

MennoExpressions

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(: *FYI* :(

Pictorality Or *Apologies to Teachers of Writing*

By J. Daniel Hess

Quite a number of cultural critics and seers say that world cultures are moving beyond the era of literacy. In other words, reading and writing for the masses are becoming dated.

It won't be long, according to communicologists, until the average Kevin and Michelle will have access on their person to the totality of world knowledge and existing images. They won't carry cell phones or palm pilots but will wear glasses that are sectioned for various functions, including TV screens. Instead of typing instructions, Kevin and Michelle will simply call for what they want to voice-sensitive instruments. They will live in the culture of pictures and orality—pictorality.

How many examples will convince you?

- Ben (8) and Sam (7) create complex Lego structures following only picture instructions.
- Mary (56) doesn't write friendly letters with printed pictures enclosed anymore. She uses a cell phone/camera.
- Lenora (39) checks out at Kroger by punching pictures.
- Gene (32) designs textbooks for McDougal Holt. Even literature books are dominated by pictures and graphics.
- With global positioning devices that use verbal instructions, Steve (23) doesn't have to read in order to drive a car. (To pass the driver's test, yes.)
- Tanya (28) doesn't read novels anymore; she'd rather see films and watch television.
- Jeff Saturday doesn't have to be able to read in order to perform as star center for the Colts.

For millennia the vast majority of people communicated verbally. They told stories. They listened to bards. They heard their news from messengers. They received the Gospel via beautiful church windows. They memorized their wisdom. Those who wrote words and read them were a special elite.

Then, thanks to Gutenberg's printing press with movable type, paper, and ink (around 1439), an era of mass literacy began. In our part of the globe, a basic education came to consist of reading, writing and arithmetic. As we got better and better at literacy, our orality—including our hearing—declined. (We had far more trouble understanding an African's name than an oral African had of our names.)

However, when electronic communication took its early

Drawing by Aimee Mayeda

forms in radio, movies, television and telephone, few people realized the arrival of a challenge to the literacy era. The coming of binary (digital) usage, feedback technology, fiber optics and computer operations sped up the revolution. The literacy era was turning out to be of short duration.

Parts of the world that never really achieved literacy merely jumped from the oral era to the pictorial era. Many parts of Africa and Asia and some parts of Europe adopted cell phones sooner than we did. To this day in areas of the Pacific Rim people have taken to electronic paraphernalia faster than are we. (Part of the lag we face is due to the cost of electronics, and that is due partly to corporations competing to profit from technological innovation.)

Where literacy had been valued (Western Europe, Canada and United States), literacy skills and disposition are declining. How many fathers and mothers and children, at 8 p.m. in the evening, sit in their houses and read? Newspaper readership continues to fall. At best, people read captions to pictures. Before children are four years old, they select icons on the screen to play computer games. Libraries, even on college campuses, are rapidly changing into electronic laboratories.

See *Pictorality*, p. 8

Editor's Desk

Ten years from now, will *MennoExpressions* still arrive in church mailboxes? Or will FMCers read it only online or on the special glasses that Dan Hess describes in his article? Will e-mail discussions like the one that recently centered on *The Golden Compass* be commonplace? Will small groups each have their own blog? Will bulletins be obsolete?

In the long run, will new modes of communication hinder the formation of church community or will they strengthen it? How will our understanding of community change?

This issue of *MennoExpressions* looks at ways in which technology is changing the way we communicate in our personal lives, but these same changes will also, (indeed, already are) affecting how we communicate with others in the church.

What is lost and what is gained? And to what extent can we lower the losses and increase the gains? Should we say "no" to some of the changes or is change inevitable and we should learn to acquiesce as wisely as possible? It seems to me those questions are not being raised enough, not only in the church but in society and in our personal lives.

Mandy describes how blogging has brought her closer to her friends. Shannon cites an example in which text-messaging has created a painful distance. Alison describes a web site forming a bridge for her ill brother and his family. Dylan cites e-mail as another movement toward abstraction, another step toward devaluation of the sensory world. *SMW*

Letter from a Reader

Dear Friends of First Mennonite Church,
A Blessed Christmas Season.

As a reader of *MennoExpressions*, I decided to share with you a thought I had about the Big Dipper:

I took a drink from the
Big Dipper last night.
It wasn't easy.
But I reached it from
my open window
with a wooden spoon.

The taste was mostly
apple with some mint
and laced with salt
from mist of oceans,
seas and people's tears.

With love and prayers,
Alma Coffman

I was at FMC from Sept. 74 to May 75 as a seminary student.

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A Caring Bridge

By Alison Schumacher

While I use a computer incessantly for work and increasingly as an organizing tool in my personal life, I've not considered myself particularly techno-savvy. I don't maintain any profiles on social networking sites, I have yet to listen to a podcast, and I follow only one blog—that of a friend whose life is crazy enough that it's blog-worthy. And yet this year I've become a great supporter of a blog called CaringBridge.org. CaringBridge offers free blog space and webpages to hospitalized individuals and offers a meaningful way for family and friends to connect—or simply stay updated on the prognosis of their loved one

Patients may post information about their diseases and recovery. Readers may post responses publicly through the site or privately using the contact information on the page. It has saved our family from unnecessarily duplicating difficult discussions with family and friends—especially for my brother, Jared. He was diagnosed last May with leukemia and was as shocked as the rest of us. He quickly tired of having to share that shock with each person who called him for the official "scoop."

Soon, he found out about CaringBridge and began posting journal entries. Family and friends picked up the URL and emailed it out to extended networks of acquaintances. Jared's wife, Anne, has mentioned that the blog has opened up more communication with many other people than she or Jared could have reached on their own. The sheer amount of energy expended to keep family members in the loop via calls and e-mails has been lessened significantly by this web tool.

In the beginning, Jared would check the page view count every day to lift his spirits, knowing that many people were including him in their prayers and following his journey. As of this writing in early January, his blog has been viewed over 30,000 times. He's written quite openly and thoughtfully about his faith and struggle, moving many to thank him for his candor, this unexpected invitation to walk with him through a difficult and scary time.

As his strength fluctuates, Anne or our mom, Chris, will post updates when Jared cannot. He has also included photos of his family on the pages, a reminder of who else is sharing in the agony of his disease. On the top of his main page is a particularly lovely photograph of Jared and his oldest son, Caleb, from winter 2006. It's a typical photo of Jared before leukemia struck—healthy, happy, vibrant. To contrast that photo with Jared as he looks today is startling, but it's also a welcome reminder of who Jared really is.

Last week, plans were hatched to hold a prayer vigil on Sunday night in Philadelphia. Info was posted on the blog and the invitation to come to their church was extended to anyone in the Philly area who wanted to pray together. Comments posted on the blog have indicated how many other prayer vigils have been organized for Jared around the country. It is a source of much comfort and hope to Jared that so many are praying, so specifically, for his healing.

A caring bridge, indeed.

An Unconventional Christmas Lesson

By Shannon Walker

**“Wshing every1 a Merry Christmas
and an even greater New Year.**

**Be blessed, safe & rmbr to cherish time w/loved 1’s.
Much love 2 all;*)”**

This was the message that appeared on my screen Christmas morning from one of my beloved cousins, Maria. My mind immediately flew back to the countless Christmases we spent together, trading gifts because we knew the other would appreciate it more or writing our letters to Santa together so that we could get gifts that went together. Just one year older than I, Maria was like my sister. As young girls, we bathed together, did every church activity together, wore matching outfits . . . shared our fears and our dreams. How had I been reduced to a text message Christmas greeting? And one that ‘every1’ else received?

When my mother and I moved from Chicago to Indianapolis in 1996, text messages were a foreign concept and cell phones were used for absolute emergencies (probably because they weighed about 20 lbs.) As a young adult, I was not raised in the generation or a culture that sends Christmas cards or letters to celebrate the season and log the joys of the year that is ending. While I understand and appreciate that practice, the telephone has always been my mode of communication. We would get Christmas phone calls and even returned to the city a couple of times to be with family during the holiday season. In the eleven Christmases that have elapsed, communication has dwindled from a phone call to a voice mail message to a personal text message and now to a group text message. Do I dare ask what next Christmas will bring?

“Rmbr to cherish time w/loved 1’s.” I am saddened and disappointed that “cherish” now suggests the bare minimum in communication. With text message greetings, I don’t get to hear the sound of Maria’s voice, of my other family members in the background; we don’t get to exchange updates about our lives nor do we get to share the joy of Christmas by expressing, “I Love You.” Perhaps I am incorrectly blaming telephone technology for the lack of communication that I am experiencing with my family during one of the most cherished times of the year. Maybe this is a relationship that would have transformed in spite of technology, but I am sure that the ability to generically send “Christmas blessings” has aided and abetted this phenomenon.

Aside from being sorrowful about how cell phones and text messages are affecting my relationship with family, as a schoolteacher, I am equally disgusted with its direct effect on the spelling and grammar of young people. In a class of 30 students, at least 20 have personal cell phones. I often have to literally remind my 9th grade students that the piece of paper they should be writing an essay on is not a phone screen. Words are frequently shortened like “rmbr” is used in my cousin’s message for the word “remember.” The most frequent habit from text messaging technology is replacing the word “to” to the number 2.

My criticism of text messaging might lead one to believe that I do not participate in this trend. However, I must admit my own personal familiarity and usage. Prior to receiving this “Christmas greeting” from my cousin, I was much less conscious of how I was replacing meaningful and valuable conversations with text on a screen. This was my Christmas lesson.

Textual Language

By Dylan Nissley

E-mail can be a wonderful thing, but its inherent problem is that it is based on only one small part of communication: textual language. There exists dynamics to our interactions with other people (as well as other life) that go beyond words. We have no man-made language that can articulate these dynamics, no means of expression that celebrates through description rather than comparison. Even when we aspire to value things in and of themselves, we are trapped by the assumptions implicit in our words:

“Do you love me more than anyone else, more than anything?”

“I love you differently, because of what you are. Not more, not less—there’s no comparison with love, for love cherishes what is. Love is not judgment, it is measureless, matchless. . .

Where did our culture’s obsession with one-dimensional standards and comparisons come from? It looks to have originated with language itself: where one word serves to represent many different individual experiences, abstraction is already present. When you say “sunlight,” the implication is that you are referring to something changeless and uniform—but all that can be said for sure is that the term designates a multitude of diverse theory data and potential sensory data.

One might argue that what is most precious in life is not the lowest common denominators but the once-in-a-lifetime particulars, which words are least equipped to convey. What use is a word that refers to only one instant of one individual’s experience? Words serve as currency precisely because they are vague and simplistic; no word or concept could ever capture the infinite depth and complexity of a single instant of life.

But never before now has there existed the means to express ourselves in this one-dimensional way on a day to day basis. Books, plays, television and other modes of one-way mediation have allowed us to do this for centuries, but never have we been able to do this interactively. The phenomenon of e-mail boils communication down to its bare essentials, but why would anyone want to do that? And who? Are they attempting to make a statement that seems more authoritarian, more omniscient by hiding behind the inhuman guise of an e-mail address? Are they trying to stay in touch with friends far removed due to the devastation of communities caused by urban sprawl? Are they attempting to remove themselves from the reality of uninhibited communication altogether?

The problems of e-mail are miniature versions of problems in the real world. Western civilization (is there any other kind anymore?) itself is founded upon one-dimensional thinking:

See Textual Language, p. 5

Tech Conversations with a Guy Interest

By Kelsey Hartman

I've been talking to this guy over instant messaging because I'm too nervous to talk to him in class. Things have been going great; we talk about all sorts of things that are important in life, like our goals in life and our favorite movies, which really tell you a lot about a person.

Tonight, he instant messaged me first, which is very important. I mean, there could be a career in deciphering the meaning of everything that's not even said in an instant messaging conversation. If he messages you first, that means he wants to talk to you. If you message him first, it might look like you're stalkerish and he might get annoyed. Of course, the only way to know if he's annoyed is if he doesn't respond, which he can do even if he really is at his computer, or if he responds to your message but doesn't ask you any questions, thus killing the conversation.

In the following conversations over the computer with my guy interest, my screen name is *wordstoliveby85* and the guy I'm interested in has the screen name *soccerplayer007*.

wordstoliveby85: whats up

soccerplayer007: hey . . . not much. u?

wordstoliveby85: not much. how r ur classes?

soccerplayer007: ok.

He stops typing and I get nervous because I don't know what to say next. But luckily, I've got time to think. I mean, it's not like he can see me or anything. I don't have to think in real time, like if we were face to face.

I'm about to type something to break the silence, which is still a little awkward, even though we aren't talking in person. I start biting my nails, struggling for a cool line to type. Suddenly, though, he starts typing, which I know because the instant messaging program tells you.

soccerplayer007: can i ask you a question?

At this point, crazy ideas of what he might say next are rushing through my head. Like, maybe he's about to confess his love for me. Or maybe he only wants to ask what the chemistry homework is for tomorrow. Or maybe . . .

wordstoliveby85: sure, shoot.

soccerplayer007: theres this girl . . .

Did he just type that?! Maybe it's a typo on the word "girl." Maybe he meant to type my name. But I'm not about to ask anything. I don't really want to know. My heart stops for a second and my smile falls fast. But he can't see how unhappy I am, luckily, because then he'd know that I like him.

So I sit in front of my computer, just waiting. He can take all the time he needs to find the right way to say his next lines. And the silence ticks on, while I'm freaking out inside.

soccerplayer007: ive been talking to her in class and I dont know how to ask her out

Great, like I want to give him advice, which I assume is what he's asking for. So I think a second . . . what am I *supposed* to say?

wordstoliveby85: im prob not the best person to ask

soccerplayer007: y not?

wordstoliveby85: no experience in relationships

WHY did I just admit that? The fact that I've never had a boyfriend is not something I should tell a potential boyfriend. It's like every time I get in front of a keyboard and I know he can't see me, I type the stupidest things. Probably because I won't have to see his reaction, which is probably laughter, not that I'll ever know it. But the possibility of him laughing or telling his friends—hopefully his friends aren't sitting right next to him at the computer right now because then everyone will know—is just making me sick. I come up with all sorts of hypothetical situations, all of which make me want to live in a cave.

The silence is looming . . . again. He's probably thinking of the nicest way to respond to my last revelation.

soccerplayer007: well . . . what do you think I should say to her?

The word "well" followed by three periods is not a good sign. I mean, it sounds like now he's just trying to be nice. What must he be thinking right now? He'll probably never want to date me now.

I think for a minute. How can I say, "I'm interested in you and I don't want you to ask this girl out?" in the nicest and coolest way possible? At least if he never talks to me again, I could say I tried.

See Tech Conversations, p. 5

Tech Conversations *cont. from p. 4*

But, of course, I don't say that because I have plenty of time to talk myself out of it.

wordstoliveby85: just ask her out

I type this in a depressed sort of way, though he might take it as a vote of confidence in his ability to ask her out. Too bad I can't type (depressed) after the sentence because then he would know the tone of my voice. But I don't because it's not like I want him to know how depressed I am right now.

He doesn't type for a minute or so. What is he thinking? This is torture. There's way too much time to imagine all the possibilities, most of them gloomy.

soccerplayer007: i will . . . thanks for ur help. bye!

wordstoliveby85: talk to you later

soccerplayer007: **soccerplayer007 has signed off at 8:57:16 p.m.**

Excellent. Now not only am I left wondering who he's going to ask out, but I've also helped him do it. Why did he sign off so fast? Is that the only reason he wanted to talk to me? Maybe he had to use the restroom. But he signed off so fast I couldn't even ask him what he's doing later.

Of course, now I have plenty of time to read the conversation and analyze every word. He probably won't instant message me again. Were we ever even friends? I'm too shy to even talk to him in person and I'm too scared to message him first because I'm afraid he'll think I'm stalking him.

Immediately after this conversation I come up with some instant messaging/texting rules to live by:

1. NEVER have a serious conversation with a potential boyfriend (or girlfriend). All the possible meanings of one line of text can be the fastest way to the end of the relationship, even if it never really began. Technology just takes away the tone of your voice, the look on your face, and real time responses.
2. If a serious conversation starts, steer it back to safe territory, like what you ate for lunch or what movie you saw yesterday, but only if it makes you look intelligent or funny.

3. Avoid all sarcasm, even if you think it makes you look cool, because it might make you look stupid or downright mean. You don't want a remark made in sarcasm to be the beginning of a conflict (or awkwardness) or the reason your friendship is over.
4. Before you type anything, make sure you read it five times or more to analyze it for any other meaning or message that could be misinterpreted by the reader.
5. And the most IMPORTANT rule of all, don't use technology to replace meaningful conversations. Just call the person or talk to them face to face, especially if you're secretly in love with the person. This way they can't ignore you.

Textual Language *cont. from p. 3*

monotheism, monoculture, monopoly, monolinguality, monotony. Our cyclopean vision of the cosmos can be traced back to Greece, where Plato took the abstraction inherent in language one step further. He declared that our abstractions refer to some "higher plane" in which abstractions like "justice" exist in their pure form; in doing so, he turned everything backwards, placing our broad generalizations before the experiences they summarize and claiming that they are truer than the raw materials they purport to represent. Thus he took the reference point of our concepts out of the world altogether, suggesting that our real experiences in it are less important than our ideas about it. The apostle Paul expanded this philosophy into a religious doctrine: the ideal exists in heaven and the earth is only a flawed, evil imitation.

Ultimately, the pursuit of ideals that cannot be realized in this world constitutes a rejection of the world and thus of life itself—as demonstrated by the sad fate of the body builders and anorexics who take that pursuit to its logical extreme, the grave. We are so used to denigrating this world, saying it is an imperfect, even intolerable place. So our world appears, compared against ideals that seem perfect precisely because they do not and cannot exist. So our world becomes, when we attempt to navigate it according to those ideals rather than the real things around and within us.

The Virtues of Blogging

By Mandy Yoder

Five of my best friends in the entire world (the women I lived with my senior year at Goshen College) live far away from Indianapolis and another one is moving from Indy to Albuquerque this summer. But, despite the miles between us, I could pick out each of the five babies that have been born into our group if I saw them in a line up. Even though I haven't see Lisa since this summer, I know that she went to the Art Institute of Chicago this week wearing her two month old daughter in a fleece sling. Even though I haven't seen Tara since early August, I know that her nine month old son had a ball playing with wrapping paper and pine needles at Christmas time. And even though I haven't see Tina's son for several months, I know that he has grown at an amazing rate and now looks like an adorable butterball.

Of course I could know all of these things from a phone conversation with my friends, but none of us have the time to talk to each one of the others in the group as frequently as we want updates on one another's lives. So, I know all of these things about my friends and their families because we all have blogs, and we all update and check them religiously. Sometimes we joke that the frequency with which we look at each others sites borders on stalking, but we don't care. The joy of seeing Eliza in the sling instead of just hearing about it is priceless. And the cuteness of Emerson with the pine tree shard in his hand is so much more amazing than hearing Tara describe it. And, of course, seeing pictures of little Henry . . . uh, I mean, enormous Henry is much better than having his mom just tell me, "Yeah, Henry's pretty big now." They say a picture is worth a thousand words and it's so, so true.

Now, sure, blogging is kind of one sided. There is no conversation taking place. Though there are places to leave comments on what someone posted, it's not the same as a phone conversation or a face to face meeting, but to me it's sure better than nothing. And nothing is what I fear many of us would have if we didn't have the blogs. I certainly don't have the time to be calling each of my friends to tell them what Jon, Noah and I are up to this week, so I update the blog and it does the work for me. Then if someone wants to be in touch in a more personal way they leave a comment, or call, or write an e-mail. Its not like blogging is the only way we stay in touch. We do call and e-mail a lot, but the blogs are a wonderful aid in our commitment to stay connected even though the miles between Philly, Chicago, Madison, New York, Ohio, Indiana and Albuquerque are numerous.

Now I don't want to make it sound like I think it's healthy for a relationship to exist solely through electronic media. Not at all. My friends and I get together as an entire group of seven twice a year in person for a weekend to catch up face-to-face and one or two of us see each other at other times throughout the year as circumstance and schedules allow. And those times are important. The quality of conversation during those meetings are, of course, different from simply viewing each others' blogs. But, it sure is nice to be able to pick up in the present when we get together rather than having to rehash the past six months.

Now before you think I've been so brainwashed by the blog fairy that I can't find anything at all about which to be critical let me say that a part of me does find blogging to be a bit self-centered. I mean, in order to post you've got to believe that someone out there actually gives a care that your baby had Cheerios for the first time last Thursday night. But, in the case of my college friends, I do care and so do they, so it all works out.

You've Sent Mail— *But Are Your E-Mails Communicating?*

By Kenda M. Resler Friend

"What?? You didn't have e-mail in college OR on your first job?" I can hear it now—my own children someday being incredulous that their "ancient" mother came of age in a time before most people had an e-mail address. Whether e-mail is an everyday staple or a new adventure, proper e-mail etiquette can help enhance your communication effectiveness. Here are a few tips from someone whose daily living is earned in part from writing e-mails for executives and global employees. These oft-ignored best practices can help your message deliver valuable information and not trigger the "instant delete" instinct in this world of e-mail overload.

- **Focus on the subject line**—it's like a headline in the newspaper. Make it meaningful, so the receiver has an idea what the e-mail is about—and thus will be more inclined to open it.
- **Think about to whom the message is going.** You should especially watch out for the trap of "Reply All" when it is highly likely only a few on the list actually need to see your reply. Only forward messages to those who are directly involved with the topic you're addressing.
- **Be concise.** Back in the day when one had the limit of a page of paper, the reader knew you were going to have to reach conclusion; that isn't the case with e-mail. If multiple scrolls down the screen are required, odds are the reader won't.
- **Watch your inflection and mood.** Because of a lack of vocal inflection, gestures and shared environment, e-mail is not as rich a communication method as face-to-face or telephone conversation. Sarcasm is especially dangerous in this environment.
- **DID YOU MEAN TO SHOUT?** Yes, all CAPS means you are shouting—would you really be shouting if you were on the phone or face-to-face with the person?

Finally, although e-mail is fast and convenient, it is good for people of all generations to remember computers aren't always the answer. This quote from a communicator's newsletter provides a good "test" as to whether or not e-mail is the right choice: "When people find themselves spending a lot of time searching for precisely the right words, it's often a sign that the topic warrants an in-person discussion."

Facebookers Anonymous

By Erica Hartman

My name is Frank.

Hello, Frank.

Hello. It's been two days since my last sign-in.

How have you felt the past two days, Frank?

Lonely.

Why? You have friends, correct?

618, to be exact.

I'm not talking about Facebook, Frank.

Oh.

How many friends would you say you have in real life?

Five, maybe. But, I might have six, if Jessica confirms an invitation to be my friend.

Frank, are you talking about Facebook again?

Oh. Yes. But that's where I meet all my friends.

Last week, we talked about joining a club or sport to make friends. Have you tried that?

Yes. I joined Soccer Fans.

Is that another Facebook group?

Yes.

(sighs)

It's a club.

Yes, I know. Frank, we are working on having real relationships with real people. Posting messages on a "wall" is not a real conversation, let alone a real sport.

Well, it can be a real conversation if you check your wall every few minutes. I've done it before.

It's not healthy.

I know. I read that on a wall in the Largest Facebook Group Ever group.

(another sigh) Why are you here, Frank?

My last girlfriend left me. She said I spent too much time on Facebook.

Do you agree with her?

I don't know. She didn't understand, though. Facebook is a matter of life and death.

How, Frank? Those "people" aren't really there.

My Fluff friend will die if I don't feed him.

Can you elaborate?

I adopted Prince Milford about a year ago. He's a kangaroo from Australia. If I don't feed him and pet him regularly, he'll

become aloof and woebegone.

How do you feed this "friend?"

Oh, I have to buy food from the Fluff store with the money I earn from petting my friends' Fluff friends. Generally, I feed Prince Milford raggedy boots and deviled eggs. Occasionally, a mojito.

But, he's not "real." (sighs) How did you meet your girlfriend?

Facebook.

(coughs, sounding suspiciously like laughter) Have you ever considered why your last girlfriend didn't like Facebook?

Well, I know I was on it a lot.

How often would you say?

About 10 hours a day. After I lost my job, about 16. It's addicting.

Yes, I know. That's why you're here, Frank.

She told me I was acting stalkish. Do you believe that?

Do you?

I don't know. I guess I was. Just because I check all 618 of my friends' profiles every day, doesn't make me crazy. And I only added all 201 of her friends because I thought that's what a good boyfriend did. I mean, everyone's doing it.

So if all of your "Facebook friends" jumped off a cliff, would you?

It depends. Is it a real or virtual one? And can I add it as an application to my profile?

(sighs . . . again)

Anyway, I've stopped "friending" all the people from my middle school and I've reduced my group memberships down to 50.

That is progress. How do you feel?

Better, I think. I have fewer headaches, and my doctor says the numbness in my fingers should go away soon.

Good for you.

He says it's because I'm Facebooking less. I think it's because I've stopped poking people.

Poking?

Yeah. You know, when you click on this button on someone's profile that says, "Poke Him!" I've stopped because it really only starts poking wars, and I've decided that I'm above those kinds of things.

I'm glad to hear that.

I think I'm really growing.

One last thing, Frank. How old are you?

45.

Pictorality *cont. from pg. 1*

Increasingly in our culture, the skills of writing and reading will be the domain (privilege) of a special minority, just as were the artists who sketched pictographs in caves or the scribes who laboriously copied books. People won't read poetry; they will expect to listen to it.

Will literacy specialists be highly enough valued in our culture to attract our children to those special (and old) vocations involving written communication? That is, will youngsters who know the power of video, TV, movies and computers be willing to "settle" for careers in writing?

I offer this little essay with two dominant feelings. First, I recognize and submit to the reality that our planet accommodates a dynamic populace through which change will always occur. I don't care to be among those who resist change.

Second, I have so valued reading and writing that I deeply regret that they might become the tools (and the enjoyment) of a limited portion of the population.

I suppose I should share my third disgruntlement. Increasingly, crossword puzzles call for names of popular culture stars, which leave me and my spaces blank!

Seriously, will communication ultimately suffer? I'm not prepared to say so, knowing how powerful are tools such as storytelling, person to person exchanges, icons and images, song and drama, oral argument and the mysteriously powerful languages of hate and love.

What are the implications for faith? I recommend that you check out from your church library the book written by Shane Higgs who led a seminar at First Mennonite Church in March. It is titled, *The Hidden Power of Electronic Culture; How media shapes faith, the gospel, and church.* (I am so biased toward literacy that the grammatical error in the title bugs heck out of me.) Higgs is, in the lingo of the 60's, hip. He writes with confidence about an emerging church that is attuned to a pictorial/oral culture. His book will help you think of the implications for our Mennonite churches.

I reached my word limit. I shall now turn off my computer and go to the den, not to watch TV, but to finish reading a really good novel.

Net Lingo

<u>143</u>	I Love You	<u>182</u>	I Hate You
<u>HIG</u>	How's It Going?	<u>k</u>	OK
<u>9</u>	Parent Is Watching	<u>EM</u>	Excuse Me
<u>CYM</u>	Check Your Mail	<u>2moro</u>	Tomorrow
<u>CRB</u>	Come Right Back	<u>L8R</u>	Later
<u>DNC</u>	Does Not Compute	<u>GR8</u>	Great
<u>NP</u>	No Problem	<u>2nite</u>	Tonight
<u>OIC</u>	Oh, I See	<u>kewl</u>	Cool
<u>OT</u>	Off Topic	<u>THX</u>	Thanks
<u>BTW</u>	By The Way	<u>J/K</u>	Just Kidding

From www.netlingo.com

Ideas Explicated by Shane Higgs

1. The forms of media and technology—regardless of their contents—cause profound changes in the church and culture.

2. The telegraph brought about the death of "absolute truth;" radio reversed the individualism of print; the graphic revolution is leading Western churches to adopt characteristics of the Eastern Orthodox Church, retrieving the Medieval Catholic emphasis on communion over preaching, and changing our concept of conversion from a single binary event to an ongoing process of transformation.

3. The church will increasingly be called to carry on the concrete, incarnational ministry of Jesus, not as sermon, but as community, with the Gospel written on the people who are the media screens of the modern age. "We are the television screen . . . we wear all mankind as our skin."

Food for Thought

By Devon Miller

Groundhog Day Treat could start a tradition regardless of whether the groundhog sees his shadow. Margaret and I received this nut treat as a gift post-Christmas. The unusual spicing makes them special. They are addictive so don't make more than you think you should be eating. The recipe comes from United Feature Syndicate Inc.

Groundhog Nuts

- 4 cups of pecan halves
- ¼ cup pure maple syrup
- 2 tablespoons melted butter
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon ground cardamom
- ¼ teaspoon nutmeg
- ¼ teaspoon ground mace
- Cooking oil spray

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Place pecans in a large mixing bowl. Add the syrup and butter and toss. Sprinkle on the salt, cardamom, nutmeg and mace. Toss until the nuts are evenly coated.

Spray a large baking sheet that has a rim (jelly-roll pan) with cooking spray. Spread nuts evenly over pan. Bake, removing the pan every five minutes from the oven to stir. Do this until the nuts are toasted and fragrant—about 20 minutes. Let cool—about 25 minutes—to room temperature. Store nuts in an air-tight container.

were the artists who sketched pictographs in caves or the scribes who laboriously copied books. People won't read poetry; they will expect to listen to it.

Will literacy specialists be highly enough valued in our culture to attract our children to those special (and old) vocations involving written communication? That is, will youngsters who know the power of video, TV, movies and computers be willing to "settle" for careers in writing?

I offer this little essay with two dominant feelings. First, I recognize and submit to the reality that our planet accommodates a dynamic populace through which change will always occur. I don't care to be among those who resist change.

Second, I have so valued reading and writing that I deeply regret that they might become the tools (and the enjoyment) of a limited portion of the population.

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Pictorality *cont. from page one*

Increasingly in our culture the skills of writing and reading will be the domain (privilege) of a special minority, just as

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