

# West Swamp News

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## MennoCon21: A few highlights

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I am embarrassed to say that MennoCon21, Mennonite USA's biennial convention, completely slipped by me this summer. It's been a while since I've attended one, but I usu-

ally try to keep up with what's going on through the convention media resources.

Fortunately, those resources are still available, and I encourage you to check them out

at <https://www.mennoniteusa.org/mennocon21-newssheet/>.

To whet your appetite, I'm including a couple articles in this newsletter.

~ *Lynne Rush*

## Glenn Guyton: 'Jesus is enough'; get ready for transformation

### MC USA leader sings 'Free Dove' to conclude MennoCon21

### FYI

- Interested in watching seminars from MennoCon21? Catch them at [MennoniteMission.net/Videos](http://MennoniteMission.net/Videos).
- The Perseid Meteor Shower happens in August. Check the sky after midnight for most of this month; the peak date is Wednesday/Thursday, August 11-12. The next night should be pretty good too.

For the second convention in a row, Mennonite Church USA executive director Glen Guyton sang his own unique version of a classic rock song to bring his message home at the final worship service.

This year it was "Free Bird" by Lynyrd Skynyrd. Guyton turned it into "Free Dove," with lyrics about the denomination's emphasis for the next two years: transformation.

"When we leave here today, church, will you

still remember me?" Guyton sang, backed by the worship band. "But if I stay here with you, church, things just couldn't be the same. 'Cause I'm free as a dove now. And this dove, it must change."

As the song ended, Guyton donned a white cape decorated with strings of lights and ran across the stage.

Guyton's message concluded the MC USA convention, held July 6-10 at Duke Energy Center in Cincinnati, with the

theme, "Bring the Peace!"

"To bring the peace, to survive, to answer the call of God, we have to change," Guyton said. "We must reject our fear, our sinful nature, worldly disputes, false purity. We must give control to God."

Guyton offered a response to those who lament change in the church: "Don't be upset that the church has changed. Be happy that the church has endured,

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## Pastor's Corner: Ordinary time

The calendar can be divided up many different ways. You can look at it as months and days, interspersed with federal holidays.

You can look at it as a cycle of sports seasons—pro basketball is just over, major league baseball is in full swing, and pro football hasn't started yet. But oh wait, we're in the midst of the Olympics.

Or you can look at it as the Christian year, divided by events like Christmas and Easter and Pentecost and seasons like Advent and Lent. Seasons of the Christian year have colors—Advent is blue and Lent is purple. The Christian year is designed as a teaching tool. Every

year we retell the story of Jesus, from his birth through his ministry to his death, resurrection and ascension.

The season we're in now is called ordinary time. It runs from after Pentecost through to the beginning of Advent. Why is it called ordinary time? Well, the rest of the year, that starts with Advent and runs through Pentecost is *extraordinary* time—so many important events.

So what is ordinary time about? Here's a clue: its color is green. Green is the color of growing things, and ordinary time is a time for spiritual growth. I want to encourage you to take some steps toward growth in ordinary

time. Take an inward step and an outward step, a step that takes you closer to God and a step that takes you closer to your neighbor. For example, for the inward step, you might read a devotional book or listen to a devotional podcast. For the outward step, now that Covid restrictions have eased in our area, you can volunteer at a food bank or at Care and Share in Souder-ton.

Like Kermit the Frog sang, it's not easy being green, but I challenge you to take some steps toward spiritual growth during ordinary time this year.

Peace,

~ *Pastor Michael*

## Worship: Time to get back to Men-O-Lan!



calendars for August 22.

Worship Commission is still planning the details of the day, so look for something in your mailboxes (both at church and emailed) in the next couple weeks.

Last year, we decided to forego our annual Sunday at Men-O-Lan, so we're very excited to announce this year's Worship at Men-O-Lan's date: mark your

Here's what we *do* know already:

- We are hoping that Solidarity & Harmony Church will join us once again.
- Worship will begin around

10:30 am.

- Lunch will be part of the festivities, of course; we'll let you know soon what we'd like you to bring.
- This year we decided to rent the pool instead of the water-slide. We hope you'll take advantage of that.
- The lake will be available for paddle boat and canoe use. We will need an adult down at the lake to be in charge of the boat key.
- It will be a fun and joyful day! Hope you can make it.

~ *Lynne Rush*

## Community: Outdoor clean-up project

Because of the damage done to the church building and grounds from the truck accident, the usual Spring Work Night was not held earlier this year. With most of the repairs completed, and the weeds taking advantage of the flowerbeds, the Community Commission organized a long-overdue clean-up project. Many thanks to the courageous weeding crew who braved thistles, vines and very warm July temperatures! Loads of mulch were then spread over the flowerbeds. Planting and grass seeding were done by a landscaper.

Special thanks to Bev Mellan, George Mellan, Jan Wieand, and Katie and Matt Mood and family for their time, hard work and dedication to make our church grounds beautiful and welcoming!

### Keeping in touch, keeping safe

The past year and a half has been difficult for all of us. It's



been a challenge keeping in touch with family and friends, including our church family.

Now that we can meet again in the church building, and vaccinations have allowed us to feel more comfortable, it's become easier for many of us to stay in touch. We encourage you to reach out to fellow members, to the extent you are able, and check in on them. Visits,



phone calls, and cards are all ways we can support each other and show Christ's love to others.

~ *Nancy Jacobs*

## The latest from Stewardship

Now in the heat of summer, here is the latest from the Stewardship Commission. All the restorations to the church building have been completed and everything looks and functions great. Also, the landscaping work has been beautifully finished by Jason Weidemann. The next Sunday you are at church for services take a minute to check out

the newly planted shrubs, flowers and grass. A special thanks to all who helped with the weeding and mulch spreading to finish everything off.

A new digital sign has been ordered and will be installed upon arrival.

The outside painting of the church will probably be done in September or October.

As for our 2021 financial standing after six months; our Treasurer reports a \$6,349 surplus on June 30. We are truly blessed and thankful to have faithful givers and stewards of God's bounties bestowed upon us.

~ *Randy Rush*  
*Moderator Deacon*

## Glenn Guyton delivers final message of MennoCon21



Mennonite Church USA executive director Glen Guyton delivers the MennoCon21 worship message July 10. — Mennonite Church USA

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even though it may look different, because we are connected to the Source.”

He said he hears many different voices across the denomination. Some liked the good old days and wonder if their voices matter anymore. Another is crying, “well I guess I have to be white and Swiss German in order to matter; why did you invite us here if you didn’t really want us?” Another says, “Why can’t we all get along?”

His message for all of them, he said, is in the words of a song he sang at the beginning of his message: “Jesus is enough.”

Guyton offered explanations for MC USA’s membership decline in its nearly 20-year history after the merger of the Mennonite Church and General Conference Mennonite Church.

“I believe our denomination is contracting for two reasons,” he said. “First is poor leadership. We have

designed leadership systems that don’t fit who we are theologically. Bureaucracy is a deadly thing. We have too many managers and seat-fillers where we need leaders with vision, compassion and roof-ripping faith.”

He was referring to a story in Mark 2 where friends brought a disabled man to Jesus by lowering him through a hole in a roof.

“We all need friends who are willing to tear some stuff up in order to get closer to God,” he said.

The second reason for contraction, he said, is that we want to control transformation, when actually God is in control.

“We’ve had some struggles since we came together as a denomination in 2001,” Guyton said. “We have numerous polarizations. We have various traditions . . . not to mention all the geographic and racial diversity.

“But the early Mennonites were so passionate and so devoted to their

faith that they shared this great Anabaptist theology with us BI-POC [Black, Indigenous and people of color] folks and many others.

“Who would have thought that if you took this rich Anabaptist tradition from the rural parts of our country to the urban centers, to the barrios, that it wouldn’t begin to change? It would transform in ways that imitated the gifts and communities that adopted this new message.”

Guyton said the church’s true power is to be the symbol of hope, restoration and community.

“We spend way too much time worrying about what we are losing rather than focusing on how we can grow and what we have to offer as the body of Christ,” he said.



~ by **Paul Shrag**, editor of **Anabaptist World**

## MennoCon21: Roosting or flying free?

When our foster daughter, Symphony, was in our care for two and a half years, I often said this to her during the tumultuous twos: “Symphony, we pick and choose how we are going to do handle things.”

To my shock, one day as I was melting down from a bad hair moment, she said, “Mommy, you know we choose and pick.”

Well, I didn't know whether to laugh because she switched around the words, or cry because she had hit the nail on the head:

***I could choose my attitude, and pick a new way to be.***

So, too, Glen Guyton, executive director of Mennonite Church USA, in his convention finale

message, called us out: we can choose to let our dove, the symbol that graces our Anabaptist documents, fly free into a Holy-Spirit led future; or, we can let that dove roost on past practices and present struggles.

He boldly proclaimed my favorite line of convention messages: “Our documents won't save us, they really won't. What will save us is a renewed focus on the lordship of Jesus Christ” and the modeling his sacrificial love toward one another.

We can choose to roost; or, we can pick a new attitude that leads to a new way of being the healing and hope of Christ in God.

We ***can roost or we can choose to*** embrace Jesus who is enough and big enough to free our souls that tend to clutch control and power, hold onto unhealed wounds, and hide idolatries of unbroken sin patterns.

We ***can be paralyzed or pick a new mode of movement:*** to launch off our agenda-laden and earthbound stages into the skies of our call to live out peace, justice and reconciliation within the infinity of God's grace.

As Glen flew across the stage in a lighted cape, I didn't know whether I should laugh, or cry. In that whimsical, wacky, and wonderful moment, our brother in Christ was modeling what it means to pick and choose Jesus above ourselves: to embrace Jesus as the eternal source of our freedom and our flight, rather than fickle illusions that risking change brings disaster.

His serious sermonizing taking flight into the playful unexpected symbolized, for me, that there is something much more dangerous than choosing transformation: choosing to chain the dove rather than to fly free, and high.



~ by **Laurie Oswald Robinson**,  
editor for Mennonite Mission  
Network



During final worship at MennoCon 21 on Saturday, July 10, Glen Guyton, executive director of Mennonite Church USA, raced across stage in a lighted cape to symbolize transformation—setting the dove (symbol of peace) free to fly high into God's future. Photo by Mennonite Church USA.

## Mission: Volunteering at Care & Share



West Swamp members volunteered a few evening hours at Care & Share on Thursday, July 15. Pictured (clockwise) are Don Rosenberger and Edna Rosenberger; Nancy and Don Jacobs; and Ann Stauffer and Marlene Stauffer.



## Mission: MCC School Kits

Thanks to all those who donated toward our school kit collection. We delivered 75 completed kits to the Menonite Resource Center in Harleysville.

(Pictured) Students at the Loreto Girls Secondary School in South Sudan excitedly receive school kits in 2019. Who knows where our 75 kits will end up!

Note for next year: We have at least 5 dozen metal pencil sharpeners left over for the next collection.

ROMANS 12:2 – DO NOT CONFORM  
TO THE PATTERN OF THIS WORLD,  
BUT BE TRANSFORMED  
BY THE RENEWING OF YOUR MIND.



THEN YOU WILL BE ABLE TO TEST AND  
APPROVE WHAT GOD'S WILL IS—  
HIS GOOD, PLEASING AND PERFECT WILL.



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Reflecting God in our  
living, loving and serving



# Birthdays

## August

- 8/2 Bonnie Kiesel  
Gary Parzych
- 8/4 David W. Green  
Ben Rush
- 8/7 Jeff Rice  
Madison Wojs

- 8/9 Marsha High  
Carl Raub
- 8/15 Anita Husvar
- 8/16 Christine Allem
- 8/20 Karen Parzych
- 8/22 Katie Mood
- 8/23 Darlene Deecher
- 8/29 Lynne Rush
- 8/31 Elizabeth Deecher

## September

- 9/1 Ashlynn Rice
- 9/2 Loretta Keiser
- 9/5 Ethan Farrell

- 9/9 Margaret Marth
- 9/10 Joslyn Kirkpatrick
- 9/15 Marlene Stauffer
- 9/16 Dana Searfass
- 9/18 Ann Stauffer
- 9/19 Doug Propst  
Alyana Riley
- 9/20 Jason Kirkpatrick  
Carolyn Rush
- 9/23 Donnie Aldinger
- 9/26 Emily Rush
- 9/27 Joan Hallman  
Blake Mininger
- 9/28 John Gwilliam

## Renewed Commitments for MC USA

### A living document for the Journey Forward process

God invites us to experience and bear witness to the belovedness of all creation. We yearn to know and share in the mystery of God's unending love. We confess that sin fragments our wholeness and strains our relationships with God, each other and the world. Confronted with the misuses of power in our lives, communities and institutions, we seek to tell the truth and repent. The Holy Spirit beckons us toward the restoration of all things in Christ. God continually calls us beloved. On this journey together, we commit to:

#### Follow Jesus

As an Anabaptist community of the living Word, we listen for God's call as we read Scripture together, guided by the Spirit. Through baptism, we commit ourselves to live faithfully as Jesus' disciples, no matter the cost.

#### Witness to God's peace

We are called to extend God's holistic peace, proclaiming Christ's redemption for the world with our lives. Through Christ, God frees the world from sin and offers reconciliation. We bear witness to this gift of peace by rejecting violence and resisting injustice in all forms, and in all places.

#### Experience transformation

The Holy Spirit dwells in and among us, transforming us to reflect God's love. Through worship, the Spirit gathers the body of Christ, where our diversity reveals God's beauty. The Spirit empowers our communities to embody the grace, joy and peace of the gospel.