

Matthew 13:31-33 Living Bible (TLB)

31-32 “The Kingdom of Heaven is like a tiny mustard seed planted in a field. It is the smallest of all seeds but becomes the largest of plants, and grows into a tree where birds can come and find shelter.”

33 He also used this example: “The Kingdom of Heaven can be compared to a woman making bread. She takes a measure of flour and mixes in the yeast until it permeates every part of the dough.”

Mateo 13:31-33 Dios Habla Hoy (DHH)

31 «El reino de los cielos es como una semilla de mostaza que un hombre siembra en su campo. 32 Es, por cierto, la más pequeña de todas las semillas; pero cuando crece, se hace más grande que las otras plantas del huerto, y llega a ser como un árbol, tan grande que las aves van y se posan en sus ramas.»

33 También les contó esta parábola: «El reino de los cielos es como la levadura que una mujer mezcla con tres medidas de harina para hacer fermentar toda la masa.»

My partner tells me that in any kind of group situation we need to pay attention to three things: inclusion, control, and affection. We need to feel included. We need to have some sense of control. And we need to know we are loved. Theologically I would say these are the principles that Paul outlined in his vision of the body of Christ with many members. Begin by assuming all members are members of one body, which is Christ - that's inclusion. All members are accountable to each other; no person or perspective may be discounted - which means that all members share control. Finally, whenever one member experiences something good or bad, the others feel and care about it - the members have affection for one another.

When I first came to Germantown Mennonite Church, there was this big debate about homosexuality going on. As a gay man, I felt uncertain about plunging into a community that was trying to decide if my existence was valid or not. It took a lot of relationship building before I began to feel included. It took me getting up and tentatively making comments and then seeing how people reacted. Were the members of Germantown Mennonite Church really willing to share control? Eventually we began to share some mutual affection for one another. Now it is my turn to extend a welcoming hand to others. I must build relationships that make folks feel included, and figure out ways to share control with newer participants. If I, and other long-time members do that, perhaps it will bear fruit in furthering genuine affection for one another.

- *Written by John Linscheid*

John Linscheid grew up in Goessel and graduated from Bethel College, where he majored in Bible and Religion. He studied for two years at The School of Theology at Claremont, California, and then transferred to Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Elkhart, Indiana, where he received his

M.Div. degree in 1980. He was the first pastor at Lawrence Mennonite Fellowship (now Peace Mennonite Church). John came out as a gay man to his family and a few friends in the late 1970s but remained publicly closeted. In 1983 he became one of the first Mennonite pastors in the United States to come out publicly. The congregation, divided on how to respond, decided to retain him as pastor on an interim basis. However, Western District Conference demanded John's ouster as a condition for continued funding. In May 1984 he left Lawrence. Although he had been approved for ordination, his coming out brought a cancellation of plans for that step. John recently married his partner of 32 years, Ken White. They live in Philadelphia and attend Germantown Mennonite Church.

Randall Spaulding served as Minister of Music, Worship and Christian Education at Bahia Vista Mennonite Church in Sarasota, Florida, from 1991-2003 and as the pastor of Covenant Mennonite Fellowship in Sarasota from 2003-2011. Southeast Mennonite Conference revoked Randall's ministerial credentials in 2009. He was the longest serving pastor in SMC, having served for 18 years. Randall was also a contributor to *Leader Magazine*, a writer for denominational Advent/Lent/Easter resources, and MCUSA national convention music/worship leader. He was Project Editor for *Sing the Journey and Sing the Story*, both supplements to *Hymnal: A Worship Book*. In 2009, Randall was appointed to the Bi-National Worship Council, which serves Mennonite Church USA and Mennonite Church Canada. MC USA leaders dismissed Randall from his position on the council in 2011. Randall graduated from Yale Divinity School in 2014. He is a ministerial candidate with the Unitarian Universalist denomination. Currently he is an attending chaplain at Yale-New Haven Hospital. Randall is married to Gary Stephens. They live in New Haven, Connecticut.

Theda Good is Pastor of Nurture and Fellowship at First Mennonite Church of Denver. She joined the pastoral team in August 2012. She is a graduate of Eastern Mennonite Seminary in Harrisonburg, Virginia, with an M.Div and concentration in Spiritual Formation/Direction. Originally from Pennsylvania, Theda graduated from Messiah College with a degree in Behavioral Science and a concentration in Family Studies. She spent two years doing short-term missions with Eastern Mennonite Missions in Italy in church planting. Theda is married to Dawn Kreider and they reside in Denver. Together they enjoy biking, hiking, skiing and home improvement projects.

Mark Rupp was recently licensed as the Pastor of Christian Formation at Columbus Mennonite Church. Originally from northwest Ohio, Mark graduated from Bluffton University and completed three years of service in the Mennonite Voluntary Service unit in Hutchinson before moving to Columbus to complete seminary. Mark received his M.Div. from Methodist Theological School in Ohio. Mark and his fiancé, Jeremy, have two kittens that happily occupy all of their free time.