

# Menno-Life



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This is an adaptation of an article I wrote in 2018 for a class while a student at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary. It was for a Spiritual Practice class. Even though most of this was written pre-COVID, it feels relevant yet as we explore our way into an uncertain and also hopeful future. We are in the middle of meaning making with massive technological and ecological change and everyday spiritual practice on the path with God. We are in this together.

I have been noticing a growing awareness of the interconnectedness of all things. Our world and especially our North American context is all about efficiency and achievement on an individual level and in the groups we are associated with. This is highly valued because it is assumed this will be a path for innovation and excellence and motivate everyone to be their best; to be great as we hear so much about recently. There can be no denying that this has worked in many spectacular ways in the modern era. It seems we have made unprecedented progress.

Why does there seem to be unprecedented stress, anxiety, depression, and addiction with all this progress? Are they acceptable by-products of our spectacular progress to be adapted to? Are they just problems to design programs for, or to produce a corrective drug to be able to live with it? This is the logic I feel surrounded with each day in our culture. What do we do with this?

It feels like we are on the way to a technological tower of Babel. There doesn't seem to be any prophecy that points to this possibility or a warning to turn away. We have again established a universal language and the possibilities seem endless. It was a long time ago and we just don't remember well a story that is so distant. This time it feels more like a path to chaos than endless progress. Nations are grabbing for their view of greatness. There are prophetic voices calling for more holistic understanding of our way together as living beings within the rhythm of relationship and interdependency. To me some of those voices are; Greta Thunberg, Shane Claiborne, Richard Rohr, Barbara Holmes to name a few. Certainly the voice of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. continues to call out. There are organizations such as Mennonite Disaster Service that are equally prophetic and service oriented in practice.

What are we missing? What are we not noticing? We need to keep orienting ourselves to a deep spirituality that calls the faithful to true patience, rest, and play. It seems there is another story we tend to forget. Walter Brueggemann reminds us that Moses warned the people of

Israel about not remembering. Moses was aware in his interaction with God that “prosperity breeds amnesia”. They may forget the increased quota of bricks, and the impossible production schedules required to make them, to satisfy the demands of progress. Today it is about staying ahead of the competition so that increasing prosperity is not inhibited. The covenants initiated by God were about a path with God that carried and displayed the identity of God and the people of God to the world. This was an identity of love, justice, and healthy living to be displayed within the people of God to the world. If we keep forgetting, we are in danger of living in a state of coercion that is increasingly difficult to identify and resist.

Patience, rest, and play that is deeply in touch with God’s presence opens the possibility for remembering the full story of God with us. The possibility opens up for seeing our neighbors as neighbors and not as competitors, enemies or ones to ignore. The possibility opens up to notice the natural world around us as a gift of God that is able to sustain all our neighbors as well as ourselves. “Sabbath... is a time for ‘useless’ poetry and other arts; a time to appreciate a tree, your neighbor, and yourself without doing something to them; a time to praise God as an end in itself.”

The spiritual practice of patience, rest, and play is a rule of life that goes beyond the dictionary definition of rule. It is a way of being that is life-giving, that remembers, and that trusts relationship with the fullness of God. I wonder if we have decided this is not a big deal and doesn’t take intentionality or relational integrity with God and others. It is covenantal in that God is true with us in it, and that we have to remember and stay in rhythm with it. The rhythm is not a particular rhythm but it is a consistent one that can change over time as our relationships develop over time. It may be like a waltz, jazz, hip-hop, classical, or the blues, and it needs to be embodied and lived.

Those reading this need to know I struggle with this. Being embedded in this culture of individualism and being an introvert seems to make this challenge one to consistently work at. It is about continuing to grow a reservoir of trust that God keeps initiating with me and the global faith community. At a very young age I had an experience with God that planted a seed of trust that continues to grow. I think a Sabbath rhythm of patience, rest, and play is an expression of trust that God is holding my (our) present life and future in God’s hands. As I (we) participate in this rhythm trust can grow and my (our) rest and play will be fruitful.

It feels appropriate to close with the hopeful and playful text of Proverbs 8:27-31 (New Jerusalem Bible) with God and the personified Wisdom of God delighting in the activity of creation.

“When he fixed the heavens firm, I was there,  
when he drew a circle on the surface of the deep,  
when he thickened the clouds above,  
when the sources of the deep began to swell,  
when he assigned the sea its boundaries  
-and the waters will not encroach on the shore-  
when he traced the foundations of the earth,  
I was beside the master craftsman,

delighting him day after day,  
ever at play in his presence,  
at play everywhere on his earth,  
delighting to be with the children of humanity.”  
- Tilden Edwards.

**Jeff Boehr, Interim Pastor of Pastoral Care**

Children and Youth Ministry



**Winter Retreat-** Nature weaving was an all-camp project each youth group helped with at various places around camp. Each loom was constructed with branches and twine and pieces of nature from the immediate area around the loom. And then woven into patterns and designs.



While on an afternoon nature hike, we saw a barbed wire fence that this tree grew around.



**Save the date!**  
**Bluffton Community VBS July 17-21!**

## Featured Article



My Bluffton, Ohio residence began in September, 1999. I had planned to retire there and had bought my 104 Hawthorn Court home in the spring of 1999. There was a Bauman reunion on

Campus that spring and some of us could stay there during the reunion. I rented a room at the Bluffton dorm so I wouldn't have to lie on the rugs like the others did!

I retired from my OB-GYN practice in the fall of 1999. June Shelly, my sister in law, was good enough to stay with me and helped me pack up to move from

Hazard, Kentucky. I couldn't have done it without her! My new home served me well, with no second floor upstairs, and a good basement where I had a bathroom put in before I moved in to save me steps in the future. A living area was on the north side of the basement, and the south side was for storage. There are three window outlooks on the living area. Couches and other furniture in this living area made room for company to stay. One year Art and Lisa were remodeling their home to get better electrical, gas, and heating systems, which then also included air conditioning! I used to smell gas whenever I was at their home before, but after the three months of work there, I no longer smelled gas! Part of the time I was on a long vacation with my high school class, and Art and Lisa could use the whole house. Also I was at the funeral of my best friend, Winnifred Parker, part of the time.

Many years I served on committees at First Mennonite Church, such as the Program Committee, the visitation committee which included elder members, and then I often did pruning of plants and bushes around the church. One summer I took an elder member with me to Pennsylvania when I visited my daughter Lois. She used to talk about going to see her sister. I finally decided to plan a trip with her. It worked out well as her sister picked her up from the plane station and I could go with my daughter. The trip back home went well too. I used to visit her with others until she passed away.

Gardening has always been a hobby of mine, often digging in flower beds at the house until it got too dark to see. I should have listened to my brother in law Aldon, when he told me there was a vine growing up from one of the trees on the east side of the house. I liked the red flowers of the vine, but didn't listen to it being a Trumpet Vine, an invasive vine. About 20 years later I decided I needed to have it taken away, no more beautiful flowers, leaving a large flower bed to dig deeply to remove as much as possible the deep roots, without digging the roots of the trees. The flower bed is no longer what it used to be! The spring flowers always looked good, and I often dug up flower beds, sharing a lot of the bulbs removed. The front tree was getting diseased so I had Chris Moser remove it. Two evergreens on the west side then also got diseased and I had them removed just recently. They had been pretty trees. Art worked hard to remove some huge roots from the tallest tree that had only been my height when I moved in.

After having a Meniere's attack in the Spring of 2021, I began to feel I needed to move to a retirement center and contacted Maple Crest. Fortunately a three room apartment had opened recently and I made the decision to move! May 16, 2021 I was moved by my family to my E 003 apartment! The best part is the four windows in the living/dining room looking out on to the pond to the north side where I can see the many Canada birds come and go. I have been adjusting to lunch at noon in the dining room, and have Art and Lisa bring me breakfast foods and fruit to add to my suppers. Life is simple and they take good care of you, calling you every morning around nine AM on the phone to make sure you are all right. There are many good programs to attend.

October 4<sup>th</sup>, a sunny evening, at 6PM, I was standing at the outhouse platform looking into the pond to look for fish, when I looked up across the pond at the street where the Riverbend houses are. They were completely covered and hidden by large white dense clouds in huge rolls. Then, I saw the upright rainbow positioned on the right part of the clouds, tall as a house, red to the left and purple to the right, as wide as a large window! I couldn't believe my eyes, and felt special to be seeing such a miracle! I often look for rainbows in the clouds on rainy days, but I never knew such a thing could happen! It was the biggest "sun dog", that is what they are called I found out, that I could ever imagine. That I came to Maple Crest to see such a miracle means so much to me! I wanted to show it to others, but no one was around. I didn't want to make a noise either. At the end of my path to go inside to show people only three men were standing there! By the time I got inside, the clouds were bare. It is still a special place for me!

There are many challenges and changes in moving to a retirement center but it is fortunate that I did move when I did. I developed a severe Meniere's attack January 10<sup>th</sup> which was the most severe and longest attack I have ever had. Three days I could hardly eat anything but finally got better by the end of the week. I had help whenever needed, with two bathrooms even for the three rooms I have! Family come off and on for helping me straighten out my things, and organize my filing system. I have to learn to use the IPAD for following family with contact programs for great-grandchildren, the ninth one is almost here! I pray that the Lord will continue to use me as He sees fit.

**Sincerely, Elizabeth Ruth Bauman Shelly**

**Office News**



**Thankful for my little helper!**

Thank you to all who helped with the Keith Brauen Visitation and Memorial Service. – Don Burris

Picture: Keagan Schumacher



**Who's behind the mask?** Come visit us in the office, we would love to see you!

Don, Trusty, Mark, Jeff & Carrie.

**Mark Suderman** will be out of the office February 14-20.

### **Et Cetera Shop, Inc had successful year!**

Our successful year has been possible even with shorter business hours due to Covid 19. With your help, we have been able to send \$33,000 to MCC this during 2021 and to pay down \$166,124.64 on our Et Cetera Shop mortgage. Also, artisans from developing countries around the world benefitted from your buying their fairly traded items at Ten Thousand Villages.

Watch your social media for events that combine all 3 stores like the scavenger hunt in December. Ten Thousand Villages will have an annual Valentine's Day Chocolate, Coffee, and Tea Sale which you may order from your church representative.

Did you know that all 3 stores are on Facebook and Instagram? You may also shop online for Ten Thousand Villages products at: [tenthousandvillages.com/bluffton](https://tenthousandvillages.com/bluffton). Our TTV store will receive some of the income when you shop on this site.

New volunteers are welcome at all 3 stores by contacting our managers.

Et Cetera Shop manager, Chrissy Lugibihl 419-358-4201

Book Reviews manager, Danielle Hodges 419-358-6999

Ten Thousand Villages manager, Marcie Allen 419-358-7233 or

Email: [manager.bluffton@tenthousandvillages.com](mailto:manager.bluffton@tenthousandvillages.com)