

Winter 2005

The **BRIDGE**

Newsletter of the Bridgefolk Movement

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Located in the heart of Virginia's beautiful and historic Shenandoah Valley, EMU also in the center of one of North America's largest and most active Mennonite communities.

Lengthening the bridge

Next Meeting at Eastern Mennonite University

The Bridgefolk board has decided to hold the 2005 gathering at Eastern Mennonite University in Harrisonburg, Virginia. After meeting at Saint John's Abbey in Collegeville, Minnesota for the past three years the board members concluded that the time had come to start alternating between Saint John's and locations in the Mennonite community.

The dates of the meeting will be the same as previously announced—**Thursday, July 21** through **Sunday, July 24**. The program will follow the same format as in previous years, and the accommodations at EMU are similar to those at Saint John's.

More details inside and on www.Bridgefolk.net

From the co-chairs

Why We're Moving

Abbot John Klassen and Dr. Marlene Kropf, the Bridgefolk co-chairs, explain why the Bridgefolk board made the decision to move this summer's gathering to EMU

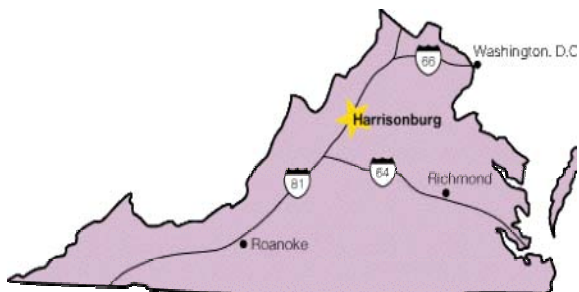
Getting to EMU

EMU is located in Virginia's Shenandoah Valley on Interstate 81, about 2.5 hours from Washington, DC

Dulles International Airport is about 2 hours away, and Reagan National and Baltimore-Washington International about 2.5 to 3 hours.

Most major airlines serve the Washington area, and most low-cost carriers as well, so there are usually bargain fares available.

The local planning committee will assist in setting up car pools for those arriving at Dulles airport. Let us know when you're arriving.



Why the change? The idea came from several participants--some Catholic, some Mennonite—not from anyone on the board. These persons felt that after three years of Mennonites experiencing Catholic community at Saint John's it was time for Catholics to have the opportunity to experience Mennonite life in a Mennonite community.

After weighing the matter the board decided to circulate a questionnaire to people on the Bridgefolk mailing list. The response to this was quite strong, with 77 people responding, but there was no clear consensus.

The board discussed this matter at the December meeting, and after long and prayerful discussion concluded that we should make the move to a Mennonite location this year.

Why now? We would have preferred to wait until 2006 to make this change, but 2006 is the 150th anniversary of Saint John's and in connection with the anniversary celebrations the Abbey is hosting a conference on the new lay movements, and would like Bridgefolk to participate in that.

Why EMU? The invitation to hold the next conference at Eastern Mennonite University came from Ken Nafziger, who is on the faculty there. Ken was the music leader at last summer's conference. EMU has similar facilities to those at Saint John's, and is located in a large and active Mennonite community. It provides an opportunity to experience the full spectrum of Mennonite life, from the most traditional to the modern. There are local people interested in hosting the conference. And it is located in a scenic and historic area.

What does it mean? We are not leaving Saint John's. It will remain our Catholic home for the foreseeable future, and the present plan is to continue to meet there every other year. But it is also a recognition that the bridge has two sides, and if our conversation is to have real integrity we must meet on both sides of the bridge.

It already appears this move will bring a significant number of new Mennonite participants into our conversation. This could be an important step forward in the Bridgefolk process. But that will depend on the willingness of the people—both Catholic and Mennonite—who have attended past conferences to come to EMU this summer.

*Marlene Kropf and Abbot John Klassen O.S.B.
Bridgefolk co-chairs*



Eastern Mennonite University

is a four-year liberal arts college, a graduate school with programs in conflict transformation, counseling, education and business administration, and a seminary. Total enrollment is about 1,400.

There are eight Mennonite churches in the city of Harrisonburg, 21 more in the county, and another 14 in the adjacent area—not including independent and Old Order congregations.

For maps and more information see www.emu.edu

What's on the Program . . .

The program will include all the things from past years that have proven successful—plus some new ones:

- **Panels** will again pair Mennonites and Catholics on a common topic. This year's theme will be building bridges through friendship.
- **Singing** will be led again this year by Ken Nafziger, the gifted Mennonite musician who led the singing at Saint John's last summer.
- **Small Groups** will provide participants with an opportunity to get to know and interact with other Bridgefolk in a comfortable and unhurried setting.
- **Questions from the Hat**, the popular activity that lets participants ask the questions they've always wanted to ask about Mennonites and Catholics, has been expanded to a full hour this year.
- **'Haiku' Stories**, the snapshot accounts of personal experience that were added last year, will be continued this year, focusing on stories of Mennonite Catholic friendships on the bridge.

- **EMU's Conflict Transformation Program** brings people from all over the world to the EMU campus to learn practical ways of overcoming violence and building peace. This summer's program will include a full session on its groundbreaking work.
- **Worship with a Mennonite Congregation** on Sunday morning will give Catholics the chance to experience the Mennonite worship tradition.
- **The Footwashing Service and Agape Meal**, which has been a high point of past year's gatherings, will be the concluding event on Sunday morning this year.
- **Free Time** for making new friends and catching up on old ones, for enjoying EMU's beautiful campus, for rest and reflection, and for exploring the nearby area will again be part of the program.
- **A Mennonite Tour** of the surrounding area will be an optional event on Saturday afternoon, a chance to see the full spectrum of Mennonite life, from the most conservative to the most modern.

Make it a vacation . . .

EMU is close to several popular vacation sites...

Shenandoah National Park
Luray Caverns
Civil War battle sites
Monticello
Colonial Williamsburg
Busch Gardens
Cape Hatteras Natl. Seashore
Lancaster County
Philadelphia
Washington, D.C.
Chesapeake Bay



Bring the kids . . .

We are working on providing child care and activities for older children during this summer's gathering. We want Bridgefolk to be a child friendly event.

For
registration forms
and
program details
see the
Bridgefolk website

www.Bridgefolk.net

If you have specific questions
email us at
info@bridgefolk.net

CNVS Mader Award

Catholics Honor Mennonites for Voluntary Service

The Catholic organization that promotes voluntary service nationwide gave its annual award to Mennonites this year—the 60th anniversary of the first Mennonite VS program. In many ways the present movement of voluntary service in the Churches was pioneered by Mennonites after World War II.

For the first time since it began making the award 15 years ago, the Catholic Network of Volunteer Service this year gave its Father George Mader Award to a non-Catholic group—and the group was the Mennonite Mission Network, an umbrella group of Mennonite organizations engaged in mission and service throughout the world.

Jim Lindsay, executive director of CNVS said, “For six decades Mennonite voluntary service has been serving the poor and marginalized in hundreds of communities throughout the world. It has been a powerful influence on the church.”

He added, “Thousands of Mennonites, and increasingly people from other denominations, have served the marginalized people of North America and the world. In the process they themselves were served and transformed by the oppressed and hurting people among whom they lived and worked.”

The Catholic Network of Volunteers was founded in 1963 by Rev. George Mader of the Diocese of Newark and his sister, Pat Stalker, to introduce voluntary service to Catholics following Vatican II. The organization now includes 206 member organizations with 12,000 people in service positions in the US, Canada and 108 other nations..

CNVS publishes an annual directory of service opportunities which is distributed to 19,000 Catholic parishes and about 10,000 Protestant congregations. The directory is also available online at www.cnvs.org.

Over the past ten years CNVS has expanded from an all-Catholic organization to an ecumenical one. About 20% of its member organizations are now Protestant, including Mennonite Mission Network. A Mennonite representative of MMN now serves on the CNVS board.

Mennonite Voluntary Service began at the end of World War II, when Mennonite conscientious objectors began looking for ways to express their faith in a positive ways. Many early volunteers went to Europe to participate in post-war relief and reconstruction efforts, and in the decades since voluntary service has become an integral part of Mennonite life.

Almost 2,000 MMN and Mennonite Central Committee volunteers now serve in more than 60 countries, doing direct relief, peacemaking and community development, sustained by a budget of about \$73 million (USD) per year.

Del Hershberger, director of Christian Service for MMN, accepted the award at a banquet at the CNVS headquarters in Takoma Park, MD in suburban Washington on Nov. 13, 2004.

In his remarks Hershberger reflected on the changes voluntary service has brought to the Mennonite community, “We have become engaged with the needs and brokenness of the world,” he said. “We have gone from being a rural people in close-knit communities to being more urban and integrated into mainstream society.”

“We have also become engaged in more ecumenical conversations, and have built bridges to other Christian groups who are seeking to follow Jesus daily in life, and to be vessels of healing and hope in this broken world.”

At the award banquet Del Hershberger of MMN accepts the award plaque from Rev. George Mader. Others from l. to r. are Jim Lindsay of CNVS, James Krabill of MMN, Pat Stalker, co-founder of CNVS, Michele Hershberger of MMN, and Scott Siemens of MMN.



At Notre Dame

Mennonites and Catholics Honor Early Christian

A group of faculty and students from the Mennonite seminary in Elkhart, IN spent two days last fall walking 20 miles to Notre Dame, where they joined members of the Catholic Peace Fellowship in honoring an early Christian conscientious objector whose remains are preserved in the basilica church on the Notre Dame campus.



In the year 298 A.D. a Roman military officer named Marcellus, stationed in what is now the city of Tangiers, stood up at the annual banquet honoring the emperor, threw the military belt which was his badge of authority on the floor and said to his superiors, “I serve Jesus Christ the eternal king. I will no longer serve your emperors.”

He was immediately arrested, and three months later put on trial before a military court. When he was asked what madness possessed him, Marcellus answered, “There is no madness in those who fear God.” When asked why he had thrown his arms away he answered, “It was not right for a Christian man, who serves the Lord Christ, to serve the armies of the world.”

As a result Marcellus was condemned to death by the sword. On the way to his execution Marcellus said to the officer who had ordered his death, “May God be good to you.”

After his death the early Church recognized Marcellus as a martyr, and commemorated the day of his death each year on October 30. The records of his trial were carefully preserved, along with the remains of his body. Some of his remains (officially called relics) are now housed in the Basilica of the Sacred Heart on the Notre Dame campus.

When he was on the faculty at Notre Dame—which has a large ROTC program—the Mennonite theologian John Howard Yoder pointed out the remains of an early Christian who believed military service was incompatible with being a Christian were housed in the campus basilica.

This year 24 students and faculty from the Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary in nearby Elkhart made a pilgrimage along public roads to the Notre Dame campus to honor St. Marcellus. When they reached the campus they joined members of the Catholic Peace Fellowship, which was holding a conference to commemorate St. Marcellus. The CPF is led by Fr. Michael Baxter C.S.C., a member of the Notre Dame faculty.

After the conference session the Mennonite and Catholics involved worshiped together in the Notre Dame basilica. One Mennonite participant said, “Singing in that space was a powerful way to end our experience, and to know the significance of Marcellus’ witness.” Another said, “It was powerfully moving to be together in that way.”

The Mennonite pilgrimage was organized by Arthur Paul Boers, a member of the AMBS faculty and a Bridgefolk participant. Nelson Kraybill, AMBS President, participated in the walk and began and ended it with an account of Marcellus’ life.

Pres. Kraybill said, “The whole pilgrim walk experience is a metaphor of the Christian life. As a group traveling through busy communities of people going about their daily lives, we were viewed with bemusement and bewilderment.

“People thought we were odd, but we had a clear sense of destination, and a reason for what we were doing. That reason was worship. It’s a reminder of the way the community of faith functions in the world.”

— from an *Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary* release

Mennonite pilgrims approach the Basilica of the Sacred Heart on the University of Notre Dame campus, where the relics of St. Marcellus are housed. They are holding the cross they carried from the nearby Mennonite seminary.

Annual board meeting

Bridgefolk Moves to Incorporate

At its annual meeting in December the Bridgefolk board took the final steps toward incorporation—a step that is necessary for the long-term stability of the movement, and to raising funds to finance its steadily growing activities.

Bridgefolk board members Gerald Schlabach, Weldon Nisly, and Regina Wilson with Bridgefolk's legal adviser, Dirk Giseburt at the December board meeting. Fr. William Skudlarek's laptop in the foreground was recording minutes.



Bridgefolk's board of directors had a full agenda at its annual meeting at Saint John's Abbey in December. Not only was the major issue of whether to hold the next Bridgefolk meeting at a Mennonite location on the agenda, but there were also numerous matters that had to be decided in order to incorporate Bridgefolk as a non-profit corporation. And in addition there several issues related to the growing number of activities Bridgefolk has spawned.

Incorporating Bridgefolk as a stand-alone 501(c)(3) organization has been under consideration for more than a year, and Bridgefolk participant Dirk Giseburt, an attorney in Seattle, has volunteered to work on the legal issues involved. Dirk attended last year's board meeting, as well as this year's.

After considerable discussion it was decided that following incorporation the board of directors will consist of 8 to 10 members, evenly divided between Mennonites and Catholics. Members will serve three year terms, and new members will be elected by current board members. Each year one-third of the members will be newly elected. Members can serve for up to three terms.

It was also agreed that at least one official representative from Saint John's Abbey (or another recognized Catholic institution), and another from a recognized Mennonite institution will be invited to join the board. Currently these positions are held by the co-chairs, Dr. Marlene Kropf of Mennonite Church USA and Abbot John Klassen of Saint Johns.

It was also agreed the board will seek to include a minimum of one member from Canada.

In considering the role of coordinator, the position now held by Gerald Schlabach, the board decided to change the title for this position to Executive Director. Legally the Executive Director will serve as President of the board, accountable to the co-chairs.

Intercommunion at the Bridgefolk meetings was another major topic on the agenda. It has become clear over the past three years of meeting at Saint John's that this continues to be a painful matter for many participants, both Mennonite and Catholic. It was proposed that perhaps the only way to deal with this issue at this point in the Church's history is simply for everyone to abstain from communion at Bridgefolk events, as a recognition of the broken relationship in which we worship. However no decision was made.

The Mennonite Catholic Theological Colloquium (MCTC) was also discussed at length. This consists of a group of Mennonite and Catholic theologians who have been working on some of the difficult theological issues which divide the Mennonite and Catholic communities. Two small books based on these discussions were recently published, one dealing with baptism and the other with the issue of peace.

The proposal was made that the MCTC hold annual meetings immediately prior to the Bridgefolk meetings, as the Martyrs Conference has done for the past two years. It was agreed there is a need for a major ecumenical conference on the report of the International Mennonite Catholic dialogue, and in connection with that it was agreed to prepare a discussion guide for the report.

Mennonite Prayer Book; Catholic Social Doctrine

Mennonites at the Elkhart seminary are creating an Anabaptist prayer book, and Catholics at the Vatican have created a compendium of Catholic social teaching.

Six years ago Arthur Paul Boers, a Mennonite pastor and Bridgefolk participant who is now on the faculty at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminaries in Elkhart, IN, received a grant to study the tradition of morning and evening prayer. The result was a book entitled *The Rhythm of God's Grace: Uncovering Morning and Evening Prayer* (Paraclete, 2003).

That in turn led to a joint project at AMBS to create a Mennonite prayer book, following the traditional patterns but with an "Anabaptist coloration." The prayers are strongly focused on the words of Jesus, and on the call to discipleship—what the book's editors call "the Anabaptist DNA." It is now available in a trial version, both on the internet at www.ambbs.edu or from Pandora Press www.pandorapress.com. Of its four editors, three have been Bridgefolk participants.

On the other end of the bridge, Catholic leaders at the Vatican had been working on a *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, which was published at almost the same time (in Italy, but not yet in the U.S.). In announcing it Cardinal Martino, current head of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, called it a document that has "no precedent in the Church's history."

It was initiated by Pope John Paul who wanted "a complete and systematic overview of the Church's social teaching." He has been a constant advocate of social involvement by the laity, and has said that the Church's social teaching "is an essential part of the Christian message." Cardinal Martino called for both "personal witness" and "new programs that involve social structures," declaring that "these two dimensions, personal and social, must never be separated."

Pope Meets Bruderhof Leaders

A lay monastic community in the Anabaptist family of churches was invited to Rome by Pope John Paul for a private audience last summer.

Pope John Paul once again indicated his interest in the Anabaptist Mennonite community by granting a private audience to the leaders of the Bruderhof community last June.



He said to them in a written statement, "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. Your witness to that message is especially reflected in your respect for God's creation and your deep commitment to defending the sacredness of all human life."

The pope 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."

The Bruderhof has been in dialogue with a large number of Catholic leaders over the past decade, including ten cardinals.

Johann Christoph Arnold, the Bruderhof leader said of this visit, "Our audience with the pope was necessarily short, but despite his frailty, there was no questioning his appreciation or our words, nor the warmth of his response." For a complete report see the Bruderhof website, [click here](#).

Pat and Tom Crotty

A Mennonite Catholic Marriage

Tom Crotty, a Catholic who discovered Mennonites through his marriage to Pat Zeiset, tells the story of his journey across the bridge—and Pat adds what she has learned from the Catholic community they now belong to.

I grew up in a Catholic family, and was largely educated in Catholic schools. I attended graduate school in Philadelphia where I met my wife Pat, a Mennonite. We were married in Pat's home church, Bally Mennonite, and we lived in Lancaster County, real Amish and Mennonite country, for the first six years of our marriage.

Thirteen years and 2 children later we currently attend a small Catholic church in eastern Kentucky where we now live. I work as a psychologist and Pat teaches nursing at our community college. Daniel, aged 11, and Anna, aged 9, attend a Catholic elementary school in our town.

The Mennonite church experience started for me during my courting days with Pat. Visiting from Philadelphia on weekends I frequently attended Sunday worship with her family. I felt warmly welcomed and accepted. I shared meals, attended small group meetings with Pat, went on an overnight hike with the men of the church, went on a young adults retreat with Pat, participated in a foot washing ceremony, and of course shared several times in the Sunday worship.

Coming from the impersonality of Philadelphia's big and old Catholic churches, I found a worshipping community that was somehow familiar to me, in the literal sense of that word.

I saw and heard people I learned were truck drivers and electricians and school teachers during the week standing at the pulpit to lead worship services. They led with an ease and

grace that I can understand only as inspired. As a Catholic used to formulaic prayer even by the ordained clergy, I remember feeling astounded at their confident eloquence in spontaneous prayer—talking simply and prayerfully to God of the needs of the congregation, the community, and the world.

The pastor came to the pulpit to preach in the context of this shared calling, shared leadership, and shared responsibility. As



a Catholic, I grew up thinking presiding over worship required years of formal preparation in schools and seminaries—not to mention celibate commitment. In this Mennonite meeting I clearly saw evidence of years of spiritual formation, though obviously not in seminaries.

My second experience was at Philhaven, a mental health organization where I worked during the early 1990s. It was founded as a psychiatric hospital in the 1950's by Mennonites who did alternative service as conscientious objectors during World War II. From working in the frequently inferior conditions of state-run psychiatric facilities, many came back looking for another way to provide for emotional healing. This way of service at Philhaven has continued for over 50 years, serving thousands of people.

I completed my psychology internship at Philhaven as one of the very few facilities in the country that offered psychologists in training an opportunity for integration of Christian faith and psychology practice. Through the challenges of that intensive training year I and the three interns with me (none of us Men-

nonite) struggled to find ways our faith could make a difference in the work of healing.

How wonderfully Mennonite that struggle was! It was full of fellowship, service, prayer before staff meetings, and good food from the Philhaven kitchen. It was an experience marked from beginning to end by a shared commitment to the service of others. That experience continues to shape my professional life.

Paul Miller, a retired Mennonite seminary professor from Goshen College helped lead some of our intern seminars. He was an inspiration—open and curious in his seventies the way few of us are in our twenties, always searching for how he could be faithful to God’s calling, how he could serve. Pat and I got to know Paul and eventually participated in a small group with he and his wife and three other couples.

Both Pat and I remember Paul’s observation about our marriage as a Catholic and a Mennonite. He would move his hand vigorously up and down, enthusiastically describing the “vertical” character of my Catholic tradition. Then he proceeded to wave his arm across his chest proclaiming the “horizontal” character of the Mennonite spirit embodied in Pat’s Mennonite traditions.

We were joining our lives together in marriage and family, he said, integrating these horizontal and vertical traditions—the right fellowship of Mennonite witness and the sacramental vision of Catholicism.

Early on Pat and I often experienced our differing traditions as painful crosses to bear. We faced difficult issues of where to worship on Sunday, experiencing Pat’s exclusion from the Eucharist at Mass, wondering where and when children would be baptized—dilemmas our Mennonite and Catholic family and friends did not have to confront. Yet Paul made our bridging of these two traditions seem to be the most exciting adventure a Christian could hope for! His wonderful, expressive vertical and horizontal motions were an unmistakable gesture of blessing to me as a Catholic.

Pat and I have no doubt that God calls us to share our lives together as husband and wife—Catholic and Mennonite as those labels may apply. Sometimes we lose our way, and those are frightening and painful times. But sometimes as we travel along the margins, we come upon bridges that span impossible divides.

Our family’s Bridgefolk experience at St. John’s last July was such a delight. Sharing the wisdom, yearning, and openness of many minds and hearts to life at the margins—Mennonite and Catholic—was a wonderful consolation and encouragement. The metaphors of the bridge and life on the bridge were very much a part of our words and imaginations over those days at St. John’s.

Bridges are mostly for crossing, I think. My Catholic sensibility reminds me that there is a cross to take up in the crossing, at least if we are the followers of Christ we say we are.

But what I now think of as a Mennonite sensibility grows in me, too.

I have come to know the joy of Christ’s promise in the music of song, a communion of many and varied voices. As I listen and sing, I am inspired beyond mere knowing that we are one body, one family of brothers and sisters—Catholic and Mennonite and beyond. How can I keep from singing? How can we keep from singing?

— Tom Crotty

Pat Crotty and Diane Yoder Hardt, both Mennonites, are the music leaders at the parish in Kentucky where their families are members. Mennonites are about 5% of the congregation most Sundays at St. Lukes.



It took more faith to go on with this into the unknown than to do the comfortable, predictable thing. I realized we weren’t going to be able to figure this all out before we took the leap of faith.

I would often sit and cry at Eucharist because I felt left out—something I couldn’t do with Tom. As a result Tom stopped going to communion. We tried different combinations. My experience of the Catholic Church was big formal churches in Philadelphia. They felt very foreign to me, although I was always comforted by the scriptures.

When we moved to Kentucky we asked, “What are we going to do about Church?” We prayed about it, and then soon after we arrived someone from St. Luke’s arrived with a cake to welcome us and now we feel we have found a place that takes the best of both and puts them together—community, discipleship, service, family, and scripture from the Mennonite tradition, added to liturgy and Eucharist from the Catholic tradition.

Sister Mary Catherine, the woman in charge of our little parish at the time could explain things in a way that helped me to understand, and St. Luke’s helped put Catholicism in context for me, by providing a sense of community. It is a context where it was so familiar, where it makes complete sense to me.

How can you not affirm the Catholic Church when you belong to St. Luke’s—made up of people who live out their faith in their work? I’ve become comfortable with the liturgy, with the comfort of a predictable form, which I’ve learned from being music leader each Sunday

I’m still a Mennonite in my heart, I’m just practicing my Mennonite faith in a Catholic church. I focus on the things in the Catholic mass that we have in common. I’m not troubled by that.

— Pat Zeiset Crotty

New art history

Was Rembrandt a Mennonite Catholic?

Recent art history indicates Rembrandt had significant ties to 17th-century Mennonites—and that his family had retained their ties to pre-Reformation Catholicism. Some art historians believe his interest in Biblical subjects may have come from his Mennonite contacts.

For years there have been rumors that Rembrandt had important ties to the Mennonite community in the Netherlands, and now art historians are providing evidence that is true—and furthermore they are arguing that Rembrandt's Mennonite associations profoundly affected his art.

Art historians have produced a large body of new scholarship on Rembrandt in recent decades, and a recent review of it by the British historian D. M. Field concludes that “Although Rembrandt seems to have belonged formally to no Church, that did not imply a lack of religious commitment. He was probably closest in sympathy to the more moderate wing of the Mennonites.”

The curator of a major new exhibition of Rembrandt's late religious portraits at the National Gallery of Art in Washington concurs. “It is not necessary,” he writes, “to determine whether Rembrandt was actually a member of the Mennonite community in order to recognize his spiritual affinity to this community's basic beliefs, which centered on man's spiritual life in response to direct engagement with biblical texts.”

Rembrandt's Mennonite connection is most apparent in his painting of the Mennonite pastor Cornelis Claesz Anslo, who in addition to being a wealthy Amsterdam merchant, was also a spell-binding preacher whose sermons Rembrandt had heard as a young man when he first moved to Amsterdam.

In Rembrandt's painting the Mennonite preacher is expounding the scriptures, not to his congregation but to his wife, who appears to be sharing with him in absorbing their message. The scriptures themselves are in an elevated position to the left, bathed in a pool of light.

But Rembrandt also had strong Catholic ties. He was born in Leiden at a time when it was still a Catholic city, and his parents came from Catholic families. He would almost certainly have been baptized a Catholic, and for the first 12 years of his life lived in a predominantly Catholic culture. But then a political coup brought Calvinist Protestants to power in Leiden, and as a result his family suffered substantially. Fields believes Rembrandt was

forced to leave school just short of graduation because of it, and suggests that “Rembrandt's strong Catholic connections were perhaps something of a social and professional handicap” in the early years of his career.

What appears obvious is that the set of religious portraits Rembrandt produced in the final decade of his life have a strong Catholic flavor. These paintings have long fascinated art historians, and are the topic of the current exhibition in Washington, one that will later move to the Getty Museum in Los Angeles.

These portraits, rather than depicting persons taken directly from scripture, are predominantly persons known from tradition—the Apostles Bartholomew, Simon, James the Major and Minor; Mary the Sorrowing Virgin; a Franciscan friar; and the 7th century hermit St. Bevo.

Rembrandt's portrait of the Mennonite pastor Cornelis Claesz Anslo and his wife was painted in 1641 when the artist was 35. It now hangs in the National Museum of Berlin.



But although these paintings depict images from the Catholic tradition, they diverge rather dramatically from the way Catholic painters were depicting saints at the time. Whereas post-Reformation Catholic painting tended toward the ornate and aristocratic, Rembrandt's images show ordinary human beings, the kind one might meet on the street. In this series Rembrandt painted his self-portrait as St. Paul, and his wife as Mary the Sorrowing Virgin.

The exhibition catalog says, "The Christ Rembrandt portrayed was much the same as the one the founder of the Mennonites (Menno Simons) had envisioned—a teacher and a healer of human suffering." At least 160 of Rembrandt's paintings are of Biblical figures, and all are notable for depicting them as ordinary people, rather than as members of the aristocracy.

The curator of the current exhibition, Arthur K. Wheelock Jr. of the National Gallery, also believes *Martyrs Mirror*, the Mennonite book of martyrs, affected Rembrandt's final paintings. He notes that it was being produced by Dutch Mennonites in the late 1650s, the same years Rembrandt was beginning the series of paintings in this exhibition.

He also notes that Swiss Mennonites were under heavy persecution at the time, and that a group had been brought to Amsterdam by Dutch Mennonites. These refugees lived in the same neighborhood as Rembrandt—who had lost his mansion in Amsterdam a few years earlier when he went bankrupt. "Descriptions of these pilgrims have striking parallels with the types of individuals Rembrandt portrayed in the early 1660s," Wheelock says. "Their penitence and search for a deeper holiness in life became their distinguishing characteristics."

Much of this evidence is tentative, and will likely be modified as research continues. And many of the conclusions being drawn from it are speculative, and will likely never be completely settled. In art we are dealing with matters of the heart, which always remain hidden, at least to some degree, even from the persons involved.

But despite the uncertainty involved, those of us on the bridge can hardly ignore the significance of Rembrandt's life for our own quest.

Earlier Mennonite historians had asked, "Was Rembrandt a Mennonite?" The answer now appears to be that he was not. But that leads to two new questions: Why did an artist who was not a Mennonite have so many relationships with Mennonites? And, what did he find in these relationships that was important to him as an artist?

To those questions we in Bridgefolk would add yet others: What was Rembrandt's relationship to the Catholic faith of his childhood and youth? How did that affect his art? And how did he combine the three great religious forces that existed side by side throughout his life—the legacy of his Catholic past, his daily life in a Protestant culture, and his attraction to the deeply evangelical message of the Mennonite community?

— Ivan Kauffman

Eric Massanari

Grapes for Good Wine

I've heard it said that there is a certain winery on the Washington bank of the Colombia Gorge that is surrounded by ranks of tidy, lush vines hanging heavy with fruit at harvest time.

I've also heard it said that if you visit and ask your guide about these grapes she will tell you that they are not used for the wine you are tasting.

*They are just for show.
They are too swollen with water;
they lack flavor.*

*The real grapes,
the ones that make the best wine,
are grown miles away in more arid climes
where watering can be carefully controlled.*

*A good wine grape needs
just the right amount of water,
and just the right amount of dryness.*

*I've heard it said it works
a bit that way with you and me too.*

*There are dry times in this life.
There are also, one hopes, seasons of wetness.
And some balance of these seems to make
for the most flavorful persons.*

*And, honestly, who wants to be
an over-swollen grape-for-show
when you can be turned into the best wine!*

*Oh yes, my friend, I hear you—
these are indeed dry times—
and I feel a bit parched myself.*

*But just look at us, we're growing
ripe, sweet, and ready for the press.*

Let's become wine for this thirsty world!

**Eric Massanari is pastor of
Shalom Mennonite Church in Newton, Kansas,
and a long-time participant in Bridgefolk.**

Bridgefolk People

News about people
involved in the
Bridgefolk Movement



Drew Christiansen, associate editor of *America* magazine, the national Catholic weekly published by the Jesuits, and long-time Bridgefolk participant writes, “This year marks a turning point for me. After fourteen years working with the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops on international affairs, I am ending my formal association with the conference. I expect I’ll still be consulting and collaborating on various projects, but I am resigning my role as counselor for international affairs. I will continue my involvement with the Holy Land and the Christians of the Middle East as a journalist and editor.

“I also rejoined the environmental theology circuit, giving the Golden Lecture with climatologist Mike McCracken at Yale’s Thomas More House, and responding to another climate-change specialist Notre Dame this fall. This coming May we’ll celebrate the 10th anniversary of the National Religious Partnership for the Environment, the ecumenical umbrella group that provides support for the bishops’ environment program.”

Jason Riemer has moved from the L’Arche house near Toronto to the L’Arche house in Cape Breton, Nova Scotia. He recently married Elisabeth, also a member of the L’Arche community, who is from Germany. When they were married he changed his last name to **Grelg**. Jason has been a participant in all the Bridgefolk meetings, including the first one in 1999. The L’Arche Daybreak house in Richmond Hill, ON where he served for 5 years, is a residential home for persons with developmental difficulties, where Henri Nouwen spent several years on the staff. L’Arche is an international network of similar houses. It was founded by Jean Vanier, and has become one of the largest Catholic ecclesial movements. Jason’s new address is Jason Grelg, 3 L’Arche Lane, Whycomomagh, NS B0E 3M0.

Joetta Schlabach writes, “After four years of taking a class each semester I’ve just completed the final course in my MA in Theology program. I’ll take comprehensive exams in March and, pending a positive outcome, will graduate in May. During the summer I was able to take an 11-week leave from my job at the College of St. Catherine and do a unit of Clinical Pastor Education, working as a chaplain intern in a long-term care facility in Minneapolis. It was a wonderful experience and fulfilled the practicum requirement my degree, but it meant a summer with virtually no vacation so I was rather weary going into the fall.”

Patrick Lyman Hostetler Baggett was born Dec. 22, 2004 to **Sheri Hostetler** and her husband Jerome Baggett. Sheri is pastor of First Mennonite Church in San Francisco and a Bridgefolk board member. Patrick arrived in the world at 2:30 pm weighing 8 lb. 7 oz. In January Sheri wrote, “Patrick and parents are doing very well. At three weeks of age he and I have settled into a routine in which I get enough sleep to feel like a human being (praise be to God). I am happy to have those first few overwhelming days of caring for a newborn behind me! Patrick is beginning to follow movement with his eyes and he makes the cutest little squeaks. Yes, I’m a proud mom.”

Stan and Marlene Kropf celebrated their 40th wedding anniversary last May by going to Italy for 2½ weeks. They write, “If you ask us, we’ll tell you an embarrassing, hilarious story or two about our adventure on Italian trains—not knowing how to speak the local language was a distinct disadvantage! We enjoyed the art, churches and gardens of Florence, the food and delightful medieval hill towns of Tuscany, the dramatic beauty of the seacoast on Cinque Terre, a week with our children in a stone cottage in the Umbrian hills, and a couple days at the end in Rome—more gardens, art galleries, churches, and incomparable Italian food.”

Stan has recently been appointed director of the Midwest office of Mennonite Central Committee.

Irene Wiens a Bridgefolk participant from Winnipeg writes, “Since I have seen you I have become a candidate to become a Benedictine Oblate at the monastery just north of our city. I’ve been going to the oblate meetings for the past two years. Also, I’ve just completed a two-month sabbatical. In November I was a resident at the monastery and retreat center. December I spent at home.” She is planning to attend a Centering Prayer retreat this summer. Her new address is #3 – 220 Guelph St., Winnipeg, MB R3M 3A9.

Darrin Belousek recently announced his engagement to Paula Snyder. Darrin is a Bridgefolk participant now on the faculty at Lithuania Christian College. He writes, “During the Christmas break Paula visited from Elkhart for a few weeks. We were able to spend five days exploring churches, museums and teashops in the old town of Vilnius. We also visited the Hill of Crosses in central Lithuania, a place that expresses both Lithuanian Catholic devotion and nationalist sentiment.”

Bridgefolk In Print

Items published
by Bridgefolk,
about Bridgefolk, or of
interest to Bridgefolk.

Courier, the quarterly publication of the Mennonite World Conference, devoted much of its final 2004 issue to the International Mennonite Catholic dialogue. The story included interviews with five members of the formal dialogue, three of them Bridgefolk participants.

Msgr. John Radano, the Vatican official involved in the dialogue says, “In our study of the church, baptism and the Lord’s Supper/Eucharist we were able to see that we share much more in common than we thought. I also believe we have more in common than we thought in regard to the church and peace. We have the possibility of giving common witness in matters of peace in today’s world.”

Neal Blough, a Mennonite participant says, “What better way to discover who we are than to have representatives from various parts of the world come together and explain to other Christians who Mennonites are. This requires honesty and humility and helps us to take our own shortcomings more seriously. I know better now why I am a Mennonite and not a Catholic. But no longer can I be a Mennonite without close relationships to Catholics. We are not self-sufficient.”

Drew Christiansen, SJ, one of the Catholic dialogue members said, “This is the first dialogue (in which the Catholic Church has been involved) to look at church history as a church-dividing issue—an especially significant contribution to reconciliation among Christians. In addition, from the Catholic side the agreement on peacemaking helps accelerate a trend away from just war toward nonviolence in the social teaching ministry of Pope John Paul II.”

Helmut Harder, chair of the Mennonite delegation said, “It is not enough for several persons to encounter Catholics on the international level over five years and expect that the dialogue is over. It is crucial that the local churches seize the opportunity to advance mutual understanding of the Catholic Church locally and, if possible, enter into discussion with Catholic Christians at the local level.”

Available online at <http://www.mwc-cmm.org/Courier/2004/2004Courier4.pdf>.

Living City, the magazine of the **Focolare Movement** in North America, featured an article about Bridgefolk in its Jan. 2005 issue. Focolare is an Italian-based Catholic lay organization that promotes dialogue throughout the world. The article is entitled “Bridging the Divide: Dialogue between Mennonites and Catholics continues at international and grassroots levels” and is based on an interview with **Lois and Ivan Kauffman**. Ivan is quoted as saying, “This is a very serious dialogue, but it’s a different type of dialogue because it’s organized from the grassroots up.” Lois says, “There are many ways to reach across to other expression in order to help to round out your own. You don’t have to cross, but there is a coming together and the sharing of the gifts of the different traditions.”

Commonweal, the national Catholic bi-weekly published in New York, recently featured a long article by Peter Dula, program director for Mennonite Central Committee in Iraq. Entitled “The War in Iraq: How Catholic Conservatives Got it Wrong,” it critiques the support for the Iraq invasion provided by Fr. Richard Neuhaus and George Weigel in the Catholic journal *First Things*. Dula argues that these two leading Catholic conservative thinkers have betrayed their own just-war principles by continuing to defend the war even after it became clear the information their original judgments had been based on was mistaken. Dula cites numerous accounts of the impact the war is having on Iraqi citizens, gathered first-hand from his ten-month stay in Baghdad. Although a Mennonite, Dula bases his critique on the just war doctrine, not on pacifism. “That *First Things* was so grievously mistaken is an important but secondary issue,” he says. “The most important issue is why theologians who argued for the justice of preemptive war in Iraq have yet to give a just-war accounting of the conduct and consequences of this war.” The article appeared in the Dec. 3, 2004 issue, and is available online. [Click here](#).

Worship, the journal on liturgical matters published by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, has published a review of the Bridgefolk book *On Baptism*, which was recently published by Pandora Press. The review is by Brother Jeffrey Gros, FSC, the associate director of the Secretariat for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs of the USCCB and a Bridgefolk participant. Gros says, “The book is a fascinating resource for anyone teaching baptism or reflecting on the RCIA in the contemporary pluralistic context. It does not attempt to produce an agreed Mennonite Catholic statement on baptism and church, though it focuses the issues that will need to be discussed, clarified and resolved if such a statement is envisaged. Above all it is a rich resource for renewing the serious reflection on baptism, discipling, formation and ecclesiology in both traditions. As one author notes, there are many hints of dissertation topics that emerge in these interchanges. We can be grateful for this beginning of what undoubtedly will be a decade’s long dialogue between traditions estranged for half a millennium.”

Bridgefolk Mail

[Brenda Bellamy, a long time Bridgefolk participant, moved this fall from her home in Seattle to the ecumenical monastic community in Taizé, France. She recently sent us a long report of her first weeks there, portions of which are printed here.]

Greetings from the Burgundy countryside. We had snow a couple of days last week. But now the only white left is the animals. There are lots of white cows, white sheep, white goats and white horses. Gray doves and great blue herons add a splash of color. From the hill on which the village of Taizé sits I can see a town nestled here, a plowed field there, a patch of forest there. Things are calm—only 150 visitors this week. Last week a group of Belgians, this week a group of Czechs. And of course individuals from about 15 other countries as well.

We are now 21 in my particular house, from 11 countries, speaking 12 languages—Catholic, Protestant, Orthodox and seekers. I love it! The blessing and the challenge is not necessarily welcoming each other across those particular boundaries, but rather practicing simple respect and attentiveness in daily life.

We just had a conversation with four of us ‘permanents’ (the 80 or so of us staying a longer time), sitting in the common room, passionately seeking ways to live in communion, even when it seems impossible due to doctrine or location or apathy. One from Poland, another from Finland, another from Sweden, another from Estonia, and me. How do we honor traditions and respect one another while at the same time acting on our consciousness and the recognized need to do something about the divisions in the church? Young people talking about this! (I am the oldest at 31.) Oh that this is fostered in Bridgefolk.

Why is it so hard to find young people in the U.S. more concerned with unity than purity (in the context of the church, if the young people are in the church at all)? Maybe my question is unduly influenced by my time at Seattle Pacific University, a Free Methodist evangelical institution, and the time I

spent with some of my immigrant Pentecostal students. Is it possible to be pure and unified at the same time? In the process of unification are we purified?

I had another fascinating conversation a few weeks ago with a British sister in the Belgian order of the Sisters of St. Andrew, living in Ameungy, the village next door to Taizé. I went into a bit of my history—Methodist, Mennonite, Catholic. “So what are you?” she asked. “Mennonite Catholic,” I said. “How rich,” she answered.

This winter the big European meeting of Taizé was in Lisbon, Portugal. To get there we took the bus. Since we traveled Christmas Eve and Christmas Day, the Brothers arranged for us to stop in Burgos, Spain for midnight mass. Even though we arrived an hour late, the priest who had driven two hours from Barcelona to preside at the mass, and one of the Redemptorist priests who lived there, greeted us with truly amazing hospitality.

First the 80 of us volunteers and the two priests squeezed into the area between the pews and the altar—we sat on the floor, or course. Then we began to sing. The acoustics sent shivers up and down my spine. The 500+ year-old monastery chapel was devoid of decoration except for a statue of Mary and a statue of baby Jesus. Just white stone walls and human voices.

After mass, we were invited to the refectory, for what we thought would be a light meal. It turned out that we walked in and each place setting had a plate with 4 kinds of salami, prawns, chips, soft drinks, bread, olives on the table. Then the two men brought the ham—they looked like little boys, they were so excited to serve. Then salad, then Spanish Christmas treats. Then bubbly wine with corks that popped. Our cups overflowed. We ate and ate and laughed.

Then to thank our hosts, we sang—“Angels we have heard on high.” And the coolest thing was that we learned it from the Mennonite Hymnal! (I brought a copy with me: don’t leave home without it.) The priests sang, we sang, God sang.

Then we had to go because the bus drivers were behind schedule. It was only 2:00 AM. We were laden with food for the journey and everybody waved goodbye. Later it seemed as if it were a dream.

There was a televised mass from St. Geronimos, a medieval monastery in Lisbon. It was a big deal. The bishop was there. All the Brothers of Taizé were there. It was broadcast live in 4 countries. Lots of people were there. More on the floor than in the pews of course. We saw later on video that they decided to show Br. Roger (the leader of Taizé) receiving communion from the Bishop. (Of course there were a bunch of other non-conformists too. But I doubt the viewing audience knew it. Certainly many knew Br. Roger is Lutheran though.)

New Years Day, after the 30,000 people left who came to the meeting, we had a Catholic mass. It was in the corner of a

huge, empty exhibition hall. Everybody sat all mixed up—us ‘permanents’, the Portuguese folks who had come to help clean up, the Sisters of St. Andrews, the Brothers (without robes). As usual, we were a diverse lot—Roman Catholic, various stripes of Lutherans, other Protestants, Russian Orthodox, seekers.

Fr. Hector, a Puerto Rican from Brooklyn, presided and Br. Parfait assisted, one of the African Taizé brothers. Mass progressed. Readings in French, German, English, Polish, Portuguese. We passed the peace. Then Fr. Hector invited all those who worked for peace, prayed for peace in this new year, invited all of us as peacemakers to the table.

I happily take up the offer of thrice daily prayer here. It is often there that I remember Bridgefolk and you.

*Brenda Bellamy
Lambaréné
F – 71250 Taizé France*

This past spring, on the first Sunday of Lent, we attended Mass in a parish north of Seattle. The priest explained the parish theme for Lent to the congregation—“Companions on the Journey.”

This parish has a strong ecumenical focus, and the bread for the Eucharist was presented at the offertory by joint bread makers from this Catholic parish and the neighboring Presbyterian church.

It was a beautiful, simple ceremony. The bread makers made short statements about the institutional differences which hindered their sharing the consecrated bread together, but of also of how much they had learned from each other in the simple act of making bread together to be shared by both of their congregations in their individual communion services.

Since Eucharist is all about making the ordinary sacred, and as we reflect on the rich experiences shared at Bridgefolk, we wanted to share this story with you, in the hopes that diverse denominations might come together in the simplicity of baking bread, and eventually be led to the ultimate desire that we might “know Him in the breaking of the bread.”

*John and Barbara Berger
Sacramento, CA*

EDITORIAL

Taking the Leap

The gathering of Bridgefolk at Collegeville for our first three annual conferences has been a source of blessing for me personally, as well as for the monastic community of Saint John's Abbey. At the same time, I heartily support the decision to hold this year's gathering at a Mennonite institution. For me, this change in venue is a sign of how we have matured in understanding ourselves as partners in dialogue.

I hope and trust that Saint John's will continue to be a "home" for Bridgefolk and that we will be able to welcome you all here at regular intervals. At the same time, I believe it is important that we gather in different parts of the United States and Canada so that more people may have an opportunity to take part in our yearly exchange of gifts. It is also valuable for all of us to experience both the giving and the receiving of hospitality.

The planning committee has proposed that the 2006 conference be back at Saint John's. That is the year we begin our sesquicentennial celebration. The School of Theology is planning a larger than usual Monastic Institute for that summer to look at the phenomenon of "new religious movements" (for example, Sant'Egidio or Taizé) and the relation of these movements to the monastic tradition. Having our conference in conjunction with or alongside the 2006 Monastic Institute would provide us with an opportunity to profit from that event as well as contribute our experience to it.

I believe that the Holy Spirit is at work in our desire to heal the wounds we have inflicted on the Body of Christ and to draw us all closer together and closer to God. I look forward to continuing our sharing in the work of the Spirit at Eastern Mennonite University in July.

— Abbot John Klassen, O.S.B.

For more information
visit our website
www.Bridgefolk.net

What you can do

Last summer it was suggested
each one of us
visit a church of
the other tradition
before the meeting
this summer.

It's a wonderful way
to extend the bridge
into new places.

The Bridgefolk Board of Directors

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