

Mennonites who invited me into the fold. (This was despite my upbringing in a German-Lutheran home culture, which is not so different from the variety of Mennonite culture that I initially found to be difficult to access.) I now serve as the pastor of a multilingual Mennonite church that is seeking the kind of intercultural vision that Kim Sun articulates in *Building Mennonite Belonging*. My congregation has experienced the tension of cultural difference, and at times has even questioned the compatibility of Mennonite tradition with interculturality. Can Mennonite faith express itself beyond the cultural and ethnic heritage that has carried it across time and place? Kim Sun convincingly demonstrates that the answer is yes.

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Peter M. Sensenig, *Good Guestwork*, Santos Books, Elizabethtown, PA, 2025. 194 pp. \$24.99. ISBN: 979-8-9994186-5-4.

In an era marked by global tensions and deepening religious divides, *Good Guestwork* by Peter M. Sensenig offers a timely and thoughtful contribution to conversations about Christian-Muslim relationships. The book addresses the tensions that arise from the persistent lack of meaningful interaction between Muslims and other faith communities, urging readers to move beyond superficial tolerance toward a posture of genuine listening. Sensenig's central argument is that the "spiritual vitality of the church depends upon building relationships with Muslims" (5).

My perspective on these themes is deeply personal, rooted in my experience growing up in Indonesia, the world's most populous Muslim-majority nation. Despite living in close proximity, it is still uncommon for people to be open about their personal beliefs. Misunderstandings often run deep, and what I would call "immature" conversations—those shaped by defensiveness rather than a desire to understand—can easily worsen relationships rather than heal them. Sensenig describes this dynamic as a kind of "sibling rivalry" (11). Muslims and Christians, he writes, "fight like siblings" because they share theological roots and physical space, yet political competition and historical tensions "erode trust that has been built" (12–13).

This book is important because it helps us understand how to approach these relationships with wisdom and humility. Sensenig argues that Christians must move away from "territoriality"—the impulse to control religious or cultural space—and instead learn to become "guests and hosts of one another" in the "great world house" God created (6, 15–16). His emphasis on relational presence resonated with my own experiences. I recall a high school friend who was strongly opposed to Christianity. We debated frequently, yet somehow managed

to remain friends. Years later he apologized for his earlier hostility and eventually became a Christian through his own journey of faith. While his decision was his own, I believe the memory of our friendship created a foundation that allowed the possibility of change. As Sensenig observes, “stories come first” because we encounter each other first as neighbors (17).

Reading *Good Guestwork* also reminded me of a trip I took in 2003 to Indonesia accompanying David W. and Grace Shenk. Indonesia has experienced painful episodes of religious violence, including extremist attacks. Yet in my experience, many conflicts grow not simply from theology but from accumulated wounds, misunderstandings, and fear. Sensenig addresses this dynamic by encouraging readers to move from focusing on “your pain” to recognizing “the pain”—understanding that individual suffering is part of humanity’s shared brokenness (51). Within this framework, Christians are called to respond not with retaliation but with forgiveness and compassion, embodying Christ’s message even amid conflict.

A central theme of the book is that our life example is often the first gospel others encounter. Sensenig writes that unless Christians “become the analogy of the incarnation” by loving people concretely, Jesus Christ remains an abstraction (19, 25). He illustrates this through the example of David W. Shenk, who modeled “House Rule #2”—“Do not look down on a fellow guest”—even when he was once “confronted at a mosque” by individuals “trashing the Bible” (148). While that particular incident is described in the book, I witnessed a similar spirit of humility during David’s 2003 visit to Indonesia. As I accompanied him to dialogues with students and community leaders, I observed firsthand how respectful relationships opened doors for meaningful conversation. These encounters reinforced the book’s central insight: When Christians open their hearts and learn to love their Muslim neighbors as Jesus does, genuine relationships can become the doorway through which the good news of salvation is heard.

The book also offers a valuable critique of Western media portrayals of the Muslim world. News coverage often emphasizes political turmoil and violence while neglecting stories of reconciliation and friendship. In Indonesia, I observed that alongside conflict there also exists a deep yearning for peaceful coexistence. Sensenig notes that these quieter stories of reconciliation are often overlooked, even though they may ultimately shape the future of interreligious relationships more than the conflicts themselves (35, 37).

Sensenig further introduces the idea of “peace cells,” small communities of Christians intentionally cultivating relationships across religious boundaries (21). These communities are particularly significant in places where Christians live as a minority and therefore feel the urgency of building transformed relationships. One example highlighted in the book is Indonesian Mennonite pastor Paulus Hartono, who repeatedly “knocked on the doors of extremists” and discovered that through Christ even former enemies could become “good neighbors” (43, 82).

Ultimately, *Good Guestwork* reminds readers that Jesus himself often lived and ministered as a guest. Much of his most transformative work took place in the homes of others, where hospitality and vulnerability created space for God's work (54). By embracing this posture and becoming what Sensenig calls "vulnerable strangers," Christians may create opportunities for genuine reconciliation (25). The book therefore invites the church to practice what the author calls a "stranger faith"—one that moves into the neighborhood and says "yes" to the religious other (52).

For readers seeking guidance on how to love their neighbors in a world marked by religious conflict, *Good Guestwork* offers both theological insight and practical wisdom. The stories and reflections in its pages remind us that reconciliation is not merely an ideal but a lived possibility. As the experiences I have witnessed in Indonesia demonstrate, even those who once saw one another as enemies may one day find themselves sitting together at the table of the Great Host.

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