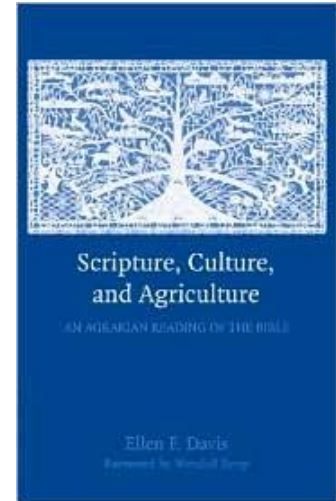


News from the Circle

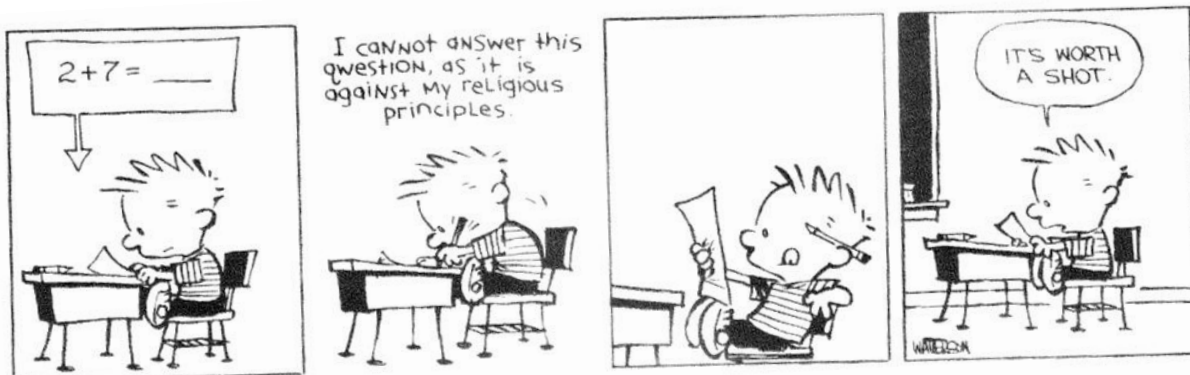
By Ched Myers

I completed my semester of Hebrew studies; thanks again to **Sam Thomas** for his generosity in letting me sit in. I got to speak in his “Introduction to Christianity” class at **California Lutheran University** too, and have gotten to know a few professors around campus. It’s a good connection. Sam’s also been working hard with **Elaine** on the **Abundant Table Farm Project** board, as they go through significant transition. We had another good session with the ATFP women on **Ellen Davis’ Scripture, Culture and Agriculture**; it’s a good read we recommend!



Our BCM board met and got out our end of year appeal at **Shady and Erin Hakim’s** new place in Santa Monica. Thanks to those two for offering us hospitality twice this month! We also had the opportunity to offer hospitality to four biking Christian travelers (sometimes called the “**Long Coats**”), and it was interesting to get to know these nomads. We also hosted **Ken Gingrich** and **Todd Wynard** from New Mexico, who are keen to launch a discipleship center in Santa Fe. One evening I had an long theological discussion with BCM board member **Cassie Lewis’** sister **Candace**, who is trying to find her way out of fundamentalism but not faith.

Having now spent over half her life residing in the U.S., Elaine took her citizenship exam, “so that I can vote and protest!” But she had to jump through extra hoops because of her conscientious objection to bearing arms and taking oaths. She was put alone into a special room to fill out a 20 page questionnaire, as apparently the Los Angeles district office had never encountered a Mennonite before. This cartoon came to her mind afterward:



We spent a weekend up in Santa Cruz attending **Scott Kennedy's** memorial service, an extraordinary gathering of over 1500 people and many testimonies to Scott's amazing career as a peace and justice advocate (*see the piece in last month's E-News by Peter Klotz Chamberlain*). Scott will be profoundly missed, especially by those of us on the west coast and friends in Palestine, with whom he worked for decades. We saw many old friends at the memorial service, and gratefully received the hospitality of **Phil McManus** and **Betsy Fairbanks**. Accompanying us was **Chris Grataski**, who we picked up at **Esalen Institute** in Big Sur on the way up (where he'd just completed a permaculture teaching certificate; Chris then spent a couple of days back down in Oak View mulching our fruit trees). While in Santa Cruz we also saw the new **Resource Center for Nonviolence** building (part of Scott's legacy), and met with a group of clergy who are planning to host us for a long weekend of events this coming March, including **David Grishaw-Jones** of **First Congregational Church** (*right*) and several local leaders I hadn't seen in 30 years!



Elaine led her **Pasadena Peace and Justice Academy** students on a field trip day to downtown L.A. to explore the theme of immigrant justice. The students experienced **Mama's Hot Tamales**, spoke to day laborers and heard from **Moises Escalante** (*left*). Moises is one of the activists featured in our upcoming book ***Our God in Undocumented: Biblical Faith and Immigrant Rights*** (Orbis, February 2012). Speaking of immigration, on Dec 13th we hosted our much-anticipated inaugural **webinar** on "Luke's Birth Narrative and Posadas sin Fronteras." Some 60 people participated in the free session, and the reviews were positive. We felt great about finally taking this step (though I forgot to push the "record" button so we missed the opportunity to post it online for those who missed it). Our plan is to host a monthly webinar in 2012; the first one will be **January 11th**, so watch www.ChedMyers.org for details.

As I write this it is snowing here in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. We are preparing for **Marg Enns'** memorial tomorrow (*see Elaine's piece above*). We wish you all a blessed Christmastide.