

IN TOUCH



Volume 28, Number 20

October 16, 2016

*When Rory and I lived in Bolivia, a few young people crossed our path, spending a year or more serving in a variety of ways. We have kept in contact with several of them. Recently I saw this post on the Mennonite Church USA site written by Sara Mwangura, she is a sister of one of the young men that Rory helped supervise. It is under the hashtag #MENNOLOVE. Sara's message brought to mind the LoveStepPrayer that we recite on Sunday. **Lord, put someone in front of me so I will meet them with love where they are. Help me to learn from them and walk with them in a way that we can both grow closer to Christ.***

In true toddler fashion, my two-year-old daughter stood in the woods on a gorgeous Sunday North Dakota afternoon engrossed for a good 20 minutes with the dullest-looking little thing in nature — a dried up bush full of burrs. At first we worked together to stack them on top of each other and count them, but then she just wanted to make the biggest burr ball she could. So, determined to be present in the moment and not pull out my phone, bored though I was, I pondered the burrs. These passive little seeds are capable of some very active action-verb-ing.

They not only stick to whatever passes their way, but they stick aggressively and assertively — audaciously. They make their presence known and spread themselves quite wildly without ever making any sort of to-do list.

It was impressed upon me from a very young age that loving people was very important. When I started saying prayers before I slept at night, probably around age six or seven, I created a ritual of telling God who I loved. As I went through the list of family and friends, I would feel anxiety rising in my chest, thinking that I better not leave anyone out. So with a rushed discipline, I'd end my prayers with "And I love everyone in the world. And I love you God. And Jesus. Amen." Phew, that should cover it, and I could sleep peacefully knowing I'd done my loving.

But I also knew that love was more than just saying that I loved everyone. So every so often, I made my way into the closet I shared with my sister. It was a deep walk-in closet with no light. Halfway to the back, under the hanging clothes was a very large box — the doll box. This is where we kept all the dolls and stuffed animals that we did not play with on a daily basis. I would climb into that box and pull out the ones at the very bottom, the ones who had been neglected for months, maybe years. These were the ones that had matted hair and were missing an eye or a limb. And with them I would play. Phew, duty done. No one in my room felt unloved.

I think it's fair to say that I was earnest, though far from perfect, in my childhood quest to love. And as I entered high school and college, I wanted to take that love further — out of the doll box, into the world — to orphans in Russia, to people who went hungry, to the lonely and suffering. So when it came time to do a cross-cultural learning experience at Eastern Mennonite University, I chose to volunteer for an entire year in Beira, Mozambique with Serving and Learning Together (SALT), a program of Mennonite Central Committee. Here was a chance to really do some action-verb-ing.

I moved in with my host family within a week or two of arriving. And I distinctly recall the first morning I woke up there — lying in bed, on a lumpy mattress I'd just shared with one of the three teenage girls that lived there. We were complete strangers who couldn't even communicate and were sharing a bed. The morning outside the window of the apartment building was busy — people shouting, dogs barking, water dripping constantly — dirty water that had who knows what in it. And there were people begging out there, right outside my window. And here were people sleeping right next to me, people who didn't have what I have. Here was my chance for loving. "So now what?" I remember thinking. "What do I do now?"

(Continued on page 2)

Lord, put someone in front of me so I will meet them with love where they are. Help me to learn from them and walk with them in a way that we can both grow closer to Christ.

Orrville Mennonite Church
1305 West Market Street
Orrville, OH 44667

Phone: 330-682-5801

Fax: 330-682-5841

E-mail: omcjan@gmail.com

Pastor Bill Seymour

Cell—330-347-7034

Email—omcbill@gmail.com

Web Site for OMC:

www.orrvillemenno.net

Web Site for

Ohio Conference

of Mennonite Church USA:

www.ohiomennoniteconference.org



(Continued from page 1)

And it hit me then — the meaning of those sermons on the balance between being and doing. It hit me that I didn't have to make to-do lists of ways to love people. But rather, the Love of God in me is powerful enough to lead me in my loving.

Like the hooks on a burr, God's love in me will act without me having it all figured out. It will act audaciously, spreading wildly, sticking to people, making a lasting impression. Love is a verb. It is active.

But I have been freed of figuring out what that means. If I open myself to God's love, it will do the action-verb-ing, using me to be a friend, an ally, a healer, a feeder, a prophet, a cleaner, a listener, a priest, a preacher. I'll still fail that love but thankfully, that's where God's grace starts its work. And I rest freely, knowing there is a power at work greater than myself.

~ Submitted by Marcia Lewandowski, Missions Communicator

Ohio Conference Fall Mission Events—Ohio Conference will hold regional Fall Mission Events during October and November. Everyone in Ohio Conference is invited to attend the Fall Mission Event at one of three locations:

- ◆ October 11—Jubilee Mennonite Church in Bellefontaine
- ◆ October 20—Central Mennonite Church in Archbold
- ◆ November 3—Berlin Mennonite Church in Berlin

Each meeting will begin at 7 p.m. and last about an hour and a half. The meetings will include a time for brief presentations and group discussion. The first part of the meeting will focus on what has happened to far in the Ohio Conference Year of Mission. Participants will be encouraged to talk about how they God at work in their congregations. The second part of the meeting will have a "looking forward" focus, getting people ready for the March 2017 missional training event with Alan and Debra Hirsch. In addition to the mission emphasis, each meeting will include a brief time of reporting from the Ohio Conference Leadership Team. This last portion of the meeting is especially important for delegates to Annual Conference Assembly, but all participants are invited to stay for the business portion of the meeting.

Mennonite Church USA Convention 2017 is coming up July 4-8 in Orlando, with the theme "Love is a Verb." One way you can show love: Consider donating to the Convention Scholarship Fund or partnering with a congregation that can't afford to send people on its own. Learn more at <http://convention.mennoniteusa.org/registration/> or find the convention

Ohio Mennonite Relief Sale Annual Meeting—The Annual Meeting of the Ohio Mennonite Relief Sale is planned for Sunday, October 23, 2016 at 6:30 p.m. The meeting will be held at Kidron Mennonite Church Fellowship Hall at 3987 Kidron Road, Kidron. Refreshments will be served. We are grateful to God for a great sale, and we need your input to keep it successful. Come, help us evaluate the 2016 sale, and give us ideas for future sales. Thank you!

~ Ohio Mennonite Relief Sale Board

Central Christian School Announcements

- ◆ Community Service Day (CSD), Friday, October 21—Thank you for your generous support of our student service fundraiser. On October 21, over 250 students and staff will serve in more than 20 nonprofit locations, as a reminder of our calling to serve one another in love. If you have not sponsored a student for their service and want to support Central's ministry, please send contributions to Central marked: CSD 2016 or visit www.ccscomets.org to make a donation. Donations are due by November 4.
- ◆ Central Christian School's Pastor Appreciation Day: Tuesday, October 25—Pastors are invited to join us for breakfast, a chapel celebration, classroom visits and lunch with our students. RSVP to DorisR@CentralChristianSchool.org or 330.857.7311 by October 20.
- ◆ Central Christian's *Anne of Avonlea*: Friday and Saturday, November 4 and 5 at 7 pm—Don't miss the fall high school production of the drama, *Anne of Avonlea*. Purchase tickets from a junior, or at the door. Visit www.ccscomets.org for details.
- ◆ Central Christian welcomes The Steel Wheels! On Friday, November 11 at 7 pm, The Steel Wheels, an Americana Roots style band, will be in concert at CCS. Members of the band are graduates of our sister MSC schools and are establishing a national name for themselves with their high energy, excellent vocals, and instrumentals. To purchase tickets, visit www.ccscomets.org or call [330.857.7311](tel:330.857.7311).