



## MAPLE GLEN MENNONITE CHURCH Grantsville, Maryland

BY TIM YODER

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### *Reflections on God's Work* – Part 4

God is at work. In 2023, the *Beacon* feature articles will seek to capture a snapshot of the ways God is working in churches across our conference. We pray that these articles encourage your faith and spur you on to join God in the work He is doing in your local congregation.

~Kelsey Jurkovich, Publication & Literature Committee

In track and field, the relay team with the fastest individuals doesn't always win the race. A less talented team can win if they focus on transitions—the passing of the baton from one person to the next. A smooth transition can shave off valuable milliseconds that can make a difference between winning and losing. To be successful in the passing of the baton, several factors need to be in place. The person receiving the baton sets up in the “fly zone,” the area before the exchange zone in which the person receiving the baton can accelerate to match the speed of the incoming runner. There is a moment where the runners are running at the same pace before the exchange occurs. The exchange must happen within the parameters of the exchange zone. When the speeds of the runners are equal, the baton is passed and the person receiving the baton sets out to run his leg of the race and to hand the baton off to the next person. A sense of relief from the teammates, coaches, and the fans prevails when a successful transition takes place. However, dropping the baton can result in disqualification, with the race being over for that team.

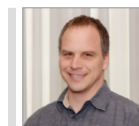
When the [baton] exchange happens, [the athletes] still run next to each other for a short period of time, but soon the exchange is complete, and the next runner is responsible for his own race.

Church leadership transition is much like a relay race. The person who is carrying the baton needs to know the right person to whom to hand it off. He needs to know the right time to hand it off. Handing it off too soon or too late can slow the progress of the baton, or worse, cause the team to be disqualified. During the exchange, there is a point where the person carrying the baton runs next to the person receiving

the baton. When the exchange happens, they still run next to each other for a short period of time, but soon the exchange is complete, and the next runner is responsible for his own race. Church leadership transitions should often have those same characteristics. There should be a time when the person set to take over leadership gets to run alongside others in church leadership. This gives them a chance to learn first-hand practical ways of leadership.

Over the years of its existence, Maple Glen (one of the founding congregations of CMC) has gone through numerous transitions, passing the baton from one generation to the next. I am currently running with the baton. I received it from Phil Moser, the previous lead pastor. He handed me the baton several years ago and has been running alongside me in the exchange zone. In August, after 38 years of faithful ministry, Phil retired and has now stopped running his portion of the leadership race.

Phil carried out the characteristics of a successful exchange. He was clear that he wanted to hand off the baton at the right moment. When he did hand off the baton, he didn't continue to hold on to it. He released it to let others run their leg of the race without interference, all along giving encouragement and cheering on the church. Though the church experienced some angst in the process, the race has gone on without too much disruption to the true goal of loving Jesus, loving His church, and spreading His glory. The baton has not been dropped. Athletes compete for temporary reward and glory, “but we do it to get a crown that will last forever” (1 Cor. 9:25b, NIV).



*Tim is lead pastor at Maple Glen Mennonite Church in Grantsville, Maryland. He is married to Londa and has four children.*



# Why Rosedale Network of Churches?



BY PRESTON YODER

What we call ourselves is not nearly as important as what Jesus calls us. Does He call us His sheep because we routinely hear His voice, trust, and obey? Does He commend us as a group of churches for obedience to His commission to go and make disciples? Does He see us as those who embody His teachings in the Sermon on the Mount? Will He recognize us as those who clothed Him when He was naked, fed Him when He was hungry, and visited Him when He was in prison? These questions are of greater importance than the question of our name. Yet, we do have a new name. Why did the ministers settle on Rosedale Network of Churches?

## 1. Why **Rosedale** Network of Churches?

Since our Bible college and mission agency accepted the word Rosedale as a descriptor many decades ago, *Rosedale* has become associated with our churches' efforts to serve our Lord Jesus together. The impact of the efforts of our churches through Rosedale Bible College (RBC) and Rosedale International (RI) has led people to associate our type of Mennonite with the word *Rosedale*. Our conference pastor and international affiliate liaison have both reported hearing people refer to CMC as "Rosedale," even while our name was "CMC." This association with the word *Rosedale* shows the fruit of our work together for the Lord. Our churches continue to send ministers to serve on the RBC and the RI Boards. We continue to send our church members as missionaries to the least reached places in the world through Rosedale International. We continue to train our young people to be Kingdom workers through Rosedale Bible College. We have alumni from RBC and RI working all over the world for the sake of the Kingdom. As Rosedale Network of Churches, our name will be synced with our mission agency and Bible college.

## 2. Why Rosedale **Network** of Churches?

The second definition of *network* accurately describes our group: "A group or system of interconnected people or things." In our history book, *Together in the Work of the Lord*, published in 2014, Nathan Yoder uses the word *network* to describe our beginnings. Our network began with informal fellowship among pastors: letter writing, visiting, and preaching in one

another's congregations. As churches discovered shared convictions, challenges, and opportunities to advance the gospel, the Conservative Amish Mennonite Conference was born. Our network formed around core beliefs that were eventually defined by Rosedale Bible College as "evangelical Anabaptism." Those convictions remain the life of our network, as our commission to *mature and multiply churches* was supported by 100% of our ministers. The life of our network comes from our common convictions, continued fellowship, and consistent work to see the Great Commission carried out. Together, we work to multiply disciples of Jesus, preparing each one to overcome evil with good.

## 3. Why Rosedale Network of Churches?

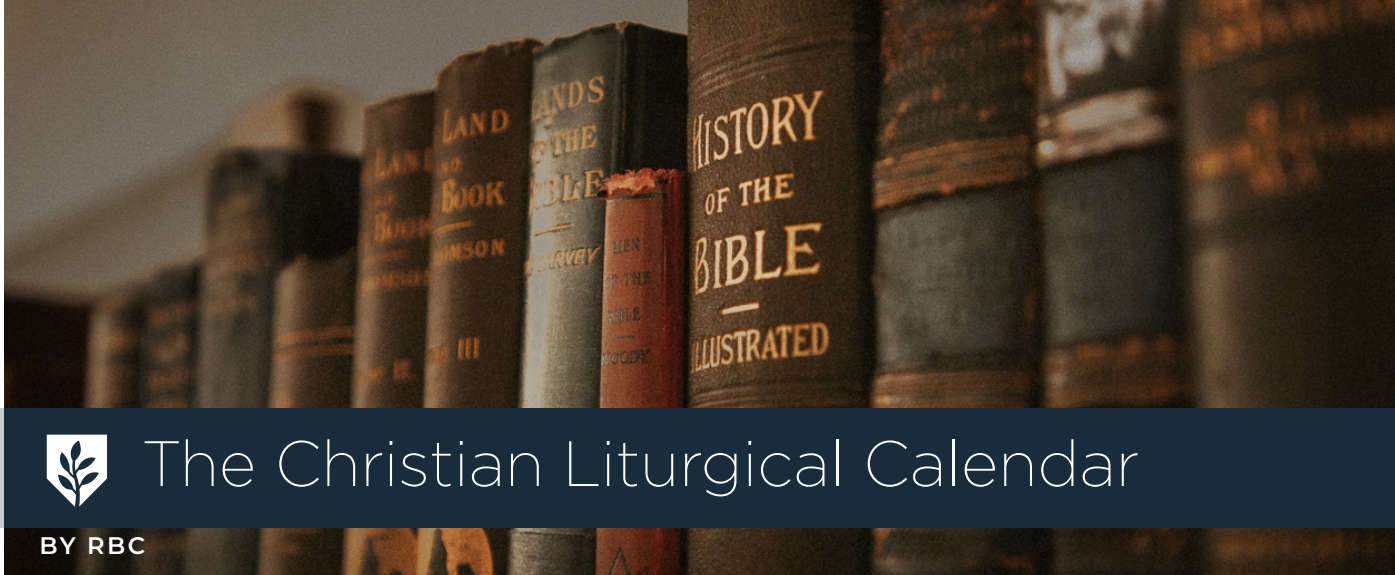
I believe that local churches are the hope of the world. When I drive to Shiloh Mennonite Church on Sunday mornings, I'm encouraged by the thought of our churches all across the country gathering for worship, prayer, preaching of the Word, and fellowship. Like the early church in Acts 2, we devote ourselves to what matters most in God's sight. The local church is where we live out our mutual commitment to submit to God's Word and urgently proclaim the gospel. The local church is where we pray, "Your Kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth (in our neighborhood!) as it is in heaven." When the Holy Spirit moves in answer to this prayer, some in our congregations reach their neighbors for Christ. We learn to disciple them in our churches. We find others go to learn and grow at Rosedale Bible College, or serve in missions through Rosedale International. Now we may find those called to reaching new neighborhoods and send them as church planters through the Rosedale Network of Churches.

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*Preston is pastor of Shiloh Mennonite Church and moderator of Rosedale Network of Churches. He and Liz serve as pastoral marriage counselors and enjoy volunteer work and outreach in their community. They have three young daughters and live in Plain City, Ohio.*





# The Christian Liturgical Calendar

BY RBC

## ***This or That?*** Part 4

***To Follow...?*** –Reuben Sairs, London, Ohio

The New Testament (NT) gives no mandate for a church calendar. In fact, Colossians 2:16-17 specifically tells us not to. When we look at the Old Testament we see holy day instructions, and the Sabbath is the primary example. The NT doesn't carry any of these forward. Older readers, though, probably remember a time when there was a more strict observance of the Lord's Day.

Like all societies, we have calendrical rites. As far as I know, all religions have special days. It's a human thing. For the most part, churches affiliated with Rosedale Network of Churches would not keep elaborate church calendars. I suppose that's typical. One writer joked about the importance of church attendance on the three high holy days: Christmas, Easter, and Mother's Day.

You probably get a bit of Advent, a Christmas service, maybe Palm Sunday, and then Easter. The rest is the most ordinary of ordinary time. Sunday after Sunday, a locked down pattern of worship is followed, we might say, religiously. I think we could do better.

Some churches will wave flags on July 4, and memorialize through advocacy armed service on Memorial Day and Veterans Day. A little less distressing, but maybe still a little suspicious, we embrace the greeting card holidays like Mother's Day, Father's Day or perhaps one of the various long weekend holidays.

We are all following calendars with special days. Whose calendar should we follow? How would developing a stronger sense of church days hurt us? It could break up stale worship routines and direct our thoughts toward a bigger faith. There are plenty of Sundays left for the usual approaches.

I would like to see us add in a few special days by having music, scripture readings, and prayer focused around the rhythm of the church calendar. We do alright by Advent and Christmas, but I wonder if the Annunciation and Epiphany could provide a focus that would help us declare vital truths that hold the stories together? Why not consider observing Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday, and Good Friday to enrich Easter? Noting Pentecost and Ascension Day would help to fill out the story of the cross.

***...Or Not To Follow?*** –Matthew Cordella-Bontrager, Lima, Ohio

When God delivered His people from slavery, He gave them a calendar of worship in the Mosaic Covenant. If Israel were righteous, keeping the covenant, Israel would have fulfilled its mission as God's priestly people: representing God among the nations; inheriting the covenant blessings.

God's prophets bring the charge that Israel is not righteous. Rather, Israel has shown its worthiness of covenant curses, and brought God's name into disrepute. But the prophets hold out hope for the future! God Himself will come to set the record straight. He will glorify Himself among the nations. God's righteous servant will bear the curse that His people deserve, in exchange for the blessing that He alone deserves.

God has done all these things in Jesus. Jesus' righteous life fulfills the Law of the Mosaic Covenant; His atoning death covers all our sins and establishes the New Covenant. In His grace, God counts the perfect righteousness of Jesus to any sinner who has faith in him. The work of Christ, not our work, secures our position before God.

The Mosaic Covenant and its calendar bear enduring witness to Jesus, foreshadowing His person and work. But if we have Jesus, we have God's substance, not His shadow! If Jesus has truly established the New Covenant, we are not bound to observe the Mosaic festivals. To impose such an observance would be apostasy: a denial of Jesus's person and work; a denial of the Good News.

If we must guard against the wrongful imposition of a calendar once given by God, how much more must we guard against the imposition of man-made calendars for the church's life? Christians must not be expected to participate in worship practices that lack clear biblical warrants for New Covenant

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RBC is the educational arm of Rosedale Network of Churches, helping students lay the groundwork for their future by providing two years of mentorship, community, and biblical education in the Anabaptist/Mennonite tradition.



# To Be a Light: A Worker Update

BY MADALYN



*The following excerpts were collected and edited from a variety of recent worker newsletters. In some cases, names and locations have been omitted or changed for security.*

## **Eugene & Katrina, Workers in the Mediterranean**

As we sat in the police station waiting to renew our visas, I struck up a conversation with the lady next to me. She started sharing her troubles with me and said that, although she is a teacher of classical Arabic, she no longer likes Islam.

We parted ways, but exchanged numbers—and a few weeks later, she came to our home. We were able to talk much more in depth together, and she asked so many questions. She has been searching and questioning for over 20 years! I shared with her what it means to follow Jesus. She confessed with her mouth that she wants to leave her old path, and that she believes Jesus died and rose again. She is on the journey with Jesus!

## **Jacob & Dani, Workers in Thailand**

We recently visited a dear friend and her family. We started talking about religion, and she commented that what she likes about Christians is that when we die, we go to be with God as His children. Our friend believes that when she dies, she will endure torture in Nakara (the Buddhist concept of hell). Another friend says she is not afraid of dying—she’s afraid of not getting to spend all her money before she dies.

As I watch these women and others live their lives trying to find hope in the things of this world, I am so thankful that Jesus called my name and I heard Him. I have hope that God will open the eyes of His children in Thailand and will give them true satisfaction. I know He loves them even more than I do!

## **Devin, Worker in West Africa**

A few months ago, Rosedale International invited me to participate in their retreat for workers in the Mediterranean. (I am the lone worker in West Africa.) I thought it was a good idea to go, but as the time before departure wound down, I was dreading the travel and having to leave my community. Despite my misgivings, I thoroughly enjoyed the retreat! We were a group of forty, including the children and a REACH team.

We had several informative sessions, times of worship together, and took time each evening for everyone to share and pray over each other. This was the first time in two years that I’ve

worshipped with other believers in English. I would not have said it was something I missed, but it felt like a cold glass of lemonade. I smile to think even now of our time together—it was like being pulled into a new family, but already feeling like you’ve known them for years.

## **Amos & Alice, Workers in the Mediterranean**

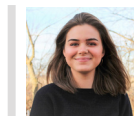
We are planning to open a new house—a place where vulnerable girls who have become pregnant can live in community and safety through the birth and early infancy of their babies, all while learning skills for useful employment. Our goal is that these mommas will be able to raise their children in dignity and community.

This new house is located in a place that we have prayed over for decades. Saints have come and gone through this city over the years, but nothing has been established. We’ve heard rumors that there might be one faithful follower in a population of almost 78,000. It is exciting to see God raising up His people to go there and plant a witness to His name in a place where He is not yet worshipped. Please keep this season of transition and foundation-laying in your prayers!

## **Brian & Noelia, Workers in Spain**

Now that we’ve returned to Spain, something we have started doing is meeting with several individuals who came to us seeking counsel. This is something we both enjoy doing—just listening to people and letting God use us through those special moments.

It’s not easy to see your brothers and sisters suffer, but that’s what Jesus is calling us to do—to be a light to those around us. It is then that Jesus meets us. In the midst of those conversations, His Spirit works through us, and He is able to do more than we can ask or imagine. He brings light and freedom. He brings care and love. He restores and heals. *What an amazing God we have*—and we are His vessels, His light, His hands and feet. It’s by faith that we can believe He will turn dark situations into a new start for His glory.



*Madalyn serves as media coordinator for Rosedale International. She lives in Columbus, Ohio, and attends Shiloh Mennonite Church.*

***Why Rosedale Network of Churches?*** *cont'd from page 2*

Our new name flows from the work we have been doing together. Our new name will serve us well in our future work together to bring others into relationship with Jesus, and live as members of His Kingdom on earth. Let's give our Great Commission work our best effort, as the return of our Lord Jesus draws closer with each passing day. May we watch for His coming, and work for His Kingdom, and one day hear Him say, "Well done, good and faithful servants."

***The Christian Liturgical Calendar*** *cont'd from page 3*

people. The church lacks authority to bind consciences to man-made festivals.

Granted, evangelical Christians commonly observe holdovers from the "Christian liturgical calendar," such as Christmas. For the most part, such voluntarily-held traditions seem innocuous or even beneficial. But once every seven years, my confidence is shaken when corporate worship on the Lord's Day is widely canceled for the private observance of Christmas!

Even when extra-biblical practices are adopted freely and discerningly, not illegitimately imposed, they will grow to fill the space they are given. Especially if these practices are well-loved, they will tend to shade out practices commended to the church by God's Word.

In my view, we have little business fostering a love of historic feasts while the Lord's Supper goes unloved among us. In corporate worship, we should dedicate our energy to those practices that God's Word commends, before emphasizing observances He does not.