

Doris Penner, *Circling the Globe: The Story of the Evangelical Mennonite Conference*. Steinbach, MB: Evangelical Mennonite Conference, 2020. Pp. 255. Softcover, \$15.

The story of the Evangelical Mennonite Conference (EMC), from its origins in South Russia as the *Kleine Gemeinde* in 1812 to the present, as a mission-minded church with a passion for service, is a story of dissent, renewal, and struggle in a desire for Christian faithfulness. As Doris Penner demonstrates in her book *Circling the Globe*, this desire has shaped the EMC throughout its over two-hundred-year history, and continues to be its guide into the future. By looking back on the history of the EMC “with eyes of faith,” Layton Friesen suggests in the book’s foreword, we can see “the figure of Jesus emerging not only in the church’s triumphs, but as much in those places where the church needed to repent and go back” (10).

Penner’s history, coming nearly twenty-five years after Harvey Plett’s *Seeking to be Faithful* (1996), tells an easy-to-follow and chronological narrative of the development of the EMC and its growing missional focus. While Penner does not address in the book why a new conference history was needed in 2020, perhaps the EMC bicentennial in 2012 inspired this celebratory volume’s commission. The book contains an extensive list of appendices (some more worthy of inclusion than others), but it seriously lacks endnotes/footnotes and bibliographic sources. The inclusion of greater notation and bibliographic citation would have greatly increased the scholarly value of this historical volume.

Additionally, Penner does not seem very concerned about historiographic issues or complexities within the EMC story, which, while making the book more readable, leaves it lacking significant critical engagement. For example, Penner begins the book with a chapter rooting the EMC in the tradition of the early church and the Reformation, noting figures like John Wycliffe, Jan Hus, and Peter Waldo along the way, which feels like a contrived historical attempt to place the EMC in some sort of pure line of “apostolic succession.” While noting the EMC’s roots in the Anabaptist-Mennonite tradition is important, this could have been done in a couple of paragraphs in an introductory chapter and without an implied purity narrative.

Secondly, while Penner notes in passing the South Russian/Ukrainian colonialist Mennonite context, she does not even engage the dilemma of Mennonites settling on the land of displaced peoples in North America, a historical reality of tremendous concern. It can be difficult to engage with these sorts of complexities in

historical study, but ignoring them does a great disservice to those seeking faithfulness through historical reflection.

While Penner's "eyes of faith" may at times appear obscured by rose-tinted glasses, her narrative approach to writing history, and her incorporation of women's voices through the individual profile histories at the end of her chapters, create a volume that is both accessible to the common reader and lifts up the role of women in a story that otherwise reads very male-dominated. In *Circling the Globe*, Penner has written a history of the EMC that a new generation will be able to receive, understand, and engage more critically, and for this we are all grateful.

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Donald B. Kraybill, *What the Amish Teach Us: Plain Living in a Busy World*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2021. Pp. xvi + 184. Hardcover, \$14.95 US.

The noted sociologist Donald Kraybill has published extensively on Amish practice and beliefs, exploring complexities of Amish negotiation with mainstream culture in books such as *Amish Grace: How Forgiveness Transcended Tragedy* (co-authored with Steven Nolt and David Weaver-Zercher in 2007) and *The Amish* (with Karen Johnson-Weiner and Steven Nolt in 2013). Now, Kraybill's first-hand access to a range of Amish families and communities has prompted him to write a short, accessible volume for general audiences, organized around lessons he has absorbed through repeated encounters with Amish individuals in their schools, businesses, and homes. This volume begins with the premise that "the Amish are silent social critics—offering a critique of modern culture that is intellectually provocative yet always practical" (x).

For readers unfamiliar with contemporary Amish practices, *What the Amish Teach Us* serves as an introduction to topics ranging from childrearing to some groups' recent selective adaptation of smart phones. Organized topically around twenty-two themes that Kraybill says have reshaped his thinking about living in a North American "hyper-everything world," the book provides examples of Amish values of patience, humility, and community-mindedness. Among twenty-six hundred church communities scattered across