

CANADIAN MENNONITE

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Volume 18 Number 3

Prepared for a dystopian future?

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the technological present on pg. 21

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EDITORIAL

Faithful speech

DICK BENNER
EDITOR/PUBLISHER

A letter writer in this issue questions the practice of yoga and doing labyrinths and other types of what she calls “non-biblical meditation and prayer.”

“Are these practices of the Bible?”

Angela Harder asks rhetorically. “Did Jesus teach us to do these things?”

In an upcoming edition, another writer asserts that the concept of stewardship is “non-biblical,” as it was expressed in a story about a “creation care” day event at Rosthern Junior College in Saskatchewan (“Students say YESS! to creation care,” Jan. 6, page 30). Calling stewardship an “eco-theology buzzword,” he claims it has come from “a desire to tone down the Genesis imperatives to *subdue the earth and have dominion over it*” (Genesis 1:28).

Enough already, another writer agonizes (also in an upcoming edition), over the ongoing discussion about John Howard Yoder’s sexual abuse. “As a friend of the family, I feel for his wife and children when this matter is repeated over and over again. We still read the psalms of David and refer to the patriarchs of the Old Testament in spite of their sexual misconduct,” she writes, wanting “his brilliance and his brokenness [held] together,” in calling for an end to the discussion.

In response to Gerhard Neufeld’s “Unlearning the Bible to welcome homosexuals” column (Jan. 6, page 15), Brent

Kipfer in this issue uses the Scripture—as Neufeld warns—to insist that the Bible’s “prohibition of homosexual relationships reflects the same holy love of God. We do no one any favours by unlearning that.”

And a couple is pulling its financial support due to our publication of Neufeld’s column.

Thus goes some of the conversation on our pages.

While we are extremely pleased with this healthy engagement of our readers, and want to present

all sides of an issue, we would like to caution our faith community of some subtle tendencies that can diminish the faithfulness of this conversation.

First, as people of the Book, we are very familiar with the stories and instruction comprising the narrative that is our guide for living. In some cases, however, familiarity breeds misuse. We are all too familiar with the dark side of our Anabaptist history, where we used the words of the Book as a weapon, taking the words of Scripture, often out of context, to hurl insults at each other, intending to intimidate and manipulate.

This has often resulted in division in congregations, fragmenting us as persons of faith, leading to splinter groups, and leaving families and individuals hurting and unable to put their lives back together. In some case, the bitterness is so severe that these persons depart from their faith and want nothing to do with the church.

What a tragic and unintended

consequence! But our words and actions do have consequences. There is nothing wrong with stating our convictions with passion so long as we do so in a spirit of unity, rather than insisting that our views prevail above all others. None of us has all the truth, but together we come to knowledge of the truth (1 Timothy 2:4).

Second, we need to hold the words of the scriptural narrative in context. As John Epp has pointed out in our “Sounding the Scriptures” feature interview (Jan. 6, page 4), the native medium of the Bible, as it comes to us today, is speech. The cultures in which the ancient texts originated were “oral” cultures. The stories that form the biblical narrative come out of very different times from our own 21st century.

Thus, it is foolhardy to try to fit some of them literally into our cultural context. In our degrading environment, for instance, we quite correctly look at the creation story through the eyes of “stewardship,” rather than “having dominion”—the language of the culture out of which the story comes to us. The earth, in Adam and Eve’s time, was new and unspoiled. There were few people on the planet. Today, we are “spoiling” the earth at an alarming rate and our world can hardly sustain its overpopulation.

Thus, our urgent need to turn from earth’s developers to earth’s caretakers.

We live in an information and scientific age, where words are abundant, but often unexamined, often loosely and viciously used. And with the Internet, they are spoken not only to a small community of known persons, but to a worldwide audience in very different settings.

In light of these complexities—not only in our small faith community, but in the global community—let us guard our speech.



ABOUT THE COVER:

Meghan Harder poses in a human-sized nest she built in Waterloo Park, Waterloo, Ont., as part of her art challenge to our current culture, to think about how dependent Canadians are on technology. She wonders how humans would—or will—live if their possessions and supports are taken away from them. See story on page 21.

PHOTO: COURTESY OF MEGHAN HARDER

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Hebrews 10:23-25 • Accuracy, fairness, balance • Editorial freedom •

Seeking and speaking the truth in love • Open hearts and minds in discerning God's will •

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Do you like to plan months ahead? Click on our online calendar for a longer listing of upcoming events across Mennonite Church Canada: <http://www.canadianmennonite.org/churchcalendar>.

Our website features selected stories from past issues and web-exclusive stories. And don't forget the Young Voices section for content from a younger perspective.

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GOD AT WORK IN THE CHURCH FEATURE

Listen to the unjust judge

BY ANITA EAST

SPECIAL TO CANADIAN MENNONITE

“Then Jesus told them a parable about their need to pray always and not to lose heart. He said, ‘In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor had respect for people. In that city there was a widow who kept coming to him and saying, “Grant me justice against my opponent.” For a while he refused; but later he said to himself, “Though I have no fear of God and no respect for anyone, yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will grant her justice, so that she may not wear me out by continually coming.” And the Lord said, ‘Listen to what the unjust judge says. And will not God grant justice to his chosen ones who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long in helping them? I tell you, he will quickly grant justice to them. And yet, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?’” (Luke 18: 1-8).

When I first read this passage in Luke’s gospel, in preparation for preaching on it, I thought, “Oh, this is just too easy.” Unlike some stories which leave you scratching your head, this one seems all too straightforward. If even an unjust judge listens to a persistent widow, how much more will God—a just judge—listen to our cries?

Not that I have any problem with the advice to pray without ceasing and not lose heart. I’ve been buoyed up by recalling these words many times. But there is something not quite right. If you “Google” the passage, like all good preachers do nowadays, you learn that we are to imitate the widow, be persistent and bothersome, and God—like the judge—will listen. Don’t grow weary in your prayers, for God will hurry to your side.

A nice thought, but there is a slightly dissonant tone in my head. Not only does its comparison of God with an unjust judge leave a bad taste in my mouth, but I realized that the picture of God rushing to bring justice to the oppressed doesn’t actually



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resonate with the world as I know it. The oppressed do continue to cry out, and justice is not always quick to come. We are ardent in our prayers, yet sometimes they go unanswered.

When that happens, we can be left with some uncomfortable conclusions. Perhaps we weren't praying hard enough or faithfully enough. Perhaps we aren't worthy enough or loved enough by God. Maybe God just doesn't care or we deserve our calamity after all. Or, as more and more finally conclude, maybe God doesn't exist at all.

Irving Greenberg, an American rabbi, author and educator, wrote after the Holocaust: "No statement, theological or otherwise, should be made that would not be credible in the presence of the burning children." To take his words seriously, I have to wonder whether it is credible to tell those perishing in the thousands of hells we've made manifest on earth, "God will listen if you only pray without ceasing. God will bring justice soon." The truth is, millions go to their graves without ever seeing this promise arrive.

But what if this isn't the promise God is making? I decided to put the books and Google searches aside, and spend a week or so just contemplating and meditating on this ancient story. In the contemplative practice of *Lectio Divina*, we are invited to "pray" the text by observing what grabs and holds our attention, and then to linger there. When I approached the parable in this way, what stood out right away was Verse 6: "And the Lord said, 'Listen to what the unjust judge says.'"

This made me curious. Why is it that Jesus suggests we listen to him? The more

I stayed with these words, the more I began to hear an unsettling familiarity in those words of the judge. They don't sound like God; they sound like us.

Martin Luther King Jr. once said, "Freedom is never voluntarily given by the oppressors; it must be demanded by the oppressed." Perhaps Jesus is making a similar point: This persistent widow, powerless in her time and place, without a formal voice in a court of law which only gave official voice to men, nevertheless achieved justice for herself. She is a powerful example of the old Quaker adage, "Speak truth to power."

The judge isn't actually being "unjust" in his treatment of the widow, not at the time the parable was spoken, at least. Justice in ancient Israel was a relational

under the law of the day.

So what was it that made the judge unjust or unrighteous? Which requirements of what relationship was he not fulfilling? The answer lies in the first two descriptors of him: that he neither feared God nor respected people. He may have followed the letter of the law, but he violated the primary commandment to love God and his neighbour as himself. He was in violation of the covenant between God and the people of Israel. The underlying issue was not legal, but covenantal.

Perhaps we should listen to the unjust judge because we are like him. While being just before the laws of our land, we have been unrighteous before God. Our ancestors followed the letter of the law

I have to wonder whether it is credible to tell those perishing in the thousands of hells we've made manifest on earth, 'God will listen if you only pray without ceasing. God will bring justice soon.'

term, not primarily a legal one, as it has become in our time. To be "just" was to fulfill the expectations of a particular relationship. A parallel term in the Hebrew Bible was "righteous." In fact, many translations of Luke's story name the judge as the "unrighteous judge."

As far as the widow was concerned, the judge did fulfill his proper responsibilities. He had no legal reason to listen to her. The widow didn't have any legal voice in the courts; only her male relatives would have had that right. To actually listen to her in the end would have been a completely unnecessary requirement

as they settled on indigenous land stolen through broken treaties. Immigration laws are only being upheld when would-be refugees are sent back "home" to abject poverty and exploitation. And no laws are being broken when we purchase cheap goods at rock-bottom prices made by children in sweatshops in Bangladesh.

But have we loved God and our neighbour as ourselves? We may be just before the law, but the sorry truth of both past and present, including the Mennonite church, is that we have not always listened to the cries of the weak because we've decided that they ought to have no

voice. Or when their relentless cries for justice do finally start to be heard, we do not know what to do, how we could possibly live differently, what responsibility we might actually have. And so too often we do nothing.

Perhaps Jesus wants us to listen to what this judge says, not because he serves as a counter-example to God, but because he serves as a counter-example to us. I can imagine Jesus saying, if a judge who doesn't love God or neighbour eventually listens to the cries of the voiceless, how much more should you, who claim to love God and neighbour, do the same!

Listen to what the unjust judge says. Be like him. Listen. Change.

And there is even yet another possibility, now that God is freed up from being linked to the unjust judge. Perhaps God does appear in this story after all, dressed in the widow's garments. This actually makes more sense, considering that this is an upside-down kingdom we are talking about.

God is "she with no voice in the world," the One the world rejected and spurned. Yet God is also "she who does not give up," even on those of us who have no fear of God nor respect for people. God continually comes to us, again and again, until we are worn out and relent . . . and repent.

That is what it means to be a covenantal God and to be faithful to that covenant. It means coming back for us even when we've broken the covenant a million times, and will a million times more. What good news it is indeed that, no matter how long it takes before we do what is right in the eyes of God, we will not be abandoned to our own hardness of heart. Isn't it on that very hardened heart that the new covenant has been written?

Could it actually be that the unjust judge is an example of what the prophet Jeremiah was proclaiming five centuries earlier?

"Behold the days are coming . . . when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel," God says in Jeremiah 31. *"I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. No longer*

shall they teach one another, or say to each other, 'Know the Lord,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest."

The unrighteous judge may have been

[The unjust judge] may have followed the letter of the law, but he violated the primary commandment to love God and his neighbour as himself.

the least of them, or may have been the greatest. Either way, even he knew the covenant of God written on his heart. It moved him to do the will of God in the end, to do justice even when the law didn't require it.

Luke was right. We are to pray unceasingly and not lose heart, but not because by doing so God will finally weary of our incessant cries and grant us our wish. Rather, it is because God has placed the seal of the covenant in our hearts and in the hearts of all people. Our constant prayers do not convince God to get with the program, but they do put some cracks in our resolve not to. Regardless of how much lack of awe and love there is for the Holy One, no matter how absent is respect and regard for our fellow created beings, God does not delay long over us.

God comes as the widow, continually, without rest, never ceasing in calling for an end to oppression and ruin, until even the hardest of hearts stirs. Even if it is only because God is a bother and is wear-

ing us out, the covenant has been placed in our hearts and the Word of God will not rest until it accomplishes what it was sent to do.

So pray without ceasing and don't lose heart. For as Martin Luther King Jr. preached, the determined widow knew and God has promised, "The arc of the moral universe is long and bends toward justice." ☞



Adapted from a sermon preached on Oct. 20, 2013, by Anita Fast at Langley (B.C.) Mennonite Fellowship, of which she is a member.

☞ For discussion

1. In what situations have you prayed for justice or deliverance? Have you ever begun to doubt that you were praying hard enough, or even to doubt the existence of God? How do you keep your faith when there is so much injustice and suffering in the world? Do you find the story of the persistent widow encouraging? Do you find Anita Fast's interpretation of Luke 18:1-8 convincing?
2. When are we like the persistent widow in the story from Luke 18? In what ways are we like the judge? Are we inclined to speak up when we see injustice? What laws in our society seem inherently unfair? How can we help the weak find a voice?
3. What do you think Jesus meant by his statement in Luke 18:8, "And yet, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?" How does this relate to the rest of the story in Luke 18? What habits help us listen to God? What habits tend to harden our hearts?
4. Fast quotes Martin Luther King Jr., "The arc of the moral universe is long and bends toward justice." What do you understand this statement to mean? How important is justice in our Christian lives? How can we encourage the increase of justice in our communities?

—BY BARB DRAPER

VIEWPOINTS

/// Readers write

We welcome your comments and publish most letters sent by subscribers intended for publication. This section is largely an open forum for the sharing of views. Letters are the opinion of the writer only—publication does not mean endorsement by the magazine or the church. Keep letters to 400 words or less and address issues rather than individuals. We do not countenance rancour or animosity. Personal attacks are inappropriate and will not see the light of print. Please send letters to be considered for publication to letters@canadianmennonite.org or by postal mail or fax, marked "Attn: Readers Write" (our address is on page 3). Letters should include the author's contact information and mailing address. Letters are edited for length, style and adherence to editorial guidelines. Preference will be given to letters from MC Canada congregants.

✉ Be careful of what the church is 'shifting' from

I AM WRITING out of care and concern for the church. There are many practices coming in and I hear more and more people in the body of Christ doing yoga, labyrinths and types of non-biblical meditation and prayer. Some of these practices are being done in our churches or at retreats, and are not questioned. Are these practices in the Bible? Did Jesus teach us to do these things?

As I was reading the Bible, I turned to Deuteronomy, where the Israelites were surrounded by the Canaanites, who had many different worship practices and worshipped many gods. In Deuteronomy 18:9, God told the Israelites, "Do not learn to imitate the detestable ways of the nations there." Through my reading, I really felt that God did not want me to participate in yoga; it was not for my

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FROM OUR LEADERS

The future before us

KOREY DYCK

Those who survived Indian Residential Schools, Mennonite Church Canada members and South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission participants all have one thing in common.

The three groups rely on archival institutions to collect, preserve and make accessible profound stories of their cultural identities. Whether found within the new University of Manitoba Centre for Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's records, the Mennonite Heritage Centre or the National Parliamentary Archives of South Africa, a rich history is available to users for a variety of purposes.

Archival institutions are often the silent partner in the stories we share. Archives are rarely the first place people consider when beginning to research new projects, but they offer a rich source of material and "lived" history that cannot



be found on the Internet.

The Mennonite Heritage Centre Archives is no exception. The combined records of MC Canada congregations and other Mennonite institutions held at the Archives play a large role in shaping us as a body of believers now and into the future. Accessing that material allows us to draw upon the collected wisdom of those who walked before us.

Physically, the Archives is a protected storage space with many boxes, an indexed selection of records on its website and knowledgeable staff. Practically, the Archives is so much more. The records kept within our building communicate values, detail important church decisions and serve as repositories of generational Mennonite experience.

The Archives is a time machine that takes young people back to the past to eavesdrop on stories waiting to be heard.

The Archives is also a specially created space where university disciplines come together. For educators, it is a place of

discovery, an opportunity to engage with multimedia materials. When used in conjunction with textbooks, archives offer students the opportunity to routinely evaluate original source material, formulate arguments and learn to defend their research.

With increasing access to digital archives, students develop the skill to approach history critically, actively and creatively. New projects for theology, immigration and gender studies, music, literature, sociology and history are readily available. Students of all ages have open access to source materials such as personal letters, diaries of farm and family, and a large, growing database of memorable photos. Access to researchers who work directly with historic documents also transforms and enhances the way students learn.

Our leaders, mentors and family role models continue to provide examples for us today through historical evidence. Exploring the Archives allows us to benefit from that evidence. It helps us to continue being faithful in challenging times, now and into the future.

Korey Dyck is director of the Mennonite Heritage Centre Archives and Gallery in Winnipeg.

(Continued from page 7)
good.

Those strong in their faith say they can practise these things and stay within their faith. But what about the weaker brothers and sisters who cannot, and participate in something like yoga, which ends up taking them away from their faith? And what are we showing to our neighbours and friends who are searching for

meaning if we direct them to mere experiences and not to salvation through Jesus Christ?

The church should be studying the Scriptures, so it is not deceived by false teachers, ideas and philosophies. There are many popular books and authors on our shelves, and it seems like people are more willing to read these books, rather than the Word of God. Are we testing these writings and questioning if they are

FAMILY TIES

The deadly sin of gluttony

MELISSA MILLER

A disturbing cartoon from childhood has stayed with me. In the cartoon, a pig—of course!—was over-eating, stuffing himself from a heavily laden table. At the very end, the pig stood up, pushed himself back from the table and, with a filled-to-bursting gut, took a few wobbly steps. But then he saw just one more thing on the table that he had to eat, probably a drumstick or maybe a slice of cake with gooey icing. He grabbed the food and stuffed it in his mouth. As it slid down his throat, it reached his out-of-capacity stomach and—in the drama of cartoon graphics—burst the pig! His whole body exploded with a great and ugly spewing of its edible contents.

The pig awoke from his nightmare, for he had been dreaming about gorging, ran to his mother with sobs of guilt and promised that he would never, ever be so greedy again. I guess that was the moral of the story: to warn children of the dangers of gluttony and over-consumption. It seemed to be in a different, more intense category than the usual cartoon fare: Tom and Jerry with their amusing cycle of cat and mouse, or the hapless coyote as he schemed to catch the elusive road runner.

The pig was guilty of gluttony, and the creator of the cartoon delivered its moral

message with a blast: you will come to a horrible end if you overeat. Perhaps the writer/illustrator was influenced by a list of sins known variously as the seven deadly sins, capital vices or cardinal sins; gluttony is on the list. Perhaps the individual struggled with the sin of too-muchness. Perhaps it's useful for us to consider the sin of gluttony early in this new year, while memories of recent holiday feasts and consumption still linger. Perhaps, given the riches and excess of our North American culture, it is a sin worth noting and addressing regularly.

In its simplest form, gluttony is about too

Gluttony is considered so deadly because . . . it leads away from concern for . . . the poor and the vulnerable.

much. Too much eating, too much drinking, too much indulging. It's about excess. While we often associate it with food and drink, it can include misuse of other resources. In our context, that might mean too much waste and misuse of the earth's resources, like air, water and fossil fuels.

Like other sins, we find references to gluttony in the Bible. We are warned against eating too much honey (Proverbs 25:16). And counselled "to put a knife to our throat if we have a big appetite" (Proverbs 23:2). Gluttony is considered so

deadly because it leads to self-centredness and selfishness. It leads away from concern for others, particularly the poor and the vulnerable. The Bible instructs people to leave some of the harvest behind—a sheaf of grain, some grapes and olives—for the needy (Deuteronomy 24:19-22).

The antidote for gluttony is moderation. Or as the traditional lists of sins and virtues put it, the opposite of gluttony is temperance. Christian values such as simplicity and frugality point us away from excess and over-consumption. Some of us watched our parents and grandparents practise these values. Some of us have sought such temperance throughout our lives, as we have established households, raised families and managed our finances.

Some of us are young adults today who understand the links between spirituality and simplicity, and are making choices to nurture those links. Likely we don't need scary cartoons or pompous finger-wagging to shape us into being God's people.

It's worth noting that Jesus is accused of being both a glutton and drunkard, in contrast to the severe deprivations of John the Baptist (Luke 7:33-35), a passage that ends with the intriguing summary that "wisdom is vindicated by all her children." May such wisdom guide our consumption.

Melissa Miller (familyties@mymts.net) lives in Winnipeg. She is wrapped in the family ties of daughter, sister, wife, mother, friend and pastor.



biblical?

Let us be people set apart, holy, salt and light in the world, instead of trying to be more like the world in this so called “postmodern shift.” What are they shifting from:

• **FROM BIBLE-BELIEVING** Christ followers to lukewarm participants who God spits out of his mouth?

• **FROM BIBLE-BELIEVING** churches to wishy-washy, seeker-friendly, no-substance churches, where truth is leaking out so we can appeal to, and fit in with, the world?

I humbly pray that the church and its people are not deceived in these last days as new age and emergent

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GOD, MONEY AND ME

Can money really buy happiness?

DORI ZERBE CORNELSEN

What makes people happier: spending money on themselves or giving to others? It might surprise many of us to learn that research done by Elizabeth W. Dunn, a social psychologist at the University of British Columbia, shows that spending money on other people may have a more positive impact on happiness. Therefore, people who live generous lives may potentially live happier lives.

Increased happiness is just one of the potential benefits of making a generosity plan. Planning charitable giving can also have the benefits of reducing taxes and leaving a legacy for future generations. Gifts can either be made immediately or at the end of life. A good generosity plan seeks to strike a balance between family needs and charitable aspirations.

The most common planned gift—a bequest made in a will—is made out of a person’s accumulated estate assets. A bequest can result in generosity that might not be possible in a person’s lifetime. While a will can be an expression of love for family or friends, it can also be a testament to causes a person supported during a lifetime. In this way a will can

become a satisfying final statement of values. For Jane, this means leaving a percentage of her estate to charity. Karn and Rheta, who have three children, have planned their wills as if charity were their “fourth child.”

Planning allows donors to look for ways to give beyond their current cash flow. For those who hold publicly traded securities outside of registered retirement plans, there are tax incentives available for giving these assets “in kind” to charities. This allows Ruth to trans-

fer securities directly to her charity of choice, receive a receipt for tax purposes for the total value of the gift and avoid paying the tax on capital gains had she sold the securities.

Gift planning can be a group project honouring a significant person. An extended family or any like-minded group may pool resources to establish a fund that gives long-term support for a shared passion. By establishing the Anthony Jones Bursary for students at their university of choice, the extended Jones family can honour their family member, support the university and influence future generations of young people.

If you would like to explore your own plan to give, talk to a Mennonite



Planning charitable giving can also have the benefits of reducing taxes and leaving a legacy for future generations.

Buying and donating a life insurance policy or naming a charity as the beneficiary of a current policy is another way to plan a gift. By giving a gift of life insurance, Lucille and Jian can anticipate leaving a more substantial gift for charity than would otherwise be possible.

Foundation of Canada consultant, your financial advisor or the development officer of the charity of your choice. You may be happier if you do!

Dori Zerbe Cornelsen is a stewardship consultant at the Winnipeg office of Mennonite Foundation of Canada. For stewardship education and estate and charitable gift planning, contact your nearest MFC office or visit www.MennoFoundation.ca.

(Continued from page 9)

thoughts are pushing their way aggressively into the church. We need to encourage each other to be set apart and different from the world, rather than shifting to become postmodern and belonging to this world.

ANGELA HARDER, CALGARY

✉ Number of 'ethnic' Mennonite congregations to be praised

RE: "GLUE AND rough drafts" editorial, Nov. 11, 2013, page 2.

I am very happy that there are more and more "ethnic" Mennonite congregations in Canada. I myself immigrated to Canada 40 years ago, and after many difficult experiences a word of caution I feel is necessary. Ethnics pay taxes like everyone else, but they are quite often denied "equal opportunity" in very subtle ways.

Yes, it is nice to worship God in familiar ways, but multiculturalism in my experience can become a "smoke screen," and visible minorities even now suffer at the hands of the "visible majority," especially in the area of employment.

In the editorial there is an error, though. The name of the Sri Lankan Tamil theologian is D.T. Niles. D.T. stands for Daniel Thambyrajah. D.T. Niles, in my opinion, was a prophet. This comes through clearly in his opening address to the World Council of Churches assembly in 1968.

BIMAL THAMBYAH, MONTREAL

Bimal Thambyah is a member of the Mennonite Fellowship of Montreal.

✉ God's faithfulness, brain bleeds span the generations

RE: "MY FAITHFUL God and bleeding brain," Nov. 11, 2013, page 34.

I read with great interest Brandi Friesen Thorpe's wonderfully written story, as I also suffered a sudden, unexplained subarachnoid hemorrhage (brain bleed) three years ago. I also was taken to a Hamilton, Ont., hospital, where I received excellent care, felt the loving support of my family and experienced God's amazing grace.

I am more than double Brandi's age—I was 53 at the time of my bleed—and also marvel that the Lord healed me. It could have been so different. Praise God that he is faithful to his children!

LAURENE NICKEL,
NIAGARA-ON-THE-LAKE, ONT.

✉ Homosexuality not necessarily 'a God-given condition'

RE: "UNLEARNING THE Bible to welcome homosexuals," Jan. 6, page 15.

I appreciate and share Gerhard Neufeld's four stated assumptions: God is; God creates; God is love; and, Christ is, through his life, death and teaching, God's revelation as to who God is and how we ought to live."

While I would also include Jesus' resurrection in this list, I agree with the thrust of his assumptions. I also affirm that hearing God's voice sometimes involves unlearning past teaching.

As Mennonite Church Canada seeks God's direction on matters of human sexuality, however, I hope that any unlearning will not involve forgetting or ignoring key realities in Scripture. Historically, for example, we have been able to confess the paradoxes that God is both loving and holy, and we are both created in the image of God and deeply marred by sin.

Given our share in creation's "bondage to decay" as "we wait eagerly for . . . the redemption of our bodies" (Romans 8:21-23), we cannot assume that every human inclination is of God. Sin pervades our human condition, including our sexuality. Even if there were overwhelming evidence that homosexuality is genetically determined, we could not assume that it is a God-given condition. Both homosexuals and heterosexuals share in both the goodness and fallenness of creation.

Our church is called to reflect the heart of Jesus Christ to gays and lesbians. All of us—regardless of sexual orientation—need both the affirmation and challenge of the gospel. God not only chooses, welcomes and blesses, but also warns, corrects and disciplines.

I am convinced that God is honest about sin in the Bible not to condemn us, but to protect us and set us free. Even if it no longer makes sense to many in our postmodern age, I trust that Scripture's prohibition of homosexual sexual relationships reflects the same holy love of God. We do no one any favours by unlearning that.

BRENT KIPFER, WELLESLEY, ONT.

✉ Youths use *Catching Fire* emblem in environmental protest

RE: "CATCHING FIRE turns up the heat" review, Jan. 6, page 27.

I think Vic Thiessen's review is very accurate.

In answer to his question about whether young viewers will be inspired to challenge elements of corporate capitalism, check out an article on an anti-fracking protest using a *Catching Fire* emblem: (<http://>

bit.ly/1m7rkog).

The values represented in popular science fiction have come a long way from classics like *Ender's Game* that were written only 20 years ago.

CASSANDRA BANGAY (ONLINE COMMENT)

✉ Proposed Québec charter not a threat to religious freedom

RE: "PEACE CHURCH should oppose Québec charter" letter, Nov. 25, 2013, page 12.

Anicka Fast and John Clarke wrote that, like many of us, they do not like discrimination against other religions.

Québec's charter of secularism is not, however, a threat to freedom of religion. In fact, it is more likely to defend all citizens, whether religious or not. The charter should reduce the chances of a citizen facing a religiously biased official or policy in daily living.

In the discussion of the charter, those opposed tend to conflate the issue of intolerance with state neutrality. The state's role is to protect all religions, all races and all sexual lifestyles against harassment. Just because there has been an increase of racist incidents does not mean government policies are faulty. It means that the government is not enforcing the law.

Nor does a private daycare's difficulty in finding clients indicate that the proposed charter is defective. As Fast and Clarke note, it's the people's fearful perceptions that keep clients away.

Governments that seek to keep religious ideas out of the governmental sphere offer a better chance that we will enjoy a peaceful society. Both the history of modern societies, as well as conditions in many parts of the world today, indicate that it is the ambitions of the religions to control public policy that represent the greatest danger.

Symbols speak even more vividly than do words. Representatives of the state wearing a turban, a hijab or a cross bring a confusing message to their jobs where the client expects neutrality. Jocelyn Barry, a psychotherapist, wonders what message a symbolic cross may send to her patients: "Would they reveal their abortions, their homosexuality, their infidelities? Could they trust me with their stories?"

The question is even more pressing if the professional serving the vulnerable works for the state, a sovereign power with a monopoly on lawful violence. In the U.S., Catholic bishops are lobbying to have Catholic hospitals that serve a secular clientele exempted from the law that all insurance plans cover prescription contraception. Employees who are not Catholic would have to live according to somebody else's religion. It is because of a church's desire for such

power that the state needs to protect all citizens.

The principles of separation of church and state were hammered out in the 17th century to prevent the powerful state churches—Catholics, Lutherans, Calvinists and Anglicans—from fighting amongst each other, as well as to protect small groups such as the Anabaptists, many of whom willingly accepted help from secular states.

JOHN KLASSEN, LANGLEY, B.C.

John Klassen is professor emeritus in Trinity Western University's Department of History.

✉ Lessons to be learned from Nelson Mandela

DID NELSON MANDELA emerge from Robben Island a conscientious objector to war? Maybe the label is beside the point, the point being that he advocated for reconciliation and nonviolent resistance, and with these methods and plenty of good will and negotiation he and many others managed to defeat apartheid. This they did while much of the world believed that such a black-and-white issue would be decided only by firepower.

Other major conflicts in our world are waiting for leaders with Mandela's principles to enter centre stage and rally people of goodwill to find negotiated solutions. The Israel/Palestine conflict has produced many such people from both nations committed to working towards a peaceful solution. Unlike South Africa, in the case of Israel/Palestine the oppressive power is being bolstered by western governments.

If it is true that Israel is the largest recipient of U.S. military aid—and the Canadian government is on the same team—we should be reminded that taxes in support of the Department of Defence work against the kind of peaceful and just settlement we would like to see, not only in Israel/Palestine but in other conflict zones.

How much more useful would be a Department of Peace? This year, place yourself firmly with peace-builders like Mandela, and direct the military portion of your income tax away from war preparation. Go to www.consciencecanada.ca and select Option B on the 2013 Peace Tax Return you find there. You won't be sent to a forced-labour prison like Mandela, but you will be making bricks to build democracy, humanity, justice and peace in Ottawa and around the world.

MARY GROH, SCARBOROUGH, ONT.

LIFE IN THE POSTMODERN SHIFT

Spirit attunement

Part 5 of a series

TROY WATSON



There is no one-size-fits-all formula for attuning oneself to the Holy Spirit. We are all wired differently. This means we will often have to take different approaches to spiritual growth and engage in different spiritual practices than our fellow believers. This is a difficult thing to do, to go against the grain and norms of one's church, but it is completely necessary for many of us. It requires courage and a desire to experience God more than maintaining one's reputation or the church's equilibrium.

One of the healthiest things a church can do, in my opinion, is create an ethos that celebrates diversity and routinely names the reality that we are all unique human beings with unique relationships with God, and therefore we connect with God in different ways. Many churches do this to a degree, but the freedom they provide lies within certain—and often unspoken—parameters.

Some of those parameters might be necessary and good, but they ought to be continually evaluated by the whole community. A good indication that the whole community is truly involved in this process will be the regular expansion of those parameters.

There are many factors that shape how a person connects with God, such as one's personality type, spirituality type, theological orientation, life stage and spiritual development stage. Even church communities that appear to be highly homogenous are made up of human beings who are regularly bumping into other people, information and circumstances that invite—or threaten—them to be stretched, grow and change. The

most prominent influence routinely motivating us to be transformed is God!

The way I relate to God today is very different than how I related to God five years ago and how I related to God five years ago was different than five years earlier. This is a sign of movement, progress and maturity, if accompanied by

increasing yields of the fruits of the Spirit. Awareness of this progression also produces humility about my current beliefs and practices. I realize there is a good chance I will again be communing with God differently in five years from now.

With this in mind, I am able to hold my current beliefs, assumptions and expectations a little less tightly. I am more

I had not yet realized that what was helping me experience God wasn't necessarily going to help others connect with God.

prepared to let go because I have learned that letting go is essential to the growth cycle. If I'm convinced of anything, it is this: a spirit of *gelassenheit*, or a willingness to let go, is paramount to spiritual growth.

In my early 20s I tried to convince everyone to doubt like I did, critique and question the Christian faith as I did, and use the same kind of reasoning I did. I was convinced I was right and that everyone needed to "see the light," as I had.

In my early 30s, on the other hand, I tried to persuade everyone to pray the way I prayed, believe what I believed and serve the way I served. Once again, I meant well. I was experiencing God so powerfully through my practices and

beliefs current at the time, I just wanted others to experience God too.

What I didn't fully appreciate at the time was that different kinds of people connect with God differently. I had not yet realized that what was helping me experience God wasn't necessarily going to help others connect with God. I also had not fully grasped another important truth. Namely, one needs to take different approaches to spiritual growth during different seasons of one's faith journey. It took a "dark night of the soul" for me to really understand this. (More on that in another article.)

What I am slowly learning to do as a pastor and spiritual guide is to fan the flame of desire for God in others. As the saying goes, "You can lead a horse to

water, but you can't make it drink." Until people experience a thirst and longing for the divine, nothing I share with them about how to connect with God is going to matter.

Antoine de Saint-Exupéry said: "If you want to build a ship, don't drum up the men to gather wood, divide the work and give orders. Instead, teach them to yearn for the vast and endless sea."

For too long I mistook pastoral ministry to mean doling out biblical instructions and giving orders on how to grow spiritually. It doesn't work. ✎

Troy Watson (troydw@gmail.com) is spiritual life director of the Quest Community in St. Catharines, Ont.

VIEWPOINT

God's Word coming to the silver screen

BY CARL DEGURSE

SPECIAL TO CANADIAN MENNONITE

For those interested in connecting with God through Jesus Christ, he's coming soon to a theatre near you—a Hollywood version of him, at least.

The movie *Son of God* opens Feb. 28 in mainstream theatres, to be followed by several forthcoming movies, some starring A-list actors, that are based on Bible stories and scheduled to screen this year.

Russell Crowe will build the ark in *Noah*, a \$150-million extravaganza set for wide release on March 8. Nick Nolte will voice Samyaza, the leader of the Nephilim (fallen angels).

And Christian Bale will part the Red Sea as he portrays Moses in *Exodus*, with Sigourney Weaver in the role of Pharaoh's wife.

A fourth movie, entitled *Mary Mother Of Christ*, is already being promoted with a poster of a mysterious hooded woman and the words: "You will believe."

As well, according to Hollywood scuttlebutt recently reported in the *National Post* newspaper, Will Smith is planning a film based on the story of Cain and Abel, and Brad Pitt is rumoured to be playing Pontius Pilate in a separate project. There will also be *Resurrection*, in which a Roman soldier is sent to investigate Christ's death.

Bible stories are suddenly hot in Hollywood, perhaps replacing the many vampire and super hero movies that were recently trendy.

Why the sudden interest? Hollywood

producers apparently took note when there was a surprisingly large viewer interest in *The Bible*, a television mini-series on the History Channel that became America's most watched cable show of 2013. In fact, the upcoming film, *Son of God*, is based largely on the mini-series, with added scenes.

For people who were acquainted with the Bible before the condensed version was broadcast on the History Channel, the unexpected spotlight of Hollywood is a development both encouraging and worrisome. First, the worries:

- **BIBLES STORIES** are best pondered with reverence and respect, as we do corporately in worship services and privately in our homes. Movie theatres are places of entertainment. There's nothing sacred about munching popcorn and slurping soda while watching the agony of Christ on the cross.

- **PEOPLE WHO** take the Bible seriously know that social context is crucial. We don't know what Jesus and his Hebrew parents looked like, but we have clues. Given his birthplace, his skin was likely swarthy; given his century, he was likely smaller physically than most men of 2014; given the nomadic lifestyle of his last few years, he was likely scruffy by today's grooming standards; given the dental hygiene of the day, his smile wasn't bleached to an artificial gleam by Crest Whitestrips.

- **SO WHO** did they hire to portray Jesus? Diogo Morgardo, a male model and soap-opera star. Appearance is important because character portrayals on the silver screen can be like tattoos on our memory, hard to erase. A generation of people automatically think of Charlton Heston

when they read about Moses because Heston acted the role in the 1956 film, *The Ten Commandments*, an image that seems weirdly at odds with Heston's later advocacy of liberal gun laws as a spokesperson for the National Rifle Association.

- **EVEN MORE** important than surface appearances, Hollywood has a knack for spinning the content of Bible stories. For example, many of us unfortunately can't forget the 1988 film, *The Last Temptation of Christ*, which took a litany of liberties, including its portrayal of Christ having sexual fantasies.

But for all those worries about the way Hollywood will portray Bible stories this year, there is also reason for hope:

- **IT'S ENCOURAGING** that the public was so interested in a mini-series, Hollywood feels the public wants more Bible stories.

- **IT'S HEARTENING** that the producers making this year's blitz of Bible movies are apparently seeking endorsements from evangelical pastors, even inviting them back stage during production.

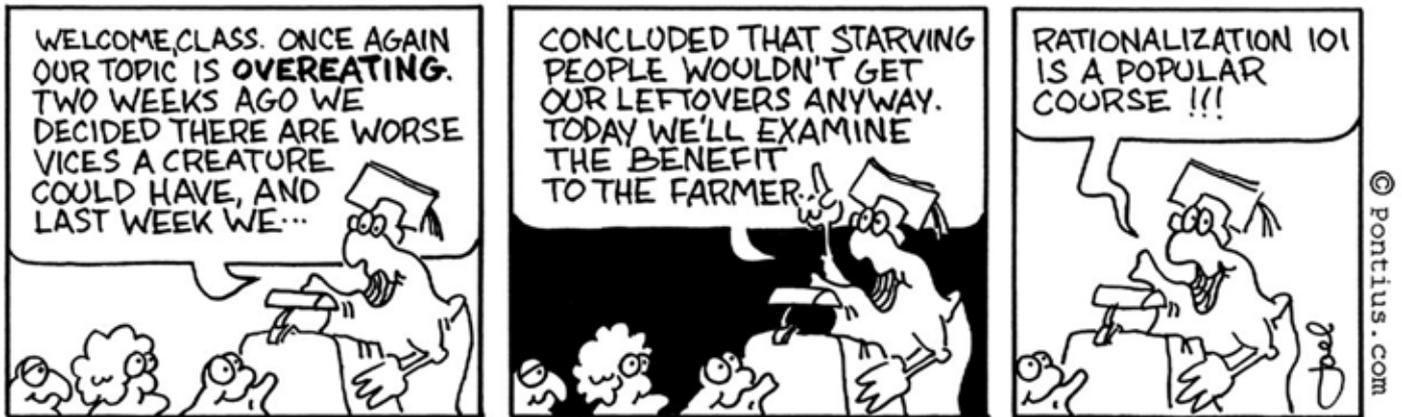
- **IN THE** end, who are we to criticize in advance a different way of telling our sacred stories? Back when Hebrew culture relied on verbal storytelling, some rabbis were opposed to recording sacred stories in writing. In the 16th and 17th centuries, people were killed because they dared to present the Bible in a language other than Latin, and to mass-produce copies so everyone could read it for themselves. Such history suggests we should be open to attempts to present Bible stories in different ways.

So we withhold judgment until we see the current batch of Jesus movies, and we hope they inspire movie-goers to dig deeper into the Bible—as long as Hollywood doesn't distort the facts and the spirit of the stories, and as long as filmmakers don't mess with the text.

Carl DeGurse is a member of Douglas Mennonite Church in Winnipeg, and vice-chair of Canadian Mennonite Publishing Service.



Pontius' Puddle



PERSONAL REFLECTION

Finding momentum for ministry

JIM LOEPP THIESSEN

SPECIAL TO CANADIAN MENNONITE

When I attend the biennial Church Planting Canada congresses, I go hopeful for several “takeaways” that will guide me in ministry or shake up my paradigm for how ministry is done.

At the 2013 event in Oakville, Ont., last November, whose theme was “Momentum,” I was jarred when I listened to Jon Tyson, an Australian who felt called to New York City to start a church. Tyson spent a year simply walking through the neighbourhood praying and developing a “spiritual map” of the city before he started his church. The Holy Spirit birthed ministry from his prayers. “Don’t invite people into what you don’t have,” he told us. “Wait for the Holy Spirit to birth something.”

Although we at the Gathering Church have done prayer walks in our Kitchener, Ont., community, one year of daily

praying seemed a little much. Would I endure that kind of a commitment?

Bob Roberts, a Southern Baptist pastor and church planter, rattled my ecclesiastical cage by telling us that too often we try to start worship services, not churches. Roberts has built amazing relationships across faiths, and told story after compelling story of the power of God at work when church planters stopped

He invited us to think beyond the question, ‘How is my church?’ and ask, ‘How is my city?’

judging and started inviting people into kingdom living.

He explained that living for the kingdom will hurt the local church because it’s no longer about the church as such, but about the kingdom of God instead. He invited us to think beyond the

question, “How is my church?” and ask, “How is my city?”

“That reflection moves us beyond the walls of our congregation into the kingdom world Jesus invited us into,” Roberts said, chiding the group for being mostly white while meeting in a city that is one of the most multicultural in the world.

Alan Hirsch, one of the foremost mission strategists in the western world, whose writing and teaching I’ve consistently found stimulating, admonished the group for a lack of women at the congress. “Movements that change the world are obsessed with discipleship,” he said. “A movement where everyone is in the game.” He reminded us that Jesus is Lord, not just Saviour, and that means that if we don’t look like Jesus as the church, something is wrong.

There was much content and many other wonderful presentations. I walked away with a full heart, emboldened to risk anew for the kingdom.

Seventeen leaders from Mennonite Church Eastern Canada attended, along with several leaders from MC Canada.

/// Milestones

Births/Adoptions

- Aleu**—Jok (b. Dec. 29, 2013), to Angalina Deng and Kuac Aleu, First Mennonite, Edmonton.
- Ayala**—Samuel David (b. Dec. 13, 2013), to Joy and David Ayala, Listowel Mennonite, Ont.
- Cressman**—Maisie Adeleine (b. Sept. 3, 2013), to Bryan Peters and Amanda Cressman, Nith Valley Mennonite, New Hamburg, Ont.
- Gerber**—Sophia Ann (b. Jan. 9, 2014), to Thomas and Amanda Gerber, Maple View Mennonite, Wellesley, Ont.
- Giesbrecht**—Samuel Thomas (b. Dec. 17, 2013), to Abe and Sara Giesbrecht, Leamington United Mennonite, Ont.
- Klassen**—Marshall Alexander (b. Nov. 29, 2013); to Miranda Stoesz-Gouthro and Nic Klassen, Pembina Mennonite, Morden, Man.
- Kroetch**—Henry William (b. Dec. 11, 2013), to Ryan and Amber Kroetch, Nith Valley Mennonite, New Hamburg, Ont.
- Kuehne**—Madalyn Eva (b. Jan. 8, 2014), to Angila and Matthew Kuehne, First Mennonite, Edmonton.
- Martin**—Simon Ilya (b. Dec. 24, 2013), to Tim Martin and Dorothy Tymchyshyn, Listowel Mennonite, Ont.
- Maxwell**—Ethan Anthony (b. Dec. 4, 2013), to Edward Maxwell and Jessica Bearinger, Nith Valley Mennonite, New Hamburg, Ont.
- Robinson**—Oaklyn Marie (b. Sept. 7, 2013), to Matthew and Stephanie Robinson, Nith Valley Mennonite, New Hamburg, Ont.

Baptisms

- Misty Klassen**—Douglas Mennonite, Winnipeg, Jan. 19, 2014.

Marriages

- Drapeau/Duncan**—Patrick Drapeau and Rachel Duncan, First Mennonite, Edmonton, Nov. 2, 2013.

Deaths

- Barkovsky**—Vern, 78 (b. Jan. 17, 1935; d. Dec. 30, 2013), Leamington United Mennonite, Ont.
- Barrett**—Lorraine Alice (nee Epp), 74 (b. Nov. 15, 1939; d. Jan. 7, 2014), Zoar Mennonite, Langham, Sask.
- Bergen**—John, 91 (b. July 18, 1922; d. Dec. 31, 2013), First Mennonite, Edmonton.
- Culp**—Erla (nee Oberholtzer), 94 (b. Dec. 13, 1919; d. Dec. 15, 2013), The First Mennonite, Vineland, Ont.
- Dettweiler**—Norma, 86 (b. Dec. 7, 1927; d. Dec. 26, 2013), Breslau Mennonite, Ont.
- Dueck**—Helmute Reinhard, 83 (b. July 7, 1930; d. Dec. 30, 2013), Trinity Mennonite, DeWinton, Alta.
- Dyck**—Anne, 92 (b. Oct. 28, 1921; d. Dec. 28, 2013), Winkler Bergthaler Mennonite, Man.
- Erb**—Ed, 73 (b. July 14, 1940; d. Jan. 18, 2014), Riverdale Mennonite, Millbank, Ont.
- Klassen**—John, 93 (b. May 17, 1920; d. Dec. 30, 2013), Zoar Mennonite, Waldheim, Sask.
- Leis**—Ruth (nee Steinmann), 86 (b. Dec. 15, 1926; d. Nov. 29, 2013), Wellesley Mennonite, Ont.
- Loewen**—Irma (nee Kliewer), 77 (b. Aug. 4, 1936; d. Jan. 1, 2014), Niagara United Mennonite, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ont.
- McLean**—Lisa (nee Richardson), 45 (b. May 25, 1968; d. Dec. 12, 2013), Nith Valley Mennonite, New Hamburg, Ont.
- Neufeld**—Helen, 86 (b. June 27, 1927; d. Dec. 13, 2013), Leamington United Mennonite, Ont.
- Pankratz**—Frank, 96 (b. June 18, 1917; d. Jan. 1, 2014), Niagara United Mennonite, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ont.
- Peters**—Annie (nee Thiessen), 94 (b. May 17, 1919; d. Jan. 3, 2014), Rosthern Mennonite, Sask.
- Sandoval**—Maria Romilia, 67 (b. April 15, 1946; d. Jan. 2, 2014), First Mennonite/Primera Iglesia Menonita, Kitchener, Ont.
- Thiessen**—Trudy, 88 (d. Jan. 4, 2014), Waterloo North Mennonite, Waterloo, Ont.
- Tiessen**—Dean, 46 (b. Oct. 20, 1967; d. Dec. 7, 2013), Leamington United Mennonite, Ont.
- Warkentin**—Abe, 87 (b. Dec. 14, 1926; d. Jan. 4, 2014), Bethany Mennonite, Virgil, Ont.

Canadian Mennonite welcomes Milestones announcements within four months of the event. Please send Milestones announcements by e-mail to milestones@canadianmennonite.org, including the congregation name and location. When sending death notices, please also include birth date and last name at birth if available.

/// Correction

It was Canadian Mennonite University professor Gordon Matties who spoke at last year's School for Ministers at Conrad Grebel University College. He was incorrectly identified in the Jan. 6 article, "Tackling tough texts means being in it 'for the long haul,'" on page 19. *Canadian Mennonite* regrets the error.

GOD AT WORK IN THE CHURCH

Vietnamese Mennonites read the Bible in a year

'I read it, and I'll read it over and over again,' says one young member of Edmonton Vietnamese Mennonite Church

BY DONITA WIEBE-NEUFELD

Alberta Correspondent

How would you respond if challenged to read the whole Bible in a year? When Kuen Yee issued the challenge to her congregants at Edmonton Vietnamese Mennonite Church at the end of 2012, the pastor couldn't have guessed at the success her church would celebrate one year later.

During the Jan. 12 worship service, nine congregants received certificates to acknowledge their accomplishment. The youngest successful reader, Esther Pham, is only 12 years old.

Deborah Yee, Kuen's 16-year-old daughter, received the challenge with joy, expressing a desire to understand what and why she believes by reading the Bible from cover to cover. "This was really exciting for me because I had wanted to read the entire Bible for a very long time," she said. "By reading through the whole Bible, I can see exactly what God's message is to me and be able to talk about the Bible to believers and non-believers with a clearer understanding."

Reading the whole Bible, however,

proved a daunting task for Rebecca Pham, a second-year science student at the University of Alberta. "The most difficult part was being disciplined," she said. "Surprisingly, this was hardest in the summer when I had the most free time, because I didn't follow a regular schedule."

Reading parts of the Old Testament proved difficult for the participants. "There were many long chapters describing the generations of sons of Israel," Deborah said of one difficulty, "but also because it had much more graphic description than I was expecting. It was difficult to read the many sins of the kings after David or the acts people committed that are unacceptable today."

Added Rebecca, "Israel's constant disobedience and all the violence in the Old Testament surprised me. I knew there was some of that, but I didn't know it was to that degree and frequency."

While finding time to read proved difficult, Rebecca found bits of time at school or before going to bed. "I really didn't have to give up anything . . . except maybe time I would have wasted on social media anyway," she said.

EDMONTON VIETNAMESE MENNONITE CHURCH PHOTO



Nine people from the Edmonton Vietnamese Mennonite Church pose with certificates earned by reading the whole Bible in 2013. Pictured from left to right, front row: Esther Pham, Rebecca Pham and Lily Hue Do; and back row: Pastor Kuen Yee, Vernie Yee, David Yee, Deborah Yee, Ut Van Ngo (chair of the board of elders), and Pastor Thomas Pham.

Deborah found that listening to the Bible while riding the bus was a good way to catch up, but noted, “I also spent many nights reading, which did cut into my sleep, but it was well worth it.”

Both families, the Phams and the Yees, strongly supported each other’s efforts. The Phams have “Phamily” time, a half-hour each night when they read their Bibles individually and then come together to pray.

Deborah offers this advice to her peers who want to read the Bible: “I would say, get a friend or group to read with you. Having someone there with you to push you when it gets hard, talk to you when it’s

confusing, and experience what you are experiencing, just makes it that much better.”

Edmonton Vietnamese Mennonite isn’t finished challenging members, especially its leaders, to know the Bible. Pastor Thomas Pham recently encouraged the memorization of 55 selected verses that summarize the story of salvation. Within a month, eight people had completed the task successfully and more memorization is in the works. For January and February, 33 verses on love have been suggested. From March through November, the congregation is being challenged with 10 verses each month related to a different

“fruit of the Spirit.”

“When you know it, you have Scriptures to help you.” Pastor Pham said.

Rebecca’s rationale for reading the Bible is compelling. “If someone who loved you immensely . . . wrote you a letter, wouldn’t you read it? If it was an essay-length letter, wouldn’t you still read it? If it was a whole book on how they fought for your heart and would help you and provide for you, and longed for you to know their love, wouldn’t you definitely still read it? The lover of my soul wrote me one of those, and I read it, and I’ll read it over and over again.” ❧

PERSONAL REFLECTION

Resolution kept!

DONITA WIEBE-NEUFELD

ALBERTA CORRESPONDENT

I’ve never been successful with New Year’s resolutions to exercise more, eat less or get organized. For some reason, however, a promise to read Scripture every week is one resolution I finally kept!

In January 2013, First Mennonite Church, Edmonton, posted a lectionary reading challenge, with goals of encouraging members to prepare for worship, read the Bible regularly and discuss Scripture with each other.

Congregants who signed up committed to reading the lectionary passages as listed in the bulletin each week. As one of the pastors, I signed and resolved to post a weekly blog on our church website to keep myself accountable. Looking back on a year of regular reading and reflecting, I have a chance to evaluate, to see if the goals were met.

One hope was for the blog to create some Scripture discussion online. That did not happen. Comments were few and far between, and the view count was low. I have little evidence the blog made any difference to the congregation, but for me,

personally, it was well worth the effort.

Regular reflection on Scripture met the goal of preparing me for worship, especially on the Sundays when I was not preaching or otherwise involved in the service. I listened to sermons in a deeper way. I noticed the inflections readers

But more than preparing me to listen in worship, regular immersion in Scripture had me listening for God in daily life away from church.

brought to the passages that were different from my own, bringing out layers of meaning and interpretation I might otherwise have missed. I heard bits of Scripture in hymns, which reinforced the message and helped me appreciate the thoughtful work of our worship leaders, musicians and children’s storytellers.

But more than preparing me to listen in worship, regular immersion in Scripture had me listening for God in daily life away from church. I was amazed at how often the readings cast light on what was happening in the world around me.

On April 30, I blogged about the story of Jesus healing a paralyzed man (John 5:1-9). All that week I had worked on an article about chronic pain for *Canadian Mennonite*. The passage came alive for me because of the people I had interviewed for the piece.

On May 6, when the news was full of the story of the Bangladeshi factory collapse, I read about how Paul set a slave girl free (Acts 16:16-34). It helped me reflect on how people are exploited for money and what happens when people stand up for what is right.

In July, while our family volunteered at a homeless shelter, many of the

Scriptures dealt with issues of poverty and portrayed Jesus as a champion of the poor. Scripture helped me look at the homeless as children of God.

Because I am now regularly paying attention to Scripture, I see things from new perspectives, I have ready words of encouragement when I am down and I am more aware of God in the stories of the people around me.

For 2014, I plan to keep on reading and blogging about the ways Scripture is alive every day and everywhere (fmclectionary.blogspot.ca). ❧

'Then their eyes were opened'

Pastors, church leaders struggle with inclusion and identity issues at annual MC Eastern Canada gathering

STORY AND PHOTO BY DAVE ROGALSKY

Eastern Canada Correspondent
MARKHAM, ONT.

Alicia Good wondered about the inherent tensions around practicality and identity, and the immanent and transcendent in communion.

Her questions arose out of her table group's discussion at Mennonite Church Eastern Canada's annual event for pastors, chaplains and congregational leaders, and encapsulated the major themes of the day. Good, on the pastoral team at North Leamington United Mennonite Church, was struggling with the meaning of "The Lord's Supper and the 21st-century Mennonite church."

Over and over in a variety of ways the group that met at Rouge Valley Mennonite Church in Markham, Ont., on Jan. 18, asked whether the communion/eucharist/Lord's Supper meal was a rite of welcome or one of identity. Is communion a meal of grace and welcome, like Jesus' supper with Simon the Pharisee that was crashed by an immoral woman, lunch with the sinner Zacchaeus or the feeding of the five thousand? Or is it a closed meal of identity, like the Last Supper or the liturgical practice of the early church in which only baptized members could be present?

Arnold Snyder and Tom Yoder Neufeld, both retired from Conrad Grebel University College in Waterloo, and Ed Janzen, Grebel's chaplain, provided a rich and varied fare of resources. While Yoder Neufeld painted the picture of the variety of meals in the New Testament, noting that Jesus was—except for a few important interactions—always among those who were in the people of God, Snyder said that church practice has changed often through the years, in particular between the early and post-Constantinian church. John Rempel, who wrote the Jan. 20 feature

on communion ("Bread, acceptance and covenant," page 4), said that "the church already has a rite of acceptance: baptism."

Some wondered if "open" communion decreased the felt-need for young adults to seek baptism, since they are already part of the community.

But Snyder stressed that, while the early Anabaptists did not believe in the "real presence" (in which the bread and wine are perceived as Jesus' body and blood), they also did not believe in the "real absence," believing, instead, that as bodies

ate bread and drank wine, spirits ate and drank Christ. He called for an invitation to the table which offered grace to people.

Yoder Neufeld highlighted John's gospel, where there is no bread or wine, but a call to "the apron" of the Last Supper where Jesus washed feet.

In the middle of discussion and presentations, lunch became a mixture of communion and an 'agapé' meal of fellowship, liturgy and mutual service.

Conclusions drawn by participants included, "It depends," noting an ongoing sense of openness to change and the Spirit, a call to welcome people with spiritual hunger, and a hope to "not have to get it right," just like the disciples in the key text of the day (Luke 24:13-35) didn't get it right along the Emmaus road, but had their eyes opened after Jesus broke the bread at table.

A highlight of the day was Theatre of the Beat's *Forgiven/Forgotten* play, which ends with a communion service at which all are welcome, although the audience knows that one of those partaking will be "banned" immediately afterwards. ☿

'Skip' David Martin takes 'lead' of Friars' Briar

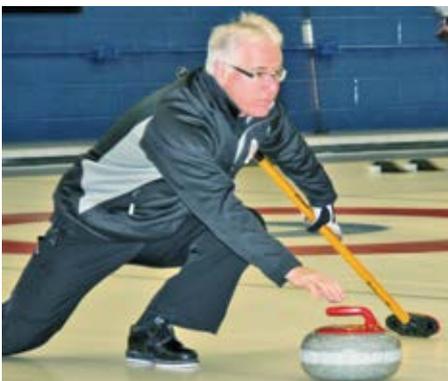
STORY AND PHOTO BY DAVE ROGALSKY

Eastern Canada Correspondent
KITCHENER, ONT.

David Martin, "skip" of Mennonite Church Eastern Canada, has taken the "lead" for the annual national Friars' Briar curling bonspiel, to be held next month in Richmond, B.C.

Held annually since the late 1970s, the

Friar's Briar seeks to bring eastern and western Canadian clergy together for fun and fellowship both on and off the ice. The brainchild of Don Amos and Hugh Christmas, over the years the event has built relationships from Ontario to B.C.



David Martin, executive minister of Mennonite Church Eastern Canada and newly minted president of the Friars' Briar curling bonspiel, shows his form on the ice at Westmount Golf and Country Club, Kitchener, Ont., on a recent Monday morning, when local Waterloo Region clergy curlers gather for fun and fellowship.

PHOTO BY DARIA MOHLER

Citing travel costs, clergy rinks from Quebec east have not participated. While the original curlers were men, the Friars' Briar has expanded to include female spouses as well as female clergy curlers.

The annual Friars' Briar is mostly run by the local hosting committee, with the president—Martin—acting in a supporting role and running a few meetings during the event. From 16 to 24 teams participate annually. After the first round—known as a “draw” in curling lingo—the teams continue the competition against opponents of relatively equal skill, resulting in few lopsided games. As is the tradition, the Friar's Briar tries to set its competition in the same province as the Briar, the Canadian men's national competition, which is being contested at the same time in Kamloops, B.C.

Martin, executive minister of MC Eastern Canada, has curled for the last 21 years and enjoys the game for its physical activity, skill development and strategy, as well as for the fun of competing on a regular basis.

He and many other Waterloo Region clergy play from October through



Gerry Binnema, centre, is installed as pastor of United Mennonite Church, Black Creek, B.C., on Jan. 19 by Garry Janzen, Mennonite Church B.C. executive minister, right, while his wife Elaine, left, looks on. Binnema previously pastored at Living Hope Christian Fellowship in Surrey, B.C.

March on Monday mornings at the rink at Westmount Golf and Country Club in Kitchener. As skip, he doesn't sweep as much any more, cutting down on the

actual physical activity.

Sponsoring five bonspiels throughout the winter, Ontario is the only province with a provincial body of clergy curlers. ❧

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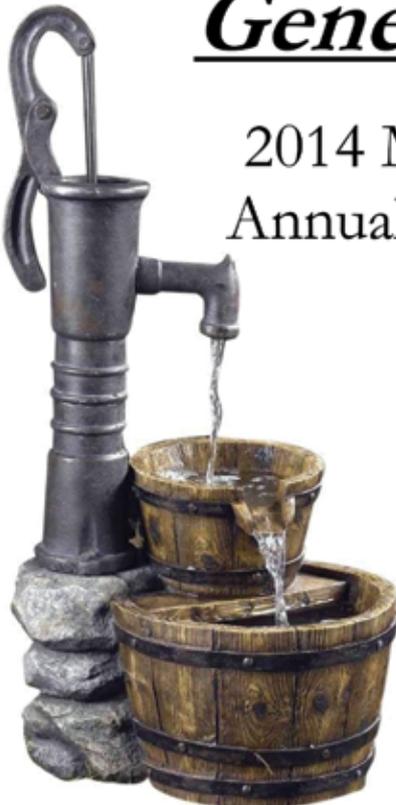
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Ephesians 3:20-21a, KJV



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GOD AT WORK IN THE WORLD

Typhoon relief effort expected to last for years

MC Canada workers on the frontlines as Filipinos struggle to rebuild their lives

By DAN DYCK

Mennonite Church Canada

Like the news, the winds and rain that came with Super Typhoon Haiyan have let up. But the damage from the storm that slammed regions of the Philippines on Nov. 8, 2013, remains on the mental and emotional front page for survivors.

One of the most intense tropical storms on record, Haiyan was nearly 500 kilometres across when it hit land. Winds were recorded at up to 314 kilometres per hour and water rose to nine metres above sea level along the coasts. According to published reports, the death toll is at least 6,000, and more than 11 million people are estimated to have been affected by the storm. Many have fled to Manila.

Mennonite Church Canada workers remain closely involved in the ongoing recovery.

Peacebuilders Community Inc. (PBCI) is a Philippine ministry led by Dann and Joji Pantoja, MC Canada Witness workers. PBCI has been deeply engaged in training local pastors and church volunteers in disaster-relief assistance and addressing the human trauma. Darnell and Christina Barkman, MC Canada church planters in Manila, sent four volunteers from their small Peace Church community to assist the Pantojas. Mission workers affiliated with Mennonite Mission Network have also taken part in the recovery work.

Many pastors and local church volunteers have themselves been hard hit by the super typhoon, but are aiding others while trying to get their own families back on their feet. Local government officials, who are responsible for providing services, are also among the many victims.

Gordon Janzen, MC Canada's director for Asian ministries, says that while the

Pantojas continue to mobilize local pastors and congregations, it will likely take many years to restore the infrastructure, homes and incomes of Filipinos.

"In addition to physical restoration, there

MC Canada workers remain closely involved in the ongoing recovery.

will be a long and ongoing need for spiritual restoration, as typhoon victims struggle to overcome long-lasting trauma and fear that another super typhoon could hit the region again," he says, adding, "The lost ability to

earn income is a frustrating complication, making a return to normal even more difficult. Farm lands have been devastated."

Establishing communication with the Pantojas has been difficult. Their deep commitment and compassion for survivors has led to long, energy-sapping days and interrupted nights. However, their Peacebuilders website (www.peacebuilderscommunity.org) reports glimmers of hope despite the difficult and chaotic scene.

Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) is partnering with PBCI to send relief to the city of Ormoc on Leyte Island. Ormoc is a neighbouring city to Tacloban in the hardest-hit region.

Food packages and non-food items, such as bath soap, detergent, towels and pails for carrying water to improve sanitation and hygiene, will be distributed mostly in Dulag, Tolosa, and Tabontabon, which are south of Tacloban. ☸

With reports from Mennonite Mission Network.



• For more photos, visit www.canadianmennonite.org/haiyan-recovery.

PHOTO BY DANIEL BYRON 'BEE' PANTOJA / FROM THE PBCI WEBSITE



Dann Pantoja, second from left, and his team pray for the pastor of a local church. 'His house was totally destroyed,' says Pantoja. 'His wife and children were hungry when we arrived. Many of his neighbours died. He cannot locate the families belonging to his congregation.'

GOD AT WORK IN US

COVER STORY

Prepared for a dystopian future?

Meghan Harder's art challenges the technological present

BY DAVE ROGALSKY

Eastern Canada Correspondent
KITCHENER, ONT.

Meghan Harder's art works at themes of political, social and environmental issues, using mixed media, public installations, interventions and performance.

At Box 13—a series of events that use repurposed industrial spaces around the Waterloo Region for an annual weekend

of art viewing and sales—she presented photographs of some of her installations and performances.

Her work focuses on a potential dystopian future where knowledge of living without current technological/commercial supports will be necessary. Tapping into

Another installation/performance pictures Harder in a 'human-nest' in the park. . . . She wonders how humans would—or will—live if their possessions and supports are taken away from them.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF MEGHAN HARDER



Meghan Harder installed this 'micro library' in Waterloo Park, Waterloo, Ont., as a challenge to people's dependence on technology, wondering how they could survive without it.



the "micro-library" movement, one of her installations was a library box in a park. But instead of novels or histories, it was full of books on gardening, living off the land and building a shelter out of available resources.

Another installation/performance pictures Harder in a "human-nest" in the park (*see front cover and above.*) Based on an eagle/heron nest, her platform is large enough for a human to perch on and live in. She wonders how humans would—or will—live if their possessions and supports are taken away from them.

Harder grew up attending St. Catharines (Ont.) United Mennonite Church. She now lives in Kitchener in a new intentional community called the Walnut Project. The house is owned by Stirling Avenue Mennonite Church and the young adults there pay full rent to help offset the reduced rents paid by those using Stirling's other properties, many of them refugees.

Household members tried their hand at gardening, but the walnut tree in the backyard has given them constraints. Working at jobs has also created constraints they hadn't expected, as their time for community involvements, such as the Out of the Cold program that provides meals and shelter for homeless people in Waterloo Region, is decreased.

As a Mennonite, Harder is glad that Mennonite Church Canada is looking into other art media than its traditional fixation on music alone.

"Mennonites have underestimated the power of the aesthetic," she says. "Sometimes visual communication can be just as powerful as talking or singing a hymn." ❧

The difference just two volunteers can make

Book sales at Sam's Place are taking off thanks to James Neufeld and Mary Klassen

STORY AND PHOTO BY EVELYN REMPEL PETKAU

Manitoba Correspondent
WINNIPEG

Mary Klassen and James Neufeld bring a rare commitment to volunteerism. Ever since Sam's Place opened in 2009, Klassen has spent her retirement from teaching volunteering full-time at this used bookstore, café and music venue, an activity of Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Manitoba.

Neufeld walked in several weeks later and bought three rare books of poetry for a few dollars. When he returned later to inform Klassen that his research showed the books were valued at several hundred dollars, Klassen invited him to join her in working with the donated books.

Both of them have been volunteering, without a break or a vacation, ever since.

"We average 20 boxes a week, often more, in donations. That would be a conservative estimate," says Neufeld, who has listed well over 4,000 of the donated books



Mary Klassen and James Neufeld relax in the café at Sam's Place, where the sorted and organized donated books are sold as a fundraising project for Mennonite Central Committee.

Donations and sales have grown to the point where book sales in the café have more than covered the mortgage for the last few years. Internet sales are more specialized and supplement those sales.

The books come from all over. Increasingly church pastors from mostly

*"We have established ourselves as serious booksellers of out of print books, theological books and Mennonite books."
(James Neufeld, Sam's Place volunteer)*

on AbeBooks, an online marketplace for used, rare or out of print books, as well as new ones.

For her part, Klassen does the shipping. "It used to be we shipped books mostly to the U.S., but now probably as many—or even more—go to Canadian destinations," she says. "Our latest quarterly report shows we sold books all over the U.S. and Canada, some to colleges, to other booksellers, to European destinations, including the Mennonite Amsterdam Seminary, and many other countries, including Australia."

Mennonite churches, but also a growing number of other denominations, are donating their libraries after retiring, Klassen and Neufeld explain while meandering through a tight labyrinth of floor-to-ceiling shelves of books in the storage space above the café.

Neufeld and Klassen note some rare finds. "We sent a Low German Bible to Korea, to someone with a Korean name," says Neufeld.

They recently came across a Russian songbook dating back to approximately 1910, when the Russian government

wanted these songbooks placed in the schools to "Russify" the Mennonites, who resisted, and the songbooks disappeared.

Four bound tomes of the *New York Times* contain complete volumes from the years 1915-18. "There's a letter to the editor from George Bernard Shaw in there written during the Russian Revolution," says Klassen.

Recently, a book written and autographed by Martin Luther King, Jr. was donated.

While not all books are saleable, each donation is handled with respect and care, stress Klassen and Neufeld

"People who have books, like books," says Klassen. "They bring them here if they think they have some value or if they want their books looked after. People know we will look after them."

No books are trashed. If they are deemed unsalable, they are recycled. The book spines are cut off and made into bookmarks, which are sold as a fundraiser for MCC. Several groups of young people with learning challenges come once a week to assist with the recycling work.

"We have many opportunities to share books with other groups," says Klassen.

Sam's Place has sent a pallet of children's books to South Africa through MCC workers there. Klassen and Neufeld have carefully screened German books to send to Paraguayan libraries, children and adult books to libraries in the far north of Canada, and recently a book about pasta from the Canadian Grain Commission was shipped to Florence, Italy, for more than \$80.

Neufeld, who has a Ph.D. in European history, spent six months learning from booksellers in Toronto before coming to Winnipeg. Both he and Klassen have learned a great deal about the value of books since volunteering at Sam's Place.

"Our Mennonite books sell well," says Neufeld. "We have established ourselves as serious booksellers of out of print books, theological books and Mennonite books. We have a real advantage between the two of us knowing German, Russian and Ukrainian in the world market that deals with Mennonite books."

"It's taken off and we want to keep it going," says Klassen.

It's that sense of commitment that keeps these two volunteers so dedicated that they don't stop for a vacation. ❧

OBITUARY

A living history lesson

Cornelius J. Dyck, 92

(b. Aug. 20, 1921; d. Jan. 10, 2014)

BY MARY E. KLASSEN

Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary
ELKHART, IND.

Cornelius J. (C.J.) Dyck not only researched and taught Mennonite history, he lived it, and he will be remembered for the wisdom, wit and commitment with which he did all three.

Dyck died in Normal, Ill., where he and Wilma, his wife, had been living for several years. He was born in Russia and immigrated to Laird, Sask., with his family at the age of 5. He became a member of the Mennonite church through baptism in 1939.

At the end of the Second World War in 1945, he volunteered for service with Mennonite Central Committee (MCC), serving for six years in England and the Netherlands. In 1946 he was assigned to the British Zone of Germany through MCC and the Council of Relief Agencies Licensed to Operate in Germany, working with all in need of food, clothing and emigration help. Of great satisfaction to him was initiating the daily feeding of about 100,000 children in North Germany with food supplies sent by Mennonites in North America through MCC, aware that when he was born in the famine year of 1921, it had been MCC food sent to Russia that saved his life.

Following MCC service, Dyck returned to North America. In 1952, he married Wilma Regier and in 1953 he graduated from Bethel College, North Newton, Kan. From 1955-59, he studied history and theology at the University of Chicago, earning bachelor of divinity and Ph.D. degrees while serving as business manager for Mennonite Biblical Seminary (MBS).

As business manager, it became Dyck's responsibility to oversee the move of MBS from Chicago to its new location in Elkhart, Ind., in 1958, when the association



Cornelius J. Dyck

with Goshen Biblical Seminary began. One task that demonstrated his efficient creativity was his solution for moving the library. He crafted crates the same size as the library shelves, filled these with books, loaded them onto the MBS bus, whose seats had been removed, and thus transported the collection

to Elkhart with minimal risk of shelving errors.

Dyck was then invited to join the new faculty team as professor of historical theology, a position he held for 30 years until retiring in 1989. As a professor he was loved for the depth of content in his courses and for the way in which he taught.

In addition to teaching, Dyck served as director of the Institute of Mennonite Studies, a research and publishing agency of the then-named Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS), beginning in

'Mennonite views toward Catholics changed over time, and C.J.'s reports from Vatican II had a major influence on that.'

(Janeen Bertsche Johnson, AMBS campus pastor)

1958 and continuing for 21 years. This work led to many conferences and his facilitation of approximately 50 publications, including *The Politics of Jesus* by John Howard Yoder and *Yahweh is a Warrior* by Millard Lind.

Dyck's own publications include *An Introduction to Mennonite History*, which after two revisions is still being used as a textbook in many Mennonite high schools and colleges into the 21st century. He served as editor of Mennonite Encyclopedia Vol. V, a 10-year project that

resulted in a 960-page volume published in 1990. He, along with others, translated and edited the writings of Dirk Philips, a volume published in the Classics of the Radical Reformation series (Herald Press 1992).

"C.J. had an original vision for a structure that would promote research and publication in Anabaptism and Mennonitism. Under his leadership, the Institute of Mennonite Studies flourished and became a model for other schools," said John Rempel, director of the Toronto Mennonite Theological Centre. Both a student and then a colleague of Dyck's, Rempel added, "He was at once a critical scholar and a devout Christian, a man who was grounded in the Mennonite church yet who had an ecumenical horizon."

From 1961-73, Dyck was executive secretary of Mennonite World Conference. His facility with languages—English, German, Dutch, French and Spanish, as well as Low German—and his work in Europe, South America and North America, contributed to his leadership of the international organization.

In the early 1960s, Dyck was an observer at Vatican II, the only Mennonite who was present. Carrying journalist credentials through *Mennonite Weekly Review*, he reported his observations.

Janeen Bertsche Johnson, now AMBS campus pastor, researched this involvement and noted, "Mennonite views toward

Catholics changed over time, and C.J.'s reports from Vatican II had a major influence on that."

Dyck retired from seminary teaching in 1989 and was named professor emeritus of Anabaptist and 16th-century studies.

Surviving him are his wife of 61 years, Wilma of Normal; three daughters, Mary of Normal, Jennifer (Suzie Lane) of Dunkirk, N.Y., and Suzanne (Brad Kliever) of Minneapolis, Minn.; three granddaughters and many nieces and nephews. ❧



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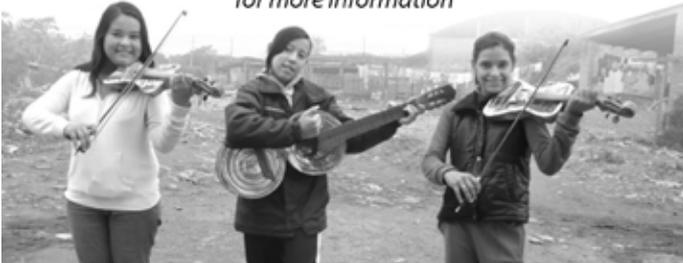
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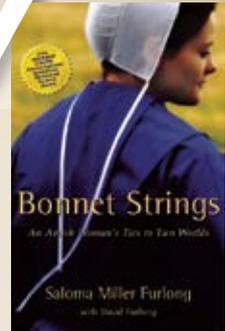


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ARTBEAT

BOOK REVIEW

Book offers neutral voice in CO debate

For God and Country (In That Order): Faith and Service for Ordinary Radicals.

By Logan Mehl-Laituri. Herald Press, 2013, 225 pages.

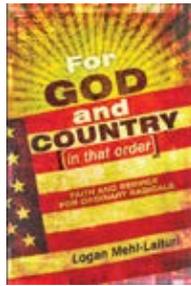
REVIEWED BY BARB DRAPER

For *God and Country* is a bit of a surprise for a Mennonite publisher. Although non-Mennonite readers may find the questions it raises about the role of Christian soldiers thought-provoking, it does little to promote the idea that followers of Jesus should not participate in war or military service.

The author, Logan Mehl-Laituri, was serving with the U.S. military in Iraq when he applied for status as a non-combatant conscientious objector (CO) and was discharged in 2006. After serving a stint with Christian Peacemaker Teams, he began studying theology and working with veterans groups. He now speaks and writes about veterans' issues. Given this background, perhaps it isn't surprising that the book is careful not to be too critical of militarism and nationalism.

On his website (www.loganmehllaituri.com), the author writes, "Whereas *Reborn on the Fourth of July* [his earlier book] was about conscientious participation with faith in mind, *For God and Country* . . . is more about chaplaincy and the line between church and state as it moved throughout history."

He goes on to say that he left the military "rather reluctantly" and knows from talking to other soldiers that "the military is compelling in unanticipated ways." Although he personally could not bring himself to end another human being's life, he understands the appeal of the military, with its sense of adventure and danger that forces soldiers to push themselves to the limit, committing themselves to something



they feel is important.

This point of view comes through loud and clear in *For God and Country*. It seems to be written for chaplains and soldiers who are struggling with what it means to serve God while serving in the military. It almost reads like an explanation of Just War theory. He declares

that a soldier's most difficult task comes when the values of one's nation conflict

with God's values. He describes with respect soldiers from long ago—he calls them saints—who balanced the love of God with love of country.

The book is not difficult to read, as it is a collection of 44 short stories about Christian warriors and pacifists from ancient times to the present. It includes warriors from the Old Testament, martyrs from the early church, stories from the medieval period and modern pacifists. Scattered throughout are pull-quotes and drawings that further break up the text. Included in the appendices are a variety of resources, including creeds from the church and the military, as well as Christian statements on war from a variety of denominations.

Although the stories are very accessible for young readers, I do not think this is a good resource for Mennonite youth. It would, however, be helpful for military chaplains and soldiers struggling with what it means to serve God and follow Jesus. It would also be interesting for mature Christians who want to consider all sides of the CO debate. ❧

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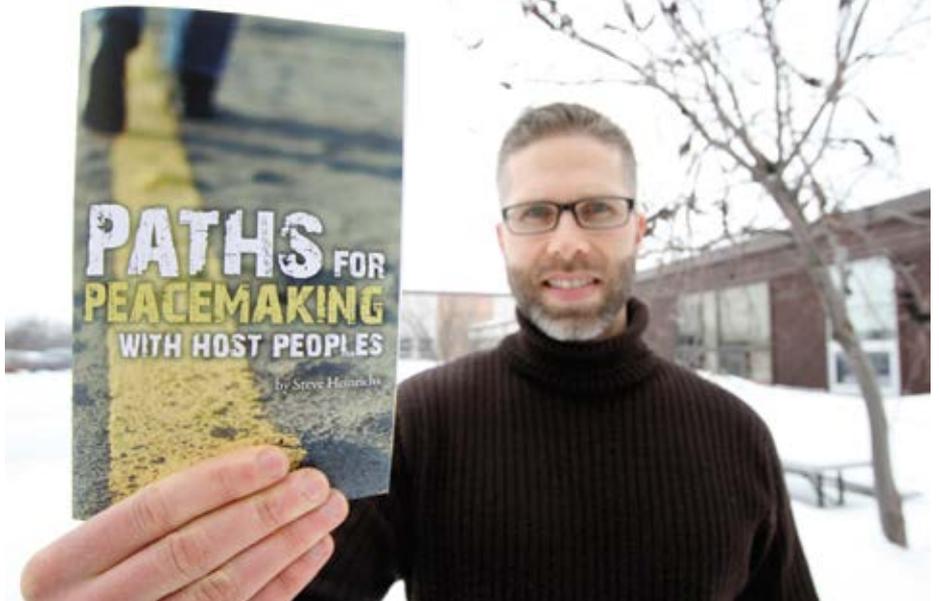
Artbeat Snapshots

PHOTO BY STEPHEN NICHOLSON / TEXT BY DONNA SCHULZ



Pianist Godwin Friesen plays 'Variations on Bach' by J. Coultard at the Walter Thiessen Tribute Concert, held Jan. 19 at First Mennonite Church in Saskatoon in honour of the church's long-time choir director and organist who passed away on Sept. 3, 2013. Sponsored by the Saskatoon Registered Music Teachers Association, the concert featured performances by many talented artists, some of them having studied with Thiessen over his six-decade career as a music teacher. Appropriately, the evening's donations went to establish the Walter Thiessen Bursary Fund.

MENNONITE CHURCH CANADA PHOTO BY DAN DYCK



Steve Heinrichs, director of indigenous relations for Mennonite Church Canada, produced the 'Paths for Peacemaking With Host Peoples' booklet in response to the question, 'What can we do next?' generated by the 2013 book, Buffalo Shout, Salmon Cry, that he edited. The booklet includes more than 50 tips to engage and strengthen relationships with indigenous people. Broken down into digestible categories, suggestions range from learning from the arts—such as listening to indigenous storytellers, poets and musicians—to engaging with justice issues and incorporating ideas about peacemaking with indigenous people into worship times. 'Paths for Peacemaking' is available for free download/home printing from www.mennonitechurch.ca/tiny/2249. Pre-printed booklets can also be ordered from the same site.

Briefly noted

Miller Furlong's new book explores ties to two worlds

In her first volume of memoir, *Why I Left the Amish* (Michigan State University Press, 2011), Saloma Miller Furlong told of growing up in a strict Amish community with a violent, mentally ill father and a sexually abusive brother, and fleeing to a new life in Vermont. Her new book, *Bonnet Strings: An Amish Woman's Ties to Two Worlds* (Herald Press, 2014), recounts how she returned for a few years, but was able to finally break away through the love of the non-Amish



man she would eventually marry. The book ends with a beginning: Saloma and David's wedding on May 29, 1982. "The joy of having overcome the cultural barriers and impossibilities of our relationship was overwhelming," Furlong says. "This was my last step out of the Amish community and into my new one."
—MennoMedia

New study aims to help youth understand *Confession of Faith*

Believing that it is important to pass faith from one generation to another, MennoMedia has published a new resource, "Claiming faith: Youth discover the *Confession of Faith*." Designed with both print and DVD components, this new tool

will familiarize youth with the *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective*. Conversations canvassing Mennonite youth pastors and youth leaders showed strong support for incorporating print and video teaching elements into "Claiming faith." The 10 sessions use these elements and more to help youth understand and claim faith from an Anabaptist-Mennonite perspective. The video segments contribute to the discussions. Videographer Wayne Gehman coordinated the DVD that includes people from across Mennonite Church Canada and MC U.S.A. sharing their faith as it relates to the session topics.
—MennoMedia



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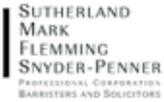
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FOCUS ON POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION



Kathleen Doll, Columbia Bible College's associate dean of students, relaxes in the commuter lounge with a couple of students.

PERSONAL REFLECTION

The core never changes

KATHLEEN DOLL

COLUMBIA BIBLE COLLEGE

I was 18 when I first walked on to the Columbia Bible College campus for new student orientation.

Filled with nervous anticipation, I approached the registration table. A young woman smiled and called me by name. Stunned, with no time to dwell on how she could possibly know my name, I was whisked away to my new home.

While standing just outside the building, I met my residence assistant: petite, short hair in two perfect ponytails, glitter across her cheeks. I was inwardly disappointed, for she was the beautiful camp-counsellor type and I had no idea how we would ever connect. I wondered that day if it was all a huge mistake.

My initial plan for one year of Bible college morphed into a four-year degree. In my final semester, I sat around a table with my closest friends, faculty and staff who had gotten to know me best, as

they shared their insights for my life. At Columbia, we call this “a senior discernment,” a process for all students completing their degrees.

My chosen contributors commented on my strengths and growth areas, and dreamed of the future with me. They

asked, “If you could change anything from the past four years, what would you do differently?”

Hundreds of memories flooded my mind: my first class presentation; praying for healing with friends; a fight with a housemate; volunteering at a local church; the first conflict I had to mediate as a residence assistant; spontaneous

camping with friends one cold March; co-leading a mission trip to San Francisco; arriving early to school for student leadership training.

I answered honestly. I would not have changed a thing. Each moment in Bible college provided opportunity to acknowledge who I was, to seek my Saviour and to prepare me for the next step on his path for me.

This last fall marked 13 years since that nerve-wracking first day. I am thankful we have a God who works in mysterious ways, for in the last six years I have lived with that “perfect” residence assistant and her husband, and become “auntie” to her three beautiful children. Needless to say, we connected.

In my current role at the college as associate dean of students, I am honoured to receive invitations to students’ senior discernments. As I attended the most recent ones, I had to smile at their stories.

They came to Columbia with ideas and expectations, and God took those and made the experience rich. They shared how they had grown in understanding of the Bible and in their critical thinking skills, how their internships had challenged their book smarts by testing their street smarts, how they had met one another and grown in friendship, and how being part of a community like Columbia’s offered space to make and learn from mistakes.

I was relieved to know that my experience was not an anomaly, but in fact one that continues today. While the course offerings might change, the buildings are

Each moment in Bible college provided opportunity to acknowledge who I was, to seek my Saviour and to prepare me for the next step on his path for me.

rebuilt and the people move on in life, the core of what happens through a Bible college education remains the same. ❧

Kathleen Doll is associate dean of students at Columbia Bible College, Abbotsford, B.C., from which she graduated with a degree in caregiving/counseling in 2004.

CONRAD GREBEL UNIVERSITY COLLEGE PHOTOS



Composer Tim Corlis, left, is pictured with Gerard Yun, Kenneth Hull and Mark Vuorinen, conductors of Conrad Grebel University College's three choirs, who came together to perform Corlis's musical setting of Psalm 150 on Nov. 30, 2013, at one of the college's 50th-anniversary events.

Conrad Grebel celebrates 50th anniversary in song

Conrad Grebel University College
WATERLOO, ONT.

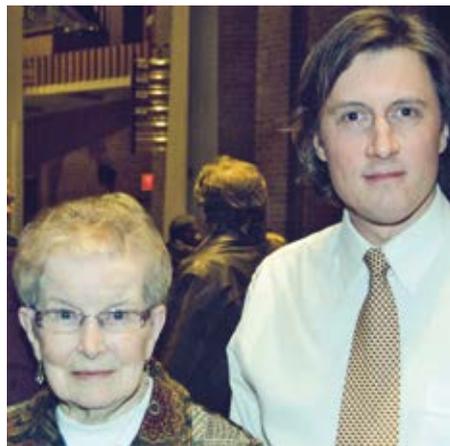
As home to the Music Department at the University of Waterloo, the culture at Conrad Grebel University College is steeped in harmony. The college hosts dozens of concerts each year: instrumental ensembles, jazz band concerts, vocal performances and choral presentations.

Nevertheless, it is truly a special occasion when the department joins together for a mass concert like the "Celebration in Song" that took place on Nov. 30, 2013, at St. Peter's Lutheran Church in Waterloo. With the sanctuary filled to capacity, this special event celebrating Grebel's 50th anniversary showcased the college's three choirs: the University Choir, the Chapel Choir and the Chamber Choir.

To cap off the event, the choirs formed a mass choir to perform the world premiere of Psalm 150, a commissioned piece by Grebel alumnus Timothy Corlis.

According to Corlis, who composed the music, the psalmist expresses in Psalm 150 the "HalleluYah" with instruments, including trumpets, organs, cymbals, harps,

strings and tambourines—many of them loud instruments—and then ends with the



Composer Tim Corlis, right, is pictured with Lena Williams, who established the Henry A. and Anna Schultz Memorial Fund in memory of her parents. The fund was used to commission Corlis to write a musical setting of Psalm 150 to help Conrad Grebel University College celebrate its 50th anniversary last fall.

word, *neshamah*, translated as "breath" or "spirit": "Let everything that hath breath praise the Lord!"

"This is the same breath or soul that God gives in the Genesis creation story," he says.

In setting Psalm 150 to music, Corlis describes the piece as "a journey up the mountain. We share earnest prayer and devotion in the beginning, and follow it by exuberance and excitement as we push on towards the summit. Sometimes the air gets a little thin up there. It reminds us that we are physically and spiritually inseparable from our creator. We may face fears of the unknown and the mysterious . . . wonder and awe as we climb higher. Life, breath, worship all at once, indistinguishable."

The piece, commissioned by Conrad Grebel University College, was made possible with the Henry A. and Anna Schultz Memorial Fund. The fund, administered by the Mennonite Foundation of Canada, was established in 1982 by Lena Williams of St. Catharines, Ont., in memory of her parents. Henry was a church music conductor and self-taught violinist, and all members of the family participated actively in singing and the playing of various instruments.

A recording of Corlis's "Psalm 150" is available online at www.timothycorlis.ca/composition/psalm-150/. ☞

FOCUS ON POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Eating like a Mennonite

Zwieback symbolizes place of food in Mennonite history, culture

BY MELANIE ZUERCHER

Bethel College
NORTH NEWTON, KAN.

Munching on a fresh *zwieback* (because sauerkraut and spring rolls would be too messy to eat on the podium), John Thiesen, archivist at Bethel College's Mennonite Library and Archives, introduced the 2013 Menno Simons lecturer, Marlene Epp.

The roll was meant to reinforce Epp's overall topic in her four lectures, "The semiotics of *zwieback*, sauerkraut and spring rolls: Mennonites and foodways." During the series, *zwieback* (two-level yeast buns) was a recurring metaphor for the place of food in Mennonite theology, history and culture.

"Food is endowed with complex signs

'just' food?" she said, "Food is central to faith practices and to the living out of beliefs through food charity. Food can take on religious meaning, as did *zwieback* for Mennonite refugees, to whom it "meant they would not be hungry on the journey. . . . When I talked to Laotian Mennonites about fleeing war violence, they spoke of the sticky rice they took along. The spiritual role of food in times of death and despair is common to all faith communities."

Epp began her third lecture, "Eating across borders: Mennonite missions and migrations," by showing several photos of "food fusion," restaurants and grocery stores in southern Ontario that feature

'For women, published cookbooks are a means to define themselves and their cultural groups, to preserve the past and save the future.'
(Marlene Epp)

and symbols," said Epp, a history and peace and conflict studies professor at Conrad Grebel University College, in her first lecture. "Food is itself and more than itself. It is so ubiquitous and so every-day that we almost overlook its value in adding meaning."

Many Russian Mennonites have direct experience or family stories of being "refugees wrenched from their homes," Epp said, noting that, for them, "food holds deep religious meaning."

Zwieback, when roasted and dried properly, is "the perfect travel food," she said. "It is connected to many often painful memories. It is a unifying social force. Roasting and packing *zwieback* became a communal ritual. As long as there was *zwieback*, God existed. There was hope. That connection between bread and life is reinforced in the eucharist meal."

In her second lecture, "Are we eating

what she dubbed "MennoMex" foods and cuisine. "The people who run these [businesses] are part of the Mexican Mennonite phenomenon, descended from 1870s immigrants from south Russia who keep going back and forth between Canada and Mexico."

Food represents "famine to feast" for those who crossed borders amid enormous physical deprivation, she said, noting that things like *zwieback*, oranges, chocolate and fresh milk were, and still are, symbols of hope for many Mennonites.

During a visit to Congo in 2012, she said she was "struck by what the [Congolese Mennonite] women had in common with Russian Mennonite women in the first half of the 20th century. *Foufou*, a cassava and cornmeal dumpling, was something akin to *zwieback* and sticky rice. There is something like this in every culture: the food of life, hope and survival."

In her final lecture, "'Just' recipes: Re-reading Mennonite cookbooks," Epp said, "Cookbooks tell stories, as do all books. [They reflect] changes in economy, women's roles, the make-up of society. For women, published cookbooks are a means to define themselves and their cultural groups, to preserve the past and save the future."

"The recipe book, ubiquitous in Mennonite homes, solidified the internal and external aspects of community," she explained. "Cookbooks say a lot about Mennonite women's lives, but also about Mennonites generally. They have told the world more about Mennonites than any other written work." As a case in point, she referred to the best-selling "Mennonite" book of all time—Doris Janzen Longacre's *More-with-Less Cookbook*—as well as the more recent *Mennonite Girls Can Cook*.

"Cookbooks [are] signposts of an era, reflecting the changes," Epp said, adding, "Mennonites often follow the ideological bandwagon, but it can be said that with



their cookbooks, they more often lead it."

"Cookbooks can be understood in terms of their wider goals and impact," she said. "Cookbooks [project] a female voice amid all the male ones. They have shaped Mennonites' self-understanding as well as external views of Mennonites."

In conclusion, Epp said, "We've come full circle, back to 'how to eat like a Mennonite.' The *More-with-Less Cookbook* suggests there might actually be a way to do this." ❖

Maintaining separation from a wired world

'Plain' church split speaks to technology complexities

Bluffton University
BLUFFTON, OHIO

Ongoing debate in the divided Old German Baptist Brethren Church illustrates difficulties that the conservative Anabaptist group continues to face in its efforts to restrict Internet use, says a Bluffton University professor who has studied the church.

The Brethren ruled against use of the Internet at its 1996 annual meeting to maintain “separation from, and nonconformity to, the world,” according to meeting minutes cited by Gerald Mast, a professor of communication, at a campus colloquium last fall.

Over the next 13 years, debate about the Internet’s value and danger contributed to a 2009 split that created the Old German Baptist Brethren Church, New Conference.

“Several years after the division, the sorrow and loss associated with separation are still evident in conversations with those involved on both sides,” said Mast, who noted that the Old German Baptist Brethren Church was originally created in 1880 as the result a schism.

At the same time, though, the 2009 division has allowed both groups “to pursue their own distinctive faithful responses to the surrounding world with its ever-changing landscape of communication technology, full as it is of both threats and possibilities,” he noted.

He added, too, that “intense discussion” at the 2013 annual meeting—which he attended—confirmed that the break “was rooted in the more basic question of the authority of the annual meeting,” and not just in conflict about Internet use.

The Internet aside, the Old German Baptist Brethren Church did not forbid use of computing technology. In 1992, the body had ruled that computers could be used in “homes or places of business for serious and

worthwhile personal, business and occupational endeavours only,” excluding “games or other forms of entertainment,” Mast said, again quoting meeting minutes.

By 1996, he said, “many Brethren recognized that the increasingly complex media capabilities associated with networked computers threatened to compromise the purpose of previous rulings designed to protect them from ‘worldly’ influences disseminated through mass media technologies.”



*“Several years after the division, the sorrow and loss associated with separation are still evident in conversations with those involved on both sides.”
(Gerald Mast)*

But in following years, he pointed out, “it became clear that some Brethren felt that there were valid non-entertainment and business uses for networked computing.” For example, he cited a 2005 annual meeting query from one local congregation that called the Internet a “simple information tool” that can be “extremely useful and necessary,” and also for an investigation of “its applications, dangers and available safeguards.”

An appointed committee compiled a lengthy report, which, in 2006, was given to a new subcommittee charged with drafting an answer for presentation in 2007, Mast recounted. An answer to the report was deferred in 2007 and again in 2008, as the Brethren sought to clarify the church’s position on the Internet, “and to find a ground for unity,” he continued.

A 2008 query asked specific questions about permissible uses of the Internet. But the inability of any subcommittee to devise a response “likely to receive unanimous agreement in the annual meeting” led to a series of actions by Brethren elders that reinforced

the 1996 ruling and made its acceptance “a test of membership,” Mast explained.

At the root of the conflict that created the church’s New Conference were differences of opinion “about the extent to which churchwide resolutions passed in annual meeting[s] are obligatory or advisory,” the professor said. The decision of some Brethren to use the Internet in spite of the 1996 ruling is illustrative, “although such use seemed to be driven more by the demands of the workplace than by any disrespect for the annual meeting rulings,” he added.

Numerous queries about Internet use were still raised at the annual meetings from 2010-12 and, at the 2013 meeting last May a discussion was devoted to several that asked if the brotherhood would permit certain kinds of Internet use for business purposes.

Eventually, a motion was approved to allow Internet use by those Brethren who

need to do so to retain their jobs. The same motion, however, also strengthened the 1996 ruling by removing the phrase “at this time” from it, “to make it clear that the rule against Internet use was not temporary,” the professor noted.

Responding to a question about how he sees the tension between the two viewpoints playing out, he pointed out that the Brethren haven’t deemed the Internet “absolutely evil,” nor have they passed judgment on others who do use it. They have simply indicated that “this doesn’t seem like it’s going to work very well with us,” said Mast.

When it comes to the group’s way of life, the question, he said, is, “Where is the front line of the struggle going to be?”

Mast has written an essay on his research that was published in the January 2014 issue of *Mennonite Quarterly Review*. His work is also part of a larger project that examines responses to digital communication technologies among “plain” Anabaptist communities, including the Amish, conservative Mennonites and Hutterites. ❧

FOCUS ON POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

New guide to Ontario Mennonite peace history online

BY LAUREN HARDER-GISSING

Mennonite Archives of Ontario
WATERLOO, ONT.

What was it like to be a conscientious objector during the Second World War? Did Mennonites participate in the War of 1812? Did Mennonite women contribute to First World War relief efforts? Do Mennonites celebrate Remembrance Day?

These are some of the questions asked of the Mennonite Archives of Ontario by genealogists, local historians, school children and academics. The “peace position” has been part of Mennonite doctrine and practice for nearly 500 years. Naturally, there is a great deal of curiosity about how the Mennonite commitment to nonparticipation in war has provided them with unique historical experiences and perspectives.

To encourage this growing interest, the Archives—located at Conrad Grebel

University College—has created a peace research guide to its holdings. Since archives are organized by creator—not subject—identifying peace-related sources can be time-consuming. The online guide—subjectguides.uwaterloo.ca/peacearchives—identifies source materials for peace history with a focus on Mennonite responses to military conflicts.

Spanning the years from 1786 to the present, the guide highlights the rich collections in peace history held at the Archives. Listings range from 19th-century military exemption papers and First World War military tribunal records, to taped interviews with Second World War conscientious objectors and efforts by Ontario Mennonites to raise awareness of Central American conflicts in the 1980s.

As the guide is electronic, new listings will continue to be added as peace-related historical documents make their way to the Archives.

Currently, the Mennonite Archives of Ontario is undergoing a large renovation that will make the collection more accessible. However, researchers can use the online guide to locate materials of interest, and then make an appointment at the Archives to view them in person. The new facilities are projected to be open in June. ☘

/// Briefly noted

Grant to address economic well-being of future pastors

ELKHART, IND.—Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS) has received a \$248,324 grant from Lilly Endowment Inc. to work at reducing concerns about the cost of seminary study and improving finances for seminary students. Personal financial pressures limit the ability of seminary graduates to accept calls to ministry and undermine the effectiveness of many pastoral leaders. To help address this, Lilly Endowment created the “Theological school initiative to address economic issues facing future ministers,” inviting all schools accredited by the Association of Theological Schools in the United States and Canada to submit grant proposals. AMBS, one of 67 theological schools to receive this funding, will use its grant for three major areas of work: research into the extent of student debt, its impact on pastoral well-being and denominational compensation practices; strategies to reduce student debt; and educational initiatives to increase financial literacy of students, pastors and bi-vocational leaders. The research component will analyze debt trends of Mennonite seminary graduates, and work with Mennonite Church Canada and MC U.S.A. to gain a comprehensive picture of compensation for pastors and to assess the impact of student debt on ministry and pastoral well-being.

—AMBS

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Bethany College student



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/// Briefly noted

TWU School of Law receives final approval

ABBOTSFORD, B.C.— Trinity Western University (TWU) received an early Christmas present in December, when the B.C. Ministry of Advanced Education approved its School of Law two days after the Federation of Law Societies of Canada did the same. With these two approvals, TWU will now move forward with development

of the School of Law, with the first class planned to commence in 2016. “It needs to be said, that all students [gay or straight] are welcome to attend Trinity Western University, providing they meet our academic requirements and agree to respect our community values,” said president Bob Kuhn. TWU requires students and staff to sign a pledge that they will not engage in sexual activity outside the bounds of marriage between one man and one woman. The TWU School of Law will offer unique

courses in two distinctive areas of specialization: charities/not-for-profit law and entrepreneurial law. A specialty in the non-profit sector will address a niche market in legal education. TWU graduates are challenged to care about the well-being of others and be committed to understanding how to address the world’s deepest needs.
—Trinity Western University

/// Briefly noted

Lilly Endowment awards Goshen College \$1-million grant

GOSHEN, IND.—Goshen College has received a \$1 million US grant from Lilly Endowment Inc. to help establish stronger career counselling, foster student entrepreneurship, and promote internships and other experiential learning opportunities at the college. The grant, which is part of the Endowment’s “Initiative to promote opportunities through educational collaborations,” is meant to boost efforts to enhance and expand opportunities for college graduates to find meaningful employment in Indiana. Some funds will go toward an endowment for the Student Entrepreneurship Grant Program, which has been awarding entrepreneurship grants to students since 2005. The college will introduce a “pathways to careers” program to all first-year students and develop programs for students to interact with local businesses and explore career opportunities. It also will create a new program that partners local businesses with graduates, resulting in real job experience and possible employment. “We share the Endowment’s concern for the long-term implications of not having a sufficient quantity and quality of employment opportunities for our graduates,” said Jim Caskey, vice president for institutional advancement at the college.

—Goshen College

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PERSONAL REFLECTION

Time for what's important

AARON EPP

YOUNG VOICES CO-EDITOR



Aaron Epp

PHOTOS BY AARON EPP



So many Bibles and resources, so little time: Reading the Bible requires perseverance, but God can help.

Reading the Bible is hard. It's hard to sit still. It's hard to concentrate. It's hard to make sense of what I'm reading. And it's hard to read stories I've heard seemingly a million times before—like the creation story, Adam and Eve, Noah—with fresh eyes.

It's hard to find time in my day to read the Bible. So far it's often ended up happening as an afterthought. I do it at the end of the day when I'd rather just go to bed, and I've missed a few days and had to play catch up.

weeks:

- **FIRST**, MY assumption going into YORB is that I am the only Christian in the world not reading his Bible on a regular basis. I'm not sure why I thought this might be the case—and it seems ridiculous in retrospect—but through conversations I've had with different people since publishing the first YORB article in December, it's become apparent to me that I'm not the only one who rarely touches the Bible. I'm not trying to judge

We North Americans are excellent at filling up our schedules and leading busy lives.

As A Year of Reading Biblically (YORB) continues, my plan is to read my Bible at the same time each day—first thing in the morning. In addition to the 15 minutes (give or take) the daily readings take me, I would also like to spend more time in quiet reflection and prayer.

I am finding that, like going to the gym and eating properly, I will only be able to read through my Bible this year if I prioritize it and make a plan to get it done. It won't just happen on its own.

When you think about adding something like that to your daily schedule, you quickly start to think about all of the ways you currently spend your time. We North Americans are excellent at filling up our schedules and leading busy lives. It's no wonder so many of us don't read our Bibles. "Who has the time?" we ask.

And that brings me to two things I have thought about over the past few

anyone; I'm just making an observation.

- **SECOND**, I'VE thought about a lesson I remember learning in Grade 8: We make time for the things that are important to us. That year, a music teacher at my school offered free guitar lessons during the lunch hour to any interested student. I went for a lesson, and he promised to give me another one once I practised what he had taught me. I bumped into him in the hallway a week later, and he asked if I had worked on any of the material.

"I haven't yet," I told him. "But I want to."

I'll never forget his response: "If you really wanted to, you would have done it by now."

I wanted to take on YORB in 2014 because, although I often find my day is full, I know there are things I can take out

of my schedule so that I can prioritize reading my Bible. I don't have a wife or children, which means there are fewer demands on my schedule than there might otherwise be. I know that might not always be the case, so I'd like to make Bible reading and study a priority this year, when it's relatively easy for me to make the time.

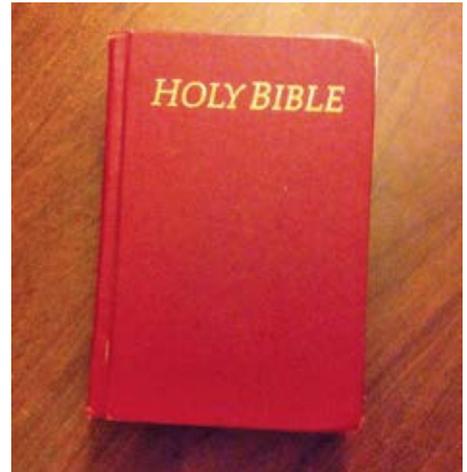
Still, reading the Bible is hard.

Thankfully, God can help.

I recently spoke with Carol Penner, a pastor for 12 years. When she was called into ministry, Penner prayed to God because she felt she wasn't passionate

enough about the Bible: "I said, Lord, I kind of feel called to be a minister. People are telling me to be a minister [but] you have to give me a love for the Bible because I don't have that and I think I need that. And I did get that. I do have a passion that Scripture can be a road to God, and I see that as a gift from God."

Asking for divine assistance during YORB—especially while reading passages that require perseverance—had never occurred to me. So as A Year of Reading Biblically continues, that's what I am doing. ✎



Taking a stand against war

Canadians create video of South Korea's first Mennonite CO

BY RACHEL BERGEN

Young Voices Co-editor

A Korean Mennonite is facing prison time for refusing to participate in South Korea's mandatory two-year military term due to his religious convictions.

Lee Sang Min, a 27-year-old member of Grace and Peace Mennonite Church in Seoul, is the first Mennonite to oppose

The married couple who teach English at Connexus Language Institute both graduated from Canadian Mennonite University and have Mennonite contacts in Winnipeg, so they decided to make a video of Lee's story and send it home.

"I remember reading about con-

'These challenges are old issues for most Mennonites. It's what they learn in the textbooks about their ancestors. Here, it's a reality. Being a Christian pacifist in Korea is a difficult thing.'
(Jae Young Lee, Korea Peace Institute)

military service as a conscientious objector (CO) in South Korea, where there are no alternative service options for pacifists.

Two Canadian Mennonites living near Seoul are doing their utmost to help him. Heather Schellenberg, 27, and Michael Harms, 25, from Home Street Mennonite Church in Winnipeg, heard his testimony at Grace and Peace one Sunday and decided his message of peace needed to be spread.

scientious objectors in my Anabaptist Beginnings class at CMU and thinking this difficult decision was something of the past," says Schellenberg in an e-mail. "After having heard his story, I thought people back home may be interested in hearing more about it."

If found guilty at his trial this month, Lee will likely spend a year-and-a-half in prison. He will have a criminal record for

(Continued on page 36)

SCREEN SHOT FROM VIDEO



Lee Sang Min is a Mennonite conscientious objector from South Korea who is facing a prison sentence.

(Continued from page 35)

the rest of his life and faces ostracism for his stand.

Lee says this decision was difficult, especially the impact it will have on his family. In the 13-minute video (<http://bit.ly/1dNx7hX>), he says, "I worry about that part and my parents especially worry. . . . But I know I am confident in my decision."

He is likely the only Mennonite CO in South Korea, but there are many Christian objectors imprisoned there. According to a recent UN report, of the 723 COs imprisoned worldwide, 669, or 92.5 percent, are incarcerated in South Korea.

"Being a part of the military structure makes me a victim and an offender without a choice," Lee says in the video.

Connexus is part of a network of organizations that works alongside the Korea Peace Institute. Institute director Jae Young Lee explains Korea's militaristic culture in an e-mail: "These challenges are old issues for most Mennonites. It's what they learn in the textbooks about their ancestors. Here, it's a reality. Being a Christian pacifist in Korea is a difficult

thing." Opposing military service in South Korea is seen as betrayal and sympathy with North Korea, he says, which is why it is taken so seriously.

Schellenberg and Harms say objection to military service is rare, so his CO status won't mean very much to the government. "His decision will likely have very little impact for the bigger picture of military objection in South Korea, but it's clearly an important issue for Grace and Peace Mennonite Church," they say.

There are many young men and boys facing the possibility of military service in the coming months and years. Lee is determined to follow through with his decision in the hope that other pacifists can choose an alternative to military service, rather than prison.

The video will be presented in a Mennonite history class at Westgate Mennonite Collegiate, Winnipeg, in February. It is meant to offer a modern-day understanding of the persecution many Mennonites endured in Europe, which forced them to emigrate to escape conscription. ❧

PHOTO COURTESY OF HEATHER SCHELLENBERG AND MICHAEL HARMS



Michael Harms and Heather Schellenberg are English teachers at Connexus Language Institute in South Korea.

Quitting not an option for Arvid Loewen

Ultra-marathon cyclist and philanthropist teams up with son to tell his story

BY AARON EPP

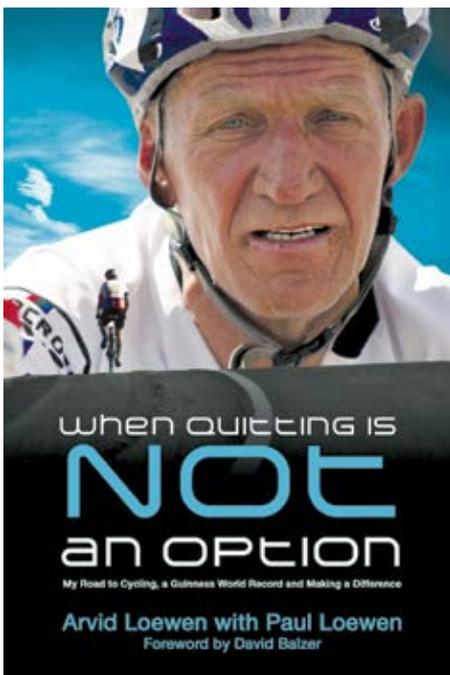
Young Voices Co-editor

Winnipeg writer Paul Loewen has self-published four novels that combine fictional stories with theological points in an attempt to create modern-day parables. But his latest book may be his most personal story yet because he has witnessed it first-hand. It's the story of Arvid Loewen, his father.

Paul wrote *When Quitting is not an Option: My Road to Cycling, a Guinness World Record and Making a Difference* with Arvid. The book, to be released this month by Castle Quay Books of Pickering, Ont., tells stories from Arvid's life and

experiences using ultra-marathon cycling to raise money for Mully Children's Family (MCF), a street mission in Nairobi, Kenya, that helps thousands of needy children.

While the book touches on Arvid's upbringing in Paraguay, his family's move to Winnipeg, his passion for soccer and his eventual discovery of cycling, it focuses predominantly on stories from the past eight years. In 2006, Arvid took a step of faith and resigned from a successful career in senior management with Palliser Furniture to volunteer full-time to create awareness and raise funds for MCF. In the



process, the 57-year-old has raised more than \$2.5 million for the organization.

Paul says one of his wishes for the book is that it gives readers a new understanding of his father and what he goes through during a race. "My hope is people will read it and go, wow, I had no idea it was that hard and that difficult, and that he thought about quitting so many times," says Paul, 27.

Each year since 2005, Arvid has undertaken a major cycling endeavour as his platform to promote MCF. In 2008, he won his age category in the Race Across

always be a Guinness World Record, but God can work through it."

He says that working on the book with his son was a fantastic experience. "How many dads have the opportunity to sit with their kid and tell them stories?" he asks. "It was really neat to go through the process of putting these stories onto paper. Paul's lived them with me and he has a very good understanding of what I go through. It was tremendous. It's been a really fun year of doing [the book]."

In June, Arvid will attempt to set the Guinness World Record for the fastest

Paul [Loewen] says the book is ultimately about more than just cycling. It's about trusting God and making a difference.

America. Rated as the world's most rigorous and challenging bicycle race, it spans the United States from coast to coast. Competitors have just 12 days to complete the 4,765-kilometre journey.

Arvid also holds the Guinness World Record for the fastest bicycle crossing of Canada (6,040 km), a feat he accomplished in 13 days 6 hours 13 minutes in 2011.

Paul, who works as the full-time youth pastor at Douglas Mennonite Church in Winnipeg, wrote the book based on a dozen interviews he conducted with his father over the course of a year. He says that being Arvid's son, as well as a support crew member on many of his races, put him in a unique position to help write *When Quitting is not an Option*.

"I know him really well," Paul says. "Our humour is similar, I'm an endurance athlete as well on a smaller scale, I've seen his pain, I've heard him speak a hundred times, I've seen him at his worst . . . so I think I have a pretty good handle on what he goes through. It was fun to write stories from his perspective."

Including stories of some of Arvid's failures was important to both Paul and his father. "People think he's Superman and that he can do anything," Paul says. "He isn't, and he can't. He's failed lots of times."

Arvid adds that he is as ordinary as can be. "I'm responsible to do my best and leave the rest of it to God," he says. "It may not always be a successful finish, it may not

time to cycle 10,000 km, a record currently set at 22 days 15 hours 34 minutes.

Before then, Paul and Arvid will celebrate the release of *When Quitting is not an Option* with a book launch in Winnipeg at North Kildonan Mennonite Brethren Church on Feb. 19 at 6:30 p.m.

Paul says the book is ultimately about more than just cycling. It's about trusting God and making a difference. His father's decision to leave a lucrative career at the age of 49, scale back his lifestyle and volunteer to raise funds for an orphanage in Kenya has inspired Paul, his sisters and their spouses. "It's been an inspiration for my faith to go full-force into things," Paul says. "He was in a time of life where people question their purpose. He found a significant purpose and we're very happy about that." ❧

A different version of this article appears in the February 2014 issue of ChristianWeek.

CANADIAN MENNONITE



Do you know of someone in your congregation not getting Canadian Mennonite?

Ask your church administrator to add them to the list. It is already paid for.

PHOTO BY MATTHEW VEITH



Arvid Loewen competes in the 2013 Race Across America. Since retiring early from a career in senior management at Palliser Furniture in 2006, Loewen has raised more than \$2.5 million for a street mission in Kenya.



Author Paul Loewen

Calendar

British Columbia

Feb. 21: MC B.C. Leaders, Elders and Deacons (LEAD) conference at Eden Mennonite Church, Chilliwack. Speaker: Rick Faw of A Rocha. Topic: "Creation care."

Feb. 22: MC B.C. annual general meeting, at Eden Mennonite Church, Chilliwack.

March 8: LifeBridge Ministries fundraising concert. Location TBA.

April 11-13: MC B.C. Junior Impact youth retreat at Camp Squeah, Hope.

Alberta

March 21-22: MC Alberta annual general meeting, in Lethbridge.

March 27-30: Truth and Reconciliation national event in Edmonton. For more information, visit trc.ca.

March 30-April 9: MCC Alberta Middle East Learning Tour.

Saskatchewan

March 2: RJC Guys and Pies concert fundraiser.

March 7: Spring pastors gathering at Shekinah Retreat Centre, Waldheim, at 1 p.m. Theme: "Church leaders in a post-Christendom world."

March 7-9: Prairie Winds worship retreat, at Shekinah Retreat Centre, Waldheim. Keynote speaker: John Bell. Theme: "Why do God's people... pray, sing, read Scripture and worship together?" For more information, visit mcsask@mcsask.ca or call 306-249-4844.

March 14-15: MC Saskatchewan annual delegate sessions at Parliament Community Church, Regina, including youth event and overnighter on March 14.

March 16: Joint choir concert by Rostern Junior College, Canadian Mennonite University and Station Singers, at Third Avenue United Church, Saskatoon; at 2:30 p.m.

March 29: SMYO Worship Extravaganza, at Shekinah Retreat Centre, Waldheim.

Manitoba

Feb 27: Face 2 Face | On Campus: Topic: "The European debt crisis and other wonders hiding in the global economy." For more information, visit cmu.ca/face2face.

Feb. 27: IDS Esau Public Lecture Series, with Hannah Wittman, at Menno Simons College. For more information, visit mscollege.ca/esau.

March 7: CMU dessert fundraising evening, in Winkler, at 7 p.m. For more information, visit cmu.ca/events.html.

March 20: CMU Verna Mae Janzen Music Competition finals, at 7:30 p.m. For more information, visit cmu.ca/programs/music.html.

March 20: IDS Esau Public Lecture Series, with Jules Pretty, at Menno Simons College. For more information, visit mscollege.ca/esau.

March 23: Mennonite Community Orchestra and CMU Singers, Women's Chorus and Men's Chorus perform *Missa Pax* by Timothy Corlis. With guest artist: Catherine Richard, piano.

March 27: Face 2 Face | On Campus. Topic: "You lost me: The church and

young adults." For more information, visit cmu.ca/face2face.

April 5: Jazz@CMU. For more information, visit cmu.ca/programs/music/html.

Ontario

Feb. 13: Conrad Grebel University College presents "An Evening with Bruce Cockburn," in the University of Waterloo Humanities Theatre; at 8 p.m. For more information, visit uwaterloo.ca/grebel/cockburn.

Feb. 17: Family Day open house at Hidden Acres Mennonite Camp, New Hamburg; from 10 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. RSVP required. Call 519-625-8602 or e-mail info@hiddenacres.ca.

Feb. 19-21: MC Eastern Canada School for Ministers, "Will you come and follow me?" with Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove at Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo.

Feb. 26: Irish singer-songwriter Steafan Harvy performs in the Chapel at Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo; at 7 p.m.

Feb. 28-March 2: Women's retreat



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A free PDF copy is available for all subscribers, delivered straight to your e-mail inbox, on or before the publication date. See more information at:

canadianmennonite.org/subscriptions/edelivery

at Silver Lake Mennonite, Camp, Sauble Beach. Resource person: Tanya Dyck Steinmann. For more information, or to register, visit slmc.ca/retreats.

March 6-7: Bechtel Lectures in Anabaptist/Mennonite Studies at Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo; at 7:30 p.m. each evening. Speakers: Steve Nolt and Royden Loewen.

March 14-15: Engaged Workshop at Living Water Fellowship, New Hamburg. For more information, or to register, e-mail Denise Bender at denise_bender@yahoo.com.

March 18: The Toronto Mennonite Theological Centre hosts a panel discussion of the book *Buffalo Shout*,

Salmon Cry (Herald Press, 2013), in Boardroom 1 at the Toronto School of Theology Building, Toronto, from 4:30 to 6:30 p.m.

March 22: Menno Singers presents "Explorations: Concert No. 3—East," with Gerard Yun and the East-West Ensemble, at Waterloo North Mennonite Church, Waterloo, at 7:30 p.m.

To ensure timely publication of upcoming events, please send Calendar announcements eight weeks in advance of the event date by e-mail to calendar@canadianmennonite.org.

Classifieds

Travel

Visit Europe the Mennonite Way with Mennonite Heritage Tours! Small group Hotel Tours focusing on Mennonite/ Anabaptist heritage in Holland, Belgium, Germany, Switzerland, Poland and Ukraine. www.mennonite-heritagetours.eu

PHOENIX (Arizona)
MENNO Guest House Bed and Breakfast welcomes families and business guests coming to the Phoenix area. Call 623-847-0314 or email phxmenno-guest@gmail.com. Visit our web site www.hospitalityservicescenter.org.

Employment Opportunities

Brussels Mennonite Fellowship is seeking a 1/2 to 3/4 time pastor. Start date: Fall 2014. For more details please go to www.bmfchurch.com

CANADIAN MENNONITE UNIVERSITY

Director of Development

Full Time

Responsible to oversee and implement a comprehensive fundraising strategy and program to financially support the mission of CMU.

More information:
cmu.ca/employment.php
Call 204.487.3300 or Email hrdirector@cmu.ca

Employment Opportunity MCCO

Mennonite Central Committee Ontario, a growing Anabaptist relief, development and peace agency, seeks three creative, strategic leadership persons:

Associate Executive Director
Revenue Development Director
Financial Controller

For more information see:
<http://serve.mcc.org/positions/employment>
Postings close February 28, 2014

Menno Simons Centre



Residence Coordinator position available starting May 2014

The **Menno Simons Centre** seeks to employ 1 member of a married couple, in a 3/4ths time capacity, starting May 2014 (flexible start date). The couple, both of whom are important to the Centre's community and student life, would live in our private 1 bdrm suite. Preference will be given to applicants who have attended university and are familiar with the Anabaptist tradition. Job duties include student ministry, administration, and maintenance. The successful candidate would also work with Board and Committee members on strategic planning and building upgrades.

For more information about the position, visit: pcda.bc.ca/msc-residence/rc2014job and be sure to apply by: **February 25, 2014.**



Vineland
United Mennonite Church

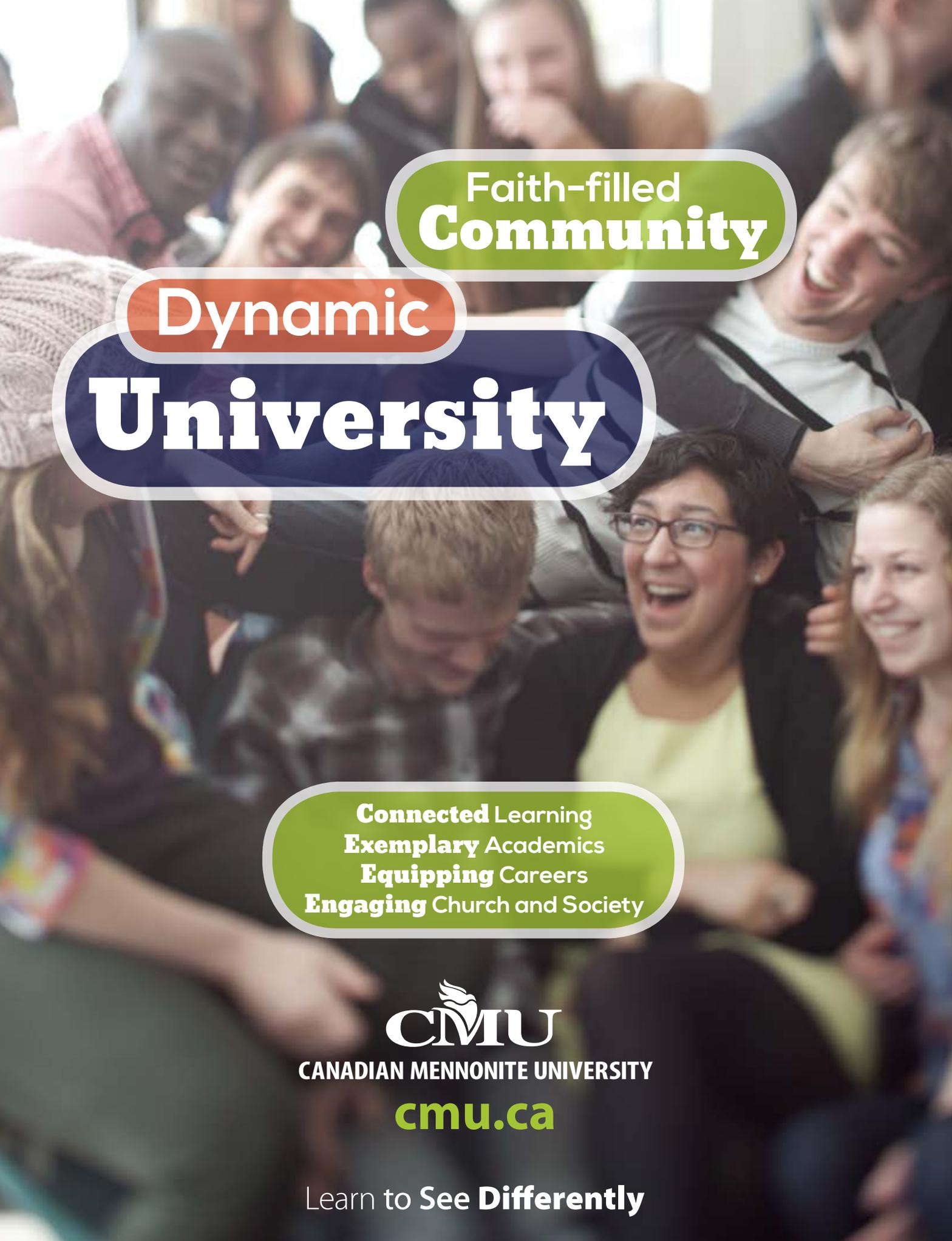
Employment Opportunity

VINELAND UNITED MENNONITE CHURCH invites applications for the FULL TIME position of LEAD MINISTER. We are located in a semi rural community in the heart of Ontario's Niagara Peninsula.

We are seeking a person who is committed to an Anabaptist understanding of faith and theology, deeply rooted in biblical teaching, a confident preacher, excels in developing relationships with the congregation and willing to work as part of the leadership team. Candidates should have previous pastoral experience, a Masters of Divinity or equivalent is preferred. Start time is negotiable.

Please submit inquiries, resumes and references by February 15, 2014 to:

Henry Paetkau, Area Church Minister,
Mennonite Church Eastern Canada
#201 - 50 Kent Ave.,
Kitchener, Ontario N2G 3R1
Tel: 226-476-2500 *704 or 855-476-2500
Email: hpaetkau@mcec.ca



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