



## PINEVIEW MENNONITE CHURCH VASSAR, MICHIGAN

BY MARY EDGINGTON

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### *Reflections on God's Work* – Part 8

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

Pineview Mennonite Church is a community of believers with a significant heritage in Rosedale Network of Churches. The church is located in a rural setting in southern Tuscola County, Michigan, where it was established in 1938 as a mission outreach by Pigeon River Mennonite Church. The composition of the current congregation of 40 people reflects how Pineview was started in an area lacking an established Mennonite community. Most of our church family was not raised in a Mennonite church, but the warmth and love shared by its members has made it a place where an outsider feels welcome. There is strength in the core community of believers who have been nurtured and shepherded by Pastor Roger Hazen and his wife, Sharon, at Pineview since 1999.

Pineview has a history of being a body of believers that connects people, supporting them with prayer and building relationships through Sunday morning worship, Bible studies, coffee hour conversations, service opportunities, and sharing meals together. Like many other small congregations, Pineview endured changes in the composition of our congregation because of the pandemic. In addition, we had several families with children relocate to other parts of the U.S. in a short period of time.

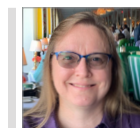
Pineview is a tight-knit group of believers. We've had the opportunity to see God's love carried out with acts of compassion, kindness, and genuine concern for one another. We've had several families lose loved ones in the past four years. In early 2021, God provided strength and comfort when our pastor's parents passed away within a few hours of each other. Bearing one another's burdens is a strength found in the body of Christ at Pineview, and it reflects the way we've been taught to bring our needs to God and to uphold one another in prayer and through genuine friendship.

Since 2021, God has enabled Pineview to be a welcoming place for several families from a neighboring community that were

searching for a place to worship where God's Word remained the foundation for teaching. This provided a much-needed boost to our congregational life. We've seen God supply our financial needs throughout the changing seasons of church life, which is very encouraging. Our members are faithful in responding generously when given the opportunity to support global missions and to meet needs within the community around us.

Recently, one of our members shared a need within the school district where he is a teacher. A family lost their home and possessions due to a house fire. On a Friday morning, a message was sent out to the congregation that we would lift a special offering for this family at the upcoming Sunday morning service. The total raised for that family was just over \$1,700.

At the present, the most important part of our congregational life is preparing for a transition in pastoral leadership. The beginning work has been done to collect input from our congregation through a survey provided by Rosedale Network, to assist with the pastoral search process. The leadership team met in July to review the results of the survey, and there will be ongoing dialogue to determine how the search will be conducted. We are convinced that God will guide our hearts and minds as we look to Him for direction and prayerfully seek pastoral candidates able to provide the ministry passion and focus needed to keep this congregation alive into the next decade of its life.



Mary and her husband, Dale, have been members at Pineview Mennonite Church since 2013. She leads a women's Bible study group, serves on Pineview's leadership team, manages the church's website, and provides solo music in worship services.



# Changing the Landscape

BY IVAN YODER

I am fascinated with landscapes and how they change over time. Natural landscapes usually change slowly, but occasionally, they may change rapidly. We often call those dramatic changes natural disasters. I personally love the landscape of the mountains in the Western United States. A few years ago, one of those landscapes I was familiar with was changed drastically by a wildfire that consumed over 30,000 acres in a few days. The year prior to that, another wildfire in the same area burned nearly 200,000 acres.

When I returned to that place, it was difficult to find anything familiar. A landscape that was once lush and filled with life was left barren and desolate. Just as natural landscapes can be changed dramatically by these occurrences, we as people can change the landscapes around us, both slowly and quickly. If you are a bit older, think back to when you were a child and how things have changed in the landscape you were familiar with. Those changes may have seemed slow or unnoticeable unless you were absent for a time.

As I have thought of the Rosedale Network of Churches' vision to *mature and multiply*, I invite us to see this as an opportunity to change the landscapes that we are familiar with, as well as those we may not yet be familiar with. To *mature and multiply* is really just a tool to accomplish the greater mandate Christ gave us to "go and make disciples" (Matt. 28:19 NIV). To see churches in every neighborhood should be an intentional effort to change the landscape of that community. So how can we begin? Sometimes, we need to remind ourselves that we have good news to share. We have an opportunity to bring hope and blessing into the burned landscapes of our communities, which will have both an immediate and an eternal impact.

"For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God" (1 Cor. 1:18).

When we multiply, we expand into those areas where Satan has brought devastation. Through the message of Jesus, we can offer hope in hopelessness. We can simply talk about what we love. I love to describe the beauty of the western mountains. I easily speak of my experiences there and how they have changed me. In a similar way, I love to talk about Jesus. My relationship with Him has changed the course of my

life; not just in this world, but for eternity.

"He is the one we proclaim, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone fully mature in Christ" (Col. 1:28).

I was recently reading a book by author Jeff Vanderstelt, *Gospel Fluency*. In his chapter relating to the good news, he makes a simple declarative statement that we as believers can sometimes forget. He states, "the gospel works, and it addresses what doesn't work." We realize that there is brokenness and darkness in our world. The gospel addresses that. Along with us talking about what we love, we also easily talk about what has worked in our lives, from fitness to home remodeling. We can start changing the landscape around us by speaking of the Jesus we love. By modeling our lives after this same Jesus, we show how the gospel has impacted our lives to those around us.

These same two things also work well within our own church communities. When we share how God has impacted our lives, and we live out the gospel in our churches, we encourage and inspire one another to deeper maturity in our individual lives and also our local churches. This can change the landscapes of our local church communities. The apostle Paul expresses a similar thought when writing to the church in Colossae: "My goal is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ" (Col. 2:2).

When we share our stories, either in our churches or communities, the landscapes can change. Sometimes, those changes may seem slow, but God can dramatically change those landscapes in short periods of time. Together, within the broader community of Rosedale Network, let's continue to be intentional about changing the landscapes God has called us to—so the world may know the good news of Jesus.



Ivan is moderator-elect of Rosedale Network of Churches and lead pastor at Locust Grove Mennonite Church. He and his wife, Pam (who serves part-time in women's ministry), are the parents of two adult children.





# When Your Church Gets Too Full

BY RBC

## ***This or That?*** Part 7

*RBC's series of Beacon articles this year showcases a wide variety of differing practices encountered among Rosedale Network congregations. We hope these articles promote thoughtful discussions and spark new ideas about the differing ways our churches are faithfully seeking to honor Christ as His Body.*

### ***Build Bigger: Greenwood Mennonite Church in Greenwood, Delaware*** –John David Swartzentruber

To build or not to build was the question we wrestled with for quite a few years. Our previous meeting house was originally built in 1947 with an addition in 1971. We were beginning to deal with issues of space and functionality, but how does a church decide whether it's time to build?

I think we all agree that the most important call of the Church is to go into all the world and make disciples. How do we sense God directing us to fulfill this command in each season of the lives of our churches?

At Greenwood Mennonite Church, we began this discernment by evaluating the effectiveness of our current ministry.

Since its founding in 1914, our church has spawned numerous other churches, but in this season, we were beginning to feel like it was increasingly difficult to effectively care for and disciple the people that God was bringing to us. While we could still seat all who attended on Sunday mornings, worshippers overflowed from the sanctuary into the balcony and side room. This fragmented seating pattern did not help build a strong sense of community.

Not only was our sanctuary getting too full, but the foyer was small, congested, and less than welcoming for people entering the church. Also, parts of the building were not accessible to handicapped people. On occasion, friends had to hoist wheelchairs up and down stair steps to make it possible for everyone present to participate in church events.

Our larger, new building is not only more welcoming and handicap accessible, but it has also created additional, unplanned opportunities to build relationships with people outside of our regular attenders. For example, the local blood bank has begun to use our new building for blood drives. It's a wonderful way that we can bless our broader community and also spread the love of Jesus.

The monthly women's sewing circle has also increased in size since we have a more suitable place to meet. Other groups,

not related to our church, are using the new facility. All these events create opportunities for us to connect with non-church members.

In the end, our new building, completed in 2021, wasn't just about making us more comfortable. We believe it's helping us become more effective in serving our broader community—and fulfilling the Great Commission.

### ***Plant Another Church: Agape Community Fellowship in Hilliard, Ohio*** –Matt Showalter

There's a sign that hangs on the back door of the auditorium at Agape Community Fellowship. It expresses an attitude that I've come to appreciate in a church. It's one of the things that drew us to the church when our family moved into the area 12 years ago. It's a simple sign that reads, "Please keep all food and drink in the sanctuary."

It's counterintuitive. Depending on the church, we have a tendency to guard our auditoriums, keeping them safe from activities other than corporate worship gatherings. Agape's auditorium is more of a multipurpose room, where we gather not just for worship, but for all sorts of other gatherings as well—many of them involving food! So we try to keep food contained to the auditorium.

From its beginning, Agape has had church planting in its DNA. It was a plant from a larger church in the area and has gone on to spawn three other churches in the past 25 years. The church budget has "church planting" as a line item. Even if there is no immediate plan to plant, Agape wants to be ready if the time seems right.

*cont'd on page 5*



*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.*



# New Life to the Desert

BY MADALYN



*Names and locations have been changed or omitted for security.*

“The desert and the parched land will be glad; the wilderness will rejoice and blossom. Like the crocus, it will burst into bloom; it will rejoice greatly and shout for joy...they will see the glory of the Lord, the splendor of our God” (Isaiah 35:1,2b NIV).

Rosedale International (RI) is excited to introduce our newest workers—Luke, Gloria, and their daughters Hope and Joanna. While they are a young couple, Luke and Gloria are no strangers to the mission field, having grown up in families deeply rooted in missions. Gloria’s family partnered with a mission organization in Asia; as a young adult, Luke participated in RI’s REACH program, serving two terms in South Africa and a third in Zambia. Since the couple married in 2019, they have felt a strong call to return overseas, specifically to “communities with little access to the story of Jesus.” In partnership with another mission organization, they recently committed to serve in East Africa, in a country where RI workers have never shared the gospel.

Luke and Gloria are passionate about bringing God’s kingdom to communities “in need of social and economic transformation.” This vision has led them to partner with an already established team in an East African country. This group of workers lives in the country’s capital city and focuses on planting churches, running a farm outside city limits, and regenerating desert land.

**“We hope to see the Kingdom of God break into people’s lives through the restoring of land, the restoring of livelihoods, and the restoring of hope.”** ~Luke and Gloria

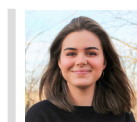
This agricultural work is a vital aspect of their ministry. “Many tribes in East Africa are nomadic herdsman whose livelihoods are closely connected to the land,” Luke explains. “Years of armed conflict and extreme drought have led to soil degradation. Making a living has become increasingly difficult for the average herdsman.” The slow work of desert regeneration will not only restore their nomadic neighbors’

way of life, but will also create opportunities to build trust and relationships with them.

This work of bringing new life to the desert is a beautiful parallel to the spiritual restoration that Luke and Gloria long to see among their neighbors. Their new home is overwhelmingly Muslim; the country’s constitution prohibits both the sharing of, and conversion to, any other religion. Christians are a minuscule group, ranging from 100 to 200 believers in the entire country. In this spiritual wasteland, Luke and Gloria “hope to see the Kingdom of God break into people’s lives through the restoring of land, the restoring of livelihoods, and the restoring of hope.”

“We are convinced that the primary way God demonstrates the goodness of His Kingdom is through His church—communities of Jesus followers living out the values of the Kingdom. With God’s help, we hope to live out these values in East Africa, and with time, to see local believers trained and disciplined to plant churches and train others in land restoration.”

Please join Rosedale International in praying for Luke, Gloria, and their daughters as they raise funds and prepare to relocate to East Africa. Pray for their family—that they would be deeply transformed by Jesus as they model the values of the gospel to their neighbors. Pray for their new home—a deeply conservative society closed off from the gospel. Pray for transformation—that as they work to bring new agricultural and spiritual life to the desert, Luke and Gloria would see the words of Isaiah ring true: “Then will the eyes of the blind be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped. Then will the lame leap like a deer, and the mute tongue shout for joy. Water will gush forth in the wilderness and streams in the desert. The burning sand will become a pool, the thirsty ground bubbling springs” (Isaiah 35: 5-7a NIV).



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



***When Your Church Gets Too Full...*** *cont'd from pg 3*

We did invest in land and a building, but if the auditorium gets full, the first impulse has always been to send people out rather than build a bigger room.

One of my favorite metaphors for the Church is the picture of a body. In his discussion about spiritual gifts in 1 Corinthians 12, Paul concludes by saying, "Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it" (v. 27 ESV). The people of the Church as a whole are Christ's body, making each of us individually a part of it.

At Agape, the practical implication of this has been to prioritize people. Agape isn't anti-building. We have a facility that meets our needs. I'm sure some would say we should put more into our facility and make sure to keep food out of our sanctuary!

We are grateful for the building that we have, but we want to keep our focus on people. What that has meant for us is that our facility can often take a backseat to the discipling and the sending out of people.