and acted upon them in their lives after graduation" (121). Hammad Othman notes that despite the school's commitment to Christian religious instruction for all students, the number of Muslim students enrolled in the school only grew. Palestinian families then and now, regardless of faith, value education and so seek out the best they are able to for their children. Muslim families, she writes, found the Quaker values of simplicity, peacemaking, and collaboration universal and therefore palatable.

While telling the central story of Friends School, Hammad Othman also gives her readers glimpses of what it felt like to live in the years prior to the *Nakba*, the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948. When the school opened, the area was under Ottoman Empire rule as it had been since the early 1500s, its seat in modern-day Turkey. Following WWI, the school was under the jurisdiction of the British Mandate. In 1937, the American Friends in Ramallah Mission reported home

that "ill-feeling and bitterness has been stirred up among the Arabs in Palestine because the President of the United States and the Federal Council of Churches in America have gone on record as favoring and encouraging the establishment in Palestine of a National Home for the Jews, without considering the unethical elements in the movement as now carried on."

These actions were "sowing the seeds of war" (164).

This book grew out of Hammad Othman's dissertation, so it reads like a scholarly work. Her exhaustive research will benefit anyone seeking to understand the effect of mission efforts intersecting with education. Though it is tempting to skip pages of footnotes in chunks, extra details are hidden here that, for the interested reader, serve as a guide for further knowledge. (For instance, a former student is quoted from what turns out to be her 1939 book on the first 70 years of the Quaker mission in Ramallah—though I was disappointed to realize it's only in Arabic.) The author's sources range from the microfiche of multiple Quaker college libraries to archives at the Friends School in Ramallah to interviews with former teachers and students, as well as their personal papers in private family collections.

Hammad Othman is assistant professor of Arabic Language and cultural studies at Marquette University (Milwaukee, WI), and founder of the Arab and Muslim Women's Research and Resource Institute. The latter uses oral histories and other means to combat stereotypes and raise awareness of the situation of Arab and Muslim women in the United States. I look forward to the work Hammad Othman will continue to produce on these subjects.

*ANDREA E. STONER LEAMAN lives in Bainbridge, Pennsylvania, and attends Blossom Hill Mennonite Church (Lancaster, PA).*

**Vincent W. Lloyd, *Black Natural Law*, Oxford University Press, New York, NY, 2016. 200 pp. \$53.00. ISBN: 9780199362189.**

As a white, male, middle-class ministering person living in the untreated, stolen territory of what is now known as the Fraser Valley of British Columbia, I come to this dynamic text saturated with the influence of my privileged experience. My ministry experience in this Canadian context has required that I encounter people whose social status, gender, sexuality, and/or race are different from mine. And as I encounter these divinely crafted people, I am simultaneously confronted with my morality—that is, my understandings of law and nature, what is “right” and “good” and “ought to be”—and that which informs the performance of my particular morality. Natural law, according to Vincent Lloyd, is a rich and variegated tradition, imagined and practiced by many communities, including Jewish, Christian, and Muslim. But according to Lloyd, it is the black community and black natural law that “gets things right” (ix).

I find Lloyd's claim provocative and persuasive. Black natural law offers a stunning critique of the sociological ideologies that lay the foundation for oppression. It assumes the integrity of all humans—which is the basis for its “normativity”—and asserts that we can know “God's law,” “the dictates of conscience, or simply justice” (5). But, and this is key, it contends that blacks are “in a particularly privileged position with regard to natural law” (xiii). Like liberation theology, with its episte-

mological turn to the poor, Lloyd argues that “because of the oppression faced by blacks, it is especially obvious to blacks that worldly descriptions of human nature never suffice.” Therefore, if we want to understand natural law, what is right and what is good, we “ought to start with the insights of blacks” (xiii).

Yet it is not simply its claim to special insight, and posture of critique toward all ideologies of privilege, that sets black natural law apart. The force of black natural law also lies in its organized, socially engaged way of being. That is, black natural law, animated by the divine law (the moral law), inherently mobilizes for action and justice. This is its necessary and embodied response to ideologies of domination and injustice.

Lloyd brings his conception of black natural law to life by exploring classic figures of the black liberation movement—Frederick Douglass, Anna Julia Cooper, W. E. B. Du Bois and Martin Luther King Jr.—and the diverse ways in which they expressed the law through their words and praxis. As a Canadian, encountering these prophetic witnesses from south of the colonial border was a journey of intrigue and joy. All paint a picture of normativity—what ought to be—which acknowledges all as human. All were compelled into social mobilization in the pursuit of the moral law (justice).

As I read the “ideological critique” of systems of power by these historical figures, as I contemplate the compulsion of black natural law to mobilize in the face of injustice, I am confronted by the ways in which systems of power oppress people here in lands some call Canada. I am reminded of a life-changing experience I had at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in Vancouver in the fall of 2013. I attended a sharing circle where I had the distinct privilege of sitting outside the circle on a black chair, with other observers, hearing the traumatic stories of Residential School survivors. I had never experienced the sound of a man weeping so painfully. He reflected on being raped and being taken from his family. This is one of the most haunting experiences I have ever had. I have not heard a man weep in such a way before, nor have I since.

I can hear Lloyd say, “Because of the oppression faced by the Indigenous, it is especially obvious. . . .”

I have not suffered the way Indigenous peoples in this country have. I have not experienced such practical vulnerability by way of the horrid denial of basic human rights. To name them is as simple as it is painful to write: Canada has taken 99.8 percent of the land. Reservations make up .2 percent of traditional Indigenous territory, and they are in disrepair due to inequitable funding. Access to food and clean drinking water is severely limited. Forty percent of children in care in Canada are Indigenous. Ninety-four percent of Indigenous languages are at high risk of extinction.

- Dispossession
- Residential schools
- 60's Scoop
- Missing and murdered Indigenous women
- Intergenerational trauma

The list can go on and on. I have not experienced colonization as Indigenous peoples have. And as such, I acknowledge that I have not experienced the “structures of power” and the totality of human life as the crucified in these lands have. It is here where some of Lloyd’s words find complex depth. It is here that the black experience of oppression and suffering is a form of privilege (thus turning privilege on its head) to a fuller understanding of the moral law and the world of which we’re part. In this way, we might see how the people who have been oppressed are the people who are closest to God’s heart and, as such, have a benefit of divine proportion. What would it mean for my congregation and my church if we truly believed this . . . and acted on it?

I believe it’s a perspective on life and divinity that we must take as key to our formation. It offers us a way to confront ourselves as those who put Jesus on the cross. We are not able to simply read the scripture and seek to identify with the suffering Christ if we indeed are implicated in the suffering of others. Many of us white Canadian Christians, like all people, do not fully understand God. To even begin to do so, we must encounter the suffering of the neighbor, a neighbor whose suffering we very well may be implicated in. The ideological critique must be from the margins and from below. We do well to listen.

Yet the radical edge of black natural law invites even more through its call to organize in the face of injustice. Anabaptist churches often take credit for being radical. I suggest that after reading this book, we need to lay down such claims, for the white Anabaptist church is integrated into systems of power in ways that prevent effective and truly emancipatory action. In Canada, mobilizing against injustice from the divine and normative perspective that all humanity is beautiful and created in God’s image would necessitate a confrontation with colonialism and even the settler state. This is simply not happening enough. And we certainly don’t center the natural law of Indigenous peoples in our efforts.

*CHRIS LENSCHYN is the associate pastor of Emmanuel Mennonite Church in Abbotsford, BC, Canada.*

Kevin J. O'Brien, *The Violence of Climate Change: Lessons of Resistance from Nonviolent Activists*, Georgetown University Press, Washington, DC, 2017. 228 pp. \$24.95. ISBN: 9781626164352.

Kevin J. O'Brien's *The Violence of Climate Change* is an inspiring read that provokes imaginative, embodied, and risk-taking engagement with the "wicked problem" (O'Brien's terms) of ecological catastrophe. In an effort to feel and flesh a response to both O'Brien's work and the specter of earth's crucifixion, I crafted the following poem.

With prayers, and honey  
we take and eat a cloud  
of witnesses, asking the  
holy ones to turn  
in us, feeding divine discontent  
in a time of wickedness,  
this age of ecocide.

In they go, one by one,  
tripping tastes, and  
stretching us wide.  
A Woolman and Addams,  
a Day, King, and Chavez.  
Five brave fools who foil  
worldly wisdom with wild idealism,  
speaking what few want to hear,  
fearlessly uttering truth.  
And they live it. They actually do!

With low wages and prayer,  
habits of fasting and  
clothes that hearten the great soul.  
They, "by faith," choose  
hospitality, enduring "cold rooms and  
lack of privacy,"<sup>1</sup> deserting the pleasures

of "cigarettes, liquor, coffee, [and] candy."<sup>2</sup>  
Modesty embodied, wrapped in

---

1 Kevin J. O'Brien, *The Violence of Climate Change: Lessons of Resistance from Nonviolent Activists* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2017), 123.

2 O'Brien, 126.

the garments of poverty and militant action,  
 the saints secure moral authority through  
     self-surrender  
 self-purification  
 self-sacrifice  
 with the people,  
 and the earth,  
 and with Christ.

We cannot be them. And we should not.  
 But like them, drawing strength from  
 despair and patience for the prospect of change  
 for the morrow.

And the mystery is this.  
 Never once—not often—do our witnesses let  
 loose of the structural for the personal.  
 Always together, never bewitched by stupid conversations of  
 separation, they know the fullness of being, the  
 interconnectedness of life, and the  
 responsibility such entails.  
 Take shorter showers and  
 fight the industrial machine. Do both, for they are  
 one.

Our common home is in trouble, unspeakable.  
 And Pope Francis, a blessed witness himself,  
 states the obvious. “‘Tyranical’ anthropocentrism  
 contributes to the problem of climate change.”<sup>3</sup>  
 But “in [this] house where all cry out I see! and  
 proceed to do the works of darkness”<sup>4</sup>  
 another fool counsels creative response to  
 this complex problem. “There is one classic  
 action open to the wise; strike yourself  
 blind, and explore that kingdom”  
 (Daniel Berrigan, d. 2016,  
 yet more alive).<sup>5</sup>

---

3 O’Brien, 104.

4 Daniel Berrigan, *The Dark Night of Resistance* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1971), 67.

5 Berrigan, 67.

The most influential people  
are the wildly idealistic. The most  
beloved by creation, those who  
give back—love and  
life and dreams—  
more than they take.  
Pray, O God, that we may live it.  
Pray, O God, that I actually do.

*STEVE HEINRICHS is Director of Indigenous–Settler Relations for Mennonite Church Canada and lives in Treaty 1, Winnipeg, Manitoba.*

**Dan Nighswander, *New Believers Church Commentary: 1 Corinthians*, Herald, Harrisonburg, VA, 2017. 402 pp. \$29.99. ISBN: 978-1-5138-0244-2.**

In his commentary on 1 Corinthians, Dan Nighswander sets out to unite his love of academic scholarship and pastoral ministry. Describing the biblical letter as “one of the richest sources of practical advice [in the scriptures],” Nighswander not only seeks to provide the reader with relevant cultural context, language study, and awareness of form, but also practical advice for the use of 1 Corinthians in our ministerial context today (19).

Nighswander’s intent comes through clearly in how he divides the sections of commentary for each part of the letter he examines. Along with the explanatory notes and basic outlines to be expected in any commentary, he includes two larger sections: the “Text in Biblical Context” and the “Text in the Life of the Church.”

As I read through the commentary, I was particularly pulled toward “the Text in the Life of the Church” sections. In these sections, Nighswander identifies themes that can be developed for preaching and teaching (113–14), book recommendations (125, 157), reflections on pastoral care (123–24), and suggestions on using a chapter from 1 Corinthians as a case study for church discernment (189). These ideas are a jumping-off point for the reader to continue looking at 1 Corinthians through a creative lens. I enjoyed Nighswander’s ideas for how 1 Corinthians can be engaged by congregations, as well as his liturgical awareness to point out which parts of 1 Corinthians are a part of the regular lectionary rotation and which are never read when strictly following the lectionary.

Nighswander’s attention to the practical applications and studies available to churches from 1 Corinthians, as well as his attention to lectionary inclusion of parts of the text, have caused me to reflect on how churches curate which scriptures are used in worship and study and which are not. I have only been at Lima

Mennonite Church for over a year and a half. During that time, I have used the lectionary for special liturgical seasons such as Lent and Advent, but I have not stuck strictly to the lectionary in other seasons of the year. I wonder what it would be like in those times to pay special attention to texts neglected by the lectionary. This would provide conversation and education for our congregation that may not otherwise occur.

I also wonder—given Nighswander’s many themes offered throughout the book—what it would look like to offer Bible studies or discussions around a particular theme rather than looking at 1 Corinthians in its entirety. Teaching a Bible study on “Factionalism in the Corinthian Church,” for instance—using Nighswander’s insights from the commentary—could pique interest because of the specificity and relevance of the topic to our struggles with factionalism in the church today.

Another Bible study option could work at including the most recent scholarship in conversation by looking at a specific theological question that has shaped the church. I felt particularly refreshed by Nighswander’s clarification regarding the word “flesh” and how Paul uses it in his writings. “*Flesh*, as Paul uses the word, refers to the whole person outside of Christ” (136, emphasis original). His dismissal of body-spirit dualism as an inherent feature of his theology could provide important fodder for discussion. Paul’s theology not only releases us from body hatred but also requires us to take a more holistic look at who we are in Christ. Opportunities for practical application and reflection abound when we are able to explore good questions with helpful resources in tow.

Overall, I resonated with Nighswander’s descriptions of the struggles within the Corinthian Church and his practical approach to engaging them in our congregations. Given our tendencies toward factionalism, questions about what it means to live out the Christian life, and even more struggle when it comes to living as a community, it is no surprise that Nighswander finds such a wealth of practical advice in Paul’s letter to the Corinthians. Even with millennia between us, the church of today has much in common with the Corinthians and can utilize this ancient text for learning and growth. Nighswander has done good work in his commentary to create a tool that enables us to engage with scripture in community so that we can live out Christ’s calling in our world together.

*EMILY HEDRICK pastors Lima Mennonite Church in Lima, Ohio.*

Rebecca Todd Peters, *Solidarity Ethics: Transformation in a Globalized World*, Fortress, Minneapolis, MN, 2014. 160 pp. \$31.49. ISBN: 9781451465587.

In her introduction to *Solidarity Ethics*, Rebecca Todd Peters addresses the key problems that need to be solved in our society so we can live in a more just and sustainable world. Most importantly, she helps the reader understand economic globalization—which, she states, is the current context we are now living in. The way people in the developed world (her term) live is not a sustainable way of life for everyone. Furthermore, the policies and practices from wealthy Western countries, particularly the United States, have devastating and unjust consequences for the Global South. Given that reality, Peters believes that an ethic of solidarity is necessary to reorient the way we live in order to reflect mutuality, justice, and sustainability. The foundations of such an ethic are rooted in “understanding social location and personal privilege,” then “building relationships with people across lines of difference,” and finally “engaging in structural change” (10).

In chapter one, Peters explores theories of solidarity. Prior to the actual language of solidarity becoming popular, a similar ideal was expressed through the language of fraternity. In later generations, it would be expanded beyond Christian familial language and be applied to a variety of relationships and bonds. Most notably, revolutionaries have used the language to blur the lines of difference and to unite people under a common cause. Solidarity in the past 200 years has been used to talk about legal obligations, moral responsibility, sentiment, and public policy. The influence of Marxist thought increasingly applied solidarity to “relationships and bonds between members of the working class” and toward being understood as a type of political action (23). The Social Gospel Movement theologically adopted the language to express how to concretely pursue justice, and the Catholic Church increasingly developed its social teaching by employing solidarity to express the type of collective action and Christian life it believed was faithful. Most importantly, solidarity especially grew in significance from liberation theology in the early 1970s, Peters explains. Most often, solidarity has been understood as something arising out of poor and marginalized communities, but Peters believes there is a need to reflect on what solidarity should look like for privileged people.

Moving into the next chapter, Peters explores the moral habits and intuitions that people operate out of unconsciously when responding to social crises. The first, and most dominant, stage is sympathy, which basically is about responding to the situation with charity and temporary compassion but in a manner that does not disrupt one’s privileged life. Next is responsibility. In this stage, people understand much more that social structures create injustice and poverty, but they still tend to rely on principles of liberty and human rights to address these things and often feel overwhelmed by the depth of the problems. And finally, Peters articulates the

last category of mutuality, in which people see their own transformation bound up in these issues as privileged people; they can identify their social location and the systematic obstacles and seek to move beyond charity to systemic justice work.

The third chapter of the book was intriguing. It begins by considering the prophetic Christian tradition rooted in Hebrew scripture and embodied in the social gospel movement and liberation theology, as well as more pragmatic Niebuhrian stances of Christian realism. Peters calls for a balancing of the two in pursuit of justice. To move toward a theo-ethic of solidarity, she emphasizes the principles of sustainability and social justice, which can guide our theology and praxis. She also identifies repentance as another important Christian practice, one which can be implemented from various starting points and moves us toward honoring the differences in others, accountability to poor and oppressed people, and action that seeks to live lives that challenge the social order built upon neoliberal globalization. This theo-ethic of solidarity also calls for “some concrete engagement with oppressed or marginalized communities—locally or globally” (65).

Next, Peters calls for people of privilege to move toward solidarity through acknowledging their privilege and then building relationships across lines of difference. Some of the challenges to this, she says, are that most wealthy people identify themselves as middle class. Most people in the United States also think inequality was addressed and fixed in the 60s and 70s. Plus, most people are unable to identify their own privilege, or they think they have earned it through hard work. This highlights the need to understand US history, especially Native American and African American history and the systems designed to benefit some people and harm others. Then Christians will be positioned to move toward solidarity. Building relationships with people across these “chasms of difference” is critical and life changing. True solidarity needs these relational connections with people who have an experience of life different from that of privileged people.

The fifth chapter gets concrete. It wrestles with what embodying solidarity actually looks like on the ground. First, we are told to consider our purchasing power. Rather than just looking for deals and discounts as is so common in middle-class US culture, we are to spend our money in a just and sustainable manner. And Peters reminds us that there are non-monetary ways of organizing our economic life through bartering, familial-like gift exchange, communal contribution, and time banks. She insists that these shifts are only significant when combined with justice work seeking to change the social structures of inequality. Ultimately, she calls for the need for church communities and organizations to link together in creative collaboration toward social change. Peters also includes a brief conclusion reminding us to keep hope alive and explaining why this book was necessary. In her words, it is “a theology for people of privilege in the first world” (117).

This book is a good resource. It takes seriously the reality of globalization that is impacting people all around the world—a reality that most people in the United States are oblivious to. We must keep beating the drum on this issue, exposing the ways that our economic policies and practices oppress others.

I was pleasantly surprised at how closely this book aligned with the language and approach that I use. Solidarity, for instance, has been a key term for me, though I use it to emphasize a subversive grassroots communal struggle on the underside of oppression.

This book is particularly heavy on the social theory side of things, especially in relation to globalization and imagining new social practices; I would have appreciated deeper theological engagement, particularly a more Jesus-shaped emphasis. Considering how following Jesus in society explicitly matters in relation to globalization is vital for many people. The biggest limitation of the text, however, relates to how it minimalizes US history and context. Any time a book focuses on global realities but isn't first rooted in the local and historical context of one's own society, it risks a new set of problems as it corrects others. This is particularly true in relation to Peters's very brief engagement with American white supremacy. Chapter 4 does mention the history, but a book like this cannot afford to skim these realities in an effort to primarily focus on global partnerships. This is because many love the idea of solidarity with the oppressed beginning with those overseas while overlooking the racial mess in one's own backyard. Of course, such a vision for solidarity is thin. A lived commitment of renouncing racial oppression and exploitation while reorienting one's life through repentance in relation to Native American and Black oppression, needs to be the starting point for understanding our context and other people groups that are demonized, exploited, and scapegoated in our society. Without that foundation, meaningful global solidarity will not happen, and white savior complexes will be encouraged.

With this in mind, a deeper engagement with Black and Womanist theology might have strengthened Peters's good book into a great one. I don't suggest that a book on globalization can't be written, just that with the inclination of some to be white saviors, it ought to flow out of our concrete social, political, and historical realities in this land. All that said, I do still recommend this book. It is a fine resource that can be used to deepen our call to do justice in a globalized world. It is a book that wealthy Christians (if you are reading this, it likely pertains to you) ought to read and wrestle with. However, when you order the book, make sure you supplement it with some theological ethics books on oppression and exploitation that are written for the US context and that can be meaningful dialogue partners with this resource.

DREW G. I. HART is an assistant professor of theology at Messiah College in Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania. He is the author of *Trouble I've Seen: Changing the Way the Church Views Racism* (Harrisonburg, VA: Herald, 2016).

**Brad Roth, *God's Country: Faith, Hope, and the Future of the Rural Church*, Herald, Harrisonburg, VA, 2017. 223 pp. \$16.99. ISBN: 9781513801612.**

"I love the rural church" (13). Brad Roth's opening line in *God's Country* defines his theological center: love for God and God's church in particular places named as rural. But he doesn't stop there. After describing the pitfalls of idealizing or disparaging rural communities and congregations, he offers a vision.

We need a new approach, one that sees rural communities not as places to pity or lionize but simply as *places*, places open to God's goodness and in need of God's grace. We need a vision for the rural church that discovers its common vocation and destiny alongside the global church. The church is forever calling people to passionate worship of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. We're calling everyone to live as disciples of Jesus who challenge structures of sin in our lives, families, and communities. It's a life animated by the Holy Spirit. . . . This is a vision that's bigger than urban or rural. It's a kingdom vision. (17)

We need this kingdom vision—rural, urban, suburban, local, and global. In my context, *God's Country* arrives at a critical time when Mennonite churches in the United States are seeking a faithful way forward amid great loss and change. While acknowledging loss and marginality as rural experiences, Roth calls rural congregations to reclaim God's kingdom vision for the rural church by "learning to praise, abide, watch, pray, grow, work the edges, die, befriend, and dream. Each of these disciplines is rooted in the biblical narrative and Christ's enduring commitment to the rural church" (18).

Readers will bring their own experiences of loss and marginality to these disciplines. I believe you will find your own story and a way forward as Roth skillfully engages each of these disciplines, bringing the biblical story alongside his own stories and those of congregations and people he meets. Through his message of hope to the rural church, Roth provides a kingdom vision for the whole church.

To further his discussion of church and place, Roth expands on ecclesiology, or "how we understand the church," to create a term he calls *ecclesioculture*. "Ecclesiology begins in doctrine and aims to define the church." "Ecclesioculture, on the other hand, begins in love. It aims to love the church as we discover it while still dreaming of where God is leading us. This is our respective ecclesioculture—a vision for cultivating churches of all sorts in communities of all sorts" (18).

My congregational work spans three states. I often visit congregations close in proximity but distant from each other in theology and practice. Each kindly asks about the other. I reply that Mennonite Mission Network is committed to serving congregations “in all their diversity: rural and urban congregations, younger and older populations, long-standing and new immigrant communities, speaking multiple languages, and many varying convictions about how to be God’s faithful people in today’s world.”<sup>6</sup> These congregations are part of Mennonite Church USA, former members of this body, emerging congregations, and congregations committed to engaging the world with an Anabaptist lens.

As a local and global church, we need Roth’s pastoral voice reminding us that God is already present in the many places and peoples we encounter—praise, abide, watch, pray. Failing to see God’s presence in every place or person is a failure to love. “But seeing God is also an act of will, an intentionality whereby we consent to recognize and rejoice in God. It’s obeying the command to love (John 13:34; I John 4:7–8) by coming to deeply, continually, and faithfully love a place and a people. Joy follows” (51).

We need Roth’s prophetic voice to imagine how God is working within and among new congregational affiliations and structures, immigrant groups, emerging faith communities, and interfaith conversations—grow, work the edges, befriend. We need Roth’s contemplative voice to draw us closer to the God who loved us first, who comes to us in flesh and calls us to be the people of God in all sorts of places and with all sorts of people, dying to self, rising to new life in Christ, and joining God’s dream of “a people gathered together from ‘all tribes and peoples and languages’ (Rev 7:9)—and addresses” (213).

While readers well versed in the Anabaptist tradition will recognize key components of a Jesus-centered, nonviolent, transformational faith lived in community and expressed through discipleship, mission, and service, Roth’s incorporation of contemplative theology may be less familiar. His instinctual application of an Anabaptist, contemplative theology may be overlooked or dismissed. As with Jesus’s lived example, this theology begins and ends in love.

*KARLA MINTER lives in rural New Paris, Indiana, and works as a mission advocate to congregations through Mennonite Mission Network (Elkhart, IN).*

---

<sup>6</sup> James R. Krabill, ed., “Walking Together in Mission: Following God’s Call to Reconciliation” (Elkhart, IN: Mennonite Mission Network, 2013), 11.

Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Empowering Memory and Movement: Thinking and Working across Borders*, Fortress, Minneapolis, MN, 2014. 535 pp. \$49.00. ISBN: 9781451481815.

*Empowering Memory and Movement: Thinking and Working across Borders* is a collection of writings by Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza and is the third volume in a series of collected works by Schüssler Fiorenza. This edited collection includes articles, speeches, interviews, and sermons; it distinguishes itself from the first two volumes by incorporating writings that specifically explore “the intersections between memory, history, rhetoric, and movement from the perspective of a critical feminist the\*logy of liberation” (1). *Empowering Memory and Movement* covers much theoretical ground, but certain key concepts weave themselves through each of the different pieces. Because the scope of the collection is so broad, this review will focus on just a few of these key concepts.

One of the concepts that Schüssler Fiorenza returns to the most frequently is her distinct theological approach, which she names a “critical feminist the\*logy of liberation” (1). While at first glance this might seem like an unnecessary amalgamation of scholarly jargon, Schüssler Fiorenza is clear throughout the book about how each of these pieces informs her work (see especially 274–75). By outlining her own personal history early on in the book, she establishes how her experiences as a “resident alien” in many different contexts have helped her to see the necessity of crossing boundaries and remaining critical of theoretical approaches that are rooted in essentialist notions of identity (62–64). Thus, while Schüssler Fiorenza situates herself within a feminist framework, she also remains committed to a critical approach to feminist theology as a way of being accountable to the many different expressions of feminism throughout history and geographic location. She writes, “Only if the term ‘feminist/feminism’ is not reified as a fixed essentialist classification but is understood in rhetorical-political terms can it function as an ‘open-ended’ category that is to be questioned, destabilized, and redefined in ever-shifting historical-political situations of domination” (205). Schüssler Fiorenza’s critical feminist theology attempts to ground itself in movements of liberation and not remain tied to one particular social location.

Closely related to this first concept is Schüssler Fiorenza’s use of the term “kyriarchy” to describe the system of domination that crosses boundaries beyond gender. She developed this concept, in part, as a response to the critique of the notion that patriarchy affects all women equally. Through the concept, she sought to “develop a feminist analysis that could uncover the interstructuring of sexism, racism, colonialism, and class exploitation in wo/men’s lives” (108). Instead of using patriarchy as a key analytical concept, Schüssler Fiorenza utilizes kyriarchy to think beyond the limiting notion of men versus women and see, instead, the way struggles for liberation are marked by the deeper tension between the notion that some are

more fit to rule over others and the realization of a radical democratic existence (108). In this way, she attempts to depart from intersectional theorists who think primarily in terms of hierarchy of identities, and she posits, instead, kyriarchy as a pyramidal structuring of multi-layered oppressions (524–25). Kyriarchy is closely tied to Schüssler Fiorenza’s critical feminist theological approach in that both work together to allow her to engage her work across many different identity boundaries.

Schüssler Fiorenza dedicates a good portion of the beginning of *Empowering Memory and Movement* to laying out these theoretical foundations, but the final two sections of the book are where her specialty in biblical studies really starts to come to the forefront. The later chapters in the book are largely dedicated to applying Schüssler Fiorenza’s critical feminist approach to the historiography of biblical texts. A favorite image that she employs to help readers understand her approach to this topic is that of quilt making. In contrast to a positivistic approach to history as a search for objective origins, which she likens to the image of archeology, Schüssler Fiorenza uses quilt making as “a metaphor that understands historiography as history making, as integrating the surviving scraps of source information like pieces of cloth into a new and different design” (327). More than simply encouraging readers to rearrange the pieces in whatever way they see fit, however, this approach insists that the process of interpretation must use rhetorical analysis to account for “sociopolitical and the\*-ethical questions of power” and not become bogged down by demands for objectivity (396).

In a few of the chapters in *Empowering Memory and Movement*, Schüssler Fiorenza uses this methodology to interrogate Paul’s writings, especially those that pertain to the subordination of women and slaves. In doing so, she shows no intention of “defending the teaching of Paul,” but rather, she attempts to bring to the forefront the hidden voices within the text by giving an account of how Paul’s rhetoric would have been received and/or resisted by these subordinated subjects (458). While some might see this as hermeneutical overreach, Schüssler Fiorenza insists that the reconstruction of these perspectives must be central to the task of interpretation if biblical studies are going to fulfill a liberative function.

Overall, *Empowering Memory and Movement* contains many interesting, challenging, and helpful ideas for engaging the relationship between women and theology. Most helpful is Schüssler Fiorenza’s commitment to holding together biblical studies and theo-ethical responsibility. Her critical feminist theology of liberation calls readers to abandon attempts at disinterested theology and commit to uncovering and empowering movements of liberation wherever they can be found. Perhaps the entire thrust of Schüssler Fiorenza’s work is summed up by a comment she makes in one of the interviews in the book: “The divine can be experienced today not by stepping outside kyriarchal structures—we can’t do this because we are deeply implicated in them—but by trying to change them” (408). This invitation

to experience the divine through the resistance of oppression is an inspiring call to a renewed and engaged theology.

My critiques of *Empowering Memory and Movement* are mostly editorial rather than substantive. Not only do most of the chapters engage similar themes and topics, many of them also contain the same anecdotes and examples. My recommendation is that readers should not feel constrained to any specific progression of chapters. Furthermore, I would recommend this collection mostly for those who are familiar with Schüssler Fiorenza's more substantive works. While each chapter is able to stand on its own, many of them allude so heavily to her full-length books that I found myself wanting to read those instead. *Empowering Memory and Movement* would probably function best for those seeking to gain a deeper appreciation for how Schüssler Fiorenza's work exists in various contexts.

*MARK RUPP lives in Columbus, Ohio, and is Pastor of Christian Formation at Columbus Mennonite Church.*





