

“We need rest to confront and
comfort a restless world.”

–*Timothy Shenk '07*



A Different Journey



IMAGES BY MATTHEW STYER

A group of 10 college students and recent graduates – eight from EMU – embarked on a cross-country cycling and spiritual adventure this summer. Another 53 cyclists joined “Bike Movement” for shorter segments along the way.

From www.BikeMovement.org:

“Our vision is to provide a responsive, relevant and bridge-building space for young adults to engage open conversation,” said project coordinator Dave Landis ’04 (*above*) of Harleysville, Pa.

Touring participants creatively recorded and summarized the group’s conversations with individuals and congregations en route on a dynamic website, inviting others to respond and dialog.

The journey was a call for the church to reemerge as a movement rather than an institution. Sarah Thompson, of Elkhart, Ind., and an ’06 grad of Spelman College in Atlanta, explained: “Our future in the church is linked to the future of the church globally. We aim to connect groups of young people across the country and the world to think about how they conceptualize church and the message of Jesus in their lives.”

bike movement.

timeline

LATE APRIL – Bike Movement is explored as a project at a conference in Elkhart, Indiana.

JULY 10 – The journey begins at Cape Lookout on the Oregon Coast. The first day's distance is 90 miles, ending at Portland Mennonite Church.

JULY 11 – Oregon's Cascades mountain range is crossed near Mt. Hood at an elevation over 4,000 feet.

JULY 15 – Group videographer Denver Steiner '04 initiates his cycling career by increasing his longest lifetime bike ride from 5 to 95 miles.

JULY 22 – All campgrounds are full. Bike Movement is extended hospitality by Presbyterian Chapel in the Valley congregation in eastern Idaho.

JULY 25 – The highest point of the trip is reached near South Pass City, Wyoming, at an elevation of over 8,000 feet.



Bike movement wasn't just about long days on the saddle and intense discussions – the group had a lot of fun too. Clockwise from upper left: The group serves birthday pancakes to support driver Teresa Lehman '04; Sarah Thompson escorts the group to the end of the block; departing riders are given the "jelly roll hug" on their last morning; Angeline Cione shows the mark of a true cyclist.





Maintaining the bicycles was an important part of the trip. Inflating tires and lubricating chains were daily tasks. Clockwise from lower right: Nathan Maust '04 applying lubrication; Andrea Weaver, a recent Messiah graduate, helping Timothy Shenk '07 ice his knees. Needing to stay hydrated, the group would often stop to ask locals for water, which tended to lead to interesting dialogue. Dave Landis '04 (above) fixes one of the many flat tires during the trip. All cyclists were encouraged to do their own basic bike maintenance and everyone helped with chores.



We descended upon Des Moines Mennonite Church (DMMC) much like we do any other church, with bags, bikes, mounds of laundry, food and technological paraphernalia EVERYWHERE. The patience of our hosts amazes me.

Our evening conversation at DMMC simply was not long enough. Our brains were very tired, but something about what was being said deserved much more time. We were amongst people from our host church and Christ Community Church. CCC joined the Mennonite denomination three years ago. After “growing” from 600 to 75 members in a search to define a living theology, CCC was drawn to Mennonites through the writings of John Howard Yoder and others. A denomination that believes in alternative ways of engaging culture, through pacifism and community living, became a source for greater accountability for this entirely non-ethnic Mennonite Anabaptist community.

Members of CCC often live in intentional community. Communal discernment is highly encouraged as persons seek to make significant life decisions. I was personally amazed that some of the ideals our group has been discussing appear to be lived out by people in CCC. As we travel around for a short period of time, it's easy to talk about the way we want things to be. However, enacting our ideals as we return to our home communities is much more difficult. I am grateful to have an example in my mind of how one church has chosen to intentionally think and live faith.

—Alicia Horst '04 on bikemovement.com
EMS student, Hesston grad, EMHS grad

One of the questions that comes up is: “Can any of us find within our traditions something unique to offer anyone else?” We are part of a growing and changing community – our ethical traditions and cultural worship styles are important, but they are hardly timeless or culturally transcendent manifestations that encapsulate Jesus’ way for the world. But that doesn’t mean that our traditions and cultures should be blank-slated (even if they could be) and that we should imagine, somehow from scratch, what Jesus would be up to today. On the contrary, it means that we come out of particular and important stories. And we have a responsibility to those stories.

For Christians it’s the scriptures, traditions, reasonings, and experiences that make us who we are. The question then becomes... “How, in conversation, do we constructively engage the stories of others and, without forgetting our own experiences, carefully entangle ourselves in the divine mess of regenerating a mutually Created truth?”

...I have been speaking only in the context of U.S.-American Mennonites – and that dialogue, at least for me, is intimidating enough. Bike Movement is about something more, though. Bike Movement is asking me and you to consider broadening our understanding of the church to the world outside of U.S. borders – outside of North America. The broader the conversation, the more complicated it becomes. Sure. But to truly realize the Creative reign of our God – we must demand of one another at least an attempt at this imagined, truly representative, dialogue – a microcosm of the true global church.

–Tim Showalter on bikemovement.com
Harrisonburg, Va., native
Goshen College student





Clockwise from upper left: Andrea Weaver approaches the top of one of the tougher climbs of the Appalachian mountains in western Pennsylvania. The group pauses at the Ohio-Pennsylvania border, entering their ninth state. For Dave Landis, this trip follows a 14-month trip through 40 countries. Meal times, often served out the back of a truck, were a chance to reconnect with the each other. Filling water

bottles was a daily part of the early morning ritual. Landis and a member of University Mennonite Church in State College, Pa., map out the next day's route to Lancaster, one of the most difficult days of the trip. Outside Kidron, Ohio, they passed conservative Mennonite cyclists who use bicycles as an everyday form of transportation. Cycling speeds reached up to 50 mph.



timeline

JULY 29 – Jenn Heatwole '04 drives 26 hours from Salt Lake City, Utah, to connect with Bike Movement in Casper, Wyoming.

AUGUST 1 – The longest daily distance of 211 miles is completed, covering most of western Nebraska.

AUGUST 4 – A stop at Jess Roth's home in Cairo, Nebraska, leads her to join the group for two weeks. Home from a Men-

nonite Central Committee term in China, Holly Showalter '04 joins for 10 days.

AUGUST 6 – Bike Movement participates in the Sunday morning service at Bellwood Mennonite Church in Milford, Nebraska.

AUGUST 11 – The Mississippi River is crossed with a long stop for lunch and swimming.

bike movement.



Clockwise from upper left: Getting passed by large trucks and cars moving too fast and too close was always a concern of the riders. Recumbent cyclists also rode. Nathan Maust '04 rests in a church. Sometimes being on a bike has its advantages – in western Pennsylvania, a bridge closed to traffic did not hinder the riders. EMU senior Kendra Nissley was one of the core riders who completed the entire journey. Most mornings, the group departed early to avoid the heat of the day. The bikes are arranged for post-ride lubrication.



timeline

AUGUST 16 – Bike Movement joins a chapel service for Mennonite Mission Network and MCUSA in Elkhart, Indiana.

AUGUST 18 – A 25-pound watermelon is carried 128 miles to the home of Denver Steiner '04 in Orrville, Ohio.

AUGUST 21 – Teresa Lehman '04 turns 26 with a celebration complete with cake-and-candles and “Happy Birthday” worn on construction paper on riders’ chests.

AUGUST 20 – The steepest hills of the journey are encountered in western Pennsylvania as the group enters the Appalachian Mountains.

AUGUST 24 – Bike Movement is hosted by Philadelphia Praise Center, an Anabaptist Indonesian congregation in South Philadelphia.

AUGUST 25 – FINISHED! The journey is completed in Ocean City, New Jersey, after 47 days and 3,584 miles.

