

Mennonite Macedonias

We all need encouragement to follow God's call on our lives. And we need support when we accept a call that may take us far from home. We note that fewer candidates for pastoral ministry in Mennonite Church USA are willing to serve away from home. In 2002, half our pastoral candidates were open to serve congregations wherever the need arose. In 2005, only a third were open geographically, and two-thirds limited the geographic areas in which they were willing to serve. We have a waiting list for pastorates in high-density Mennonite areas and empty pulpits in regions where Mennonite population is sparse.

God is at work in areas other than where Mennonites have clustered.

Valuing spousal careers and proximity to grandparents or aged parents are understandable needs, but some candidates include limitations such as preferred weather or proximity to cities with cultural offerings. I advise candidates to think of serving a series of pastorates—and perhaps the first one can be “away from home.” During Paul's second missionary journey, he had a vision. A man of Macedonia pleaded with him saying “Come over to Macedonia and help us” (Acts 16). Paul and Silas went, convinced God had called them to proclaim the good news in a new area.

What could one learn by serving a pastorate for a season in Macedonia? That God has created beauty in all geographic areas? That we may learn to depend on God more in areas without family than with? Some surprising lessons from people who have lived out their faith in small congregations or rural areas?

Phil Rosenberger is one pastor who listened to a Macedonian call. He was born and raised in eastern Pennsylvania, where he found many opportunities for ministry as a dairy farmer, a school bus driver, a draftsman and an engineer. Phil didn't understand his call to seminary. He had “a perfect family, a perfect job and lots of opportunities to witness.” But he had confidence God had a plan, and pastoring would be a wonderful experience to God's honor and glory. Conference minister

Kathrine Rempel assisted God's call by telling him about a congregation of Native Americans in New Mexico. During the phone call, which he took at work, Phil had a special sense of God's calling.

He accepted a call to pastor Light of Life Mennonite Church in Farmington, N.M. He and his family left home, sold the family farm and moved across the country. While candidating, he took home a phone book and sent resumés to places that could use his skills. He now works four days a week at an engineering firm and pastors the rest of the time. His retired missionary in-laws have moved with the family, his wife grew up among Native Americans and the children have always been home-schooled.


There are Macedonias in Mennonite Church USA.

There are churches in need of pastors calling, “Come and help us.” Are we willing to hear?

Remember the Call Wall at Charlotte 2005? Assembly-goers posted names of people with pastoral leadership potential—180 of them (see below). If you were one of those who posted a



name, have you been in touch lately with the one you “called”? Mennonite Church USA is depending on you—not only to shoulder-tap, but also to follow up in a mentoring or sponsoring role of encouragement and discernment with your nominee. During your conversations with your nominated leader, be sure to discuss serving where the needs are most pronounced and assure the candidate of your support (email, visits, phone calls, packages) wherever they accept a call.

I pray that more Mennonites hear God's call to pastoral leadership and that their mentors support and encourage them to hear the call of those underserved Mennonite congregations who, like the Macedonians, call, “Come and help us.” 



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