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Peter Dula and Alain Epp Weaver. *Borders and Bridges: Mennonite Witness in a Religiously Diverse World*. Telford, PA: Cascadia, 2007.

This is a little book that packs a lot! It contains accounts of the work of Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) in non-Christian contexts around the world that describe the reasons Mennonites are found in inter-faith relationships, and the nature of inter-faith bridge building in specific contexts.

Here one will encounter examples of being missional, peacemaking praxis, cultural and religious histories of a variety of countries, information about some world religions, and insights into how MCC approaches its work. The essays explore the implications of MCC's written policies that stress a commitment to work through local administrative and Christian structures in the settings they find themselves called to serve in, with a current strategic initiative (2006-2010) to engage in "interfaith bridge-building."

The authors narrate MCC's collaborative involvements in inter-faith contexts over many years that demonstrate the imperative to listen to the beneficiaries of programs and to work within the understandings and priorities of the communities one serves, and the enriched nature of service undertaken collaboratively with other Christians and partners of other faiths.

One reads how service workers listen to the beneficiaries, and how and where inter-faith bridge building is occurring in the act of living amidst one another. Is such bridge building a specific set of orchestrated activities, or a by-product of relationships formed amidst service and development work? The stories recognize the multi-layered nature of such a question, and suggest that the answer to it is both.

This book is full of implied missiology. It rarely engages explicitly in theological theory, with the exception of Peter Dula's essay at the end. A theology of presence is assumed, as is a theology of serving those in need, regardless of creed or culture. The relational nature of these ecumenical and inter-faith encounters presupposes a shared humanity (which is not to say we all ultimately believe the same things). The stories imply that theology is lived and walked, whether or not it is systematically explored and written out. It reveals a relational theology – the notion that Christian faith is to be

embodied in the way we live in relationship to other people, Christian and non-Christian. These relationships are a part of our relationship to God.

These essays, coupled with Dula's reflection, encourage the reader to consider that Jesus can be met in places and people beyond the church, dogma, or Scripture. This book is a gem for the pastor and congregation seeking to better understand multicultural relationships they are encountering in their home communities. It can help North American communities to know more about their newly immigrating neighbors, but it also provides models of how to create community together.

This volume offers numerous examples of "gift exchange" between Mennonites and various Christian communities as well as with those of other religious expressions. The relationship imperative shines through, begging us to recognize the way Mennonite witness, even in its particularities, is part of the ongoing witness of the church universal (123). MCC has long had a policy of working within existing church structures in any given country, "in-grafting" ourselves into established churches. These stories show how the involvements of Mennonite service workers in situations of non-Christian faith communities requires, and facilitates, the ability of Mennonite Christians to work directly at building Christian unity too.

Administrators in mission or humanitarian development agencies will benefit greatly from these accounts of how MCC has interacted and developed programming in a wide variety of contexts. From the story-telling approach one can see what worked and what did not as various MCC personnel sought to listen to, and accompany, those they wished to serve. This book addresses complicated issues around how sustained relationship building is consistently important in programming, while asking what shape of program architecture and infrastructure is needed to facilitate it. There must be the capacity for programs to intentionally create space for relationships to take root and grow.

"In almost all of the essays in this volume, the authors highlight MCC's emphasis on long-term, personal relationships with partners and beneficiaries. MCC has usually insisted on long-term relationships with respect to development and peacemaking – these essays show that it is just as important for interfaith bridge building" (168).

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