

Summer 2005

The **BRIDGE**

Newsletter of the Bridgefolk Movement

Inside . . .

**Mennonites and John Paul II
New Pope's Anabaptist Friends
Local Dialogue Begins in Indiana
Mother Teresa's Mennonite Friend**

Bridgefolk • Mennonites and Catholics Bridging the Divide

There's still time to register!
Join us for this summer's Bridgefolk conference
'Friendship on the Bridge'



***Thursday evening July 21 through Sunday noon July 24
at Eastern Mennonite University***

***Registration forms and more information at
www.Bridgefolk.net***

Be a friend! Bring a friend!

On the program this summer . . .

Outstanding speakers, including Dr. Nancy Heisey, President of Mennonite World Conference, Abbot John Klassen of Saint John's Abbey in Collegeville, MN, Ruth Zimmerman, co-director of EMU's Conflict Transformation Program, Andrea Bartoli, U.S. leader of the Community of Sant'Egidio, and many others—all focusing on the role of friendship in building relationships between formerly estranged groups. There will be panels on peacemaking, dialogue at the local level, and building community through friendship—all by persons who have important experiences to share with the group.



Singing . . .

Hymn singing, led by the well-known Mennonite church musician, Ken Nafziger. Ken is a long-time Bridgefolk participant who led the singing at last summer's conference. Singing together Mennonite-style has been one of the most popular features of past conferences, and will continue this year with singing at the beginning of each session, and an hour-long hymn sing on Saturday evening.

Footwashing service and agape meal. These events have been a major feature of past conferences, and this year will be the culmination of the conference on Sunday morning.

Shared worship. The program this summer includes opportunities for participants to attend Catholic worship at the local Catholic parish on Saturday evening, and the Sunday morning worship service at a local Mennonite congregation.



Worship . . .

Mennonite tour. The program this year also includes an optional 'Mennonite tour' of the surrounding area on Saturday afternoon. EMU is located in the center of one of the major Mennonite communities, with more than 30 Mennonite congregations in the immediate area, ranging from the most conservative to the most modern.

Questions from the hat, the popular feature of past conferences that allows Mennonites and Catholics to ask each other the questions they've always wanted to ask—anonously. It will be part of each session, and in addition a full hour of questions will be included in the Saturday evening session, which ends with an ice cream social.

Haiku stories. We'll continue the tradition begun last summer of asking Bridgefolk to share their stories in 'haiku' fashion, this year concentrating on stories of forming friendships across the Mennonite Catholic bridge.

Small groups will continue this year, giving participants the chance to interact with and get to know other Bridgefolk in a comfortable and unhurried setting. Come to meet old friends, and to make new ones.

EMU's Conflict Transformation Program is known world-wide for its pioneering work in overcoming violence and building peace. This summer's conference will include a full session on its work, which has brought together persons of many religious traditions.



Friendship . . .

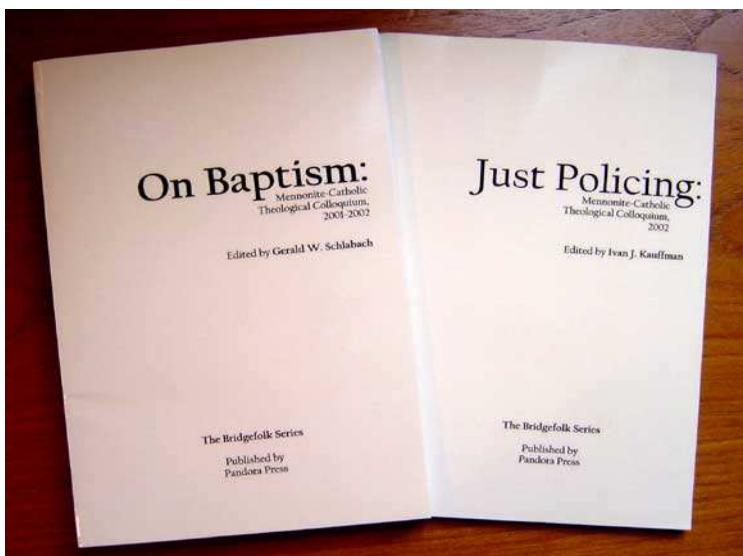
Full details available at www.Bridgefolk.net

MCTC Conference

How Are We 'Called Together'?

On the day prior to this summer's Bridgefolk conference Mennonite and Catholic theologians will hold a session of the Mennonite Catholic Theological Colloquium, the group of scholars that have formed to support the international Mennonite Catholic Dialogue. The meeting this year will focus on next steps following the publication of the report of the first five years of dialogue.

The papers from the second and third sessions of the Colloquium have been published by Pandora Press and are available at www.pandorapress.com



In 2004, theological exchange between Mennonites and Roman Catholics marked a historic milestone, as delegations to the first international dialogue between representatives of Mennonite World Conference and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Church Unity released a final report summarizing their five years of conversation.

Called Together to be Peacemakers offers a common narrative of watershed events in church history, especially during the 16th and 4th centuries. It explores theological perspectives that the two traditions both share and dispute concerning the nature of the Church, sacraments and ordinances, and peacemaking. It closes with mutual confessions of repentance for past violence and recrimination, thus inviting a “healing of memories.”

As it holds its fourth annual conference, Bridgefolk has invited theologians, historians and ecumenists from the two traditions to gather on the previous evening and day to reflect on what they have learned from this historic document and to explore next steps for promoting theological dialogue between Mennonites and Roman Catholics.

Scholars from other churches who regularly find themselves in conversation with both traditions are also invited to attend, along with all participants in the Bridgefolk conference that will follow.

The colloquium will begin on the evening of July 20 with a keynote address by John A. Lapp, church historian and former Executive Secretary of Mennonite Central Committee. His address will be entitled “Ecumenical Dialogue as a Ministry of Reconciliation.” Lapp is a senior leader in the Mennonite churches, and has played a key role in internationalizing the Mennonite community.

The next day the colloquium will hear theological reflections on *Called Together to Be Peacemakers* from both Mennonite and Roman Catholic ecumenists.

Nancy Heisey and Earl Zimmerman of Eastern Mennonite University’s Bible and Religion department will form a panel that responds to the document by asking “What Have We Learned? What’s Next?” from a Mennonite point of view. Heisey is President of Mennonite World Conference, and Zimmerman is a former overseas mission and relief worker who recently completed a Ph.D. at Catholic University of America.

In the afternoon Margaret Pfiel of the University of Notre Dame and Drew Christiansen, S.J., editor-in-chief of *America* magazine will discuss the same question from a Catholic perspective.

Participants will have ample opportunity for their own responses and discussion. The meeting will conclude by exploring ways to follow through on the document’s suggestions for further study.

The Mennonite Catholic Theological Colloquium was formed in 2000 to support the international dialogue, which had recently begun. It has held three rounds of discussion by email to date. The first dealt with the issues of Constantinianism and Christology. The second dealt with the issue of baptism. The third discussed the morality of warfare, focusing on the concept of just policing.

The program is available at <http://bridgefolk.net/mctc05>. Registration forms are also available there. The conference is open to all interested persons.

— Gerald Schlabach

Death of a pope

Mennonites Join Mourning for John Paul

There was an unusual outpouring of appreciation for John Paul in the Mennonite community following his death last spring. Reprinted here are two pages of selections from statements by Mennonite leaders, and from commentary in the national *Mennonite Weekly Review*.

These two editorials in the nationally distributed *Mennonite Weekly Review* were typical of the stories that appeared in Mennonite periodicals following Pope John Paul's death.



Mennonite World Conference officials, President Nancy R. Heisey and Executive Secretary Larry Miller, sent a letter of condolence on the death of Pope John Paul II to the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity. For more than five years, MWC and the PCPCU have engaged in an International Dialogue. The letter was addressed to Cardinal Walter Kasper, President of PCPCU; Bishop Brian Farrell, Secretary; and Monsignor John Radano, Head of the Western Section. Following is the full text:

"Dear Brothers in Christ, On behalf of the Mennonite World Conference, we extend heartfelt sympathy to you and, through you, to the Catholic Church as we join in mourning the death of Pope John Paul II.

At the same time, we give thanks to God for the gift this man has been in so many ways for the peoples and churches of the world. We are grateful in particular for his service on behalf of reconciliation.

We believe that the International Dialogue of the Catholic Church and the Mennonite World Conference, with its joint recognition that we are 'Called Together to be Peacemakers,' stands as a tribute to John Paul II's exemplary spirit of repentance and his deep desire to heal divisive memories.

Please be assured of our love and prayers for each of you and for your church in these days of momentous transition. We will pray especially for you and your colleagues, Cardinal Kasper, as you enter the Conclave in several days. May God grant you extraordinary wisdom and discernment as you choose a new leader called to be a servant of God and of unity in the Body of Christ."

Along with the leaders of other Christian World Communions, Miller attended the funeral of John Paul II as a fraternal guest.

Rev. Dan Nighswander, executive of Mennonite Church Canada, devoted his monthly newsletter distributed to Mennonite churches nationwide to an essay entitled "On the Death of Pope John Paul". It included large portions of the *Bridgefolk Brief* distributed shortly after the pope's death. Selections from his essay are quoted below:

"Mennonites have not always had much appreciation and respect for the Roman Catholic pope. With other churches that emerged in the 16th century Reformation, our spiritual ancestors rebelled (protested, hence "protestants") against various practices in the Roman Catholic Church, including the authority given the Bishop of Rome. Harsh things have been said: it has not been uncommon to refer to the pope as the Antichrist. On the other hand, it is not uncommon for Mennonites to refer, usually without cynicism, to various leaders as 'the pope of the Mennonite Church'.

The abstract idea of a pope, however, is not the same as a particular person who holds that office. The late Pope John Paul II was a pope who contributed positively to the witness of the whole Christian church. Many evangelical Christians found him to be an ally in their ethical and political concerns.

During the time of his papacy many Mennonites have grown in their appreciation of the Roman Catholic Church. We have adapted Catholic liturgies, studied Catholic writings, worked together to address moral issues that challenge our society and church. The formal dialogue between representatives of the Mennonite World Conference and the Roman Catholic Church's Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity has furthered John Paul II's passion for reconciliation, forgiveness and the lived expression of the gospel of peace.

We don't agree with every conviction or practice of the Roman Catholic Church. Many Catholics don't agree either. There are many great issues and challenges that all churches and in particular the Roman Catholic Church need to face.

We must recognize that these are sisters and brothers in Christ with whom we need—for our sake, for their sake, for the sake of the Gospel and the glory of God—to be in relationship.

This may be a unique moment in the history of relationships between parts of Christ's body that have been separated from and hostile toward each other for 480 years. Let us engage this moment by praying for the successor to John Paul II. Pray that God will guide those who are choosing the next pope and pray for the person chosen. Pray that God would draw the Roman Catholic Church and all churches into the light and truth of Jesus Christ, through the power of the Holy Spirit."

The national Mennonite newspaper, Mennonite Weekly Review, published two editorials following Pope John Paul's death. The first was by Robert Rhodes, the associate editor, entitled "John Paul: A pope Protestants loved". Selections are reprinted here:

"That John Paul was revered by many Protestants for his stances and leadership is testament as well to his authentic faith and abilities. But what made him so appealing to those outside the Catholic Church?

Throughout his papacy, John Paul was an exemplar of issues that transcended his own church. Perhaps never before had a Christian leader stood as such a symbol of freedom and authentic change. Even at great personal risk, the pope continued to travel to those oppressed places and, without hesitation, spoke out for the way of nonviolent resistance and change.

Even during his waning years the pope was a brave and outspoken advocate for peace, the sanctity of life, compassion for the suffering and sick, and ecumenical openness.

Perhaps most inspiring about this pope, however, was his appeal to the young. Almost from the start, wherever the pope went, throngs of young people followed. According to one witness those young people even touched John Paul in his last moments. As they completed a round of choral prayers for his welfare, the pope raised his hand as if to bless them, then, after a great effort, uttered a final Amen.

That he ended his time in this world with a prayer and a benediction for the next generation says a great deal about the true character of this man and what he has meant to the world."

The second MWR editorial appeared two weeks later, written by Paul Schrag, the editor, and entitled "Pope's legacy draws Christians together." Selections below:

"After the death of Pope John Paul II, one sensed that more was happening in hearts and minds around the world than merely a fleeting interest in an important person. Catholics

surely experienced the deepest emotion, but Christians of all kinds could claim him as their own.

The ecumenical embrace that John Paul extended to other Christians, even to people of other faiths, was reciprocated. Non-Catholics embraced him as the world's leading representative of Christianity. And, by all accounts, most were pleased with how he filled that role. Many even loved him.

It's a landmark change in Christian history: Today you don't have to be Catholic to love the pope.

This has a lot to do with the charisma and warmth of the man born Karol Wojtyła. But it also has much to do with positive changes in how Christians see themselves and each other.

It's been a 500-year journey up from the depths of intolerance. The Reformation was necessary, but the animosity that endured for centuries was not. [John Paul] proved that loyalty to historic convictions is fully compatible with ecumenical cooperation. Dialogue, he said, is a means of seeking truth and sharing truth.

In life and in death, he united people of faith as never before. He set an example of unity and respect for Christians of all denominations."

Longtime MWR columnist Elaine Sommers Rich devoted her column in the May 16 issue to John Paul. Selections are reprinted below:

"Stalin asked scornfully, 'How many divisions does the pope have?' Would that Stalin could have seen some of the pope's 'divisions' from all over the world when John Paul II died!

The late pope demonstrated what incredible influence one man can have, not through military power but through moral courage and spiritual strength.

Count me among his admirers. Granted, I disagreed with him on important issues, such as the right of the clergy to be married and women to be ordained. Also, I believe that neither women nor the world itself can sustain an unlimited number of births.

But I appreciated many of his beliefs and actions. He opposed the war in Iraq and capital punishment. He stood up to Communism in his native Poland. He believed in young people, understood their spiritual potential and challenged them to be dedicated to God. He forgave the Turkish terrorist who tried to assassinate him, and he visited the man in prison.

Here is one of John Paul's many published prayers: *To you, Creator of nature and humanity, of truth and beauty, I pray. Hear my voice, for it is the voice of the victim of all wars and violence. Hear my voice, for it is the voice of all children who suffer and will suffer when people put their faith in weapons and war."*

MWR also carried a front page story by Bridge editor Ivan Kauffman on John Paul's relationship with Mennonites. Most items are available online at the MWR website.

A lasting legacy

John Paul and the Mennonite Community

Relationships between Mennonites and Roman Catholics changed fundamentally during John Paul's papacy. One reason was his own interest in the Mennonite community and especially in its peace witness. This report by *Bridge* editor Ivan Kauffman is based on observations made while covering international affairs for the Catholic press during John Paul's papacy.

Surprising as it is to many—both Mennonites and Catholics—Pope John Paul II knew about the Mennonite community and cared about it. Coming as he did from Poland where there are no longer any Mennonites this was not the case when he assumed the international leadership of the Catholic Church in 1978, but over the years as he came learn about the Anabaptist Mennonite community and its longstanding commitment to peace his admiration grew and so did his gestures of friendship for Mennonites.

The most significant of these took place only three years before his death, at the 2002 World Day of Prayer for Peace in Assisi. This was John Paul's response to the 9.11 attacks, and drew hundreds of world religious leaders. It was broadcast live in several nations and covered by hundreds of reporters.

It concluded with all the participants jointly making a 12-point pledge to peace. Each point was read by one of the participants, including the head of the World Council of Churches. The readings concluded with a final summary—and the person selected to read it was a Mennonite pastor from Indonesia who was then the president of Mennonite World Conference.

Although I witnessed this as a reporter it moved me to tears. The day had been filled with indications that its deeply symbolic events had been planned personally by John Paul, and assigning this final event to the Mennonite participant hardly seemed accidental.

Sixteen years earlier at the first Assisi day of prayer for peace I had also been present. Then the executive secretary of Mennonite World Conference had been present but not as a participant in the program. He exchanged an embrace of peace with the pope at one point, but his seat on the platform had been the most distant from the pope of all the Christian leaders.

But now something had changed. The Mennonite representative had literally been moved from the foot of the line to the head of the line.

Pope John Paul never spoke publicly about his relationship to the Mennonite community, but his involvement in the ecumenical dialogue between the Mennonite World Conference and the Catholic Church which began in 1998 also indicated his personal appreciation of the Mennonite tradition.

When a formal dialogue with Mennonites was first proposed some Catholic leaders questioned whether the Vatican should devote its limited resources to a conversation with such a relatively small group. This would be only the eleventh international dialogue the Catholic Church had engaged in, and would involve a major commitment of time and resources.

John Paul not only gave his approval to this dialogue, he gave his personal support as well. When we first began hearing reports of his interest, both Mennonites and Catholics found them hard to believe. Why would someone of John Paul's international stature care about Mennonites? But after Assisi 2002 it seemed obvious this was the case.

Other gestures followed. Later in 2002 a Mennonite laywoman and her son who were visiting Rome were greeted by John Paul at his regular Wednesday Audience, an unusual honor, especially for non-Catholics. **(Photo at left)** The next year the Vatican sent an official delegation to the Mennonite World Conference Assembly in Bulawayo.

Less than a year before his death Pope John Paul invited the Bruderhof, the Anabaptist communal group, to visit him in Rome. He said to them, "You share a tradition in which Christ's call to discipleship finds expression in common life in the Spirit, and in daily witness to the evangelical law of love. Christians always need



to hear anew the radical summons to holiness, which is the heart of our savior's message." He added, "I greet you with affection in the Lord and I pray that the growing contacts with the Catholic Church which you are fostering will bear fruit in ever greater mutual understanding, respect and cooperation."

Why did Pope John Paul care about the Anabaptist Mennonite community? There appear to be three features of the Anabaptist Mennonite tradition that would have been attractive to him:

The peace tradition. John Paul knew war and tyranny from the inside, as few people have. He risked his life as a seminary student during the Nazi occupation of Poland. He lived most of his adult life under Communism. From those experiences he became a vigorous advocate for peace. He never became a pacifist, but when he discovered a small but long-established community of Christians who had always rejected violence he reached out to them.

The Anabaptist martyrs. John Paul had known many Christian martyrs personally. As pope he knew about the many thousands of Christians throughout the world who continue to risk their lives for their beliefs, and of the hundreds who have died. He asked that a list of all twentieth century Christian martyrs—Catholic, Protestant and Orthodox—be compiled. Pope John Paul had been personally impacted by the martyrs, and would have been attracted to a Christian community which had a martyr tradition at its center.

Lay discipleship. John Paul's success in overthrowing Communism in Poland came from mobilizing the Polish laity, and he believed lay Christians had a special calling to transform society. He repeatedly proclaimed the vision of a "civilization of love"—a world in which everyone belonged to a single global family—and he believed it would be created by Christian families. The Mennonite tradition in which ordinary people matter, the laity matters, and the family matters would have been attractive to John Paul.

John Paul left behind an immense legacy, a legacy whose eventual impact we can only imagine now. But surely that legacy includes a new relationship between the Mennonite and Catholic communities, one that will continue into the future.

By his actions John Paul said he believed Mennonites are part of the universal Church—that they belong, that their gifts should be recognized, that their traditions should be honored, that their voices should be listened to. When he came to Rome Mennonites were on the periphery. They no longer are.

Pope John Paul indicated that he hoped for a time when Mennonites and Catholics could join in an effective Christian witness to peace. That is one reason the report of the International Mennonite Catholic Dialogue is entitled *Called Together to Be Peacemakers*.

That hope, which only a few years ago would have seemed utterly unrealistic, no longer seems so.

— Ivan J. Kauffman

'Called Together' Summary to Be Published

A group of volunteers is preparing a summary and discussion guide for the International Mennonite Catholic Dialogue report, *Called Together to Be Peacemakers*.

A summary version of the report of the International Mennonite Catholic Dialogue is being prepared, and will appear soon. It will include a set of discussion questions intended for local parishes and congregations.

The summary will be published as part of the Bridgefolk Series by Pandora Press, directed by Bridgefolk participant Arnold Snyder. A publication date has not yet been announced, but the project is nearing completion.

The summary was approved by the Bridgefolk board at its last meeting and is being overseen by Bridgefolk's executive director, Gerald Schlabach. Several other Bridgefolk participants have volunteered to work on the book, including Helmut Harder, Mennonite co-chair of the dialogue, and Eric Massanari, pastor of Shalom Mennonite Church in Newton, KS.

Willard Roth of Elkhart, IN, a retired Mennonite editor and pastor, has volunteered to prepare a condensed version of the report, and Eric Massanari has written a series of discussion questions to accompany it. Helmut Harder has agreed to write an introduction.

The condensed version will be about one-third the length of the original. Its purpose is to make the document accessible to local groups who might otherwise be discouraged by the length of the full report.

Several persons, both Mennonite and Catholic, who were involved in writing the report have read the summary text and commented favorably.

Called Together to Be Peacemakers has been sent to the churches, both Mennonite and Catholic, for their discussion and response, and it is hoped this publication will enable such discussion to take place at the local level.

The new pope

Benedict and the Bruderhof

The new pope, Benedict XVI, has had a ten-year friendship with leaders of the Bruderhof, a lay intentional community that is part of the Anabaptist group of churches to which Mennonites also belong. During a 1995 meeting in Rome the cardinal who recently became pope discussed the persecution of the Anabaptists in the sixteenth century with Bruderhof members.

The meeting took place in June 1995, in Rome. Several persons from the Bruderhof community, headquartered in Rifton, NY, had flown to Europe to meet with Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, who was then head of the Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, the agency responsible for ensuring doctrinal continuity in the Catholic Church.

Mutual friends from the Integrierte Gemeinde, a similar community of Catholics in Germany where the Cardinal had been bishop before coming to Rome, had arranged the meeting. The Bruderhof delegation included persons whose forbearers were persecuted in the sixteenth century.

The visitors were told the Cardinal was not feeling well and probably would be able to stay for only a few minutes. But, says Johann Christoph Arnold, leader of the Bruderhof, "as our conversation progressed he became more and more attentive." He ended up staying for three hours.

During the meeting a theologian from the German Catholic community read the stories of two of the sixteenth century Anabaptist martyrs. Cardinal Ratzinger listened carefully and then responded in these words:

"What is truly moving in these stories is the depth of faith of these men, their being deeply anchored in our Lord Jesus Christ, and their joy in this fact, a joy that is stronger than death.

"We are distressed of course by the fact that the church was so closely linked with the powers of this world that it could deliver other Christian to the executioner because of their beliefs.

"This should be a deep challenge to us, how much we all need to repent again and again, and how much the church must renounce worldly principles and standards in order to accept the truth as the only standard—to look to Christ, not to torture others but to go the way of witnessing, a way that will always lead to martyrdom in one form or other.

"I believe it is important for us not to adopt worldly standards, but rather to be ready to face the world's opposition, and to learn that Christ's truth is expressed above all in love and forgiveness, which are truth's most trustworthy signs. I believe that this is the point at which we all have to begin learning anew, the only point through which Christ can truly lead us together."

Arnold says, "I will never forget how by the end of the meeting he had tears in his eyes, and how he encouraged us with words of love and reconciliation."

The Cardinal ended the meeting by saying, "It is important for us to realize that we cannot bring about unity by diplomatic maneuvers... Instead we must open ourselves more and more to God. The unity that he brings about is the only true unity. Anything else is a political construction, and it will be as transitory as all such constructions."

"When hatred can be overcome, and forgiveness be given," the future pope said, "that is the work of the Holy Spirit. Then we know that we are in Christ."

Speaking of the new pope Arnold says, "The press has been quick to characterize Ratzinger as an inflexible and mean-spirited theologian, but I know him to be different."

Members of the Bruderhof community meeting with Cardinal Ratzinger in Rome in 1995. At the Cardinal's right is Johann Christoph Arnold, leader of the community.

More information available at www.Bruderhof.com.



Local dialogue

Indiana Mennonites & Catholics Meet

There is a large Mennonite community in the Goshen and Elkhart areas of northern Indiana, just east of the large Catholic community in South Bend, home of the Univ. of Notre Dame. This spring members of these two communities began to meet in informal dialogue, organized by local Bridgefolk.

A summer series of centering prayer services has been organized by Michiana Bridgefolk, the local grassroots organization of Mennonites and Catholics who want to share the gifts of their traditions with each other.

This series will be held every other week on Thursday evenings, and will focus on centering prayer and conclude with an ice cream social so those who attend can get better acquainted with each other.

Sharing leadership are Jay Landry, Pastoral Associate at Little Flower Catholic Church in South Bend, and Marlene Kropf, Belmont Mennonite Church in Elkhart.

The meetings will alternate between Catholic and Mennonite churches in South Bend and Elkhart. The first meeting was at Little Flower in South Bend. Future meetings will be on June 23, July 7 and 19 (Tues.), and Aug. 4 and 18. Open for one or several or all meetings.

It wasn't the first-ever gathering of Mennonites and Catholics in the South Bend-Elkhart area of Indiana, because Mennonites and Catholics have been working, talking and praying together in a variety of ways for many years.

But on April 24th about 24 people met at Kern Road Mennonite Church for an evening of intentional conversation between Mennonites and Catholics about our mutual interest and curiosity about one another's life, worship and spirituality.

The evening was organized by Andre Gingerich Stoner, pastor at Kern Mennonite Church, Mary Schertz from Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary and Regina Wilson from St. Joseph Catholic Church.

Gathered for the evening were Mennonite scholars from Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Mennonite pastors, Catholic parish ministers, people in Mennonite-Catholic marriages and Mennonite and Catholic congregation members.

The evening began with song led by Rebecca Slough of Goshen and then a section from Luke 24 describing the disciples on the road to Emmaus, read by Margie Pfeil.

After dinner small groups were formed where people had time to share discussion on three questions:

- Share your own story of encounter or interest in the Roman Catholic or Mennonite Church.
- Why do you think there is more interest now in Mennonite-Catholic dialogue and sharing?
- What ideas do you have for supporting one another in the future?

The large group then reconvened for more discussion about what was heard in the smaller groups and to talk about what our next step might be.

Some of the themes that emerged in the large group discussion were: A shared attraction or fascination with the other's tradition including prayer forms, peace work, liturgy, singing, etc. A recognition that truth is multi-layered, is there to be discovered and known by us and that there is a sense of mystery in working together to discover the truth. When we gather it feels like the account of the early Christians in Acts 2 and 4. Our two "worlds" are really very different. Historically we are in a remarkable time.

Marlene Kropf reported on the annual Bridgefolk gathering and invited people to attend this summer's event. Several of the people gathered that evening had been to Bridgefolk conferences and spoke enthusiastically of them.

The group then discussed a possible next step. It was agreed that sharing worship is very important. It was also suggested that reading something (the Bridgefolk book, *On Baptism* was suggested) for discussion would be enlightening. "Questions from the hat" (where people could write down questions about the Mennonite or Catholic Church for answering) would be fun.

Eventually, it was agreed that we would meet again in August, after the Bridgefolk gathering, for prayer, meal and conversation. We also concurred as a group that broadening the invitation to people in our congregations is very important.

Finally, we ended with song and intercessory prayer for our communities and for the world. Such an ending gave us all hope that this is indeed a remarkable time to feel the Spirit drawing us together in unity.

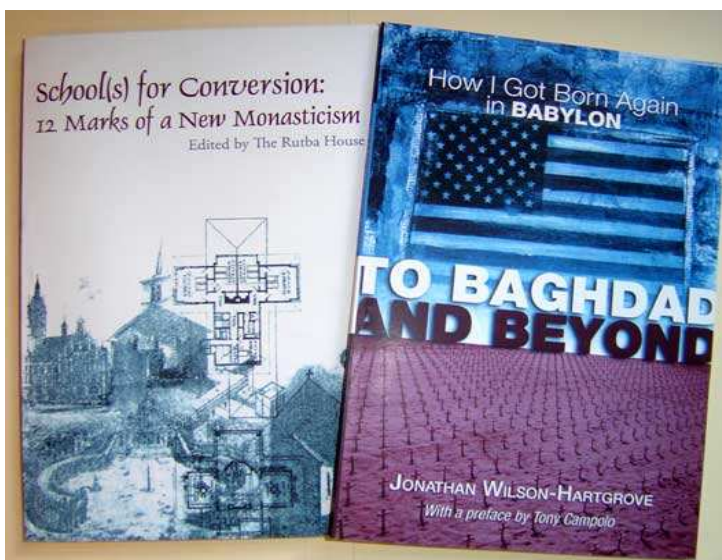
— Regina Wilson

Another bridge

New Monasticism Movement

Evangelicals, Anabaptists and Catholics are uniting to create a new kind of lay monasticism that is showing unusual vitality. A 'community of communities' called the New Monastic Movement is forming nationally. Two books published recently tell the story of this new movement.

The two books describing the new monasticism movement, and the motivations behind it, were published recently by Cascade Books. Available at www.wipfandstock.com.



Jonathan Hartgrove came to Eastern University near Philadelphia 6 years ago from a Baptist congregation in North Carolina. His leadership abilities already recognized as a high school student, he had been a Senate page in Washington, DC and a mission volunteer in both Africa and Latin America.

At Eastern he met a fellow student, Leah Wilson from California, whose father was a Baptist theologian and author of *Living Faithfully in a Fragmented World: Lessons for the Church from MacIntyre's 'After Virtue'*. MacIntyre, a Catholic philosopher at Notre Dame, had written, "We are waiting... for another—doubtless very different—St. Benedict." Wilson had concluded his book by calling for "a new monasticism".

While they were students Jonathan and Leah married, and shortly after joined West Philadelphia Mennonite Fellowship. There they discovered the writings of John Howard Yoder. When the 9.11 attacks took place less than a year after their marriage, Leah and Jonathan decided to join the Christian Peacemaker Team in Baghdad, to be present during the bombing that initiated the war. They were strongly influenced both by Yoder's writings and the witness of Archbishop Romero.

Their time in Iraq was short but eventful. On their way home one of the team's vans overturned, seriously injuring another team member, Weldon Nisly, Bridgefolk co-founder and board member. Weldon was taken to the nearby town of Rutba, only to find its small hospital had just been bombed.

Despite this the Muslim doctor in this small desert town treated Weldon's wounds as best he could, and sent him on to the Jordanian border, where he would spend several days in a hospital before returning to the U.S..

Jonathan and Leah had been influenced by another team member, Jim Douglass, a Catholic Worker, while in Iraq and when they returned to the U.S. decided to start their own version of a Catholic Worker house. They called it Rutba House, to commemorate the hospitality they had experienced in Iraq.

They now live in Durham, NC, where Jonathan is a student at Duke Divinity School and Leah is a community worker. Both are members of Chapel Hill Mennonite Fellowship.

Last summer they hosted a conference to which they invited persons from other communities. They invited Bridgefolk to participate and Ivan Kauffman attended and described the Bridgefolk movement.

A collection of essays by participants in that conference was published recently, entitled *School(s) for Conversion: 12 Marks of a New Monasticism*. Of the 14 authors 7 are Evangelicals or other Protestants, 4 are Mennonites, and 3 are Catholics, including Bridgefolk's Kauffman.

Of this book the well-known Protestant theologian Stanley Hauerwas writes, "Whatever future God has for the church, I am convinced the essays in this remarkable book will help us discern that future... Through some strange miracle God now seems to be calling Protestants to consider what it might mean for them to live in communities... very much like monastic communities."

A second book tells the story of Jonathan and Leah's remarkable personal journey. Entitled *To Baghdad and Beyond: How I Got Born Again in Babylon*, it has been described by Daniel Berrigan SJ, the Catholic peace activist, as a story "of inner transformation, from collusive silence and inertia to an energetic torrent of service—from a cultural dead end... to a biblical third way."

Bishop Will Willimon of the North Alabama Methodist Conference writes, "Here is a retrieval of truly evangelical Christianity—truthful, prophetic, vibrant, apocalyptic, and by God's grace, hopeful."

In India

Get Well Card from Mother Teresa

When Dr. Glen E. Miller, a Mennonite physician from Ohio, was director of Mennonite Central Committee in India he learned to know Mother Teresa by working with her, and when he suffered a heart attack she sent him a get well card. Dr. Miller will be one of the speakers at this summer's Bridgefolk conference.

Mother Teresa's get well card arrived at the hospital along with many others. I was in a Calcutta hospital recovering from a heart attack. The postcard-sized card had a hole in the top as if it had been thumb-tacked to the wall.

On the front side was a picture of Jesus carrying a lamb and followed by other sheep. Written over the lamb Jesus was carrying was the word "you". On the reverse side Mother Teresa wrote, "Be the little lamb in the arms of Jesus who loves you. I will pray for you to get well. God bless you."

In the many times I met Mother Teresa I was always aware that her daily activities were world news. Despite her responsibilities as the leader of a worldwide organization she had time to wish me well. When I received the card, I recalled that when asked how she had managed to help so many people she replied, "One at a time."

I had become one of those touched by Mother Teresa. As Director of Mennonite Central Committee in India from 1990 to 1996 our paths crossed on a fairly regular basis. I particularly recall visiting her after the religious riots in December 1992. During the week long riots the Army was on the streets with orders to shoot on sight. Mother Teresa and her driver were among the very few who had ventured out.

After the curfew was lifted I went to see Mother to offer MCC relief help. She told me with some amusement how she was waved through the Army checkpoints when her face was recognized. Her widely circulated prayer for peace was credited with reducing violence and helping to bring an end to the conflict. These actions characterized Mother Teresa for me.

When talking to her one quickly became aware of her single-minded pursuit of causes for the right, and in favor of the poor. She was fearless in this pursuit and willing to take on the high and mighty of the world. Her compassion seemed to have no limits. A phrase she frequently quoted was, "To the Glory of God and the good of man."

She was a friend of MCC and honored us by her presence as chief guest at the 1992 celebration of MCC's 50 years in India.

More than 50 years ago Mother Teresa left the cloistered walls of the convent and a comfortable teaching position to enter the busy and crowded streets of Calcutta.

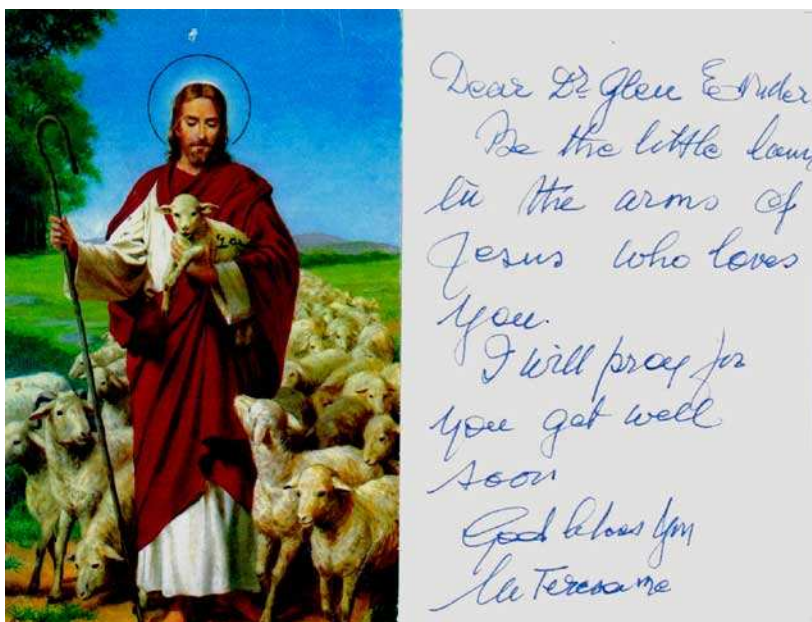
She told us a story of the generosity of the poor. In the early days of her ministry she was teaching a group of students under a shade tree, with the dust

on the ground as her blackboard and a stick as her chalk. She noted that one boy looked sick. When asked why, he said he hadn't had anything to eat for three days. Mother Teresa got some rice and took it to the family. The boy's mother immediately divided the rice into two portions, and gave half to her neighbor whose family hadn't eaten in four days.

The stooped figure of Mother Teresa will remain a symbol for time to come of compassion for the poorest of the poor, and of hope for those in despair and hopelessness. She accepted poverty and deprivation without noticing because her passion and attention was directed to helping the needy about her.

The sisters of the Missionaries of Charity around the world will carry on the work of Mother Teresa. We can best honor her by also taking up the work of making life better for the poor and needy.

— reprinted from *Ohio Evangel*,
newsletter of the Ohio Conference of Mennonites



At Combermere

The Mennonite Catholic Bell

Alma Coffman brought her Mennonite great-grandmother's bell with her from the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia when she joined Madonna House.

April 2 was a busy day in the kitchen here at Madonna House. Our young Korean guest was washing dishes, and I was preparing the stew for supper when the news came that Pope John Paul had died. Immediately I went to the phone to pass on the news, and the bell above the chapel began to ring.

As I entered the chapel I was very aware of the first time I had listened to the ringing of that bell.

It was after my great-grandmother's funeral, who died a month before attaining the age of 99. My father and I had stopped by her now empty house and he said to me, "Come, I want to show you something."

We went up to the attic and there on the floor was a big bell. Papa bent down and lifted it with both hands and swung it. The bell pealed out echoing around the attic as if longing to be free. Papa said, "I'm going to buy this bell," and he did at the family auction.

Great Grandma Sarah Heatwole Coffman had been born in 1859 in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia, just before the start of the Civil War. Her early memories included soldiers riding into the yard shooting the chickens. Her family was Mennonite and at this time in history they were in a unique situation. They did not own slaves, and they refused to fight.

Sally, as she was called, was a lively young woman who as a teenager rode horses so fast the boys couldn't keep up with her. She married Joseph Coffman, who would become a Mennonite minister.

In the years following the war money was scarce, but she wanted a dinner bell to hang in the yard. And this she obtained by selling some pigs and she hung it in the yard.



Alma and the bell at Madonna House

Madonna House Archives

On Sundays their farm yard would be filled with buggies because it was known that anyone could come to Sally Jo's for dinner, even without an invitation.

But there was a problem. The big dinner bell was hung on a low post and the young boys would ring it. Frustrated by this Great Grandma had the bell placed in the attic until it could be hung in a high place where it would only be rung at the proper time.

Now this same bell was ringing as I entered our chapel to pray for the pope—whose pontificate began even before I entered the Roman Catholic Church. In the chapel we prayed the Glorious Mysteries, which start with the mystery of the Resurrection. How much our beloved Holy Father loved the prayer of the rosary.

How did the bell get here to Combermere? When Papa bought the bell we had moved off the farm and lived in town with no place to hang it. So it went in our attic.

Then in 1988 I took my final vows of poverty, chastity and obedience as a member of Madonna House. Here at Combermere we needed a bell, and my father gave me the bell. On his last visit before his death in 1991 he rang it and heard it echo over the river and into the wooded hills.

At last it hung in a high place where it would only be rung at the proper time.

In that November day in 1959 when I first heard the bell ring I was wearing a homemade “cape dress”. My hair was in braids around my head, covered with a white net prayer covering. My father had on his plain-cut suit coat, worn by the conservative men of the Mennonite Church.

I was 15, proud to be the Mennonite girl that I was. Neither my father nor I would have guessed at the journey that was ahead, for either myself or the bell.

Between the ringing of that bell in 1959 along Dry River in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia and the ringing of the same bell along the Madawaska River in Combermere, Ontario on April 2, 2005 much was to happen.

Remaining within sight of my beloved Virginia mountains I became a registered nurse. This was followed by nursing and skiing in Michigan. Then it was on to Goshen College to get my degree in nursing.

But then my life took a surprising turn. My next four years were spent at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Elkhart, IN.

After graduation I served as pastor of Ottawa Mennonite Church.

During my time in Ottawa I visited Madonna House. Later I came back for a few weeks, and that turned into a lifetime commitment. Madonna House is a Catholic community of men, women and priests who have taken promises of poverty, chastity and obedience.

When I first stopped by Combermere for 5 minutes in 1976 I had no thought of such a journey. Great Grandma’s bell still sat in my father’s attic in Harrisonburg, VA and only rang if someone strong lifted it off the floor.

I got up early to watch Pope John Paul’s funeral mass on TV. But first I took a flashlight and went for a walk to the statue of Our Lady of Combermere—my daily place of prayer for all those I love and who have been part of my earthly pilgrimage.

For the heart of the young Mennonite girl listening to the ringing of the bell has soared also. I entered the Roman Catholic Church because of my hunger for the Eucharist, and the presence of Mary, mother of Jesus Christ our Lord. Each year is a continuing journey into the mysteries of our faith.

Bridgefolk People



Drew Christiansen, S.J., longtime Bridgefolk participant, has been appointed editor of *America* magazine, the national Catholic weekly published by the Jesuits in New York. His appointment was effective June 1. He had been associate editor of the magazine since 2002, and prior to that had been director of the U.S. Bishops Office of International Justice and Peace.

For the past two decades he has been a leading expert on Catholic social teaching and peace, and was the lead staff person in the drafting of the 1993 U.S. Catholic Bishops’ peace pastoral, *The Harvest of Justice is Sown in Peace*. He became a member of the International Mennonite Catholic Dialogue when peace emerged as a central topic in it, and played a major role in drafting the final report, especially its section on Catholic teaching on peace.

The resignation of his predecessor at *America*, Thomas J. Reese, S.J. was highly controversial, and produced numerous news reports and considerable commentary in national print and broadcast media. Reese had appeared frequently on national television as a commenter on Catholic issues and events.

According to Catholic News Service, Reese resigned after repeated complaints extending over several years from Cardinal Ratzinger, then head of the Vatican’s doctrinal office. A Jesuit spokesman in Rome said, “With Cardinal Ratzinger elected pope I think Fr. Reese thought it would be very difficult to continue his line of openness, without creating more problems. He knew the situation. He didn’t want to embarrass the Society, and he didn’t want to fight the pope, so he resigned.”

The conflict between *America* and the Vatican involved the statement on Christ entitled *Dominus Iesus*, and the issues of same-sex marriage, stem cell research, and banning politicians who support legal abortion from taking communion. On these issues Reese had printed articles which presented a broad range of views, some in open disagreement with official Catholic teaching. The Vatican has consistently taken the position that a magazine published by a Catholic religious order must support official Catholic teaching.

More information at www.Americamagazine.org.

Weldon Nisly, Bridgefolk co-founder and board member, has had his ministerial credentials suspended in a controversy involving a same-sex covenant ceremony. Mennonite ministerial credentials are granted by local conferences, and the Mennonite Church USA's Pacific Northwest Conference took this action on April 23, according to a report in the *Mennonite Weekly Review*.



Nisly is pastor of Seattle Mennonite Church, which accepts persons in same-sex partnerships, as some other Mennonite congregations do. Last July he officiated at a ceremony recognizing one such couple. It did not take place at the church, and was not considered an action of the congregation. The conference leadership however determined that it fell under the denomination's membership guidelines which explicitly forbid a pastor from performing "a same-sex covenant ceremony."

The chair of the conference committee responsible for this decision says, "The relationship continues with Weldon and with the Seattle Mennonite congregation. It is not our intention to cut that off, but we also recognize that we as a conference have accepted the membership guidelines of Mennonite Church USA." Nisly continues as pastor of SMC and his status will be reviewed in two years.

Last fall Weldon wrote to the committee, "This did not just happen out of the blue and apart from the church. It is a consistent and faithful outgrowth of over 30 years of my Mennonite pastoral and peace ministry."

An online editorial on the *Mennonite Weekly Review* website says of this event, "From the earliest years of our history Mennonites have a tradition of taking unpopular stands for reasons of conscience. But submission to the community of faith is also a Mennonite value. When the two clash, which should take precedence?"

More information at www.mennoweekly.org.



Doris Murphy, longtime Catholic Bridgefolk participant from Ellsworth, WI is spending the summer in England with the Benedictine Sisters of Grace and Compassion, a religious order which has missions in Uganda, Sri Lanka and India, as well as in England, where they minister to the elderly, especially the elderly poor. She will be spending time with the sisters in their houses of formation in England, giving days of reflection, as well as some classes on perspectives on ministry as lived in the rule of St. Benedict. "It will be a wonderful opportunity to live in community again," she says, "while engaged in this cross-cultural religious experience that is influenced not only by ecumenism but from the non-Christian world as well."

Daniel Izuzquiza, S.J., a Spanish Jesuit who is a graduate student in Boston and who attended last summer's Bridgefolk conference, is spending this summer in four locations in Mexico and the southwest U.S. studying the situation of Mexican migrants to the United States. He also hopes to join the Christian Peacemakers Team in Arizona for a week. "I hope this will help me to be closer to this situation, to understand it better, and to clarify my future work with immigrants back in my home country," he says. He recently completed his STL thesis, *Rooted in Jesus Christ: Toward a Radical Ecclesiology for the Twenty-first Century*. "Two of my main conversation partners in the thesis are John H. Yoder and Dorothy Day, so you can probably consider it a Mennonite-Catholic proposal," he says.



Betti Erb, Bridgefolk participant from Waterloo, Ont. was married May 28 to Greg Van Horn.

Darrin Belousek and Paula Snyder were married June 18 in Ontario. There will be a reception and fellowship dinner for the new couple on Sunday, June 28 at Kern Road Mennonite Church in South Bend starting at 1 p.m. All Bridgefolk are invited—and to bring a favorite pie. RSVP at pjsnyder@student.ambbs.edu.

Bridgefok Mail

It is now almost a year since the Bridgefok meeting last summer. I was very privileged to be invited. Abbot John offered me free lodging at the Abbey for the duration of the conference and for as much time beyond as I wished. This truly generous offer made it very easy to go all the way from Ireland.

In this letter I concentrate on the Catholic-Mennonite dialogue report. *Called Together to be Peacemakers* is a beautiful title and, thank God, we all accept this is our calling today. It is clear that a huge amount of hard labor went into the report.,

As a Catholic, however, I found it disconcerting to read its account of the persecutions. About 5,000 persons, it is said, died for their faith in the sixteenth century. About half were Anabaptists, the majority executed in Catholic territories. So between 1,000 and 1,500 Mennonites “were executed for their religious beliefs”—Catholics apparently are reluctant to call them ‘martyrs’.

Then comes a remarkable paragraph which seems to me to say, ‘You Mennonites must realize that we Catholics have also suffered persecution, especially in England. A number of Catholics “were brutally martyred for their faith” (note the different terminology). Even if we did kill a thousand Mennonites we had about a hundred martyrs of our own.’

It seems to me that this is a great flaw in the document. It is self-defensive when it should manifest profound repentance. A Martyrs Conference has been established and has already met twice. One hopes this will lead to a better understanding of ‘dying for the faith’ and ‘killing for the faith’.

Perhaps the Catholics were offended by the Mennonite assertion that they cannot trust us on persecution, despite our Decree on Religious Freedom from Vatican II. From the time of Augustine on, we have stoutly defended our right to persecute dissenters. The Catholics could have admitted that our newfound tolerance is indeed a tender plant.

There is an assertion that Catholics realized that some Anabaptists were pacifist only after the Munster War in 1535. And yet the Confession of Schleithem was formulated by the former Benedictine, Michael Sattler, in 1527. This is surely one of the greatest Christian statements of the imperative of non-violence. But our Catholic friends did not seem to be able to acknowledge this.

I use the word ‘imperative’; but my Catholic friends on the dialogue said that for us the non-resistance recommended by Jesus is only ‘a counsel of perfection’. One wonders how this old chestnut got in. The exegesis was that Jesus told the rich young man that if he wanted to be perfect he should sell all. This was not for every Christian, according to medieval Catholic thought, but only for those called to perfection. The discourse on love of enemies expounded another part of this optional calling, as its last words were, ‘Be perfect as your heavenly father is perfect.’

St. Augustine had said that you must love your enemy even as you kill him in war. St. Bernard thought this was too difficult, so he told the Knights Templar that they should ‘hate their enemies with a perfect hate’ as the psalmist had said. So this was another form of perfection.

It seems to me that to persist in the use of this term ‘counsel’ is to contradict the current papal magisterium. In the introductory pages to *Veritatis Splendor*, we are told that the “selling all” in the story of the rich young man is “*meant for everyone*” (papal italics).

The dialogue report says, “We have mutually condemned one another.” This is like saying, “Perhaps we should not have condemned you, but remember that you did condemn us too.” This attitude just will not work. If we or our church condemned someone wrongly, it is a sin and we must repent before God. The existence of sin in the other party is irrelevant when coming before God. We cannot say, “Since you forgive me I will forgive you.” We repent even if there is no repentance on the other side.

The Schleithem Confession is so important that it deserves a commentary on the scale of the Common Declaration on Justification agreed to with the Lutherans. I pray that the International Mennonite Catholic Dialogue will do that for us some day.

Abbot Eoin de Bhaldrathe O.Cist.

An inadvertent, but massive, caffeine overdose made it possible for me to watch the Pope’s funeral in real time that morning. As I watched, I came closer to being able to articulate the dream I hold for Bridgefok.

The initial affinity of joining with others for whom rhythms and practices are central remains important for me. Still, I have mused a lot about what dream I hold beyond that. This side of eternity, I do not hold a deep ache for one and only one expression of Christ’s church. I feel strongly that the many streams of tradition bring different gifts, illuminate different facets of God’s love, and offer many different entry points into that love.

Maybe, now, I can say my dream is that we can look at one another across the table with love, regardless of how different we seem to one another on the surface—the same way a group of truly diverse people come together as family at Thanksgiving or Christmas.

I have long since forgiven my brother for being a genius, and myself for being my parent’s slow-witted child, but I will never understand him—how he sees life, how he can come to the conclusions he has reached. But I can appreciate, enjoy, and love him. In the same way he scratches his head at my priorities and positions, and still is able to appreciate, enjoy, and love me. We go our separate ways, do things very differently, and yet are one at the core.

That’s it. That’s the reason Bridgefok is important for me.

Leslie James

EDITORIAL

Good News and Conflict

This issue is filled with good news. When the officers of the Mennonite World Conference can tell their Catholic counterparts that Mennonites are praying for those who will be choosing “a new leader called to be a servant of God and of unity in the Body of Christ” we have clearly entered a new era.

When a Mennonite denominational leader in Canada can say of Catholics, “We must recognize that these are sisters and brothers in Christ with whom we need—for our sake, for their sake, for the sake of the Gospel and the glory of God—to be in relationship,” a new day has dawned.

And when the editor of the *Mennonite Weekly Review* can write, “Today you don’t have to be Catholic to love the pope,” we can surely agree with him that “It’s a landmark change in Christian history.”

But the outpouring of affection for Pope John Paul hasn’t been the only thing that’s happened in the past months. Two of Bridgefolk’s leading participants, one Catholic and one Mennonite, have also been involved in disputes that have made the front pages. (See *Bridgefolk People*, pages 13-14.)

Committed as we are to building bridges rather than engaging in controversy this has been painful for many of us in Bridgefolk. Although both incidents are the result of internal differences, and neither involves Bridgefolk, they nevertheless affect us. We cannot be part of the Church without being involved in the disagreements that have been part of its life from the very beginning.

But we remain hopeful because we believe the new relationship between Mennonites and Catholics that has emerged during John Paul’s papacy will have a much greater long-term impact than these current conflicts.

So long as we are humans we will disagree. But so long as we are committed to being in dialogue, to working for unity, there is no disagreement we cannot eventually overcome. That is not to ignore the pain along the way, but it is to say that even our disagreements, difficult as they often are, play an important role in God’s plan for us.

And that is truly good news.

— Ivan J. Kauffman

For more information
visit our website

www.Bridgefolk.net

What you can do

Come to this summer’s
conference at EMU!

There’s nothing you can do
to help build the
Mennonite Catholic bridge
that’s more important
than participating in our
summer conferences.

And bring a friend!

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