



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

MAYOR JERRY SANDERS

## San Diego Public Library

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
October 22, 2007

CONTACT: Lynn Whitehouse  
619-236-6821

### **David L. Weaver-Zercher, One of the Authors of Amish Grace: How Forgiveness Transcended Tragedy, to Speak at the San Diego Public Library**

*“A story our polarized country needs to hear: It is still grace that saves.”*

*—Bill Moyers, Public Affairs Television*

San Diego...KPBS, The Fetzer Institute's Campaign for Love & Forgiveness and the San Diego Public Library will host David L. Weaver-Zercher, one of the Amish Grace authors on Monday, November 19 at 6:30 p.m. in the auditorium of the Central Library, located at 820 E Street in downtown San Diego. This event is free and open to the public.

On October 2, 2006, a thirty-two-year-old gunman entered a one - room Amish school in Nickel Mines, Pennsylvania. Ordering the boys and other adults to leave, the killer opened fire and shot the 10 remaining girls execution-style, killing five and leaving the others critically wounded. He then shot himself as police stormed the building.

Before the sun had set on that awful October day members of the Amish community brought words of forgiveness to the family of the one who had slain their children. Those in the outside world were incredulous that forgiveness could be offered so quickly for such a heinous crime. The story of Amish grace eclipsed the story of violence and arrested the world's attention.

Amish Grace explores the many questions this story raises about the religious beliefs and habits that led the Amish to forgive so quickly. It examines forgiveness embedded in a separatist society and questions if Amish practices parallel or diverge from other religious and secular notions of forgiveness. It also asks why and how forgiveness became international news.

Regardless of the cultural seedbed that nourished this story, the surprising act of Amish forgiveness begs a deeper exploration. How could the Amish forgive so swiftly? What did this act mean to them? And how might their story provide lessons for the rest of us?

David L. Weaver-Zercher is associate professor of American religious history and chair of the Department of Biblical and Religious Studies at Messiah College in Grantham, Pennsylvania. He received his Ph.D. in religion from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in 1997.

Professor Weaver-Zercher's writing has focused on outsiders' perspectives and portrayals of the Amish. His books in that area include *The Amish in the American Imagination* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001); *Writing the Amish: The Worlds of John A. Hostetler* (Penn State University Press, 2005); and a co-edited volume with Diane Zimmerman Umble, *The Amish and the Media* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008).

Weaver-Zercher's publications also include *Vital Christianity: Spirituality, Justice, and Christian Practice*, co-edited with William H. Willimon (T & T Clark, 2005). His writing has appeared in numerous journals, including *Church History*, *Mennonite Quarterly Review*, and *North Carolina Historical Review*.

Major support is provided by the Fetzer Institute as part of the Campaign for Love and Forgiveness, <http://www.fetzer.org/Love>. A private foundation established by John E. Fetzer, a broadcast pioneer and former owner of the Detroit Tigers, the mission of the Fetzer Institute is to foster awareness of the power of love and forgiveness in the emerging global community. Informed by both scientific rigor and spirituality, the Institute's research and education programs explore how love and forgiveness effect transformation and healing for individuals and communities.

Please visit [www.kpbs.org/loveandforgive](http://www.kpbs.org/loveandforgive) for further information on the local Love and Forgiveness Campaign.

Copies of *Amish Grace* will be available for purchase and David Weaver-Zercher will sign copies of his book.

Learn about other events at the San Diego Public Library's Central Library and 35 branches, find links to numerous additional resources, or search for materials in the Library's catalog online at [www.sandiegolibrary.org](http://www.sandiegolibrary.org)

*The City of San Diego Public Library – Your Link to the Past and Gateway to the Future*

# # #