



# TODAY

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Martha Shank Whissen in the 1931 EMS yearbook. (Courtesy photo)

## Centennial Spotlight - Martha Shank Whissen: Educator and Encourager

by Elwood Yoder

Born in 1914, Martha Whissen graduated from Eastern Mennonite School in 1931, and she is likely our oldest living graduate. Martha will turn 103 on February 26, 2017. She was born three years before EMS started, even before the beginning of World War I. Martha Shank's grandparents suffered the loss of their barn and house during the infamous Burning of the Shenandoah Valley in October, 1861. Her Shank grandfather donated land near their Broadway farm in 1885, for Zion Mennonite Church, where Martha has attended all her life. Martha is also a 1953 graduate of Eastern Mennonite College, and she earned a Master's in Education from Madison College (now James Madison University) in 1963.

Martha's strong Christian faith has encouraged many. She will tell you, as she did in her interview with me recently at Virginia Mennonite Retirement Community, that one of the highlights of her life was teaching students in the Broadway public school system from 1957 to 1979. Martha has been single most of her life, though she was married to Clarence Whissen from 1967 until his passing in 1990.

In the EMS 1931 yearbook, Martha was characterized by her peers as being "a real Virginian." Over the past three decades Martha and I have attended Zion Mennonite Church together. She has instructed me about Virginia history and culture, she has given me several important history interviews out of her excellent memory, and she has shown me her 19th century artifacts and books. Martha never had children, but she has encouraged, taught, and guided many, including me, in understanding a Southern way of life that is gentle, gracious, and hospitable. Thank you Martha Shank Whissen for your lifetime of educating and encouraging others. We look forward to celebrating the EMS Centennial with you.



Martha Shank Whissen at Zion Mennonite Church. (Photo by Karla Souder)

### SAVE THE DATE!

*Mark your calendars and join us for these great events:*

February 13-17: Spiritual Renewal Week for Middle & High School

February 13: VOCES8 in Concert, 7:30 p.m. EMS Auditorium

February 15: Kennel-Charles Anabaptist Lecture featuring Todd Wynward, 7 p.m. EMS Auditorium

February 20: PTF Parent Forum, 7 p.m. EMS Commons

March 2-4: Senior Play "A Midsummer Night's Dream" 7:30 p.m. EMS Auditorium

March 4-5: Senior Parent Weekend

March 9: Science Fair, K-8 6:30 p.m. EMS Commons and Dining Hall



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## Faculty Spotlight

### Bible at EMS: Preparation for Life

by Max Driver '17

Bible instruction has been a central part of the EMS curriculum and influential in the lives of many students. Through study, classroom instruction and chapel programming, students learn to interpret, understand, and apply the Bible and its lessons within a supportive community of believers. The EMS Bible department is one of the school's core departments, stretching through a student's entire academic career, and influencing them in post-graduation life.

The EMS Bible experience begins at the elementary level. At EMES, learning is focused on Jesus' life, the stories he told others, and understanding the example He set for His followers. EMES Bible instruction focuses on an annual theme, such as showing good will to others and understanding that all people are uniquely created by God. EMES students attend a weekly group chapel called Gathering, where they sing, listen to speakers, and ponder questions to grow their faith. Elementary teachers focus on connecting students with their congregations and future Bible courses they will take at EMS.

Bible instruction continues at the middle school level. In sixth grade, Mrs. Susan Melendez guides students through study of Creation, the birth of Jesus, and how stories from the Bible relate to modern life. In Mr. Andrew Gascho's class, seventh

graders continue learning the foundational stories of Christianity, primarily the parables and miracles of Jesus and how they apply to their own lives. Students create interactive, hands-on projects whenever possible, through a mixture of podcasts, animations, and other technology-based activities. In eighth grade Bible, Mrs. Randa Hendricks '96 presents multiple lessons revolving around Old Testament prophets through a combination of memorization, answering questions the students themselves raise, and "wrestling with big ideas." These lessons prepare the students for the intensity of high school Bible courses.

At the beginning of their high school career, students take Mr. Steve Yoder's Bible 9 class. Mr. Yoder has developed a curriculum based around the content, context, and interpretation of the Bible. Mr. Yoder immerses the students in the stories of the Old and New Testaments, having them act out the scenes, look for patterns, and consider the historical context of the writing. This teaching method also allows students to interpret text and ask questions they create themselves. Mrs. Susan Swartz, Bible 10 teacher, uses the skills students learned in previous years to delve deeper into the Bible. Her teaching focuses on the different disciplines of faith, including different forms of prayer, scripture reading, and meditation on the Word. Memoriza-



EMS Bible Faculty, from left, Susan Swartz, Elwood Yoder, Randa Hendricks '96, Andrew Gascho, Steve Yoder, Susan Melendez, and Curt Stutzman. (Photo by Andrew Gascho)

## VISION:

*Eastern Mennonite School aspires to reflect Christ's light as a learning community where every student belongs, thrives, and lives God's call.*

tion is emphasized as Mrs. Swartz believes that knowing the Word is the "heart of the message of Jesus." These disciplines form the basis of the "Controversial Research Project" the students complete. For this project, students choose and research the sides of a debate in the church, finding both secular and religious material for both sides. Upon completion, students present their research and personal opinion to the class. Mrs. Swartz hopes to prepare students in the faith, addressing doubts and providing a safe learning environment for their growing understanding of Christianity.

During their Junior year, students have a variety of possible Bible electives. Global Anabaptism and Global Christianity, taught by Mr. Elwood Yoder, introduce students to the history and beliefs of the Anabaptist church, and general church history and its modern reach, respectively. Global Anabaptism is an online course, making it available to students beyond EMHS, such as a student enrolled last semester from Sarasota Christian School. Other electives include Christian Family Living which focuses on faith in combination with home life and nurturing romantic relationships. Philosophy and Theology focuses on the difficult issues of the church and challenges the students to defend their developed faith. The final elective option is Christian Leadership/Ministry which prepares students to lead others in faith through church interaction.

In their Senior year of high school, students end Bible instruction with Kingdom Living class, taught by either Mr. Elwood Yoder or Mr. Curt

Stutzman. This final class brings together all the past lessons of the Bible curriculum: reading, memorization, context, scripture analyzation, and personal interpretation. Mr. Stutzman focuses on the Lord's Prayer, the coming of the Kingdom of God, and how His will should be carried out on earth. Mr. Yoder takes his classes in a similar direction, focusing on maturing the seeds of faith each student has gained from past years and preparing that growth to weather the storms of life. In Kingdom Living, students complete an EMHS created workbook focusing on mission work, living simply, and peaceful Christian lives.

Since 2007 Seniors have delivered a culminating 15-25 minute public speech about their life and faith journey as a part of the Kingdom Living Bible class. Each May students summarize their co-curricular involvements, academics, and faith development and present their reflections to peers, family, faculty and friends who attend. Caroline Clymer '07 gave the very first Senior Presentation, almost ten years ago, and she used the hymn "My life flows on in endless song" as her theme. Caroline, a member at Lindale Mennonite Church, is currently a long term missionary in Cambodia and an example of the impact Bible classes at EMS can have on a student's future.

From Kindergarten through Senior year, EMS Bible curriculum and educators seek to reflect all aspects of our school mission of faith in Jesus Christ, academic excellence, personal integrity, and compassionate service in the world.

## Fan the Flames!



Nicole Gordon '19 runs Cross Country. (Photo by Andrew Gascho)

For a school the size of EMS, we are blessed with excellent athletic opportunities K-12. At EMES, students may participate in soccer and basketball and compete against other private schools in the Valley. At EMMS and EMHS the variety of sports are expanded as students compete in league and conference play in volleyball, cross country, tennis, soccer, basketball, baseball, softball, track, and golf.

We commend Athletic Director and Boys Varsity Basketball Coach, Dave Bechler, for his leadership in building a strong, comprehensive athletics program which focuses on integrity and teamwork as much as it does on mastering skill. Our dedicated coaches and our committed, hardworking parent-run Booster Club also enable the EMS Flames to shine on the courts, fields and tracks, representing all aspects of the EMS mission well.

Come "Fan the Flames" by attending an athletics event this spring. Complete schedules can be found at: <http://emsathletics.org>. Enjoy this look back at action-packed Flames moments from the past seasons!



(Above) Nicholas '18 at the rim with Flames Varsity Basketball. (Photo by Elwood Yoder) (Left) Karissa Saucier played Flames Varsity Volleyball. (Gentry photo)

# Lessons I've learned from Baseball

by Elwood Yoder

I'm a Cleveland Indians lifer, having followed the team since I was a boy in the 1960s. My sister and I used to sit by the family stereo in Hartville Ohio on a Saturday night with a bowl of popcorn and listen to an Indians game for entertainment. More recently, I watched every game of the World Series, and it made for some short nights of sleep before school the next morning. I'm disappointed the Indians lost the seventh game in a heartbreak, but maybe we can win next year—it's only been 68 dreadfully long years since we last won the fall classic.

Listening to the Cleveland Indians play baseball year after year has taught me valuable lessons for life. Baseball helps me navigate a challenging world and has given me a set of survival skills. Here are six lessons I've learned from following the Indians.



Jake Hall '17 pitches for the Flames Baseball team. (Gentry photo)

## **Aim for a hit, not a homerun.**

Good hitters aim to meet the ball squarely and get on base. Only occasionally do they hit a homerun. This past year the Indians were a scrappy team, eking out singles and doubles, stealing bases, and getting just enough clutch hits to achieve a winning record. At the beginning of the season, very few experts expected the Indians to make it to the seventh game of the World Series. Indian hitters went to the plate game after game, aimed for singles, and occasionally smacked the ball over the fence. My first life lesson is to hit the ball coming across my

plate squarely, try to get on first base, and once in a while I may get lucky and hit a homerun.

**Do the little things.** Learn how to bunt, make sure you catch the ball before you throw it, always run hard to first, and touch every base when you run. One hitter in the recent World Series watched his grand hit, and ran slowly because he thought it was a homerun, but it bounced off the top of the wall back onto the field. If he would have run hard he would have made a triple instead of a double. For me, doing the little things means being ready to teach every time students walk in my classroom door, notice each student, greet them, care about them, and do my best to make history classes interesting. My life lesson is that doing the little things adds up and helps to win a few games over a career.

**Forget about yesterday's loss.** Professional baseball players often have only one night to think about the last game until they have to get ready for the next day's game. In baseball, you will lose about half your games, but the best players learn how to move on quickly and forget about yesterday's loss.



Nathaniel Solomon '18 catches for the Flames Varsity Baseball team. (Gentry photo)

I've had some losses in life, some disappointments, and each time I've had to decide how to respond. Will I get up the next morning and go on, greeting the new day with determination, a smile, and attempt to do my best in spite of yesterday's loss? That's my goal, and it's a lesson I draw from the Indians, who, over my five decades of listening, have lost their fair share of games.

**Play like a professional.** One of the reasons I follow almost every game the Indians play is because of their radio announcer Tom Hamilton. He is an outstanding professional commentator, and he continues to entertain and call interesting games, even when the Indians lose a lot. Hamilton does his background reading and research, he shows up for work, and he stays interested until the 9th inning, even when we're getting pounded by the other team. After one dismal season a few years ago, I wrote Hamilton a letter, thanking him for his outstanding work. About two months later, I received a nice handwritten note from Hamilton, thanking me for listening to him call games. Tom Hamilton announces in a way that inspires me to play the game of life like a pro.

**Learn how to play for a new manager.** The Indians have gone through their share of managers over the years. During 35 years of teaching, I've worked for several managers. Each one is different, has different values, and emphasizes different elements of the educational enterprise. It's up to me to figure out the new manager and play hard with a new lineup. The players in the Indians' dugout have to figure out new managers when they arrive, and so do I.

**Encourage the team.** Over a season of following the Tribe, I can tell who the team leaders are. They encourage the other players, speak in positive ways, and play hard until the last out. Baseball is a team sport, but the game relies on the success of individual players, which is why I find it a great mix of individual players' skills and teamwork. On my faculty, I want to be a team player, encouraging others and noticing their successes, but I've learned from baseball that to be a good teammate I need to carry my share of the load.

Following the Cleveland Indians over the years has taught me good lessons for life. Maybe if the Indians apply these lessons to their game next year we can win the World Series.

*Managing Editor's note: This essay first appeared as a blog entry for The Mennonite. You can find more of Today Editor Elwood Yoder's blog at [themennonite.org](http://themennonite.org).*

# EMS News Updates

## School Counselor Position Open



Lindsey and Asher Fast  
(Courtesy photo)

Lindsey Fast, EMS K-8 School Counselor and Health Coordinator, and her husband Asher have heard and accepted a call to serve youth in Francistown, Botswana for the next three years. The Fasts will be coordinating programs at the Mother Theresa Resource Centre for prison ministry and refugee community work. While at EMS, Lindsey skillfully served our students and will be missed by all of us. We are grateful she and Asher extend their hands of service in Botswana where many needs abound. Please pray for the Fasts and for EMS as we begin our search to fill the K-8 School Counselor & Health Coordinator position. Applications for employment are available on our website [www.easternmennoniteschool.org](http://www.easternmennoniteschool.org). Additional employment positions are listed on this

site as they become available. Please help spread the word to qualified candidates who would like to join in spreading the EMS mission. Godspeed Lindsey and Asher!

## Todd Wynward to Present at EMS

Todd Wynward will deliver the 15th Annual Kennel-Charles Anabaptist Lecture, February 15, 2017 at 7:00 p.m. in the EMS Auditorium. The lecture is free and open to the public and church youth groups are encouraged to attend. Wynward will develop the thesis that if age-old Anabaptist values were lived out loud, society would be transformed in needed ways. His latest book, *Rewilding the Way*, will be available for purchase at the program. Additionally, Wynward will lead the Spring 2017 Spiritual Renewal Week for middle and high school daily during chapel February 13-17. All are welcome to attend. Confirm chapel times that week by calling (540) 236-6000.



Todd Wynward, speaker at the 15th Annual Kennel-Charles Anabaptist Lecture. (Courtesy photo)

Today is published six times a year for families, alumni and friends of Eastern Mennonite School. We value your input. Send your feedback and story ideas to: [today@emhs.net](mailto:today@emhs.net).

Look for previous issues of Today online at <https://issuu.com/easternmennoniteschool>

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(Head of School).

## Let the children come...

## 100% Participation Received from EMES Faculty and Board of Directors for LTCC Campaign



We're pleased to announce that the *Let the Children Come* campaign has received 100% participation through generous pledges from the entire EMES faculty and EMS Board of Directors. Together, these pledges total over \$300,000, a tremendous leadership gift from two groups committed to the campaign's success. Please continue to keep the *Let the Children Come* campaign in your daily prayer as we seek to ensure a comprehensive K-12 plan for the next 100 years of EMS history. To learn more about the campaign or to get involved, contact Head of School Paul Leaman at (540) 236-6000 or [leamanp@emhs.net](mailto:leamanp@emhs.net).



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## MISSION:

*Eastern Mennonite School joins home and church in calling students to faith in Jesus Christ, academic excellence, personal integrity, and compassionate service in the world.*



EMS Junior and Senior Choirs presented two performances of G.F. Handel's Messiah as their Christmas Worship program this past December. Over 130 8th-12th grade student vocalists and instrumentalists participated alongside professional orchestral musicians. Focusing on Handel's Christmas portion of the piece, aspects of the Easter section were added, including the Hallelujah chorus. Current EMHS choir students who performed solos included: Jack Anderson '17, Grace Brega '17, Leah Huyard '17, Ceci Hughes '18, Erin Layman, '17, Sara Beth Mumbauer '18, Ellie Pence '17, Joe Seitz '17, Khampha Stempel '17 and Rosie Wright '18. (Photos by EMS Staff)