

Greater Things



Jesus said to his followers: "...if you have faith in me, you will do the same things that I am doing. You will do even greater things, now that I am going back to the Father." (John 14:12)

Arthur Mennonite Church • 710 East Park Street • Arthur, IL 61911 • (217) 543-2781 • www.arthurmennonite.org

LOSING THEIR RELIGION IN SPAIN

from Matt Lane, Minister of Administration

As most of you probably saw in the bulletin a couple of weeks ago, Jacque and I had a short trip to Barcelona, Spain recently. While it was a business trip for me, we did have a good bit of time to explore the city and had a great time doing so. Along with being a center



Sagrada Familia

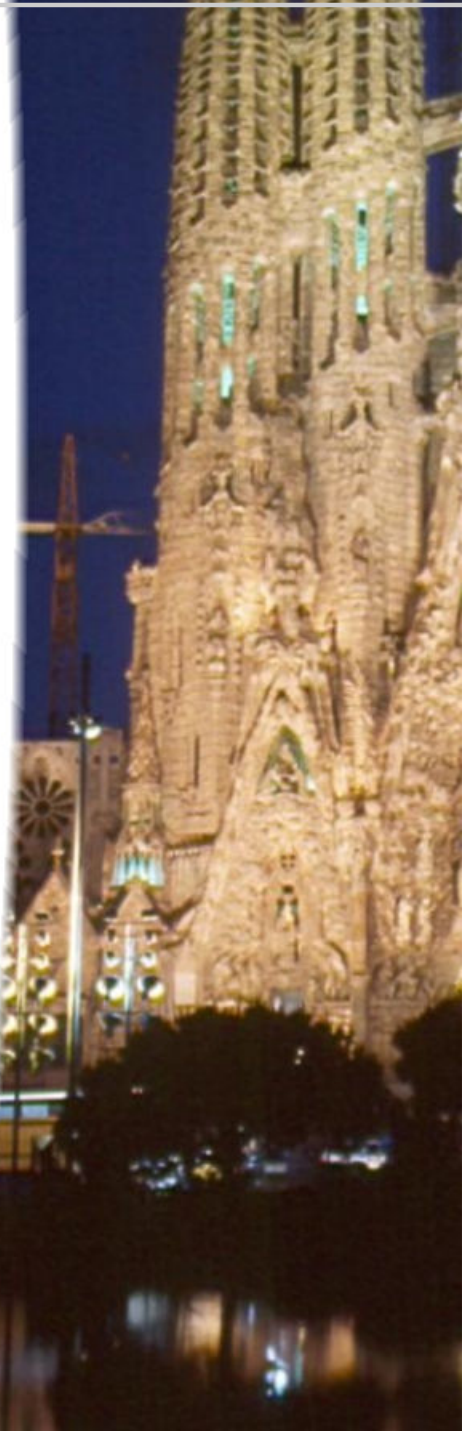
of art, architecture and fashion, Barcelona is a major business and financial center and is the 4th wealthiest in all of Europe. In addition, Barcelona has many historical tourist attractions with some dating back to before the time of Christ's birth.

Barcelona's old Gothic quarter where we spent most of our time is filled with many huge old Christian churches from medieval times and earlier. We wandered around and took pictures of most of them. (Or maybe we were lost and unknowingly kept taking pictures of the same ones over and over again?) Besides the old churches, there is a huge new cathedral *Basílica i Temple Expiatori de la Sagrada Família* (Sagrada Família for short) under construction. The Sagrada Família (which means Sacred Family) is the symbol of and most famous site in the city. It is such a huge project that it has

been under nearly constant construction since 1882 (yes 1882!) with construction now scheduled to be complete around the year 2020. We spent about 2 hours or so touring the inside and outside of the cathedral.

However, what is both interesting and disconcerting is the lack of belief in the Bible, God, the teachings of Christ and church attendance that has overtaken Spain and especially the urban prosperous areas like Barcelona. Spain is now one of the most irreligious countries in Europe. This seems a dire contrast to the long history of Spain as a bastion of Catholicism, the many old churches there and the fact that they currently have the largest church construction project in the world as the symbol of their city. After I got home, I did some research on this subject. According to the studies I found, while over 90% of Spaniards have been baptized, only about 10% of them are weekly church attendees with another 12% or so going about once a month. In addition, only 3% of Spaniards consider religion as one of their three most important values and just over 40% of Spaniards consider themselves to be atheist or agnostic. Unfortunately for Spain's future, the younger generations are even less religious than the overall Spanish average.

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CHRISTIAN RESOURCE OF THE MONTH

In past issues of this newsletter we have highlighted books and resources in our Church library. We are going to continue to do that, but in addition we are going to offer other resources that might be helpful in your spiritual growth and discipleship walk with Jesus.

Third Way Café Website

www.thirdwaycafe.com

Third Way Café was created to provide information, both history and present-day thinking from an Anabaptist viewpoint – particularly that of Mennonites. *Third Way Café* offers more than 3,000 pages of Mennonite information, audio files, video clips, essays, reviews, scriptures and conversation.



Third Way Café was launched in 1998, with a goal of “helping the church be relevant and effective in carrying out its mission using the contemporary media of the age.”

Jerry L. Holsopple, (M.Div and Ph.D), a producer at Mennonite Media (now Third Way Media) at the time, and now a professor in the visual and communications arts department at Eastern Mennonite University, led much of the early development work for *Third Way Café* (and proposed

the name), including writing code from scratch – in the days before so many available templates.

Third Way Media staff eventually decided on the following core purpose for *Third Way*:

- To inject Anabaptist Christian perspectives into society’s marketplace of ideas, providing a prophetic witness at the intersections of faith and contemporary issues
- To present content from the bias that following Jesus Christ impacts all of life and that following is often an alternative to current culture
- That *Third Way* not be a “corporate” or institutional site, but rather a ministry site with information and inspiration for the general public that interests people in Mennonite beliefs and congregations.

Randy Spaulding, pastor of Covenant Mennonite Fellowship in Sarasota, Fla., wrote: “*You are helping to dispel some of the vintage views of who Mennonites are in the 21st century.*”

Since its beginning days, *Third Way Café* has had over a million visitors; has undergone three new redesigns; added 11 additional sister sites; and staff have continued to add new content and try to keep up with the ever-changing Internet landscape.

THOUGHT AND VISION

From the Ministry Team

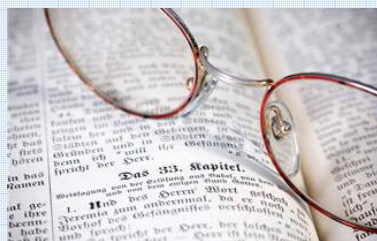
Godly discernment in the information age

from Glen Rhodes, Minister of Discipling and Community Life

In 1 Thessalonians 5:19-22 Paul says, “Do not put out the Spirit’s fire; do not treat prophecies with contempt. Test everything. Hold on to the good. Avoid every kind of evil.” In our world of instant non-stop information we need to be aware that our knowledge, worldviews, and faith can easily be shaped by worldly sources if we are not careful.

As God’s people and residents of the world we need to be informed, educated, and aware of the news, teachings, and philosophies in our midst, but we must also remember to view them in the light of God’s Word. Theologian Karl Barth once told a group of young people that they need to read both the Bible and the newspaper but they should interpret the newspaper from the Bible. In other words, we need to have a keen discernment process as we hear the many opinions, ideas, and theologies that people communicate through the news, books, magazines, internet, and other sources.

I consider myself an information junkie. I read books,



subscribe to many magazines, read the newspaper, and surf the web. Why? Not because I have to know the latest about everything that is going on, but I want to. Part of our journey of faith is to continue to ask difficult questions and discuss difficult realities with others. If we are going to be salt and light for Jesus in our communities and world then we need to know what is going, what is being

said, and what trends are shaping humanity.

It is often frustrating when someone will argue about a book and/or article and then end by saying, “well I haven’t actually read the book yet.” We can’t read every book and article but we can “stay tuned” to what is going on in our world and filter it through the words of scripture. Let’s try to do that in the days ahead! As Paul said, “Test everything,” then hold on to the good and avoid the evil and the heresy. The one key ingredient however is that we are staying in God’s Word and communicating with Jesus on a daily basis so that the true filter stays fresh. May the Lord be with you as you share His truth in an often confused and mixed up world.

LOSING THEIR RELIGION . . .

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All of this left me with a lot of questions:

- What caused this situation and what might turn it around?
- Were they ever really that religious in Spain or was church attendance mainly done as duty and to conform to societal norms?
- Did Spain's unpopular 20th century church-state dictatorship under General Francisco Franco sour people on religion and contribute to this situation?
- Will religious belief in the United States ever decline to such low levels?

When most of us think of church-state rule, we probably think back hundreds and hundreds of years to the time of the Holy Roman Empire. However for much of the 20th century (1939 to 1975), Spain had similar rule. General Franco's forces who with backing from Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy were victorious in the Spanish Civil War. Under Franco, the Catholic Church was the only religion in Spain to have legal status. No other religion was allowed to advertise its services or publish any materials. Among other things, the Spanish government paid all priests' salaries, and the Vatican gave Franco full authority over the appointments of bishops and all parish priests in Spain. Catholic religious instruction became mandatory in all public schools. In addition, divorce was outlawed along with civil marriage (i.e., outside of a Catholic church), contraception and many types of immoral sexual conduct.

In theory, these would all seem like good things in order to promote a moral and religious society. In the end, Spain ended the 20th century as one of the most irreligious and sexually open countries in the world. Sometimes it seems like maybe the best way to ruin something (even religion) is to let the government support it, take it over or get involved in it. This situation may be a good example of that. (Hopefully I'm not sounding too Tea Party-ish here!) Of course, the Anabaptists and our own Confession of Faith have had a long history of opposing this type of union of church and state so hopefully I'm on solid ground with this thought.

Or maybe the decline of true religion in Spain and most of Europe goes back much further than the 20th century. In the recent book, [The Naked Anabaptist](#), Stuart Murray writes that "Christianity" was essentially replaced by "Christendom" in the 4th century.

Whereas early Christianity revolved around everyone attempting to humbly model their individual lives around the life and teachings of Jesus, Christendom represented a cold, lifeless and formal form of public worship and was more about one's citizenship and civic duty. Christendom represented not a Christ-centered model but a worldly power structure that was brutal to anyone who opposed it whether they were Jew, Muslim, Eastern Orthodox Christian or Anabaptist.

In his book which is written largely from a European perspective, Murray writes of the efforts of many to rebuild

European Christianity from the ground up in a post-Christendom world by following practices and beliefs similar to the early Christians and to the Anabaptists of today. Murray sheds no tears over the demise of European Christendom and welcomes the opportunity to push the "reset" button and roll time back about 2,000 years. Spain is a prime example of where there is a need to re-establish Christianity after the collapse of "Christendom".

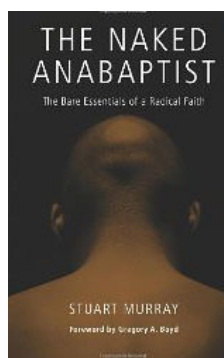


*Cathedral of Santa Eulalia
(14th century)*

It was my impression after reading [The Naked Anabaptist](#) that for all of our problems, the state of Christianity in America really bears little resemblance to the poor state of things in Europe. It is important to remember that America was largely founded by the Puritans and other Christians who came to America for religious freedom and were specifically fleeing the religious oppression and persecutions of European Christendom. Although that founding was now hundreds of years ago, that same independent spirit, passion and interest in religion is still very much alive here in a large percentage of our population so personally I'm not too worried about Christianity in America following in the ways of Spain and the rest of Europe. However, the situation in Europe is a good reminder that we must stay committed and obedient to Christ in our daily lives and pass these values on to the next generation.



*Santa Maria del Mar Church
(14th century)*



FIRSTFRUITS LIVING

Giving God Our Best

Stewardship and Attendance

	Attendance	Offering
February 27, 2011	115	\$2,274
March 6, 2011	141	\$6,622
March 13, 2011	202	\$2,473
March 20, 2011	132	\$6,695

GETTING TO KNOW:

JEFF MARNER A Personal Profile



- What is your job and what does it consist of?**
I work at Masterbrand as a finisher in the big trim department. I finish out crown moldings and corbels and large panels that are not suitable to run on one of our finishing monorails. I take fully shaped moldings from the raw to the final topcoat.
- If you could go anywhere or do anything all expenses paid, what would you do?**
Hang out at the Cardinals spring training camp for the entire spring.
- What is your favorite verse and/or book of the Bible?**
Well, my favorite book is James but there is probably one verse that intrigues me more than any other and that is 1 Thess. 5:16-18. I'm guessing Brother Lawrence (Practicing Gods Presence) drew from that verse often.
- What toppings would you choose for your pizza? What is your favorite kind of pie?**
Pie- Just about any kind but not with that flaky wonderful crust. And Pizza- Just about everything. But let's talk about Chipotle, I love their chicken fajita with hot and mild sauce and sour cream and cheese.
- Do you have a favorite book? If so, what is it?**
The Lord of the Rings by JRR Tolkien, You Can Farm by Joel Salatin, Mere Christianity by CS Lewis, Preaching by Fred Craddock
- What hobbies do you enjoy?**
I enjoy board and card games, but I'm obsessed with fantasy baseball. I probably have an unhealthy desire to win at things in general but not at all costs.
- Is there a time in your life when you have felt God's presence stronger than at any other time?**
As I walked to Oklahoma and then on to Tennessee my right knee bothered me to a point where I sat on the side of the road and nearly quit the second day into the journey. I told God that in order to be able to go on I'd either need him to heal my knee or carry me. He did both.
- Interesting Facts?**
My real name is actually Jeff. And if one of my legs had been significantly longer than the other I'd probably put my pants on one leg at a time but that's not the case so I'll still put my pants on two legs at a time more often than not.

ILLINOIS MENNONITE CONFERENCE ASSEMBLY

The Illinois Mennonite Conference Assembly will be in Cicero, Illinois from April 8-10 at Sonido de Alabanza (Sound of Praise) church. This years theme is ¡Abraza! "Embrace each other for the glory of god! Romans 15:7." Everyone is invited to attend. For more information or to register on-line visit www.illinois.mennonite.net or see the Discipling board in the foyer.

★ ★ ★ APRIL BIRTHDAYS

Ervin Yoder	April 2 nd
Sherrill Shunk	April 2 nd
Taylor Miller	April 3 rd
Chad Yoder	April 3 rd
Paul Kauffman	April 3 rd
Ryan Miller	April 4 th
Derek Rhodes	April 4 th
Alma Schrock	April 6 th
Liz Diener	April 7 th
Bill Kauffman	April 8 th
Sarah Kuhns	April 12 th
Duane Oye	April 13 th
Kasie Otto	April 15 th
Lynn Marner	April 19 th
Verna Yoder	April 23 rd
Bryce Carroll	April 23 rd
Isabella Miller	April 25 th
Dick Storm	April 26 th
Galen Tully	April 26 th
Alyssa Otto	April 29 th
Amy Diener	April 30 th

ANNIVERSARIES

Roger & Jodi Kauffman	April 3 rd
Joe & Lanora Gingerich	April 8 th
Cliff & Kathy Yoder	April 17 th

CONTACTS AND INFORMATION

Submit articles and content ideas to Melissa Schrock at 578-2522 or by email to arthurmennonite@yahoo.com

AMC Ministers:

All of Jesus' followers here at Arthur Mennonite



ARTHUR MENNONITE CHURCH MINISTRY TEAM

Administration	Matt Lane mattlane@hagerman.com 972-2861
Discipling and Community Life:	Glen Rhodes glenrhodes@yahoo.com 273-5026
Outreach:	Jeff Marner wookiee_77@hotmail.com 273-5089
Worship/Youth:	Lamar Miller lmillerpm1@yahoo.com 369-8237