

# CONNECTIONS

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2010

## THE FIRST WORD

### WEBINAR TEACHES SOCIAL MEDIA USES

Members have asked for help with understanding and using social networking tools. During the fall MHS Alliance staff engaged Ted Houser of Ninja Fast Consulting and Landis Homes CEO Larry Zook to lead a Webinar on the topic.

Feedback from more than 30 Webinar participants was very positive. There is strong interest in exploring more resources on this topic. For example, questions remain about how to convince skeptics to give social networking a try, about the kinds of staff resources needed, and how to remain compliant with HIPAA when using social media.



Another session is being planned for spring 2010. In addition, a forum will be set up to share questions and successes.

Those who missed the Webinar can sign up for a workshop at Mennonite Health Assembly on using the Web. Presenter Shannon Pipkin will explore how social media can transform communication, grow community and increase efficiency.



Mim Shirk  
Vice President

## SWEET WILL DESCRIBE WAYS CHRISTIANS CAN NAVIGATE SEAS IN 'PERFECT STORM'

Len Sweet, who will be the keynote speaker at the 2010 Mennonite Health Assembly, writes that the church is heading into a "perfect storm" of cultural forces. He believes the key question for Christians — and organizations sponsored by Christians — is whether we will sink beneath the waves or ride the winds of the Spirit.

According to Sweet, a perfect storm of cultural forces is comprised of "the tsunami of post-modernity, the hurricane of post-Christendom, and the global warming of post-scale."



Leonard Sweet

"Postmoderns feel badly burned: by science, by modernists, by the church, by philosophy," Sweet argues. "There is a loss of confidence in *both* pre-modern authority figures and modern reason. . . . Solid ground is as much a myth as the solid surface of the Earth is a myth. . . . When the sea floors move, the tsunami appears."

In regard to post-Christendom, Sweet quotes Stuart Murray: "Post-Christendom culture is 'a culture in which central features of the Christian story are unknown and churches are alien institutions whose rhythms do not normally impinge on most members of society.'" Sweet amplifies, "More people now recognize the golden arches more than the cross or the crescent. Most postmoderns don't fret over

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## ERNEST BENNETT

Ernest Bennett, 94, longtime mission administrator and father-in-law of MHS Alliance President Rick Stiffney, died Nov. 18 in Goshen, Ind. For many years, he served with Mennonite Board of Missions, the former Mennonite Health Association and as a leader with Mennonite Health Assembly. He had a lifelong passion for Mennonite outreach in health and human services.



*Ernest Bennett and his now deceased wife Earla were recognized by Mennonite Health Assembly in 1976 for his 25 years of service as executive secretary of the organization.*

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whether Christianity can get you to heaven; they want to know it will make you a better person.”

Sweet interprets post-scale reality, the third component of the perfect storm, this way: “In a post-progress world, the devil is in the scale more than the devil is in the details. There are thresholds, or tipping points, when scalability suddenly accelerates and becomes more significant. All problems are now fractal problems, at once local and global.”

Within this perfect storm, Sweet calls for leaders who can steer the church and its organizations through stormy seas. He outlines five counterintuitive ways to navigate the perfect storm:

“1. Lift anchor and put out into the deep. In times of storm, the shore is *not* safer. Jesus placed himself in the firing line of history. Sometimes he calls us to place ourselves in the firing line of history.

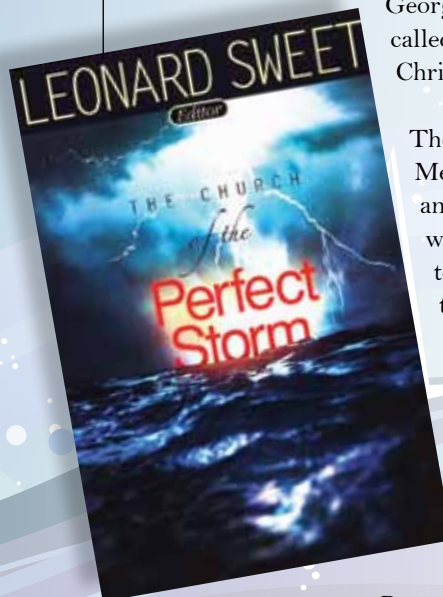
“2. Steer into the wind. . . . To turn toward the wind (but never directly *into* the wind) is to turn toward the future.

“3. Get rid of excess cargo; toss heavy burdens overboard.

“4. Lash yourself to the mast of the Master. . . . We are not captains of our own ship.

“5. Enjoy an epic ride. . . . Jesus has entered the storms of post-scale, postmodern and post-Christendom and has defeated each one of them.”

Sweet is an author, scholar, and ordained United Methodist minister who teaches at Drew Theological School and George Fox University. He has been called one of the 50 most influential Christian leaders in America.



The planners of this year’s Mennonite Health Assembly anticipate that Sweet will identify ways we can apply responses of faith to our work and organizations amid this perfect storm. Registration information for the March 4-7 assembly in Norfolk, Va., is available at [www.mhsonline.org/php/assembly/index.php](http://www.mhsonline.org/php/assembly/index.php).

(All quotes are taken from Leonard Sweet, *The Church of the Perfect Storm*, Abingdon Press, Nashville, Tenn., 2008.)

## BOARD ADOPTS VALUES AND BELIEFS STATEMENTS

With a focus on values integration, the MHS Alliance board adopted a statement of values and beliefs during its November meeting.

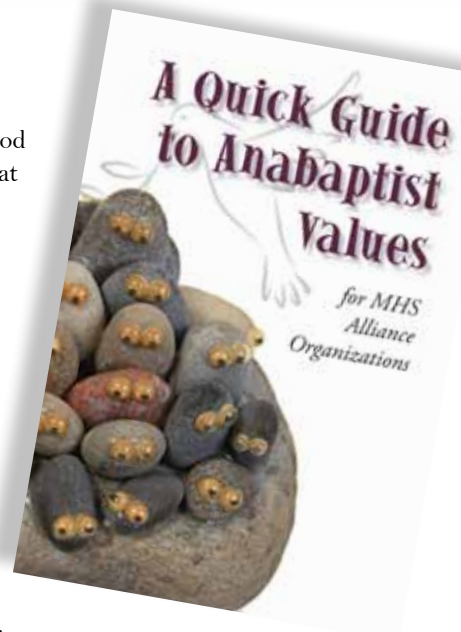
This action follows the publication of the booklet, *A Quick Guide to Anabaptist Values* and an accompanying DVD, *The Quickest Ever Guide to Anabaptists and Their Values*; the development of an online resource kit (available in January), and creation of a values-related assessment tool. Additional resources are being developed to address the role of the CEO in influencing organizational values and culture.

### MHS Alliance Values and Beliefs

- 1. Spirituality and Prayer.** God created us as physical, intellectual and spiritual beings. When our spirit is healthy we understand that even in the face of unavoidable suffering and death, all is not lost.
- 2. Community, Mutuality and Service.** God has given each person gifts which are to be used for the benefit of all. God calls us to share these gifts within our communities, serving one another in the name of Christ.
- 3. Human Dignity and Compassion for All People.** God has created human beings in God's own image and blessed each human being with an intrinsic dignity. By respecting this divine image in one another, we are able to express our love for God.
- 4. Stewardship of God's Gifts.** Everything belongs to God,

who calls us to serve as good and just stewards of all that has been entrusted to us.

- 5. Justice.** God calls us to bring the healing waters of justice to a world that is parched and suffering. Restoring health and wholeness and promoting just relationships go hand in hand.
- 6. Peace and Reconciliation.** God calls us to live in peace with all people and to bring peace to those who lives are marred by violence and discord. The truest healing environment is permeated with the peace of Christ.
- 7. Ethical Rigor.** God calls us to work within the community of faith to discern God's will, and to make the resources and support of the community of faith available to individuals and families facing difficult decisions.
- 8. Grace and Hospitality.** God always graciously welcomes and forgives us. As we create environments where all are welcome, shortcomings are acknowledged and forgiveness granted while also acting responsibly to the community as a whole, we create cultures of grace and hospitality.

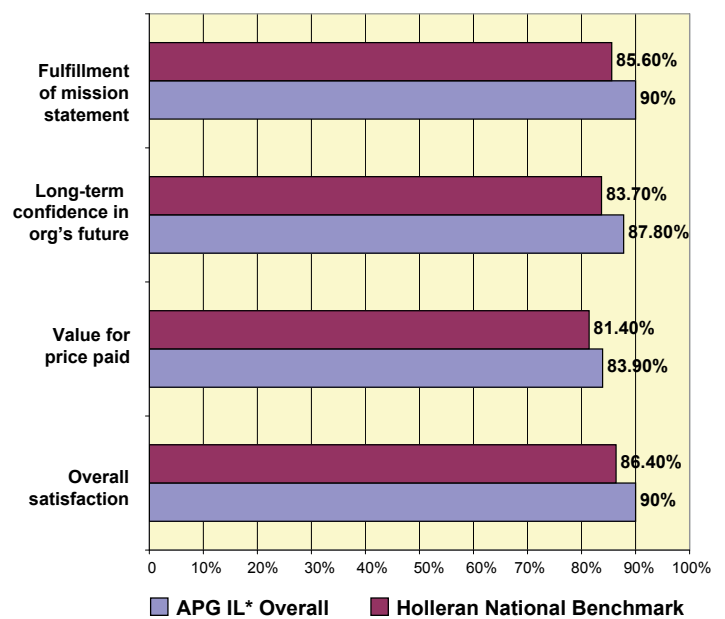


## APG RETIREMENT COMMUNITIES EXCEED NATIONAL BENCHMARKS

Retirement community members of the Anabaptist Providers Group (APG) and Sunnyside Village, Sarasota, Fla., invited independent living residents to participate in a Holleran national satisfaction survey, and the results indicate that respondents in these MHS Alliance organizations exceeded national norms on at least four dimensions.

APG survey participants indicated high satisfaction in fulfillment of mission statement, long-term confidence in the organization's future, value for price paid, and overall satisfaction. These results were above Holleran's national benchmarks that are based on a database of more than 62,000 surveys.

APG invited 4,637 residents to participate, and 3,816 completed the survey for a response rate of 82.3 percent, exceeding Holleran's average response rate of 78.6 percent.



\*Anabaptist Providers Group Independent Living

## MEMBER NEWS

Two MHS Alliance member organizations have appointed administrative leaders.



Mary Ellen Farber

**Mary Ellen Farber** began her service as chief executive officer of **Sunny Crest Homes**, Morgantown, Pa., Nov. 5. She holds advanced degrees from Eastern University and Mercy College. To connect with Sunny Crest, call 610-286-5000 or send e-mail to [sunnycrest@dejazzd.com](mailto:sunnycrest@dejazzd.com)

**Gwen Schuit** has been appointed chief executive officer of **Friendship Community**, Lititz, Pa., beginning in January. Previously, she worked as an administrator at Willow Valley Retirement Communities, Lancaster, Pa. She holds bachelor's and master's degrees from Widener University. The Friendship telephone number is 717-656-2466.



Gwen Schuit

## COMING ATTRACTIONS

### Midwest Chaplains

Jan. 20  
Goshen, Ind.

### Plains Human Resources

Feb. 17  
Hesston, Kan.

### Values-based Leadership Program Session II

Feb. 23-25  
Laurelville, Pa.

### Executive Circle

March 3-4  
Norfolk, Va.

### Mennonite Health Assembly

March 4-7, 2010  
Norfolk, Va.



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## THE LAST WORD

Self-confidence, resolve, and perseverance are generally considered important pre-requisites for executive effectiveness. Other ingredients are important too. Authors such as Collins, Covey, Greenleaf, Benefiel, Palmer, Kouzes and Posner report that truly effective CEOs are self-aware and humble and tend to reach out for support and counsel.

Anyone who knows me knows that I have no corner on humility. (At least I am self-aware!) But I have been learning the value of reaching out for counsel and peer support. I have found two types of interaction very helpful. I meet periodically with CEOs of other national associations. This inter-faith group has been an important source of professional perspective and personal support. I have also been meeting monthly with my pastor, who has training as a spiritual director. He asks essentially one simple but profound question: "Where have you been sensing God's spirit in your life and work?"

One study suggests that when CEOs are willing to interact regularly with others in a setting beyond their comfort zones, organizational performance increases. Another study of CEOs reports that peer learning groups, characterized by high trust, result in significant changed attitudes and behaviors.



I have been deeply encouraged by the feedback from participants in our first cycle of the Executive Circles program sponsored by MHS Alliance. The experience was a source of fresh perspective and much encouragement. Learn more here: <http://www.mhsonline.org/php/members/executive.php>. I encourage all executives to find settings in which to be stretched and supported.

Rick Stiffney, President and CEO