

## A Place for Shame

Have you noticed what a bad rap shame gets in our culture? Shame is linked to poor self-esteem, the failure to realize our potential and to live in positive relationships with others. I'm not interested in giving shame a place of honor, but I do wonder if we shouldn't give it some recognition.

I suppose it all started back in the garden with the description of Adam and Eve being naked and having no shame. We all long for that original state of perfection and the accompanying absence of shame, so it should be no surprise that shame doesn't have the best reputation.

But there was that one big problem—sin! And when Adam and Eve disobeyed God, an awareness of nakedness and



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accompanying shame was an immediate result. God, of course, was not surprised by their shame. No, shame was the expected result of disobedience, of sin, of failure.

And so it should be today. Our failure should be accompanied by a sense of shame, even as true guilt brings a sense of condemnation. Without a sense of shame coming from an awareness of failure and guilt, there is little appreciation for the value of God's gift in Jesus—"there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus!"

There is one area of life however, which, according to God's Word, has no room for shame. In relation to Jesus, and

the good news which he spoke and is, there should be no shame. Jesus made it clear that being ashamed of him and his message would have consequence—the Son of Man would be ashamed of that person in the presence of God and the holy angels. (Luke 9:26) Paul echoes the thought in Romans 1:16: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ...."

Shame has a proper place in relation to sin; it is the natural result of failure. The Good News is that Jesus' death offers forgiveness for our sin and failure, his resurrection gives victory over the power of sin in our continuing life here on earth, and his ascension gives hope for future full salvation in the new heaven and new earth. Now that is a message for which we need have no shame!

## CONFERRING

## Strategic Visioning Advisory Team

You may have heard the adage "The greatest danger for most of us is not that our aim is too high and we miss it, but that it is too low and we reach it." That is the challenge of setting goals.

We live in a rapidly changing world and much of the change is beyond our control. That is the challenge of attaining goals.

What does God wish to accomplish through CMC in the coming years? The CMC Executive Board has appointed a group of people to dream about the future of CMC. Debbie Diller Hochstedler represents the younger generation, Paul Kurtz brings the perspective of Rosedale Mennonite Missions, Laban and Mary Ann Miller are active laypersons, Dan Ziegler represents Rosedale Bible College, Brian Hershberger is a senior pastor and Executive Board member, and I will bring the perspective of conference minister and general secretary.

To lead the team, the Executive Board went outside CMC, but not too far. Jon Byler grew up in CMC but now serves as the international coordinator for Global LEAD Alliance. Prior to that he lived and worked in Kenya, where he developed the Leadership Training Institute. His passion is to see leadership

training programs developed around the world. Jon has authored several books on that topic, including *The Art of Christian Leadership*, which was recently reviewed in the Beacon. Jon is married to Loice and they have three children. They make their home in Lancaster, Pennsylvania.

This Strategic Visioning Advisory Team (SVAT) has begun to meet and seems actively engaged in the task. The name of the team is descriptive of its work. Strategic implies the carrying out of plans, visioning refers to dreaming about the future, advisory limits the power of the group, and team suggests working together. The work of the team will be reviewed by the Executive Board and eventually by the ministers of CMC.

The mission statement of CMC reads, "The Conservative Mennonite Conference (CMC) exists to glorify God by equipping leaders and congregations for worship, teaching, fellowship, service, and making disciples. To accomplish this, CMC provides resources with an evangelical, Anabaptist, and conservative theological orientation to members and affiliates." This statement does not facilitate strong visionary lead-

ership from the conference. SVAT's goal is to move beyond the generalities of this statement and suggest specific ways this mission can be accomplished.

In a review of the conference, the team noted the strong view of scriptural authority, sense of community, support of missions, warm piety, home-grown leadership, and congregational autonomy. This has created an incubator in which young leaders have flourished. The team noted, as well, that the quality of youth coming through RBC and RMM is exceptional. On the downside, the team observed that we are losing people and congregations to resource-rich denominations.

I'm excited about how God has brought together this seasoned and skilled group of leaders and thinkers, and I believe that, under the leading of the Holy Spirit, the Strategic Visioning Advisory Team can be an important tool to mobilize the strengths of CMC into additional ministries that bring people to a devoted relationship with Jesus.



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