

DIRECTOR'S DESK

I will again be stepping down as director in late September after 11 months as interim director. I came to Menno-Hof in October of 2001 and served for eight years with a one year break in 2009-10 year. I have been deeply blessed and nurtured in the organization of Menno-Hof. The staff, board, volunteers, donors, members and visitors have all been part of this ongoing saga.

I have just read Stuart Murray's book called *The Naked Anabaptist*. Murray is part of the Anabaptist network in England. His insightful book claims that "the Christendom era" is coming to a close. This era started with the Emperor Constantine in the 4th century as the institutional church exchanged the model of the counter culture Kingdom of God for the model of "the church triumphant and militant." Instead of Christians being persecuted as they were in the first 300 years of Christianity the Christians started persecuting and killing groups like the Muslims and Jews. The church and state worked together as theologians, church leaders and politicians made accommodations to the Gospel so that the church would remain powerful and triumphant. An example of this would be Augustine's "just war" theory. Murray states the following about the Christendom era, "Christendom seriously distorted the gospel, marginalized Jesus, and has left the churches ill equipped for mission in a post-Christendom culture."

Into this void left by Christendom's demise Murray claims that the core convictions of the Anabaptists will be most welcome for a new reforming of the church. Following are very brief summaries (page 45-6) of these convictions that will be part of the future of Christianity.

- Jesus is our example, teacher, friend, redeemer and Lord.
- Jesus is the focal point of God's revelation. We are committed to a Jesus-centered approach to the Bible.
- Separation of church and state.
- We are committed to exploring ways of being good news to the poor, powerless and persecuted.
- Churches are called to be committed communities of discipleship and mission, places of friendship, mutual accountability and multivoiced worship.
- Spirituality and economics are interconnected.
- Peace is at the heart of the gospel.

The mission of Menno-Hof will continue to be very critical as it faithfully tells the story of radical Christianity and invites people from all over the world to consider following the Prince of Peace, Jesus.

—Joseph Yoder



MENNO-HOF

AMISH-MENNONITE VISITORS' CENTER

P.O. Box 701

Shipshewana, Indiana 46565

*See and Hear
the Amish-Mennonite Story*

AN INVITATION

We invite you to help in the ministry of Menno-Hof with your tax-deductible contribution. Menno-Hof works at telling the story of how God works in people's lives, past, present and future. Your help in telling that story is greatly appreciated.

Visitors:

January–July 2010: 12,675

May 1988–July 2010: 838,360

Reunion is published quarterly to keep our friends informed of happenings at Menno-Hof. Direct questions or comments to Joseph Yoder, director, at jyoder@mennohof.org

Menno-Hof Amish-Mennonite Visitors' Center

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The Menno-Hof Newsletter

reunion

Menno-Hof Influence on Jim and Jill Wade

by Jill Wade

Everyone's faith journey is an individual experience. How each of us is led and influenced depends on the person God made us to be and the life experiences we, in our free will as humans, choose to accept and make a part of us. That includes being willing to be led and to listen to God's voice when he calls us. For my husband Jim and me, visiting Menno-Hof opened doors of understanding and an awareness about the Mennonite faith that changed our lives. But, it was the people as well as the place that opened our eyes and ears.

Jim and I both knew clearly that we believe in God. Jim's beliefs stemmed from his experience as a teenager from going to church with friends because his parents were not churching. Later, experiences he had as a Navy Medic in the Vietnam War truly showed him that God watched over him. I, Jill, also knew that there is a God and had tried going to church as an adult with friends from several different faiths, but still wondered if anyone ever actually lived the teachings of the Bible. My family did not attend worship services when I was a child. There were times when I confused human emotions for manifestations of the Word of God. There were many times that I thought that if I could only learn enough and try hard enough, I could become a good Christian and the person I longed to be. Needless to say, we both struggled with trying to be Christians in a secular world. We joined a local church in Illinois when we lived there, but it did not feel that God truly dwelt there.

In December 2003, I was asked to perform some risk management consulting work for the Lutheran church headquarters in Illinois. Part of that work entailed going through old stored library boxes to find missing insurance records. The material had been packed in some disarray and was mixed up with old library materials wherever there was unclaimed space. As I sorted and read, I ran across some readings comparing several different faiths. For some reason, I found the readings on the Mennonite beliefs compelling. Then I began to do some research on the Internet about organizations such as Mennonite Disaster Service. I told my husband about what I had learned, and he was a little puzzled by my enthusiasm, but still interested. The following summer, we made a tourist trip to Shipshewana for a few days to learn more about the Amish way of life. During our exploration, we ran across Menno-Hof and decided to take the tour. We read our way from end to end, and managed to spend almost half a day in the center. One of the people we met that day was volunteer Maurice Berkey, who spent over an hour with us just telling us about the Mennonite faith today. At his invitation, we attended church with him and his wife Cecelia at Shore Mennonite in Shipshewana. After church we stayed and asked more questions. The beliefs of non-violence, believer's baptism, and seeing so many people who truly believed in living the teachings of Jesus in a faith community

MENNO-HOF INFLUENCE

by Joseph Yoder

Two months ago I had the opportunity to meet Jill and Jim Wade. I was fascinated by their story of how God was working in their lives. I have been part of the Menno-Hof story for nine of its twenty-two years since the opening on May 4, 1988. When I started my tenure as director I was concerned that we not use the Amish to promote our self interest.

It didn't take long to understand that the average tourist does not have a very indepth understanding of who the Anabaptists are and what they stand for today. I enjoy being part of the Northern Indiana tourist community. I consider our area a great place to bring family and friends and learn an interesting part of Americana.

A unique thing that we get to do at Menno-Hof is to gently influence people in the way of Jesus. As visitors listen, read, and interact on the Menno-Hof tour they learn about a history, a lifestyle and a culture that has an incredible journey. But this journey is all about what it means to follow Jesus faithfully in life. We help people to consider this way of Jesus that goes beyond cultures, religions and national borders.

Our volunteers are trained to never tell our visitors that they are wrong in what they believe. We are truly a "crossroads of

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began to touch both Jim and I deeply. We returned home wishing to learn more, but there was no Mennonite church in our area. God was beginning to call us closer, but we did not yet understand.

Life seemed to move on, and my consulting work began to require more and more extended international travel. Because my work involved so much travel, for up to a month at a time overseas, we began considering moving to Michigan where Jim would be closer to my family and company while I was away. In July 2007, we stopped off for a few days to visit my cousin who lives in Stryker, Ohio, while on the way to look for property in Michigan. On a whim, we decided to talk with a local real estate broker about property in this area. As she told about the surrounding communities, she mentioned a little hesitantly, that Archbold is a Mennonite community. To Jim's and my total surprise, I blurted out, "That is where we are going to live; in the Mennonite community." We found out later as we talked with her while looking at property, that she was a Mennonite. God was again pulling us closer, and we were beginning to hear, but still did not understand.

Two days later we found property with the potential to start a small Business Day Retreat. This was my dream business to escape from 'Corporate America' and stop traveling so much. We closed escrow on the property August 17, 2007. I had been told by my boss that I could take my job anywhere I wanted to move, since I traveled most of the time anyway. When I told him we were moving home to our Mennonite community, he angrily recanted all of his promises. I was then sent to London to work for a month, then Buenos Aires for another month. I could not even stay home long enough to make arrangements to move. In early December I announced that I would be taking my long-overdue accrued vacation time and would not be back until after the January 1, 2008. I did not know what would happen next, but I knew that we were moving to Ohio, period! We put our house in Illinois up for sale, and on December 19 we left for Ohio. On December 21, as the moving van was pulling up our new driveway with the first load of our belongings, my mobile phone rang. It was a very large risk management firm offering me a job working with their Detroit office as a consultant with only domestic and no international travel. I just stood and cried. For the first time in many months, I prayed, to say "Thank You" to the Lord. As God began to take over and lead our lives, we were beginning to hear and understand, but it was still so new and hard to trust and believe what we were learning.

As we came to know our neighbors, we found out that nearly every one of them was Mennonite or members of the Church of the Brethren. We had not known this when we bought the property. Everyone welcomed us warmly, bringing snacks to eat, cards, good wishes, invitations to dinner, and even helping plow the snow in our driveway. They never asked if we were actually members of the Mennonite faith, they simply walked theirs and showed us the way true believers live. We heard God's voice and we saw His face in many around us who believed, prayed and lived their faith.

Wanting to help the local economy, I began developing class material to teach "small business start-up and management." Then I was introduced to members of MEDA, and told about a program in Toledo that MEDA supported providing this type of training. I joined MEDA and started a similar program in Archbold in collaboration with Northwest State Community College to teach small business skills. I knew beyond a doubt that this was my work to do. I heard God's voice clearly.

We attended Lockport Mennonite Church for nearly a year with our neighbors and friends, and came to love them for their true faith and gentle caring in community. We met wonderful people whose lives were truly led by the words of Jesus.

We wanted to know more, and so we attended Zion Mennonite in Archbold and received the same warm, open greeting and saw even more of the walk of faith of many wonderful people who truly embraced and lived the Mennonite faith. We studied with a small group selected by Sherm Kauffman, interim pastor. Jim and I were baptized into the faith and membership at Zion Mennonite Church in April 2010. This is our faith, this is our community, and these are our people. With God's blessings and calling, we have come home.

MENNO-HOF INFLUENCE ...cont. from page 1

the world." We have had many wonderful reports of God at work in the lives of our many visitors. Our task is to share our story that goes beyond clothes, buggies, food, "rumspringa" and even persecution, but reflects on following Jesus.

We are living in a "post-Christian" era in which many will be searching for an authentic Christianity that goes beyond the generic Christendom that has been prevalent since the Emperor Constantine adopted Christianity as the religion of the Roman Empire. I personally believe that Anabaptists with all their flaws and divisions have been preserved for this time in history. Can we be true witnesses to the way of Jesus in this exciting time of history?

Menno-Hof names new Executive Director



Jerry Beasley has been named the new executive director of Menno-Hof, the Amish and Mennonite information center in Shipshewana. He will officially begin his role Sept. 13, 2010, succeeding Joseph Yoder, who has been serving as part-time, interim executive director since October 2009.

Beasley grew up in Alabama, and currently resides in Middlebury, Indiana. He is recently retired from nearly 20 years in senior management positions at large regional healthcare organizations in Northern Indiana. In these roles he oversaw budgets of more than \$200 million and construction projects totaling over \$450 million. Since 2000, Beasley has served as chief executive officer of both St. Joseph Hospital in Fort Wayne and Kosciusko Community Hospital in Warsaw.

In addition to his significant management experience, Beasley has a long history with Menno-Hof as well. "Jerry was a participant in Menno-Hof's 'barn raising' over 20 years ago and, from 1999-2000, served as Manager and then Interim Executive Director of Menno-Hof," said Lovina Rutt, search committee chair. "He already has strong connections to this organization's history and operations which, combined with his deep commitment to the Anabaptist faith, uniquely qualify Jerry to guide Menno-Hof into the next phase of its development."

Beasley said he is excited about Menno-Hof because it challenges those in Anabaptist circles and beyond to follow the teachings of Jesus in new ways, like the early Anabaptists did nearly 500 years ago. "I am delighted to join the work at Menno-Hof, which presents a great story and witness to the thousands of individuals who visit each year," he said. "We are so blessed to have dedicated board members, volunteers and staff working here at Menno-Hof and I am grateful for the opportunity to join them in this powerful outreach."

"Leadership transitions are important, exciting times for organizations," said Menno-Hof board president Mark Regier of Elkhart. "We look forward to tapping Jerry's incredible management skills, his extensive experience in leading organizations and his passion for Menno-Hof's mission as we begin to shape our next 20 years of service and witness. We believe God has much in store for us."

You can now get the current issue of *Reunion* on line at www.mennohof.org. Also get our **Ponderings from the Hof**, (short meditations) and up-to-date happenings under "**What's Happening**" on our website. We welcome your response by E-mail or regular mail.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

September 12, 2010, 5 p.m.

Menno-Hof 2nd Annual Singspiration

A Cappella singing in the traditions of the Amish Church, Amish Mennonite Church, Conservative Mennonite Church and Mennonite Church USA



More than 500 people gathered for the 2009 Menno-Hof Front Porch Singspiration.



Clinton Christian High choir members gather on Amish church benches before singing at the 2009 Singspiration.

More information about leaders and special groups will be forthcoming.



Charlotte Long

Menno-Hof is pleased to announce the appointment of Charlotte Long in a new part-time position as Program and Communication Associate. For the last 13 years Charlotte worked for the Indiana-Michigan Conference of Mennonite Church USA. Her roles included bookkeeping, webmaster, member of the communication team and support to various committees.

Charlotte is married to Dave, and they are the parents of Jenson (7) and Allison (4). They attend Siloam Fellowship in Goshen, IN. A few of her varied interests are flowers, photography, garage sales, hugs from my husband and kids, and chocolate. She says, "I'm excited about this opportunity to use my gifts to further the vision and mission of Menno-Hof."