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World War I marked a watershed in the history of the modern West. In addition to the unparalleled destruction to life and property unleashed by the war itself, several million men, women, and children, forcibly uprooted from their homes, faced an uncertain future as refugees in the years following the conflict. For the Mennonites living in South Russia the aftermath of the war was complicated further by the realities of revolution, anarchy, and famine, which prompted thousands to flee in search of safe haven in Germany, Canada, or Paraguay. Mennonites in the U.S. and Europe responded to the crisis with an outpouring of generosity and support, including the creation of Mennonite Central Committee in 1920 and a landmark gathering of European leaders in Basel in 1925 that marked the beginnings of Mennonite World Conference. Nevertheless, as **Peter Letkemann** suggests, those efforts, at times, were rife with conflict.

In the opening essay in this issue, Letkemann, an independent scholar from Winnipeg, provides a detailed narrative of the origins of the first Mennonite refugee camp. Beginning in 1921, a group of Mennonite leaders representing the *Mennonitische Flüchtlings-Fürsorge* (Mennonite Aid to Refugees) negotiated a lease of Lager Lechfeld, a former military training camp in southern Bavaria. Some assumed that the camp would provide only temporary housing for the refugees; but others envisioned the property as the foundation of new Mennonite community that could replicate the agrarian villages left behind in the Ukraine. In the end, the entire project became mired in conflict, beset by financial difficulties that were exacerbated by personality conflicts among key leaders and by administrative mismanagement. The story of the Lechfeld refugee camp reveals some of the challenges of benevolence and the various ways in which divided leadership can undermine good intentions.

Like Mennonite relief organizations, Mennonite mission initiatives have also been the focus of divergent visions and internal tensions. **Anicka Fast**, a Ph.D. student in mission studies at Boston University, traces several themes in Mennonite mission theology during the second half of the twentieth century. In the 1970s and 1980s, mission scholars explicitly challenged the Constantinian assumptions of the earlier Mennonite mission movement and highlighted the centrality of ecclesiology in their missiology. More recently, several new themes have emerged. A younger generation of scholars, alert to the global character of the Anabaptist-Mennonite movement as well as the power imbalances between north and south, have emphasized new models of missions rooted in relationships of mutuality and church connections that intentionally cross boundaries.

Jamie Pitts, a professor of church history at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary, explores similar questions of boundaries and ecclesiology with a probing theological critique of believer's baptism as a "practice" that sharply distinguishes the church from the world. In his essay, Pitts argues that baptismal practices have always related the church to the world in various, often ambiguous, ways. While not rejecting the significance of baptism as a marker of Christian identity, Pitts invites readers to a more vulnerable understanding of believer's baptism that acknowledges, and even embraces, blurred boundaries between church and world, and the provisionality of ecclesial forms.

The argument Pitts advances has direct implications for ecumenical relations, the focus of a thoughtful essay by **Larry Miller** and **Helmut Harder**, two veteran church leaders and pioneers in Mennonite ecumenical relationships. In their essay, Miller and Harder trace the beginnings of Mennonite ecumenicity to a series of conversations initiated by mainstream Protestant groups on themes of peace and reconciliation in the aftermath of World War II. A new expression of interchurch relations emerged in the 1980s when Mennonite World Conference participated in a series of bilateral conversations with representatives of the Catholic Church, as well as with Baptist, Lutheran, Reformed, and Seventh-day Adventist groups. They conclude their survey with a series of regulative principles, anchored in Anabaptist-Mennonite theology that could help set the parameters of Mennonite ecumenical conversations in the future.

Finally, we close this issue of *MQR* with a research note by historians **Steven Nolt** and **Theron F. Schlabach** that revisits some numerical assumptions regarding Mennonite responses to military conscription during World War II. A frequently cited source suggests that fewer than half (46 percent) of drafted Mennonite men in the U.S. upheld the denomination's official position on nonresistance by serving in Civilian Public Service. Nolt and Schlabach, however, drawing on a previously unpublished text by Harold S. Bender, suggest that these conclusions need to be rethought. As Bender noted, the 1942 draft census on which these figures were based omitted data of draft-age men—as many as two-thirds of all draft registrants—who received agricultural deferments. The authors not only reproduce Bender's text, but also offer a series of suggestions for further research.

We hope that this research note, along with all the essays presented in this issue, will stimulate more research and deeper understanding.

– John D. Roth, editor