Anabaptist Youth Ministry Revisited: Going Beyond the Programming

Introduction

In the Anabaptist tradition, much of the youth ministry is practiced by individuals with little or no theological training. Even if they have the training, many are overwhelmed by the implementation of one activity after another and do not feel like they have adequate time to think theologically about why they do what they do in ministry. Even if those who work full-time in youth ministry had the time to do some serious theological reflection, do they integrate with integrity that theology into their youth ministry? The temptation is to resort to doing what works and to think later about whether that was theologically appropriate and consistent with their Anabaptist framework. Regardless of whether they feel they have the time or not, youth workers must take the time to think theologically about why they believe what they believe and then implement that thought into their ongoing ministry practice. The orthopraxy of the ministering person is essential in order to be faithful to the gospel as it applies to all areas of life.

The concern that our practice of youth ministry matches an articulated Anabaptist theology should be the concern of all Anabaptist-Mennonite Christians. The purpose of this paper is to explore the key components of a youth ministry that make it distinctly Anabaptist in its orientation. The three distinct foci of an Anabaptist youth ministry will include a particular understanding of discipleship, commitment to life in community, and the rejection of violence in any form.

Recent Attempts at Articulating an Anabaptist Youth Ministry Vision

Intentional efforts have been made in recent years to articulate a theology of youth ministry, but it has often been done in a generic enough fashion so as to appeal to a wider audience.[i] A more recent example of this theological articulation can be seen in an issue of *Youthworker Journal* where the theme of the issue was "theology." As Kenda Creasy Dean notes, "Practical theology studies that messy

arena of human action, where our practices embody our deepest convictions about God (Dean, 2005, p. 25)." This particular journal has a wide ecumenical readership, so one may be left wondering how possible it would really be in that context to articulate with passion one's deepest convictions. For instance, in the context of this journal's readership, how free would someone be to state that the deepest convictions one holds for a theology of youth ministry must include an element of the rejection of violence? Such an assertion would likely generate numerous letters to the editor from military veterans who are serving in full-time youth ministry positions.

Leaders of Anabaptist-Mennonite youth ministries have been hungry for practical help in their ministries and have digested popular "how-to" resources but often at the expense of not being intentional in their development of an approach to youth ministry that considers the theological roots of Anabaptism. Another way of asking the question about theological influences from outside the Anabaptist-Mennonite tradition would be to articulate a question as Bob Yoder, campus pastor and youth ministry educator at Goshen College has articulated it: "Will the 'how-to' practical books published by non-denominational businesses such as Youth Specialties and Group continue to theologically influence our adult leaders?" (Yoder, 2005, p. 29). Anabaptist educator Gareth Brandt has raised the question of whether an Anabaptist theology has been articulated well enough, or if articulated, whether it has been shared widely in the growing field of youth ministry (Brandt, 2002, p. 26).

An attempt to understand youth ministry from an Anabaptist perspective was done by Lavon Welty in 1988 in his book, *Blueprint for Congregational Youth Ministry.* As he says, the book is "an effort to develop a broad framework for youth ministry in congregations that have a particular understanding of faith, that of a 'believers' church' perspective (Welty, 1988, p. iii)." The book was a project of the Integrated Congregational youth Ministry Council, a group of youth workers from the Church of the

Brethren, General Conference Mennonite Church, and the Mennonite Church, the latter two entities of which today form what is now called Mennonite Church USA.

The conceptual model for youth ministry developed by Welty would align closely with the inclusive-congregational approach advocated by Malan Nel (Senter, 2001). As Nel describes it, "youth ministry is part of a comprehensive ministry of the congregation…it is an integral part of the congregational whole, in that the whole is never complete without youth ministry (Senter, 2001, p. 4)." Welty describes youth ministry from an Anabaptist perspective as being congregationally-focused. Often the only deliberate context for youth ministry is the "youth group," setting the stage for the development of a parallel congregation, leaving the youth sponsors with the responsibility to communicate with the rest of the congregation and to be the bridge between the two (Welty, 1988, p. 2). Youth ministry should be an integral part of the congregation's ministry as a whole.

Welty presents a model where seven settings within the congregation are identified to ensure a comprehensive and intentional interaction between adults and youth. An attempt is made to include youth in congregational life and to develop a consortium of adult mentors for youth across a broad intergenerational spectrum. The seven intentional settings suggested include worship, family life, Sunday school, youth group, catechism, mentoring relationships, and peer ministries. Some of these settings all congregations already have in place, but others could be initiated as it seems realistically possible.

Although one can affirm the attempts and hard work of Welty to articulate an Anabaptist understanding of doing youth ministry, the critique of his work in this paper is based on his theology and also his practical implications of it for a model for youth ministry. Welty's theology does not seem to offer anything radically different from what other theological traditions would or might say about what drives and directs their ministries. His three foundational theological principles of "God is Creator," "God through Christ provides the way of salvation," and "God continues to be present in the Holy

Spirit," does not appear to differ much from the rest of Christendom (Welty, 1988, pp. 51-61). The closest he comes to being distinctive would be his use of the phrase "reconciliation between enemies," but even then he does not spell out what he means by that, and as it is, it certainly would not be anything different than what most, if not all, Christian traditions would desire and long for. Welty's practical implications also give no distinctive mark of an Anabaptist approach to youth ministry. There is nothing programmatically present in his seven intentional settings that would set apart his model as something distinctively Anabaptist when it is viewed by anyone outside of the tradition. Of the three foci necessary for an Anabaptist youth ministry I mentioned in the beginning of my paper and to be expounded on later, the clearest connection Welty makes is with the concept of community. His programmatic suggestions rely heavily on the necessity of the faith community to work together in the nurture of youth, but clear goals in discipleship are unclear and lacking, and the concept of peace and nonviolence is only given brief lip-service.

Building on Welty's work, Carol Duerksen published a book in 2001 titled *Building Together: Developing Your Blueprint for Congregational Youth Ministry.* One of the new ideas offered in this book is that the seven settings offered by Welty should really be eleven. Duerksen adds camps, conventions and conferences, service and mission opportunities, and spiritual practices as also being settings where youth ministry happens and the congregation has a role (Duerksen, 2001, p. 60). Her contributions to the discussion are in the areas of programmatic implications and in looking at the big picture. She enlarges the conception of the community of faith to include the settings in which a number of churches can cooperatively provide opportunities for their youth. She also recognizes the surge of interest in ancient spiritual practices and the need for youth to connect with God through prayer, fasting, silence, and meditation (Duerksen, 2001, pp. 74-75).

Duerksen offers minimal theological formulations of this ministry with youth, in fact, her book includes only four pages of theological reflection. However, most significant of what she offers in this

area is under the heading, “God empowers Christians to reveal God’s saving purposes to the world (Duerksen, 2001, p. 38).” This is actually her fourth theological principle, the previous three being identical to Welty’s. Although she is not explicitly stating it, she is implying the need for Anabaptist theology to be missional. Duerksen’s fourth theological principle characterizes a dynamic witness being evident through holy living, compassion, unity, reconciliation and peace, and sharing our stories. The compassion of the Christian community is a reflection of God’s love for the world. The image of God is reflected as Christians function together in unity and love. God’s reign is witnessed to through expressions of peace and justice “when we show reconciling love to a society marked by alienation and violence (Duerksen, 2001, p. 40).” With the addition of this fourth theological principle, Duerksen comes a little closer to my three suggested foci by making the need for peace and nonviolence more prominent. Although there is nothing inherent in her programmatic implications that flesh out what that means practically, her suggestion of service and mission is intended for that purpose. But again, like Welty’s paradigm, there is nothing programmatic that would suggest a distinctive Anabaptist approach to youth ministry. Although her inclusion of service and mission opportunities as an additional setting is intended to include peacemaking action, on the surface level anyone outside of the Anabaptist tradition would not view it as being anything different.

The most recent attempt to construct an Anabaptist-Mennonite theology of youth ministry was done by Wendell Loewen in his book, *Beyond Me,* published in 2008. Although certainly informed by his Anabaptist-Mennonite foundations, Loewen tries to attract a wider readership by framing his theological approach around the premise of inviting youth to participate in God’s counter-narrative to what the world has to offer. The reality of today’s postmodern youth is that they live in a world where there is a seduction towards consumerism and a culture of abandonment by adults. The “reign of God as a counter-narrative” frames a new reality waiting to break forth where the adolescent narrative, informed from the postmodern context, is re-scripted to be in alignment with God’s kingdom purposes.

This counter-narrative invites youth to participate in God's unfolding story, to find a connection with and be affirmed by the faith community, acquire a transformed identity that is part of a contrast culture, and also to be strengthened by a sense of purpose in a contrast vision of an unfolding future (Loewen, 2008, pp. 98-110).

Loewen has much to offer to the discussion of an Anabaptist-Mennonite theology of youth ministry. He is to be commended for paying close attention to what has been suggested above as the three foci of an Anabaptist-Mennonite youth ministry: discipleship, community, and peace and nonviolence. Clearly stated is that the reign of God is composed of transformed followers of Jesus (discipleship), is reliant on the community of faith for a sense of identity and belonging as a countercultural entity (community), and responds non-violently to enemies through acts of loving service. My concern with his work is that he never gets specific enough about which story of the reign of God that he believes we should own. Distinctive features of Christian discipleship are never pinpointed, nor are the distinctive marks of a community of faith involved in this reign. For instance, a key component of faithful Anabaptist witness is the refusal to take up arms in service to one's country through military service. Loewen never directly addresses this issue, which would seem paramount as a goal in discipleship for youth. Much of the language that he uses regarding the reign of God is certainly countercultural to the non-Christian culture, but does what he espouses put Anabaptism as countercultural to the rest of Christian culture? The roots of Anabaptism are born out a countercultural movement that put it at odds with the "Christian" culture of its day. An Anabaptist-Mennonite youth ministry should be explicit as to how it differs from the rest of Christendom to be true to its roots.

Anabaptist-Mennonite Theological Considerations

Since few if any distinctively Anabaptist theologies of youth ministry have been published, recent attempts to summarize Anabaptist theological distinctives may provide a better resource for

developing an Anabaptist theology of youth ministry. Recent attempts by modern theologians to articulate an Anabaptist theology are based on what can be learned from the early Anabaptists. The early Anabaptists were often more concerned about survival amidst persecution than making sure their beliefs were put into print, so they did not always leave clear theological trails as to their assertions about key fundamental tenets they may have shared with broader Christendom. The earliest known attempt to put into writing the beliefs of the early Anabaptists was undertaken by Michael Sattler in 1527. Seven articles were adopted by a secret synod, sometimes known as the Martyrs' Synod, of South German and Swiss Anabaptists at Schleitheim near Schaffhausen, so the document came to be known as the Schleitheim Confession (Hershberger, 1957, p. 65).

The Schleitheim Confession contained no fundamental theological concepts such as God, man, salvation, eschatology, etc., but the aticles were more concerned with order and discipline within congregations (Estep, 1975, p. 41). The articles deal with the issues of baptism, the ban (or excommunication), the breaking of bread, separation from abomination, shepherds in the congregation, the sword, and the oath (Snyder, 1984, pp. 114-118). The articles present a vision for the body of Christ within the realities of the political systems at that time. Because of the ensuing persecution among Anabaptists by the church authorities, there needed to be clarity about how their congregations would relate to these authorities and still be true to who God has called them to be as a people of God. An article of particular importance is the one dealing with the use of the sword. Here the believers are commanded not to wield the sword as the magistrates do because it is not "within the perfection of Christ (Yoder, 1973, p. 14)." The implications of this article would be that participation in the government, either as an official of it, or as a soldier in it, would be considered outside the perfection of Christ.

The basic contention of the early Anabaptists was that the ongoing reformation occurring in Europe at that time did not take the reformation of the church, and a restoration of New Testament

Christianity, far enough. The Protestant reformers were only willing to go as far as the civil authorities would allow them. The early Anabaptists agreed with other Protestant reformers regarding the doctrines of God, Jesus Christ, and justification by faith. Fritz Blanke says, "the men who adopted this confession (Schleitheim) were in agreement with Luther and Zwingli concerning all of these central truths (Blanke, 1957, p. 65). C. Arnold Snyder agrees, "…the record is clear that the principles of Christian orthodoxy formed the common background of their faith (Snyder, 1994, p. 11)." Elsewhere, Snyder again affirms, "although the Anabaptist way was orthodox, and generally followed the Protestant path, it was undeniably a distinctive interpretation of the Christian way (Snyder, 1999, p. 48)."

While Blanke and Snyder may be correct in saying that the Anabaptist reformers agreed with the Protestant reformers on key points, it would be premature to then assume that the issues which separated them are merely peripheral. The Anabaptist reformers' vision of the church and what it meant to follow Jesus was so radical that it threatened the very existence of the church at that time and caused the authorities to attempt to squelch the movement through persecution. What was being proposed by the Anabaptists was different enough that it quickly set them apart from the established state church. If the issues separating the Anabaptists and the other reformers were only peripheral, why would it have cost them their lives? Certainly the thousands of Anabaptists who were martyred for their beliefs would not have said that they were dying for peripheral theological points.

Although agreeing in thought to a certain extent with Blanke and Snyder, Harold S. Bender, perhaps the most prominent modern Anabaptist visionary, describes three main points of the Anabaptist Vision as being discipleship, a new concept of the church, and a new ethic of love and nonresistance (Bender, 1944, pp. 3-42). Bender asserts that Anabaptism is the "culmination of the Reformation, the fulfillment of the original vision of Luther and Zwingli, and thus makes it a consistent evangelical Protestantism seeking to recreate without compromise the original New Testament church, the vision of Christ and the apostles (Bender, p. 13)." Bender argues that these three main points of the

Anabaptist Vision are not peripheral but asserts that these are distinctive beliefs setting Anabaptist apart from their Protestant counterparts. In reviewing the vision of the early Anabaptists, Bender says that there are clearly two foci: The transformation of life through discipleship, and the church as a brotherhood of love in which the fullness of the Christian life is to be lived out (Bender, 33-34). The Anabaptists believed that the kingdom of God should be set up here on earth now and it was quite possible to live this discipleship ethic.

Discipleship meant "the transformation of the entire way of life of the individual believer and of society so that it should be fashioned after the teachings and example of Christ (Bender, p. 20)" The Protestant reformers had their emphasis on "faith," but the Anabaptists emphasized "following." Their understanding was that "the focus of the Christian life was to be not so much the inward experience of the grace of God, as it was for Luther, but the outward application of that grace to all human conduct and the consequent Christianization of all human relationships (Bender, p. 21)." Living as a Christian apart from a life of discipleship was impossible. The application of this theological truth was taken so seriously by the early Anabaptists that it became a characteristic trait of the Anabaptist believer, and if anyone was found to live a moral, upright life aiming for the perfection of Christ, they were often suspected of being an Anabaptist.

Twentieth century theologians Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Dallas Willard, among others, have followed suit in the importance of this concept for the Christian by writing texts outlining a radical commitment to discipleship following the Sermon on the Mount.[ii] Both of these authors imply that a life of discipleship is only possible when lived out in Christian community. It is no coincidence that this same Sermon on the Mount text is at the heart of sixteenth century Anabaptist thought. Anabaptist scholarship has had an increasing impact on recent evangelical scholarship.[iii]

In describing key characteristics of the Anabaptist-Mennonite tradition a generation after Bender, J. Denny Weaver lists three that mirror the vision described by Bender. Weaver calls these first-

level principles, and they are as follows: Jesus as the norm of truth and the basis upon which the Christian is to evaluate their lifestyle (discipleship), the church as a new social reality — a community, and the rejection of violence as a central tenet of the kingdom of God (Weaver, 2005, p. 120). Weaver, like Bender, is not willing to describe these principles as peripheral or nuances of the Anabaptist movement, but significant and central to their very understanding of the gospel itself. One way of stating this distinction is to say that the good news of the gospel is not that Jesus died for our sins so that we might experience salvation and eternal life, but that the good news is that we can live a transformed life in Christ and experience salvation in this present life culminating in life eternal. Salvation is then not merely assenting to some propositional truth about the mission of Jesus, but a daily adventure where we choose to live in the reign of God's kingdom.[iv]

John Howard Yoder, a contemporary of Weaver and perhaps the best-known Anabaptist theologian of the twentieth century both inside and outside the Anabaptist tradition, echoes these three foci of Anabaptism described above. He describes seven words beginning with "m" that capture the mission of Anabaptism as it seeks to bring liberation to all areas of human life (Yoder, 1988, pp. 338-348). Three "ms" of particular importance are mars, mammon, and myself. The mission of Anabaptism is to proclaim liberation from the dominion of "mars." No longer do we need to hate and kill others or defend ourselves when we are physically threatened. Self-preservation is not the greatest good for a people who await the resurrection.[v] Preservation of values that give witness to the kingdom of God are most important. A second mission of Anabaptism is to proclaim liberation from the dominion of "mammon." Those who follow Jesus do not seek more of this material world. As Richard Foster notes, "We really must understand that the lust for affluence in contemporary society is psychotic. It is psychotic because it has completely lost touch with reality. We crave things we neither need nor enjoy (Foster, 1998, p. 30)." Thirdly, Anabaptists are called to the liberation from the dominion of "myself." No longer do we have to do our own thing. This idea of self is not limited to just what the individual

wants to do in contrast to what God might invite us to, but also includes a temptation to adopt an attitude that what really matters most for me is between me and God. This liberation, as Yoder explains it, "frees the disciple of Jesus Christ from the temptation to make his or her own perspective, feelings, and impulses the criteria of God's purposes (Yoder, 342)." Yoder argues that "by naming and denouncing the unholy trinity of 'mars, mammon, and me,' we have said enough to describe why and how an Anabaptist commitment should be identifiable. No other major denominational heritage is marked by these three specifics (Yoder, 343)."

By suggesting these foci of the Anabaptist mission or vision, Yoder clearly echoes Bender and Weaver in describing important theological tenets of Anabaptism. Discipleship, community, and the rejection of violence are common threads of each. Yoder makes a strong connection between "me" and "mammon" as working against the intended role of community in the believer's life. Viewing faith as purely a relationship between God and me disallows the role and advantage of the collective wisdom of the discipled community in the life of the believer, and being consumed by things separates believers from the community of faith as they need to care for these things. The rejection of violence is important because of how the evil of violence can separate people from each other and establish a culture of mistrust between individuals.

The missional dimension of the Anabaptist vision has regained some emphasis and enthusiasm in recent years. Mennonite Church USA has declared itself to be a "missional" church.[vi] Thomas Finger's recent work on Anabaptist theology deals extensively with the missional nature of the Anabaptist vision from an historical perspective.[vii] Although history proves that Anabaptists tended to retreat into enclaves because of the persistent persecution the movement endured at the hands of the state authorities in sixteenth and seventeenth century Europe, the initial movement was very missional in its invitation to others to join in the disciple community and in so doing to renounce the use of violence in all forms as they together followed the example of Christ. A pivotal book in the broader ecumenical

"missional church" movement is one edited by Darrell L. Guder titled *Missional Church.* Lois Barrett, another leading theologian in the Mennonite Church, is a contributor in that book. Her chapter, titled, "Missional Church: The Church as Apostle to the World," states that the church's mission to the world is to reveal the reign of God in its midst. "The church by its life together shows others the nature of the reign of God. The church is a preview of life under the reign of God in the age to come, a forerunner of the new Jerusalem, a foretaste of the heavenly banquet, a sign of the reign of God (Guder, 1998, p. 128)." Barrett's article, as Finger would affirm, restates the missional nature of the Anabaptist vision that the early radical reformers envisioned as well. An Anabaptist-Mennonite youth ministry with a three-fold focus of discipleship, community, and peace and nonviolence will be missional in its relationship with the world as it goes about its ministry, inviting others to participate as well in the reign of God in their midst.

The Biblical Witness

The early Anabaptists were attempting to be faithful to the biblical witness as they originally broke from the reformation going on in Zurich under the leadership of Zwingli. Now that the Scriptures were available in the vernacular of the common people, there was a growing desire to read the Word of God and to apply its teachings to one's life. The biblical witness is what gave rise to the three foci of Anabaptism that are described above. In the areas of discipleship, community, and peace and nonviolence, new understandings emerged as serious study and reflection were practiced in the life of the gathered community.

Discipleship

The early Anabaptists read in the biblical witness that the first century disciples of Jesus, as disciples of the Way, saw themselves as those who lived or patterned their lives after Jesus, from whom they learned and had been taught the way of salvation. The process of discipling, or discipleship, began

immediately after they had believed in Jesus as the Messiah, because nowhere in the New Testament is there evidence that learning to follow after Jesus begins or happens later in the life of the believer.

The decision to follow Jesus is a decision to be a disciple of Jesus and not merely a new designation of "Christian" based on an assent to propositional truth. In other words, one doesn't first become a Christian and then decide to become a disciple. The Anabaptist assumes that faith in Christ immediately begins one on the journey of discipleship. The decision to follow Jesus is a decision to be a disciple of Jesus. Michael Sattler is an example of an early Anabaptist who believed that faith in Christ exceeds mere verbal assent to belief in him.

> How then has Christ worked satisfaction for our sins? Answer: Not alone for our own, but for the sins of the whole world, insofar as the world believes in him, and follows after him according to the requirement of faith…Therefore, when one speaks of justification through Christ one must also speak of that faith which cannot be without works of repentance, yes, not without love, which is an anointing (Dyck, 1995, p. 60).

Romans 10:9-10 states, "…because if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved." Believing in one's heart assumed that belief would affect every part of one's life, just as the heart pumps blood to every part of one's body. A true confession of faith in Christ will result in a life change evidenced by works of righteousness.

A key understanding of a life of discipleship for the Anabaptist was a regeneration or new birth experience. As Dyck states, "the new birth was the dynamic cause of early Anabaptism, with the Scriptures as the formal root cause and the Holy Spirit as the enabling power (Dyck, 1995, p. 52)." At the heart of the Anabaptist vision of the church is the new creature that Paul describes in II Corinthians 5:17, "So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything

has become new!" The new birth experience in Anabaptism is, for the most part, a gradual process where the individual is being renewed through faith. Although one's conversion experience might be dramatic, regeneration happens over the long haul as the believer submits in increasing measure to Christ and offers the parts of his or her body to him as instruments of righteousness (Romans 6:13, NRSV). Baptism is an act by which the new birth is given expression and recognized as having taken place in the life of the individual. As Menno Simons states, "For we are not born again because we are baptized…but we are baptized because we are born again out of God's Word, for the new birth does not follow out of baptism, but baptism follows out of the new birth (Dyck, 1995, pp. 54-55)." Spiritual discipline is important for Anabaptists as they train themselves in godliness (I Timothy 4:7b) and work in concert with the Holy Spirit to effect regeneration and a lasting change in their lives after their baptism which signifies the new birth that has begun.

Jesus calls out believers to follow the path that he himself takes in life in some very explicit ways. Perhaps the most explicit call to follow can be seen in Mark 8:34b-35, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it." From what is known from the outcome of Jesus' life, it can only be assumed that Jesus is saying that those who follow him will suffer, perhaps even to the point of death. Jesus chose to suffer in spite of the fact that he had every right as God to not have to take that path (Phil. 2:5-11, NRSV).

Jesus chose to be a servant though he had every right to be master over others. As he washed the disciples' feet he set for his believers the example for how they are to serve one another (John 13:15, NRSV). The dispute that arose among his disciples revealing their desire to be given a favored position of power and authority over others gave Jesus the opportunity to teach on this life of servanthood. Jesus says, "Whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant of all (Mark 9:35b, NRSV)." According to Jesus, it's really an upside-down kingdom compared to the world's standards.

The sacrificial love exemplified by Jesus on the cross, a love which is willing to die for the other person, is commanded by Jesus of his followers as well. Jesus says, "I give you a new commandment, that you love on another, just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another (John 13:14, NRSV)." This ability to love with a sacrificial love is a special calling of those who desire to follow Jesus. Not only will Jesus' followers be known for their love for each other, but what will set them apart from others is their ability to love their enemies, because anyone can love those who return that love. To love even one's enemies will be a sign of those who follow Jesus (Matt. 5:46, NRSV).

Though certainly not exhaustive, the above biblical references begin to give a picture of what Anabaptists believe to be important in what Jesus had in mind for those who would follow him in life. First of all, the act of being discipled begins as one believes in Jesus and not at some later point in life. Secondly, the new birth is essential for a life of discipleship. This new birth is evidenced through the believer submitting him or herself to the public act of baptism, and then enabled to take lasting effect through the practice of spiritual disciplines. Thirdly, the cost of discipleship is so high that it will mean giving up one's life to follow Jesus. The likelihood of the disciple encountering suffering will be constantly present as the believer sets themselves at odds with the world. A fourth characteristic will be the willingness of the believer to take on the role of a servant. Instead of lording it over others, the disciple of Jesus willingly places themselves in a position to serve others and live a life of humility. A fifth characteristic is the ability of the follower of Jesus to love others. Not only will they love those within the fellowship of faith, but their love will be manifested among their enemies.

Community

The early Anabaptist understanding of community is directly connected to how they believed they gave witness to the reign of God in the world. They believed themselves to be "new communities brought into being by Christ, the head of the church, through the power of the Holy Spirit. They were

visible, dynamic cells living in obedience to the Word and the power of love. Their goal was to be faithful internally to their new norm as well as to be a lighthouse to all who lived in darkness (Dyck, 1995, p. 172)."

A biblical understanding of community from an Anabaptist perspective is best undertaken using John Howard Yoder's *Body Politics* as a guide. In his important treatise, Yoder outlines five practices of the community of faith that make for an Anabaptist view of the church. The five practices he suggests are binding and loosing, breaking bread together, baptism, the fullness of Christ, and the rule of Paul. In each case the practice of the early church will be explored as reflected in the writings of the New Testament (Yoder, 1992, p. ix).

The concept of binding and loosing in the context of community is best exemplified through Matthew 18:15, "If another member of the church sins against you, go and point out the fault when the two of you are alone. If the member listens to you, you have regained that one." When Jesus gave this directive to the disciples he was implying that the activity of the community of faith would be the activity of God here on earth. In verse 18, Jesus continues this line of thought by saying, "whatever you bind on earth on will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." Yoder notes, "to bind" in rabbinic usage is to respond to a question of ethical discernment…to 'loose' is to free from obligation…thus the activity has two dimensions: moral discernment and reconciliation (Yoder, 1992, p. 2)." The goal of binding and loosing in community is always reconciliation, but the option exists for the one who has sinned against the community to be released from his or her responsibility to the community. The community as fulfilling the earthly work of Christ is clarified as Jesus continues in verse 20, "for where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them."

Certain principles of binding and loosing legitimate it as the work of Christ here on earth. First and foremost, it is always an action done by the person who is offended by the sin of the brother or sister in Christ. The leadership of the body is not involved until other recourses for reconciliation have

failed. Secondly, the intention of the confrontation is restorative and never punitive. The goals are always to right a relationship that has been wronged and to restore the unity of the body. Thirdly, there is never an understanding that there are certain major and minor offenses. Because it involves the body, each offense is never trivial. Lastly, the intention is never to protect the church's reputation or to make others realize the seriousness of sin and the consequences they too may have to bear if they so commit a sin in kind, but it is always to restore the believer to the fellowship of the church and to restore unity (Yoder, 1992, pp. 2-3).

A second practice of the church is found in the breaking of bread together as described in Acts 2:46: "Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts…." The assumption here in this passage is that Luke is not describing an Eucharistic celebration, but the practice of sharing food with one another so that all would have their dietary needs met. The common meal was at the center of their life together and was symbolic of their communitarian economics. Each individual was to be provided for according to their need, and the very act of sharing a common meal together was an act of worship (Yoder, 1992, pp. 18-19).

Baptism is the third practice of the Anabaptist community where its understanding is one of being initiated into a new humanity. As in our discussion above regarding the new birth, II Corinthians 5:17 is instructive here, "So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!" Although this passage is often interpreted to mean the individual's taking on a substantive change whereby they are created new in Christ Jesus to more fully embody the purposes of the reign of God, Yoder suggests there is a corporate meaning to this verse. As an individual accepts and receives baptism, the symbolic recognition of becoming a follower of Jesus, that person then also joins a new humanity, a people formed and shaped by the risen Christ. "As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is no longer Jew or Greek,

there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus (Galatians 3:27-28, NRSV)." Baptism then symbolizes a new kind of social relationship where the previously polarizing societal realities are leveled and all believers are now equal and united (Yoder, 1992, p. 30). As Yoder states, "baptism is the formation of a new people whose newness and togetherness explicitly relativize prior stratifications and classification (Yoder, 1992, p. 33)." Baptism is a very public and social act of joining this new humanity as a witness to what God is doing in the world.

Experiencing the fullness of Christ is the fourth practice of the Anabaptist community. "The Paul of Ephesians uses the term *the fullness of Christ* to describe a new mode of group relationships, in which every member of a body has a distinctly identifiable, divinely validated and empowered role (Yoder, 1992, p. 47)." Ephesians 4:11-13 provides the foundational understanding for this practice, "The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ."

At another point in his writings, more specifically the first letter to the Corinthians, Paul uses the image of the body to demonstrate the value and importance of each member of the community of Christ in the functioning of the church. From the hand to the foot to the eye to the ear, etc., Paul validates the essential ministering and functional role of each member of the body. Each part of the body has a purpose and use in the overall composition of the body. There is such an interrelated aspect to the various parts of the body that "if one member suffers, all suffer together with it; it one member is honored, all rejoice together with it (I Corinthians 12:26, NRSV)."

The final practice of the Christian community is the rule of Paul where each member is given an equal right to be involved in the decision-making process. Yoder relies on I Corinthians 14:26 for this practice. "When you come together, each one has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue, or an

interpretation. Let all things be done for building up." The implication here is that each individual should be given a voice when decisions involving the body need to be made. Rather than majority rules in an environment where the greatest number of votes carries the day, the rule of Paul is a process where an atmosphere for open conversation is nurtured and fostered and consensus is reached uncoerced. "The only structure this process needs is the moderating that keeps it orderly and the recording of the conclusions reached (Yoder, 1992, p. 67)." The assumption here is that the Holy Spirit is alive and well and functioning in the meeting, and although it may sound risky and potentially explosive, the result is an atmosphere where there are no winners or losers, but instead, a unified decision.

Principles for ministry which can be taken from these five practices of the Anabaptist community are then as follows: sin within the community of faith is dealt with because all are affected and the goal is always reconciliation of the offender; everyone's physical needs are to be provided for; becoming part of the community of faith symbolizes the entrance into and decision to join a new humanity where all are equal; every person is considered a minister where they have a significant gift to share with the whole; and every voice in the body needs to be heard and considered in the decision-making process.

Peace and Nonviolence

An Anabaptist hermeneutic is historically Christocentric, reading and discerning the meaning in all of Scripture through the lens of the words and life of Jesus. In cases where the Old Testament and New Testament appear to be contradictory, then the words of Jesus serve as a filter to discern an interpretation that expresses God's vision for God's reign on earth. More specifically, Perry Yoder says, "To understand the Old Testament we need to see it from the perspective of the authors, in its literary and historical perspective. To determine its *significance,* we must see it in the perspective of Jesus Christ (Yoder, 1978, p. 71)." Jesus himself makes this inference when he states, "Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets; I have come not to abolish but to fulfill (Matthew 5:17,

NRSV)." Apparently Jesus' teaching was considered so contradictory to the Law, or what we now know as the Old Testament, that the Pharisees and religious leaders were accusing Jesus of wanting to abolish the Law and establish something new. What follows Jesus' statements in Matthew 5:17, certainly sounds different than the Law, and the antitheses that follow in Matthew 5:21-48, are Jesus' teaching on the original intent of fulfillment of the Law. As John Howard Yoder asserts, "The relationship of the New Testament to the Old is not one of rejection, but of fulfillment (Yoder, 1984, p. 26)." Understanding the Old Testament is important in seeking the meaning of the larger narrative of the Christian story, but the significance of the Old Testament text in the life of the believer and of the church can only be determined by careful scrutiny through the hermeneutic lens of the words and life of Jesus.

A hermeneutic with a Christocentric understanding is an important starting point as we consider the third focus of an Anabaptist theology for youth ministry, which is a commitment to peace and nonviolence. The words of Jesus are taken seriously when he says, "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you (Matthew 5:44, NRSV)." The apostle Paul validates Jesus' words for Christian practice in Romans 12 when he says, "bless those who persecute you," and "do not repay anyone evil for evil…(Romans 12:14-17, NRSV)." Paul then puts the responsibility for peace on the believer when he says, "If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peacefully with all. Beloved, never avenge yourselves… (Romans 12:18-19a, NRSV)." "Blessed are the peacemakers," Jesus says, "for they will be called children of God (Matthew 5:9, NRSV)."

The New Testament teaching on peace is often countered, by those who question the literal application of these texts, with the stories of war in the Old Testament and the apparent sanctioning of violence by God. One way of understanding these war stories has been to blame the violence on human misunderstanding of God. The will of God was never the destruction of Israel's enemies, but because of the hardness of their hearts, God allowed it and even made provision for it (Byler, 1989, pp. 76-77). As

the late Mennonite theologian Chester Lehman has explained it, “The people of Israel were in their earliest stages of spiritual development. God in His wisdom brought to them divine truth as they were in a position to receive and understand it. It was a long way from their understanding of love of neighbors and the Christian comprehension of this teaching (Lehman, 1971, p. 176).” Another way of understanding the apparent contradiction between the Old and New Testaments is a theory of the holy war based on God’s covenant with his chosen people; a covenant that is superseded in the new covenant of Jesus Christ.[viii]

Often neglected are the many contexts in the Old Testament where God’s vision of peace is advocated. Psalm 34:14 is a text where Israel is encouraged to seek after peace, and to do otherwise is considered evil: “Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace and pursue it.” The vision of shalom is offered by the prophets to be God’s eschatological intent. The prophet Micah proclaims,

> Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths. For out of Zion shall go forth instruction, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. He shall judge between many peoples, and shall arbitrate between strong nations far away; they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore; but they shall all sit under their own vines and under their own fig trees, and no one shall make them afraid; for the mouth of the Lord of hosts has spoken (Micah 4:2-4, NRSV).

The vision of the prophet here is that the instructional truth of the Lord to be taught to the people is one of peace. The people are called to put away their weapons of destruction and forge them into instruments of production for the planting and cultivating of crops. A parallel text is found in Isaiah 2:2-4.

When the people of Israel approached Samuel desiring a king, Samuel reluctantly pleads their case before God. God makes a concession and informs Samuel that it is God they are rejecting as their king by instead desiring an earthly king who will muster armies and provide a defense against the invading peoples. The warning that Samuel gives to the people if they still desire a king is that their economy would become a war economy when they rely on human protection as opposed to God acting as their king and protector. Perhaps as a lament to what the earthly kings have done to Israel, a messianic prophecy in Zechariah signals the coming king as one who brings peace to the nations,

> Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter Jerusalem!
> Lo, your king comes to you; triumphant and victorious is he, humble and riding on
> a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey. He will cut off the chariot from Ephraim
> and the war-horse from Jerusalem; and the battle bow shall be cut off, and he shall
> command peace to the nations; his dominion shall be from sea to sea, and from
> the River to the ends of the earth (Zechariah 9:9-10, NRSV).

The coming king will be one who will no longer produce the machinery of war but instead shall work for peace.

Paul affirms this idea of a movement away from considering the conflict with evil a physical battle. In Ephesians, Paul describes the battle we undertake against evil as a spiritual battle, using the metaphor of physical battle armor to describe what is needed for the spiritual conflict that is inevitable in the life of the believer. "For our struggle is not against enemies of blood and flesh, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places (Ephesians 6:12, NRSV)." When Jesus was arrested in the Garden of Gethsemene, his disciples attempted to defend and protect him by the use of the sword, even cutting off the ear of the slave of the High Priest, but Jesus told them to put their sword away, "for all who take

the sword will perish by the sword (Matthew 26:52b, NRSV)." The implication here by Jesus is that the taking of life only leads to more death and not life.

When considering the missional dimension of an ethic of peace and nonviolence, an interesting text is found in the book of James where the author speaks of two kinds of wisdom. The first wisdom, that which is from above, "is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without a trace of partiality or hypocrisy (James 3:17, NRSV)." The second wisdom, which is not from God, and is considered earthly, unspiritual, and devilish, is that which expresses envy, selfish ambition, is boastful, and expresses false truth (James 3:14-15, NRSV). The author concludes this passage by stating that "a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace for those who make peace (James 3:18, NRSV)." God's wisdom is demonstrated by God's people as they live out their call to be peacemakers, and how they make peace is as important as the end product. The goal of peacemaking is peace, but just as important is the method in which the peace is attained. Sowing in peace ensures a more genuine, lasting, and enduring peace.

One way that the community of faith sows in peace is when it is living at peace with each other. Jesus calls for this reconciling peace among others in reference to worship. The church practices hypocrisy when it offers its sacrifice at the altar, yet its members are at odds with each other. Jesus calls us to the spiritual discipline of reconciliation in our relationships so that our horizontal relationships are in order, and in effect, causing our vertical relationship to be in order (Matthew 5:21-26, NRSV). Paul picks up on this theme of peaceful reconciliation in Romans 12:18, when he says, "If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all." By being willing to forgive and to live at peace with one another, the body of Christ becomes an agent of God's grace and love to each other, and in so doing, gives witness to the grace and love of God to the world.

Peacemaking always draws us to a lifestyle of service towards the other, and the other is often our enemy. As Paul so distinctly articulates in Romans 12:21, living at peace with others is not about

just being nice and courteous, but it's about actually feeding your enemies when they are hungry and giving them something to drink when they are thirsty. The directive given is to "overcome evil with good." A lifestyle of service is easy for those who give their service towards those who loves them, but what sets the disciple apart from the rest of the world is when they love those who are difficult to love (Matthew 5:44-48, NRSV).

Principles learned from this biblical journey into a theology of peace and nonviolence for the purposes of this present analysis are that believers should be proactive in living in peace with all; believers should trust in God to protect them and not rely on some earthly power; believers should live out God's vision of peace and shalom for his creation; believers should never be reactionary with the physical defense, knowing that responding with violence only escalates violence, and a disciple will be drawn to a lifestyle of service toward others; and often the other is one's enemy.

Reformulating a Contemporary Vision

Building on the work of Welty, Duerksen, and Loewen cited previously in regard to a congregational youth ministry, if an Anabaptist youth ministry is to adhere ot the understood foci of Anabaptism, discipleship and peace and nonviolence must be a vital part of ministry with youth. Clearly the focus of Welty and Duerksen's paradigm of youth ministry was on community, and Loewen's work concentrated on issues of discipleship, and rightly so, but peace and nonviolence must be unambiguously present in a youth ministry paradigm to make it distinctively Anabaptist in its understanding. In keeping with the broader missional emphasis of the Anabaptist vision, a youth ministry that acknowledges this theological heritage will also be missional to the world around them, inviting others to walk with Jesus as a disciple, to join their community of faith, and to participate in the nonviolent reign of God on this earth. A commitment to discipleship and the rejection of violence are two important components of an understanding of faith that we are inviting youth to live in the context of community. Any paradigm of youth ministry must be viewed through these three lenses to

determine its compatibility with the Anabaptist vision. Any congregational youth ministry must view their ministry through these lenses if they are being true to who they say they are.

What the focus of this article has been is not a specific program for Anabaptist-Mennonite youth ministry but a search for theological principles that would help shape and guide the work of congregational youth ministry and also serve as an evaluative tool for those who are seeking to implement specific resources into their youth ministry settings that may not come from a specific Anabaptist perspective. Based on the work that has been done previously in this article, the following theological principles can be used to guide the shaping of a youth ministry program that is compatible with the Anabaptist vision. Some of these principles may seem compatible with other Christian traditions as well because of the spreading influence that Anabaptism has had on the wider church. However, taken in its entirety, these principles will shape an uniquely Anabaptist youth ministry.

In the foci of "discipleship," principles that would shape a uniquely Anabaptist youth ministry are as follows:

1. The invitation to follow Jesus that is given to youth is not a verbal assent to propositional truth but rather an invitation to follow Jesus in life, so even how the invitation is given will need to be proactive to this end. The classic statements such as, "Do you believe in Jesus as the Son of God and accept his sacrifice on your behalf for the forgiveness of sins?" cannot stop there. Included in the invitation needs to be something to the effect of, "Do you commit to growing as a disciple of Jesus Christ and to learn what it means to live in the reign of God?" Following Jesus begins immediately after a young person chooses Christ, and there need to be intentional efforts made to instruct such a young person in what it means to follow. Families should be encouraged to take on this role as Steve Wright rightly argues, but in an Anabaptist setting, the entire congregation also needs to assume the role of mentor for the youth.[ix] Intentional mentoring

programs and intergenerational learning settings are paramount in order for young people to have models of mature discipleship as seen in adult believers.

2. An emphasis on the "new birth" should be encouraged for each young person. Just as the early Anabaptists viewed the new birth as setting them apart from the rest of the world, young people need to understand that a life of discipleship will lead them down a path that will not be compatible with the rest of the world. Ways of demonstrating this for the youth in a congregation will be for adult members to give testimony as to how their worldviews have been changed by their experience of their own "new birth" and choosing to follow Jesus in a life of discipleship. The use of spiritual disciplines will need to be modeled by the entire congregation in order for the young person to understand that the "new birth" is not a once and done event, but it is a gradual process of training oneself to be godly (I Timothy 4:7b).
3. Suffering should be an expected consequence of what it means to follow Jesus and set oneself apart from the world. Teaching young people the stories of the church where believers faced persecution and martyrdom, even at the hands of the rest of Christendom, will help to emphasize the distinctive nature of the Anabaptist understanding of Christian faith. The book, *Martyrs Mirror,* is a helpful resource for these stories created for the Dutch church in Holland in mid-seventeenth centuries when the Anabaptist-Mennonite church there was also facing significant issues of acculturation.[x] In recent years there have been other resources that have been developed to retell some of the pivotal stories from this book, and congregations and individuals have produced plays and skits to bring them to life for a new generation.[xi]
4. Taking on a lifestyle of humility and the role of a servant will be evident in an Anabaptist-Mennonite youth ministry. Youth will be instructed that the other person is more important than oneself and being a servant to the other will be taught and modeled. Although having the potential for being abused, this characteristic of the Christ-follower will be developed in the

young people in ways that will help them to understand that in giving up their lives they will find it and also that the last shall be first in God's view (Mark 9:35b). Service projects in the community would be a good start in shaping this characteristic in young people as well as seeing it modeled in other mature members of the congregation.

5. Love for others is considered more mportant than love for self, even to the point of loving one's enemies. At all levels, youth need to be encouraged to love enemies, from the school hallways to across an ocean. This principle is key to following Jesus. More specific implications and examples of this will be given below under the heading of "peace and nonviolence."

In the foci of "community," principles that would shape a uniquely Anabaptist youth ministry are as follows:

1. The communal dimensions of sin need to be addressed with youth to the point where they are challenged to see how their sin alienates them from community. Of course, the normal functioning of the entire church body will model this as the gathered body attempt to give a unified witness to the broader world. As youth are affected by the sin of their brothers and sisters in Christ, they should be encouraged and trained in how to lovingly confront the offender with reconciliation to the community of faith as the goal. As stated above, Matthew 18:15-20 gives the guidelines for the process of how this should be conducted. The communal nature of sin must be taught from a young age so that youthful believers realize that sin has both vertical and horizontal dimensions affecting their relationship which God and also with those in the body of Christ.
2. Youth need to be encouraged to meet the physical needs of others through freely giving of their time and financial resources. When youth are involved in a community of faith, there should be a realization on their part that the community cares about them wholistically and not just

spiritually. When needed, physical, social, emotional, economic and spiritual needs are all provided for by the community of faith for each person. The youth themselves should be encouraged to help needy members of the congregation with chores around their home, not as a "service project" but as a natural function of how the community of faith cares for each other. Funds established by the congregation for the benefit of young people's educational needs can help those who are especially unable to do so because of their economic situation. Those youth who may experience an unwanted pregnancy could be aided in their ability to raise the child, not by being ostracized by the church, but by individuals willing to help with child care or other financial needs so the young mother can pursue her vocational goals through schooling and work experience. Many churches have benevolent funds that aid those in economic needs. Anabaptist-Mennonite congregations who are being true to who they are will have abundantly available benevolent funds for those among them who are needy.

3. As a witness to their "new birth" experience as described in the discipleship section above, youth of the congregation should be encouraged to take the step of baptism as a way of confessing their belief in Christ and identifying with the body of Christ. In an Anabaptist-Mennonite setting this is not done quickly or haphazardly but will involve a time of instruction as to the meaning of baptism. Some congregations assign mentors to each youth who is desiring baptism to walk with through that experience and also to continue guiding and nurturing them in the faith after their baptism. Encouraging youth to make a verbal confession of their faith in Christ can also be a way to validate this experience in a more profound way and not just to allow the experience to be one where the youth participates because of parental or peer pressure to do so. The genuine experience of the "new birth" can be validated through public confession.

4. The natural abilities and spiritual gifts of each individual youth are used for the benefit of the community of faith. From early on in life, the young people of the congregation must be included in the life of the congregation to the point where they feel they are making significant contributions. This could happen in the specific ministries of the congregation through teaching and mentoring of younger peers, participating in worship leadership in some form, or helping to prepare and serve meals. Youth with unique skills and abilities can be called on to help others who are in need. For example, youth with mechanical skills might be called on to help congregational members with their vehicles. Many youth are proficient on the computer in ways that are much more advanced than older members of the congregation, making them invaluable aids in computer trouble-shooting.
5. Individual youth will know that their voice and opinion is important and receives equal consideration in the decision-making process of the community of faith. The first place this will be felt will be within the youth ministry of the church itself, making the role of youth pastor, if the congregation has one, different than might be true in other theological traditions. Youth in Anabaptist-Mennonite congregations need to be trained in leadership ability, decision-making, and communication skills to help them contribute constructively in matters of community discernment. Much of this might be modeled by the leadership of the congregation but intentional efforts to train them in these tasks will communicate the important voice that they have and the desire for the rest of the body to hear their perspective on any number of issues. The youth themselves will be encouraged and expected to take significant leadership roles in their own peer group activities with the help of adults walking with them. The committees of the church will also be open to youth involvement according to their interests and talents.

In the foci of "peace and nonviolence," principles that would shape a uniquely Anabaptist-Mennonite youth ministry are as follows:

1. Living a life of peace and nonviolence is not just about what the believer does not do, but is even more about what the believer does proactively to work for peace in his or world. Reconciliation with enemies at all levels should be encouraged. Anabaptist-Mennonite youth ministries will train their youth in conflict resolution skills and encourage them to make peace in their schools, families, neighborhoods, and world. As the congregational life is marked by the willingness to confront disagreement constructively, the youth of the congregation will be empowered to also deal with disagreement they will face in other contexts. Exposure to the work of Christian Peacemaker Teams and other faith-based and humanitarian organizations who work for peace will encourage the youth of the congregation to recognize that violence is not the only response to conflict.[xii] Some congregations may even choose to take their young people on cross-cultural experiences to places like Palestine and other areas of the Arab world to put a human face on the enemy they might hear so much about in other ways from the media. Service projects planned for youth or intergenerational groups from the congregation to places of poverty and economic disadvantage can help to also dismantle stereotypes that the youth may have constructed about "the other."
2. Youth should be instructed in what it means to live a nonviolent life in all their relationships, especially in their daily interactions with others. Anabaptist-Mennonite youth ministries will instruct their youth from the Scriptures on Jesus' teachings on peace and nonviolence. The youth ministry will be a place where conflict, when it develops, is confronted constructively and in life-giving ways. Church leadership will also model peace and nonviolence as it sensitizes its members to issues of racism, gender, and the environment.
3. Youth in an Anabaptist-Mennonite congregation will be counseled not to seek military service and other occupations which may lead or contribute to the escalation of violence in our world,

but instead be encouraged to explore vocations that are life-giving and promote peaceful relations between individuals and groups.

Conclusion

The intent of this article was to suggest that youth ministry from an Anabaptist-Mennonite perspective must be centered on discipleship, community, and peace and nonviolence. Recent works by Welty, Duerksen, and Loewen within the Anabaptist community have done a good job of defining the role of the community of faith's involvement in congregational youth ministry, but have only begun to identify key Anabaptist faith understandings that need to be applied in all levels of ministry with youth. Although not as specific programmatically as Welty and Duerksen's works were, the attempt of this article has been to suggest a theological paradigm, consistent with theological works by noted modern Anabaptist theologians like Bender, Weaver, and Yoder, as a starting point to allow a re-envisioning of what actual programming might look like. The role of the youth ministry practitioner will be to apply these foci in their specific situation as a way to be true to a contemporary understanding of Anabaptism from a Mennonite perspective.

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[i] Helpful intentional efforts to encourage youth workers to think more theologically can be seen in works by Dean Borgman, *When Kumbayah Is Not Enough: A Practical Theology of Youth Ministry,* and Kenda Creasy Dean, Chap Clark, and Dave Rahn, ed., *Starting Right: Thinking Theologically About Youth Ministry.*

[ii] Dietrich Bonhoeffer's, *The Cost of Discipleship,* first published in 1937 by R. H. Fuller as *Nachfolge,* and Dallas Willard's, *The Divine Conspiracy: Rediscovering Our Hidden Life In God,* published in 1998, are two examples of modern scholarship exploring the implications of a life of discipleship using the Sermon on the Mount. Lee Camp's more recent work (2003) titled *Mere Discipleship: Radical Christianity in a Rebellious World,* is another example of

the way of thinking about discipleship that is typical of Anabaptists but is now being exemplified in more recent evangelical scholarship.

[iii] Shane Clairborne (*Jesus For President)* and Greg Boyd *(The Myth of a Christian Nation)* are two evangelical authors who demonstrate a strong reliance on the theological thought of Anabaptist authors with their strong foci of a particular understanding of discipleship as well as an ethic of nonviolence.

[iv] A growing body of evangelical literature is talking about salvation in these terms and challenging the notion that one is saved by assenting to propositional truth about who Jesus is and what he accomplished in his mission on earth. Ron Sider's, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Conscience,* published by Baker Books in 2005, and Donald Miller's *Searching for God Knows What,* published by Thomas Nelson Publishers in 2004, are two examples of this growing literature that likely has been influenced by Anabaptist thought and theological understanding.

[v] A helpful resource in learning more about the concept of self-sacrifice can be found in a book written by Jim S. Amstutz (2002). *Threatened With Resurrection: Self-preservation and Christ's Way of Peace.* Scottdale, PA: Herald Press.

[vi] By viewing the Mennonite Church USA website, one can get a more complete understanding of the current missional understandings of this denomination. It can be found at http://www.mennoniteusa.org in the "Vision: Healing and Hope" statement.

[vii] In *A Contemporary Anabaptist Theology,* Finger has a chapter entitled "The Missional Dimension," making the missional aspect part of a three-fold dimension of the Anabaptist vision as he interprets it: personal, communal, and missional.

[viii] For further insight on this explanation see Millard Lind's book, *Yahweh Is a Warrior,* and Richard McSorley's book, *New Testament Basis of Peacemaking,* more specifically pages 56-63.

[ix] In his book, *ReThink,* Steve Wright makes the case that family ministry, and more specifically, parental involvement is necessary for the spiritual formation of young people.

[x] The *Martyrs Mirror* was also republished in German in Ephrata, Pennsylvania, in 1745, and then published in 1837 in English, and has gone through numerous printings since, all under the intention of reminding the youth of the faith of the suffering that comes as a result of following Christ and to discourage acculturation into mainstream American life.

[xi] *Mirror of the Martyrs* is a book written by John S. Oyer and Robert S. Kreider designed to enrich and enhance the experience of the display "Mirror of the Martyrs" that was circulated by Mennonites in America in the late twentieth century. The display focused around the thirty existing copper plate engravings that were used for the printing of the book, *Martyrs Mirror,* depicting early Anabaptists in their path of martyrdom.

[xii] For more information on Christian Peacemaker Teams check their website at www.cpt.org.