

CANADIAN MENNONITE

July 7, 2014

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PM40063104 R09613

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EDITORIAL

Coming off the 'high'

DICK BENNER
EDITOR/PUBLISHER

By the time this editorial sees the light of print and the Internet, some 500 delegates attending our national assembly in Winnipeg will have discerned, debated, parsed and probably tired of the theme for the event: *Wild Hope, faith for an unknown season.*

The perceptions of what happened there will be as varied as the people attending. Because of the issues highlighted, some will have taken new heart in what they hear and discuss, others will say there was nothing new, while yet others will likely despair. That's because we, as Canadian Mennonites, are a diverse gathering of believers, who, though having different histories, coming from different places and holding a variety of worldviews, are one body in Christ.

Diversity, though, can become a cliché that diminishes its rich meaning as a characteristic of a people called out to be everyday followers of Jesus, a communion that delights in challenging each other to greater faithfulness, a gathering of persons taking a high view of Scripture as their basic text and a healthy respect for robust imagination in applying and interpreting what all this means in a new and uncertain age when some of the familiar goalposts disappear.

Which means that "uniformity" is gone, but a greater commitment to "unity" is one of the foundation stones, replacing some of the crumbling stones of doctrinal

statements and historic confessions. Which means we are no less committed to "church," as we have known and have practiced it in the Anabaptist tradition, but recognizing that it will happen in new and refreshing ways that address challenges we have not faced before.



For the adventuresome, this is exciting and exhilarating. For those wanting security through definitive statements and black and white guidelines in living out the Christian faith, this can be threatening. Both dynamics can live side-by-side if we pay attention to Jesus' prayer in John 17 that his followers be "one." Notice, not "right," but "one." Being "one" trumps "being right." Recognizing that there are "risk-takers" and the "risk averse" are keys to this unity, this oneness.

This might be new thinking for some of us. Our past does not bode well for us. We have split and split again and again over who is the most "right," who is the most faithful, who uses what Scripture in the most "literal and truthful" way. But that has not served us well. Those on the margins have felt alienated and have left. Many of our children and grandchildren have not found this kind of environment welcoming and spiritually formative.

Assemblies are prone to spiritual highs. The family reunion atmosphere engenders goodwill and generosity with each other. A spirit of unity is generated over four days that feels good and motivates

many to take this enthusiasm and creative thinking/discussion back home to fellow-believers who were not a part of the "high" and move forward with new vision.

Then reality hits. Without the camaraderie underlying those four days of rich fellowship and thoughtful discussions, the reception to all this is met with a dull thud. Those not attending are not nearly as fired up, nor can they fully grasp what is so new and exciting about what is being translated back home. A certain pall falls over all that dynamism.

We suggest, then, that delegates think long and hard, even while enjoying this "festival of inspiration" in Winnipeg, about *how* and *what* will resonate back home for the more than 30,000 who did not attend. And to be diligent and patient when they return and not despair if it is not greeted with the same enthusiasm that was experienced in "Jerusalem." To be persistent and long-suffering, even as they pray with Jesus that we, as his followers, are "one."

And while the focus in Winnipeg will have been on sexuality and future directions, there are many other pressing issues with which we are dealing as 21st century Christians in our changing culture. There will be a tendency to major in the sexuality/future issues and miss the importance of a host of other issues, such as creation care, our new and enriched relationship to our indigenous neighbours and emerging New Canadian churches, the always-present need to find our place as "strangers and pilgrims" in an increasingly hostile political climate, the need to keep our own local congregations as intentionally inter-generational as possible.

The wise path is to keep all these issues in balance and not to be side-tracked or blind-sided by the high profile ones.

ABOUT THE COVER:

The Goreme open air museum near Cappadocia, Turkey, includes rock-cut chapels that are part of an ancient Byzantine monastic settlement. A group of Ontario Mennonites visited the site in May as part of an intercultural learning tour. See story page 18.

PHOTO: PAT MANSKE

Circulation: Please contact Lisa Jacky toll-free at 1-800-378-2524 ext. 221 or by e-mail at office@canadianmennonite.org for subscriptions and address changes. Subscriptions can also be ordered at our web site. We acknowledge the financial support of the Government of Canada through the Canada Periodical Fund for our publishing activities. ISSN 1480-042X

Canada

CANADIAN MENNONITE

PUBLICATIONS MAIL AGREEMENT NO. 40063104 REGISTRATION NO. 09613
RETURN UNDELIVERABLE ITEMS TO CANADIAN MENNONITE
490 DUTTON DRIVE, UNIT C5
WATERLOO ON N2L 6H7
Phone: 519-884-3810 Toll-free: 1-800-378-2524 Fax: 519-884-3331
Web site: canadianmennonite.org

Please send all material to be considered for publication to:

General submission address: submit@canadianmennonite.org

Readers Write: letters@canadianmennonite.org

Milestones announcements: milestones@canadianmennonite.org

Obituaries: obituaries@canadianmennonite.org

Calendar announcements: calendar@canadianmennonite.org

Material can also be sent "Attn: Submissions/Readers Write/Milestones/Obituaries/Calendar" by postal mail or fax to our head office.

Reprint requests: reprints@canadianmennonite.org

Mission statement: *To educate, inspire, inform, and foster dialogue on issues facing Mennonites in Canada as it shares the good news of Jesus Christ from an Anabaptist perspective. We do this through an independent publication and other media, working with our church partners.*

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One-Year Subscription Rates

Canada: \$44 + tax (depends on province where subscriber lives)

U.S.: \$66

International (outside U.S.): \$89.10



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GOD AT WORK IN THE CHURCH FEATURE

Jesus taught equality, regardless of sexual identity

Thoughts on using Matthew 19:4-5 in the homosexual debate

BY NORMAN KRAUS

SPECIAL TO CANADIAN MENNONITE

He answered, "Have you not read that he who made them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh?'"
Matt. 19:4-5

Probably the two most divisive issues in the church at the moment are women's status and rights in the church, and the moral legitimacy of same-sex covenant relationships. The parallel passages of Matthew 19:3-22 and Mark 10:2-12 have implications for both of these questions.

And Matthew 19:4-5 is frequently misused as Jesus' authoritative word proscribing same-sex marriage by those who oppose it. Understood in the context of the historical situation and textual setting, these words do not speak to the question of same-sex marriage. Those who use the words of Jesus in this text to exclude committed gay partners from church membership sin against the spirit of Jesus.

Let me explain.

'One flesh' is not about male-female sexual relations

The anti-gay argument is based on an interpretation of these two verses that God created humans male and female, and explicitly restricted sexual intimacy to a married male-female relationship. The implication is that sexual intercourse makes them "one flesh," as Paul seems to imply in I Corinthians 6:16. But as we shall see, that is not the way the argument is framed here. Indeed the question of sexual intercourse is not explicitly spoken to in the text. Instead, the Pharisees' question has to do with male privilege.

The slight differences in the Matthew and Mark accounts of

PHOTO © ISTOCK.COM/BIBLEARTLIBRARY



what Jesus taught are complementary. They recognize the same issue and make the same point, but Matthew's account gives us a further clue about the cultural context of the question, and thus quite explicitly focuses on the real issue.

The "for any cause" phrase in Matthew focuses the basic issue as male superiority and privilege implied in the husband's right to divorce his wife. And Jesus' answer to that question had some unexpected and unacceptable implications to his first-century Jewish hearers, which are reflected in the disciples' dismay in verse 10.

The passage does not speak explicitly to questions of sexual orientation and practice that we face today, and, where it might have some bearing on these issues, it counter-intuitively implies an approach to them that still surprises his modern disciples. Taken as a whole, the passage indicates that Jesus was far more empathetic with the social and religious undesirables—the queer/weird and unclean, including those of anomalous gender

identity, such as those "born eunuchs"—than with his religious challengers.

This should not surprise us since Jesus himself lived under the cloud of questionable legitimacy. While our New Testament stories of his birth exonerate Mary, and Joseph accepted him as his son, the stories spread about his questionable patrimony. He was considered, as Bruce Chilton points out in his 2000 book, *Rabbi Jesus, a mamzer*, that is, one of uncertain paternity; and patrimony, not sex, was the basic concern. As Chilton writes, "From the beginning of his life Jesus negotiated the treacherous terrain between belonging to the people of God and ostracism in his own community."

The status of women, children and eunuchs

Jesus did not behave toward those of lower social and religious status, such as women, children and eunuchs, in the manner the Pharisees associated with Mosaic custom. He seemed to consider

women equal in status to adult males; and he invited children, both male and female, to come to him when his disciples tried to shoo them away. Then in verse 12 he makes a special, and some think puzzling, reference to eunuchs, who are significant for understanding the issues being addressed in this passage.

The Pharisees' question does bear directly on the gender issue, but it was not whether God created "Adam and Eve" or "Adam and Steve," as the issue is humorously argued by some anti-gay-marriage advocates. The issue is the status and rights of Eve and her offspring who do not qualify as fully adult male gender! The passage has only an indirect bearing on our contemporary debate about the psychological and moral standing of same-sex orientation and relationships, and cannot legitimately be used as Jesus's words on the subject.

Women and children did not have the same status and rights as men before the law, and male eunuchs were a special case of loathing and pity. The social status of

wives left them no recourse to divorce, and once divorced they were socially vulnerable. Men could divorce their wives on a whim according to some interpretations. Others said there had to be a good reason. But in either case the man had the position of privilege.

So the Pharisees' question has to do with the rights and status of males in relation to females. They assumed that males had social and religious prerogatives and rights

that women did not share. If men followed correct legal procedure, they could break their covenant oath taken in marriage without being guilty of adultery. But if the wife "for any cause" broke her covenanted relationship, she was an adulteress.

Jesus, however, said that it was equally adulterous for both genders to break their vows, and he based his answer on the creation story as told in Genesis 2, in which God created male and female

equally human—that is, "one flesh"—from the beginning.

Equal in dignity and rights in the garden

In the Genesis 2 story, the first human creature (Adam) is male, a farmer created to take care of the garden. He is formed out of the ground like the rest of the mammalian creatures. But he clearly represents a break in the mammalian chain, and

'They will know we are Christians by our love'

BY LISA SCHIRCH

Eastern Mennonite University
HARRISONBURG, VA.

During the 2013-14 academic year, Eastern Mennonite University (EMU) was engaged in intense conversations on and off campus regarding its hiring policy concerning individuals in covenanted same-sex relationships. Research professor Lisa Schirch sent the following letter to the university's student newspaper, The Weather Vane, representing some of that conversation.

Here are 10 points to consider in the current EMU listening process:

1. HATE AND homophobia are pervasive in American culture. School kids call each other "fags" and insult people by calling them "gay." Bullies of all ages beat up gay and lesbian people, from the New York alley to the Kansas highway. Families disown their gay and lesbian children, a key factor in the alarmingly higher rates of suicide in these kids.

Jesus defended the humanity of all people, even society's outcasts. A decidedly secular fear and lack of knowledge about homosexuality shapes many of the negative Christian attitudes about our brothers and sisters who are lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgendered/queer (LGBTQ).

2. EMU LEADERS, like their Anabaptist ancestors, are taking great risks to follow Jesus' "way of love" in allowing this listening process.

When I started leading campus dialogues on homosexuality at EMU in 1997, I began getting hate mail from others on campus. Other faculty shouted into the phone to tell me that I was a sinner for facilitating

such dialogue. To this day, one EMU neighbour will not greet me as I pass by her home.

The most important part of the listening process at EMU is the tone it sets on how we deal with differences in our community. Can we practise the skills detailed in the Mennonite Church's statement, "Disagreeing in love," or is our pacifism only a theological position?

3. IT IS because of my faith, not in spite of it, that I believe the Mennonite church and institutions like EMU should accept all people—including those with an LGBTQ identity.

I trace my roots 500 years back to my ancestors in Switzerland who opposed the church hierarchy and challenged all to follow the radical way of Jesus at all costs. I have spent nearly my entire life attending and working at Mennonite institutions. Mennonite institutions have taught me to understand the Bible as a call to the "law of love" and to practise radical inclusion.

I learned not to water down the Bible, but to read the Bible alongside its culture and history. I learned not a selective reading of the Bible's convenient passages, but to more fully understand that Jesus' teachings can help human beings live in an increasingly chaotic world.

4. THE BIBLE'S primary message is about acceptance, inclusion and an embrace of diversity. Jesus spent most of his time with people that the Jewish leaders of the day called "sinners." Jesus embraced everyone, no matter who they were or what they had done. Jesus never practised exclusion. He welcomed all people to the table.

5. THE BIBLICAL passages on homosexuality overwhelmingly refer to male slave owners who abusively sodomized their male slaves, often boys. The Bible refers to male rape as sin. Rape is always wrong. Rape is prevalent in our culture, but rape is completely

he could not find a suitable companion among the animal population to share his dignity and status in God's image.

So God did special surgery and made a suitable companion out of the male's flesh and bone, whom Adam recognized as "at last . . . bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh." Now Jesus uses this creation story to make the point that male and female share equally in dignity and rights in the kingdom of God. They are one flesh.

When they marry, the man is to leave his procreative family, and the male and female become a new human unit—"one flesh"—as in the beginning. In marriage, the woman joins the man as an equal to begin a new home. She does not join the husband's family as a glorified servant under patriarchal authority, as is the case in some traditional cultures. In the eyes of God, they share equal status.

Note that it is not sexual intercourse

that makes them "one flesh." In the beginning, God created them "one flesh." God did not form Eve from the ground, but from the flesh and bone of Adam, so they are joined together as "one flesh."

The covenant bond between humans is a covenant between equals, and in the marriage covenant what God "has joined together" let no human legal authority nullify. Human law, even the law of

(Continued on page 8)

different from homosexuality. Rape is a crime of power and domination. Homosexuality is not the same as rape. The Bible does not provide any comment on a loving relationship between two people of the same sex.

6. SCIENCE TELLS us that homosexuality is not a choice; it is a biological fact.

God creates up to 30 percent of people with diverse sexual orientations. People are born gay, lesbian, bisexual, queer and transgendered. Homosexuality is not the same thing as being sexually "loose" or permissive.

Heterosexuals in our community often fail to respect their own bodies and those of their partners. Sexual integrity is a separate issue. EMU should continue to

Perhaps the very arrogance of judging another is the highest form of sin, as feeling entitled to judge places us apart from God and divides the human community.

support a culture of sexual integrity for both heterosexuals and homosexuals on our campus, as we live in a world that teaches us to abuse others and ourselves.

7. JESUS DOES not command us to judge our neighbours or form an exclusive church for those without sin. Jesus does the opposite. He tells us to focus on the "log in our own eyes rather than the speck of dust in our neighbour's eye." Jesus repeatedly warns people against judging others. Perhaps the very arrogance of judging another is the highest form of sin, as feeling entitled to judge places us apart from God and divides the human community.

8. EVEN IF we read the gospel without understanding its cultural context, Jesus mentions many different

types of sinning or brokenness. Mennonites sin in many ways. Who would dare cast the first stone against another's sins at EMU?

If we agree with Jesus that it is harder for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God than for a camel to go through an eye of a needle, why are we silent about our addiction to wealthy donors who finance Mennonite institutions? There are too many biblical passages on the sin of gluttony to mention and too many delicious Mennonite recipes for any of us to point fingers at the extra inches on our waists.

Are any of us without sin? Or do we want to start ranking some sins as worse than others? Where is the biblical precedent for a policy of exclusion of any type of people? Would Jesus have turned away anyone seeking to learn how to do justice, love mercy and walk humbly with God?

9. IN THE past, EMU had closed its doors to African Americans. The church has been wrong in the past. Christians twisted biblical passages to make it seem that slavery was acceptable. At times, the church has been judgmental and racist. It took the leadership of courageous Mennonite women insisting on the full humanity of African Americans to eventually change EMU's policy to welcome people of all colours.

In the footsteps of these women, we must stand beside our LGBTQ faculty, staff and students, and defend our right to learn from them and with them.

10. HOW WILL the world know that EMU is a home for spiritual growth, a university like no other? They will know we are Christians by our love, by our tolerance for diversity, for the way we care and respect each other even in the midst of our differences. No one will know we are Christians by our homophobic policies of exclusion and judgment.

I hope EMU will continue in the Anabaptist tradition of following Jesus' radical love for and inclusion of all people, no matter the financial or institutional costs.

(Continued from page 7)

Moses, has no authority to change such a relationship. Unless the bond is already clearly broken, the permissive Mosaic law of divorce has no legitimacy.

The hinge in this passage that relates the question about the status of women to that of children and eunuchs is the disciples' extreme reaction. They could not imagine a situation in which women were given that kind of equality! *"It would be better for a man not to marry if that is the case!"* If women have that kind of control over their own bodies, it would be better for us men to be celibate!

And Jesus replied, *"Yes, not everyone can accept this [new reality in the kingdom of God], only those who have the gift of self-control/celibacy."* We know that this adjustment of gender and sexual attitudes, rights and relationships, was a contentious issue in the early church from the amount of space that Paul gave to it in his letters, and from many other writings outside the New Testament texts. It represented a major cultural and moral transition.

This assumed male prerogative was based on the husband's sexual potency to produce progeny. Sexual potency to procreate was considered essential to the "image of God," and any male who was unable to have children, be it because of injury to the genitalia or by birth, was not considered to equally reflect the image of God. Such individuals were, for example, restricted in their attendance at the temple.

What to do with 'born eunuchs'?

This is the point at which the physiological and moral evaluation of what we call sexual variants enters the text, and it helps us understand why Jesus begins with those who "are born eunuchs."

"Born eunuchs" is not a term used in the modern classifications of sexual variation! Its very use indicates an ancient cultural perspective on male sexuality, its purposes and privileges, which we no longer share. And implicitly it reflects the patriarchal view of women's subservient role as passive carrier of the male seed that becomes the husband's offspring.

So how are we to translate the term into our modern context in which the analysis of sexual identity has become

Now Jesus uses this creation story [Genesis 2] to make the point that male and female share equally in dignity and rights in the kingdom of God. They are one flesh.

highly differentiated? And how might we use it to give us an authentic Jesus pattern to guide us in today's anxiety-ridden conflict over the moral status of lesbians/gay/bisexual/transgendered/queer people?

Biblical scholars, even some who have taken a very conservative stand on same-sex issues, have come to agreement that the term "born eunuchs," although not an analytical category, may properly be used inclusively to classify those deemed sexually deviant by the heterosexual majority. This must be applied especially to those whose deviant sexual identity stems from biological conditioning and genetic structure, as does up to 5 percent of the total world population.

And finally, in answer to the last question, one can only conclude that Jesus was alluding to the Isaiah 56:4-5 passage, in which the prophet represents God as fully accepting and blessing such people. To them, God says, *"I will give, in my house and within my walls, a monument and a name better than sons and daughters."*

In a word, Jesus indicates that these "born eunuchs" are to be judged not by their physiological orientation and erotic desires, but by their moral character and faithfulness to his covenant way of life. This certainly suggests that Jesus' primary concern was not how they expressed their private erotic physical longings, but how they expressed his compassionate respect for their fellows, male and female, young and old. ☸



Now living in retirement in Harrisonburg, Va, Norman Kraus was professor of religion at Goshen College, has authored some 15 books, and has served under the

Mennonite Board of Missions in Japan from 1980-1987.

☸ For discussion

1. Does your church give equal status and rights to women and men? How did earlier generations explain their assumption that powerful roles were reserved for men? How much does our culture affect our attitudes when it comes to what is right or wrong in the church?
2. How have you traditionally understood Jesus' words in Matthew 19:3-22? Norman Kraus argues that the passage has to do with male privilege and about equal dignity and rights. Do you find his argument convincing? What questions arise from his interpretation?
3. Lisa Schirch says that she has learned to read the Bible "alongside its culture and history" (#3). What does she mean by that? Why might this concept be frightening for some of us?
4. Kraus says this biblical passage "indicates Jesus was far more empathetic with the social and religious undesirables... than with his religious challengers." Who are the social and religious undesirables of our day?
5. What advice do you have for Mennonite Church Canada leaders as they work at the Being a Faithful Church process (see story page 20)?

—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.

✉ Keep national, area churches out of LGBTQ decisions

THE MAY 12 issue of *Canadian Mennonite* contains the recognition that the local congregation is gaining prominence within our denomination, both in the article "Mennonite churches caught up in 'shifting stats'" by Dave Rogalsky and in the editorial "All 'church' is local" by Dick Benner.

I trust that as we move in that direction, we are affirming the expertise of local congregations in discerning the guidance of the Holy Spirit in their particular situations. Much of the pain wreaked upon those lesbian/gay/bi-sexual/transgendered/queer (LGBTQ) people who have dearly wanted to serve the church in leadership roles could be avoided by the area and national churches simply acknowledging the integrity and discernment capability of the local congregations that have chosen to welcome such leaders.

Instead, we have allowed judgment-at-a-distance to over-rule the close-up compassion needed to make Christian love operative in these situations. At least some of the divisiveness inflicted upon the church by the homosexuality issue could be relieved by permitting local congregations to decide their own stance and act accordingly without fear of decredentialing by the area church or the denominational office.

Where then is our unity? Even in a more localized church organization, our unity is in the lordship of Christ, as open to different understandings and applications as Jesus' commandments to love. When we can all agree that the lordship of Christ is what binds us together, then the importance of the homosexuality issue can be allowed to shrink to the level of all

those other things we couldn't hope for consensus on, but that nevertheless don't endanger us as a church, like abortion, the teaching of evolution, or the peace witness. A more localized church under the lordship of Christ can only lead to more healthy diversity, more room for Spirit-led experimentation, a broader collective witness to a needy world, and an exciting revitalization of our collective experience.

RUDY WIENS, MISSISSAUGA, ONT.

Rudy Wiens is a member of Mississauga Mennonite Fellowship.

✉ Scripture does not refer to homosexual behaviour positively

Re: Letters in response to "Christians must continue to call all sins 'sin'" (June 9, pages 11-12)

After reading these letters of response, I felt compelled to write a few words in defence of Artur Esau.

First off, I am not "homophobic." That's a word invented by activists that is meant to shut down honest dialogue. Nor am I a "hater" of anyone in the LGBTQ community. In fact, I have never met a gay person that I didn't like ... a lot!

But I have searched the scriptures and they refer several times to homosexual behaviour, but never in a positive light. Ever. And to my homosexual and lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgendered or queer brother or sister in Christ, as much as I cannot and will not condemn you, I cannot let you ignore the teachings of the Bible in order to let you become more comfortable in your sin, while leaving people like me to remain uncomfortable in mine.

For I am a fallen heterosexual. I live in a society that is only too eager to feed my lustful imaginations. And, trust me, I don't need much help with that! I don't know why we are as messed up sexually as we are, but we are.

And to others like Mr. Esau, let me encourage you to keep being those voices in the wilderness. There are more of you out here than you will be led to believe. Don't ever fall for the lie that Jesus never addressed this subject. He most certainly did, and he referred to the written Word of God when he did so.

He seemed to think it was pretty crystal clear, actually. He said, "*Haven't you read? . . . that at the beginning the Creator 'made them male and female; and said, 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh?'*" (Matt. 19:4-5)

Canada may have rewritten our marriage laws, and anyone can plainly see that the Mennonite Church in Canada will one day rewrite theirs. But God never has.

PAT MURPHY, AYR, ONT.

✉ Sports can transform, maybe even save, lives

Paul Loewen's article "Sport is not our saviour" (May 26, page 35) included several points which I believe to be inaccurate or misleading.

To say that most high school athletes go to seed once they graduate is wrong in my experience. Sports instilled a love for physical activity for my teammates

and I that continues to this day (I'm 20 years old). Whether it takes place on a high school football field at age 17, or on a treadmill at a gym at age 45, the passion for fitness remains.

Second, to say that sports don't form lifelong community is categorically false and somewhat offensive. Going through the highs and lows of a sports season together forges relationships based on covering for each other's weaknesses, which forces you to embrace

FROM OUR LEADERS

Authority and influence

JUSTIN ZACHARIAS

Cultural norms and values from one generation to the next are a moving target. While this isn't a new concept, there are many challenges associated with the increased rate of change. Perceptions of authority and the shifting realities of influence are important as we consider the present and future church.

The owner of a large company recently shared that one of the biggest challenges their company faces is adapting their management and communication styles to relate to different generational groups of employees. The positional authority of a manager or boss used to motivate people toward a diligent work ethic. This is not the case anymore.

The term "authority" is loaded with some positive and often negative connotations. Despite its limitations, I use it here to indicate the ability of a person, idea or item (like the Bible) to influence a person or group of people.

Inspired by Mervin Charles, a mentor of mine in Pennsylvania, here are a few types of authority I've been reflecting on:

- Positional (the position has authority, regardless of the person who holds it)
- Relational (authority is given out of a relationship of trust)
- Experiential (education, training and experience cause someone to be trusted as an expert)
- Spiritual (similar to positional authority,

this would apply to someone within a religious order who is perceived to have authority given by a deity)

- Financial (golden rule: those who have the gold make the rules)

The idea that the Christian church is at the centre of society and culture is sometimes called Christendom. This model has held and extended its authority and influence based primarily on spiritual and positional authority. As the



Relationships of trust are essential. We need to know our leaders and feel genuine care.

church moves from the centre toward the margins of society, these forms of authority are no longer relevant for those outside their congregations. Through changing cultural norms and unlimited access to information, society is more aware than ever of the failings of persons and power structures that we've trusted. These models of authority don't serve the church as well as they used to.

Financial authority can and has been used to assert a particular will or intent. Although subtle and sometime unintentional, it can also be used as a threat that financial support may be withdrawn. This is not very helpful when we talk about building a community of mutual discernment, respect and accountability in the

church.

My perception is that relational and experiential authority are becoming increasingly important as we consider the future of the church. Relationships of trust are essential. We need to know our leaders and feel genuine care. In the Mennonite Church in Canada we have placed a high value on education and experience for our leaders. The problem now lies with expecting congregants to trust in a position of authority on the assumption that every person in that position has trustworthy education and/or experience.

There are many challenges for the church in these changing perspectives on authority. It affects our sense of accountability, the role of community, how pas-

tors lead, and how we organize ourselves. Perhaps most importantly, it affects our view of God's authority, and specifically how much authority we give the Bible to shape our values and lifestyle choices.

What types of authority are most commonly exercised or depended upon in your congregation, in your church culture/structures or even in your church council meetings? What kind of leader are you? Do you rest on your position of authority, or do you seek opportunities to build relationships of trust, from which you hope to lead?

Justin Zacharias is Director of Camping Ministries for Mennonite Church Manitoba.

yourself for who you are. In my humble opinion, a sports team is a form of self-sacrificing community. To this day, I'm closer to some teammates than I am to my own family, because of the trials that sports put us through.

Lastly, I disagree with the assertion that sports will not save your life. In a nation plagued by obesity, I don't think any form of physical activity should be discouraged, especially because physical activity can prevent diseases such as heart disease and diabetes.

The lessons learned of hard work, dedication, perseverance and self-sacrifice for teammates can be applied to faith, career, family life and almost anything else. If sports won't save your life, they will at least substantially improve it.

Sports have the power to transform lives; to

discourage that is extremely unwise.

TOM DE GURSE, WINNIPEG

✉ **Writer struggles with God 'as anything other than a man'**

RE: "BEYOND TRINITY" by Susie Guenther Loewen, June 9, page 44.

You did a good job of digging up some references where God is referred to as having motherly traits.

I would like to point out, however, that I struggle with viewing God as anything other than a man, and always have. I think this may have to do with Jesus being both God and a man, as well as to the

(Continued on next page)

OUTSIDE THE BOX

Trouble with summer reading

PHIL WAGLER

I write this from what must be one of the most beautiful places on earth. We're on a family holiday on one of the small Gulf Islands in British Columbia's Strait of Georgia. I know; you're already feeling sorry for me. I'm enjoying rest, playing with my kids, conversation with my wife and, sandwiched in small bites on this full table of grace, a good book.

I need to revisit what I choose for holiday reading. Inevitably as a vacation approaches I get to a volume that has been on my shelf patiently waiting with its crisp, unbroken binding. I think that's why I haven't purchased an electronic reader yet; I hear breaking the binding is not so smart. Anyhow, persistently on these summer getaways I have ended up reading a book that moves me deeply and shakes my comforts and perceptions. It's why I was drawn to the title in the first place. Yet this type of reading always seems like a conniving of the Spirit to mess with my vacation. You'd think I'd have figured this out by now.

A mentor of mine gave me a book on

Christian growth a few weeks back and so I packed it along. I should have known Ronald Rolheiser's subtitle, *A Vision for a Deeper Human and Christian Maturity*, was not going to treat me gently. A few pages in I came to this: "At one stage in our lives, Jesus calls us to give up *something* for God, at another stage he calls us to give up *everything*." These and other words were



I may sing or read about giving up everything for Jesus, but what do I really know of that?

unnerving my innards and necessitated some rumination so I took a break.

I turned to the newspaper and came across the deeply disturbing story of Iraqi Christians who, as I chilled with my morning coffee overlooking the Pacific, were being left with a decision between conversion to Islam or death at the hands of the advancing Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS). These brothers and sisters of mine, in their own words, "have run out of places to hide." Beheadings and even

crucifixions have been reported. They find themselves in a stage of discipleship where Jesus calls to give up everything.

The contrast between their reality and mine couldn't be greater. For me there has only ever been *something* to give up. I may sing or read about giving up everything for Jesus, but what do I really know of that? Very little indeed. I am humbled and somewhat disgusted with myself.

But, through my lifting fog, I see one constant I share with my suffering sister or brother: the call of Jesus. The call comes and I, and they, must be ready to respond as disciples who know his voice and follow. Rolheiser continues, "Sometimes Jesus invites us to small conversions, and sometimes he invites us to martyrdom." So, while I must let my

heart be expanded by the dilemmas of the world and my conflicted place within them, the way forward is equally shared by Iraqi Christians and myself: responding to Jesus again today whether that be in another small conversion or immense sacrifice. If I don't do that then both this placid getaway and their inestimable suffering are wasted.

Phil Wagler lives in Surrey, B.C. and he's learning not to take that for granted.

(Continued from page 11)

overwhelming reference to God as “Father” both by Jesus and in the Old Testament, where Genesis says “he created man male and female.”

I do not want to put God into a box and make an idol of that box, nor do I want to create a God after my own image. John 1:18 says, “No man has seen God

at any time, but the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has declared him.”

That being said, this does not change my view on women. I think the fact that Jesus used a “mother hen” reference to describe himself shows that women possess godly traits that he uses.

RYAN CARNEY (ONLINE COMMENT)

NEW ORDER VOICE

Diversity 101

KATIE DOKE SAWATZKY

This past spring, from March to May, I attended a series of classes at Spirit of Life Lutheran Church in Vancouver. The classes or “gatherings,” as they were called, were part of a program titled Caring for All Creation: Land, Water, and Our Communities. My partner Glenn was attending for class credit and since it was free for the public, I thought I’d go, too.

The program is sponsored by the University of Alberta’s Chester Ronning Centre for the Study of Religion and Public Life and in its second year. The purpose of the class is to build community around ecological and land justice. The website explains, “The premise . . . is that in order to see, think and act in the new ways required of us, we must do so within a caring community.”

The three-hour classes were every other Tuesday evenings. Each focussed on a different theme and featured speakers from local organizations who spoke on topics like Food and Land Systems, Decolonization and Indigenous Wisdom, and Extractivism and the Gift Economy. We began each time with a potluck supper and there was group discussion throughout the evening.

It’s a wonderful community-building project and I recommend it. But while I learned about cool non-profits and other resources, what I repeatedly realized during the sessions is that I am a judgmental,

impatient person, who doesn’t really like group discussion with 20 strangers.

Yikes!

But I care about social activism and am part of social justice circles. I support indigenous sovereignty and admire the work of environmentalist groups. This should be my kind of thing. So what’s my problem?

The series was my first sustained community or peace-building exercise and it was not exactly what I would have ordered. I was hoping for activist mobilization, but what I experienced was a lesson in patience and empathy.

The attendance during the series



Encountering diversity, which I deem to be healthy, on whatever level, is actually weird and disorienting.

changed from class to class, making it hard to connect with people. The majority of participants were middle-aged and so in different life situations than me. The levels of issue awareness varied from person to person, sometimes making the discussion elemental or, in my opinion, slow. Of course, everyone was coming from a different background and place.

In short, this was diversity 101. And I had a hard time handling it.

“Diversity” is a trendy term nowadays. I’m guilty of using it and claiming its significance. But when it came to an actual encounter with a mix of eco-concerned people, I struggled to keep from rolling my eyes at different comments or sifting

through a slough of first-impressions.

Again, yikes!

It turns out that healthy community-building, something crucial to activism, is slow and requires just as much patience and kindness of me as does parenting or work. Encountering diversity, which I deem to be healthy, on whatever level, is actually weird and disorienting. I need to put aside my first impressions and acknowledge the commonalities I share with others, even if I have to start with, “Okay, we’re both here.”

As for activist mobilization, some participants wanted to continue meeting after the series ended. Others like me, didn’t. It might have been an awkward impasse, when one participant, a man working to raise awareness about social isolation in Vancouver, suggested that meeting together regularly, even for a finite time, was the most important thing we could

be doing. We were creating community in the moment and that was enough.

In the end, we weren’t a group of people ready to float our boats in front of an oil tanker. But we’d spent six evenings together eating, listening, and sharing in a supportive and inclusive environment. We were all concerned about the earth and willing to do something about it. I’m sure in many an activist’s handbook this is the first step. And as frustrating as they can be, first steps have to be taken.

Katie Doke Sawatzky lives in Vancouver. If you’d like to check out Caring for All Creation and its curriculum and resources, go to spiritoftheland.ca.

✉ Does the Bible truly denounce loving relationships?

WHILE MENNONITE CHURCH Canada and the area churches have been struggling with the issue of homosexuality, it has become more of a personal discussion for our family as our son came out to us about two years ago. Our son is very fortunate in that he is able to be part of a church and be open about his orientation. He is also part of a loving committed relationship and has been able to express this openly with family and in his church community.

Getting to know others who have a family member of a different sexual orientation or identity had helped us to realize that this is not everybody's experience. Some may say that people in the church who have a family member of a different sexual orientation falsely interpret scripture to justify their loved one's "lifestyle," or reject scripture that speaks to this issue. Instead I think that we have a better understanding of just how much our loved ones are like everyone else before God, and there is no need to reject scripture or twist God's word to make this claim.

The very few verses in the Bible that refer to same-sex relations are taken out of context whereas other verses alongside them are not thought to speak to us today. The references to same-sex relations in Leviticus and in Paul's writings seem to refer to lustful, oppressive, loveless relations, not loving committed relationships. The story of Sodom and Gomorrah in Genesis 19 refers to gang rape. Jesus states that the teachings of the Law and the Prophets from the Old Testament are summarized in the words "Love your neighbor as yourself" (Matt. 19:18 and 22:37). Sins named by Jesus include adultery, murder, injustice, greed, but there is no mention that it is sinful to have a loving relationship between two men or two women.

When we are looking at becoming a faithful church, I would hope that that we can look at this issue with new eyes. Determine for yourself if the aversion to homosexuality is really rooted in scripture or rather is a reaction to what is seen to be out of the norm. Re-read scripture and pray for God's guidance in interpreting His Word for us today.

Ask yourself these questions: Do any of these scriptural references to same-sex relations denounce as sin a loving relationship between two men or two women? Why do we pick out these few verses in the Bible and allow our interpretation of them to divide churches and families and exclude a whole segment of God's children from the church, when we don't consider verses about clothing and slavery to speak to us today?

I hope that over time these discussions about how God is speaking to us today can lead to acceptance and affirmation, and renew our ability to be

together as God's people.

LAURIE WIENS, HERSCHEL, SASK.



For a longer version of this letter, see <http://www.canadianmennonite.org/articles/letter-mother>

✉ Community action, not just fossil fuel divestment, needed

I AGREE WITH Doug Pritchard (May 26, page 11) that we have to take action or we are going to destroy our environment. We can't control what other people do, but we can make a start by excluding items that we use that have petroleum in them.

Here are only a few items of the 6,000 products that are petroleum based. If each one of us could omit only 10 items that we use from this list it would make a lot of difference. So here is a challenge for each of us—let's get started!

It is estimated that half of all commercial food has some petroleum in it.

Goods containing petroleum include: ammonia, anaesthetics, antifreeze, antihistamines, antiseptics, artificial limbs, artificial turf, aspirin, awnings, balloons, ballpoint pens, bandages, basketballs, bearing grease, bicycle tires, boats, cameras, candles, car battery cases, car enamel, cassettes, caulking, cd player, cd's, clothes, clothesline, cold cream, combs, cortisone, crayons, curtains, dashboards, denture adhesive, dentures, deodorant, detergents, dice, diesel, dishes, dishwasher, dresses, drinking cups, dyes, disposable diapers, electric blankets, electrician's tape, enamel, epoxy, eyeglasses, fan belts, faucet washers, fertilizers, fishing boots, fishing lures, fishing rods, floor wax, folding doors, food preservatives, football cleats, football helmets, footballs, gasoline, glycerine, golf bags, golf balls, guitar strings, hair colouring, hand lotion, heart valves, house paint, ice chests, ice cube trays, ink, insect repellent, insecticides, life jackets, linings, linoleum, lipstick, luggage, model cars, mops, motor oil, motorcycle helmets, nail polish, nylon rope, oil filters, paint, paint brushes, paint rollers, panty hose, parachutes, percolators, perfumes, petroleum jelly, pillows, plastic wood, purses, putty, refrigerant, refrigerators, roller skates, roofing, rubber cement, rubbing alcohol, safety glasses, shag rugs, shampoo, shaving cream, shoe polish, shoes, shower curtains, skis, slacks, soap, soft contact lenses, solvents, speakers, sports car bodies, sun glasses, surf boards, sweaters, synthetic rubber, telephones, tennis rackets, tents, tires, toilet seats, tool boxes, tool racks, toothbrushes, toothpaste, transparent tape, trash bags, TV cabinets, umbrellas, upholstery, vaporizers, vitamin capsules, water pipes, wheels, yarn.

ALICE UNRAU, CALGARY, ALTA.

✉ Climate change is happening

RE: “WHERE IS the global warming? reader asks” (May 26, page 12).

Climate change is happening now. Period. There are many lines of evidence more than just the increase of global temperature: ocean acidification from carbon emissions; declines in arctic sea ice; changes in species distribution patterns (moving to higher latitudes and altitudes); and more. So the question, “Where is the global warming?” is mind-boggling for a people who should dedicate their minds to God.

The author refers to predictions of the future as having “no basis in science” and “only...hypothesis.” Hypothesis based on past predictions and theoretically robust reasoning is precisely the foundation of science. The future is always an hypothesis, until it happens! Theories are the explanation of the data collected by systematic means. Theories are tested over time and only superior theories last. This is an important, self-correcting process.

In both science and faith we see imperfectly. In faith we humbly know that someday, what we know in part will be made fully known. Science is even more humble—it assumes that nothing will ever have every last bit of doubt erased. Proof, in this context, is not perfect

knowledge—it is evidence that is resistant to falsification because of the quality of the evidence. This quality is improved by the peer-review process of scientists.

As an aside, the scientists cited by the letter have only disputed minor points in the overall patterns evidenced by climate change science, or have not published their larger criticisms in peer-reviewed sources.

Climate change is happening and we are already dealing with the consequences which are falling most severely on those with fewer resources. Thus climate change is a social and a moral issue. Global environmental degradation (including declining biodiversity in major ecosystems, loss of soil fertility, rapacious resource extraction) is happening.

We are to prove all things, hold fast to that which is true, and seek out what is good. Since we know that people and God’s world are suffering, it is deceitful to deny or avoid knowledge that has run the best human tests of proof. It is wicked to ignore our brothers’ and sisters’ suffering. We gain a bit of worldly comfort for the short while, but lose both the world and our souls.

RANDOLPH HALUZA-DELAY, PHD,
EDMONTON, ALTA.

The author is associate professor of sociology at King’s University College, Edmonton, and has published academic research on this topic.

✉ Finding employment never easy for new grads

RE: “ARE WE ‘the worst generation?’” by Rachel Bergen (June 9, page 43).

What Rachel is experiencing is not a new phenomenon. I graduated from Teachers’ College in 1973 with a Bachelor of Science and a Bachelor of Education. I applied for teaching positions across Ontario, only to find there were none available. My wife, a nursing graduate, was one of the few people in her class to find full-time employment. Most people looking for work as nurses or teachers had to leave Ontario for jobs in the United States or outside North America.

After graduating we moved to Kitchener and for three years I worked as a driving instructor and then 13 years in the retail sector. I finally realized my goal as a teacher just before turning 40.

I worked as a teacher for 23 years and am now retired. Perhaps the message for today’s graduates is—hang in there. I enjoyed all my jobs and found they were a great help when I was able to get work as a teacher. The days of employers lining up to hire new grads ended many years ago. I hope Rachel finds as I did, that there are many interesting jobs and people out there. Enjoy what you are doing!

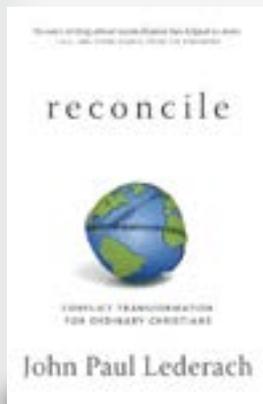
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—Lynne and Bill Hybels,
cofounders, Willow Creek
Community Church, from
foreword

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WOMEN WALKING TOGETHER IN FAITH

Let's celebrate!

BY WALTRUDE GORTZEN



Mennonite
Women
Canada

*'Honor your father and mother'
and 'love your neighbor as
yourself.' (Matt. 19:19 NIV)*

In our frenzied, everyday lives, it's essential that we celebrate important ministry anniversaries or family milestones that come along as we journey through the years that God has set aside for us. But with those celebrations—you guessed it!—comes the work of planning, which sometimes takes months and can become exhausting, frustrating and certainly, time-consuming. Oh! And, it costs money, too!

For example, this past spring, I was caught in a whirlwind of planning two major milestones, including the 75th anniversary of the annual MC B.C. Women's Ministry Inspirational Day (See May 26, 2014, page 17 and photo below), and my Mom's 80th birthday. Both required numerous planning meetings with others, lots of prep work and patience (mixed with frustration!) while waiting for guest lists and other information to come in.

Also, there were several more ordinary, smaller milestones, such as birthdays, graduations, a 25th wedding anniversary and a couple of weddings, to attend. Plus, unexpected invitations to babysit grandchildren or to attend their dance, music and sporting events, which as grandparents, you just don't want to miss.

And, interspersed with all of this, there were also the sad and unexpected happenings such as funerals and memorials for loved ones that we are honour-bound to attend, given that celebrating a life well-lived and saying farewell, are certainly milestones in their own right.

Still, there were times when I felt totally overwhelmed this spring and it seemed like I was just running from one event to the next, hoping I was at the right place, on the right day and at the right time, while wondering if all this work and running around, was really worth it.

However, looking back, I'm more convinced than ever that, if possible, each milestone needs to be celebrated and remembered. Be it a happy occasion or a sad one, we need to pause and pay homage to a beloved person or a well-loved organization. Remembering the history of the relationships involved allows us to evaluate whether we are still on the right path of honouring what is good in our lives.

Also, examining the reasons why an organization was started in the first place helps us decipher if it is still fulfilling its original purpose and whether it will continue to do so in the future. And celebrating a person's milestone birthday, or the life journey of a loved one gone to their eternal rest, is a time to show our love and respect for the person being celebrated.

When we gather for a special occasion, whether it's in our birth, adopted or church families, and see the happiness on people's faces as they greet each other with a simple handshake or a tight hug, it just tugs at the heartstrings, knowing that we've had a small part in facilitating that hug or handshake. A heartfelt greeting between friends or family members is something neither Facebook nor Twitter or anything else out there in this fast-paced internet world can replace.

This, combined with hearing words of thanks and appreciation at having organized a special event, makes all the work, frustration, time and patience worth every penny and every hour invested in celebrating yet another milestone!

When all is said and done, what is life all about anyways? Our Scriptures tell us that it's about loving God and our neighbours (including our families!) as ourselves!

So, let's keep on celebrating! ☘

PHOTO BY GREGG GORDON



Gertride Nickel (nee Janzen) admires her beautiful birthday cake on May 31, 2014.

PHOTO BY JOSHUA KATHLER



There were 144 women who joined in the festivities celebrating the 75th anniversary of Mennonite Church B.C. Women's Ministry Inspirational Day on May 3 at Emmanuel Mennonite Church, Abbotsford, B.C.

/// Milestones

Births/Adoptions

- Baldwin**—Avery Ruth Estelle (b. May 17, 2014), to Christa (Enns) and Nick Baldwin, Rosthern Mennonite, Sask.
- Bauman**—Sage Elyse (b. May 26, 2014), to Crystal and Dave Bauman, St. Jacobs Mennonite, Ont., in Beamsville, Ont.
- Dotzert**—Norah Kaitlyn (b. June 16, 2014), to Daniel and Marina Dotzert, Maple View Mennonite, Wellesley, Ont.
- Fehr**—Jace Rory (b. June 3, 2014), to Alissa and Matt Fehr, Hague Mennonite, Sask.
- Finnie**—Leah Ruth (b. June 3, 2014), to Chris and Elaine Finnie, Steinmann Mennonite, Baden, Ont.
- Hiemstra**—Jensyn Annette (b. April 13, 2014), to Janel and Rodney Hiemstra, Listowel Mennonite, Ont.
- Horst**—Sadie Elizabeth (b. May 1, 2014), to Annalee and Jamie Horst, Listowel Mennonite, Ont.
- Lowry**—Hudson James Richard (b. May 26, 2014), to Chris Lowry and Christina Steinmann, Steinmann Mennonite, Baden, Ont.
- Schroeder**—Lukas Alexander (b. May 20, 2014), to Alan (Avon Mennonite, Stratford, Ont.) and Etsuko Schroeder, in Tokyo, Japan.
- Wiebe**—triplets, Zander Pete Friesen, Myelle Nora Friesen and Tasha Jess Friesen (b. June 4, 2014), to Loretta Friesen and Tom Wiebe, Grace Mennonite, Steinbach, Man.
- Baptisms**
- Nic Lobrutto**—Crosshill Mennonite, Ont., June 8, 2014.
- Frank Bueckert, Georgia Loewen, Amy Peters, Matthew Sawatzky, William Van Doeselaar**—Douglas Mennonite, Winnipeg, June 8, 2014.
- Phil Martin**—Elmira Mennonite, Ont., June 1, 2014.
- Elaine Ranney**—Erb Street Mennonite, Waterloo, Ont., June 1, 2014.
- Rebeka Schroeder**—Grace Mennonite, Steinbach, Man., June 8, 2014.

Shae Driedger, Andrea Linke-Driedger, Samuel Dyck, Amanda Enns, Kiana Epp, Elizabeth Hill, Rachel

Tiessen—Leamington United Mennonite, Ont., June 8, 2014.

Emma Bender, Courtney Brubacher, Hannah Weber—St. Jacobs Mennonite, Ont., June 8, 2014.

Lorena Diller Harder, Lily Roth, Rebecca Wade—St. Jacobs Mennonite, Ont., June 15, 2014.

Robert James Friesen, Connor Allan Haining—Vineland United Mennonite, Ont., May 25, 2014.

Wendy Gascho, Emily MacDougall—Wellesley Mennonite, June 8, 2014.

Marriages

Davison/Kennel—Amy Davison and Maxwell Kennel, at Steinmann Mennonite Church, April 12, 2014.

Janzen/Patkau—Helen Janzen and Erwin Patkau, First Mennonite, Saskatoon, May 17, 2014.

Jantzi/Leis—Jeremy Jantzi and Christine Leis, at Maple View Mennonite, Wellesley, Ont., June 14, 2014.

Deaths

Albrecht—Marjorie (Roth), 83 (b. Aug. 3, 1930; d. June 7, 2014), First Mennonite, Kitchener, Ont.

Baer—Morgan, 93 (b. March 17, 1921; d. June 16, 2014), Shantz Mennonite, Baden, Ont.

Bergen—John A., 59 (b. May 15, 1954; d. Jan. 6, 2014), Grace Mennonite Brethren, Kitchener, Ont.

Bock—Anne Marie (nee Sawatzky), (d. June 3, 2014), Morden Mennonite, Man.

Braun—Ed, 88 (b. April 5, 1926; d. June 3, 2014), Bergthaler Mennonite, Altona, Man.

Dyck—Sara (nee Foth), 93 (b. Aug. 14, 1920; d. June 13, 2014), First Mennonite, Saskatoon, Sask.

Hamm—Nicholas, 99 (b. Sept. 21, 1914; d. May 30, 2014), Leamington United Mennonite, Ont.

Harms—George, 95 (d. May 31, 2014), Crystal City Mennonite, Man.



Pontius' Puddle



GOD AT WORK IN THE CHURCH

Brothers and sisters cross the language divide

Mennonite Church Saskatchewan pastors form friendships with their Chinese counterparts

STORY AND PHOTO BY DONNA SCHULZ

Saskatchewan Correspondent

Nine voices sang in Mandarin. As the song ended others took up the chorus in English. “In Jesus Christ we are brothers and sisters.” Language divided this group of pastors; their love for Christ and the church united them.

The pastors were participating in a Chinese-initiated exchange facilitated by Mennonite Church Canada’s Church Engagement Council. The first half of the exchange took place in September 2013, when a group of Canadian pastors travelled to China at the invitation of the Chinese church. The second half began when eight Chinese pastors (one travelling with his spouse) arrived in Saskatoon on May 30. For the next 11 days they were hosted by Mennonite Church Saskatchewan.

Craig Neufeld, of Rosthern Mennonite Church, was part of that initial visit to China and helped plan this event. Neufeld and his fellow pastors shared hosting responsibilities with members of their congregations.

One of the Chinese pastors’ goals was to learn about the Mennonite Church. Tours of Mennonite Heritage Museum, Rosthern Junior College and Mennonite Nursing Home in Rosthern and visits to the MC Saskatchewan offices and Mennonite Central Committee Saskatchewan in Saskatoon introduced the visitors to the history and ministries of the area church.

During their time together, the pastors discussed similarities and differences in pastoral work in their respective countries. The Canadians learned that in China ordination is a lifelong commitment and pastors are, ideally, employed full-time. Their Chinese counterparts learned that rural Saskatchewan ministers are often

employed part-time and must supplement their incomes with other employment. The Chinese pastors admitted that in rural China the situation is similar, but full-time employment is the goal. Also, to be an ordained minister in China, one must be a seminary graduate, whereas within MC Canada, seminary education is encouraged but not required.

Both Canadian and Chinese pastors shared concerns for the future. Emily Toews, of North Star Mennonite Church in Drake, said rural depopulation and an aging demographic have impacted her congregation. One Chinese pastor responded that this is also the case in rural China. Meanwhile, urban growth is forcing the Chinese church to explore different ways of being the church. “The church of the future will look very different,” said one Chinese pastor, “but it will still be the church.”

Toews said hope for the future lies in the knowledge that “it isn’t our church, it’s God’s church. The God of resurrection and life makes all things new.”

Another goal of the exchange was to

build partnerships. Neufeld hopes the MC Saskatchewan pastors can maintain friendships with their Chinese counterparts. “I think we can help each other,” he says, “One Chinese pastor said, ‘we do a great job of evangelism, but we don’t do a great job of doing the work of the church. You Mennonites do a great job of doing the work of the church, but your evangelism isn’t as strong as it could be. How can we help each other?’” Neufeld said such partnerships may require “a shifting of language away from doing missions in China to partnering with the church in China.”

Jeanette Hanson, MC Canada Witness worker in Chengdu, helped organize the visit and acted as interpreter for the group. Hanson, who hails from Saskatchewan, said, “This experience has been like the two halves of my life coming together.” She added that what began as a crazy idea became a powerful experience because of MC Saskatchewan’s hospitality.

Toews expressed her enjoyment of the experience by saying, “You brothers and sisters from China are bubbles of joy.” Patrick Preheim, co-pastor of Nutana Park Mennonite Church, said of his Chinese guest, “When he spoke to our congregation, without knowing our context, the Holy Spirit guided him . . . His preaching was gold.” Preheim added, “Our time together has been a great encouragement.”

The sharing ended with the Lord’s Supper, led by MC Saskatchewan area church minister Jerry Buhler. In closing, participants formed a circle, joining hands to sing one last time, in Mandarin and English, “In Jesus Christ we are brothers and sisters.” ☞



MC Canada Witness worker Jeanette Hanson chats with two of the visiting Chinese pastors.

COVER STORY

Mennonites learn about hospitality and living for others

Inter-cultural study trip to Turkey involves selfless service by Muslims

BY AMANDA WITMER

On May 5, a group of eleven Mennonites from Kitchener-Waterloo area churches embarked on a ten day intercultural study tour of Turkey, sponsored by the Intercultural Dialogue Institute (IDI). The tour was co-led by Leon Kehl of Floradale Mennonite Church and Sezai Yeter, a member of the Turkish community in Kitchener.

IDI is run entirely by volunteers from Hizmet, a reform movement within Islam that began in Turkey during the 1960s under the leadership and inspiration of Fethulah Gülen, a Turkish preacher, writer and activist. Hizmet, “The Service,” works

to actively build mutual understanding through education and intercultural dialogue, believing that peace begins with knowing one another. The purpose of these study tours is to build bridges of understanding that lead to peace. As one Turkish academic and mystic we met noted, “Every existence is inter-related. If this is true, how can we be in conflict with each other? To be in conflict with another is to be in conflict with ourselves.”

The organization also has a relief and development arm, which is similar to Mennonite Central Committee. Kimse Yokmu (translated “Is there anyone to

help?”) works in 110 countries, in the areas of disaster relief, humanitarian aid, medical assistance and educational resources, and boasts over 50,000 volunteers. As testimony to the high regard in which this organization is held, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees chose Kimse Yokmu to work with Syrian refugees in Turkey near the Syrian border, where for the past two years they have been providing meals to over 4,000 people a day.

Our trip itself included a mixture of sightseeing and impromptu gatherings at open air cafes, and more serious and informative meetings with journalists, academics and business leaders. Turkey is an experience for the senses, from the ancient city of Istanbul, bursting at the seams with its population of over 14 million, to the stunning mountain vistas of central Turkey, and the lush Mediterranean coast. Istanbul’s geographic location at the juncture of the Asian and European continents is reflected in the faces of the people who fill its vibrant and bustling streets and in the ever-present sense of history that pervades the city.

In Central Turkey, we visited the poet Rumi’s (1207-1273) tomb, and watched the Whirling Dervishes, members of the mystical Sufi sect of Islam, perform. Near Cappadocia we toured underground cave cities where Christians hid from Roman persecution during the second century, and the Goreme open air museum, a Byzantine monastic settlement, that includes rock-cut chapels, monasteries and churches filled with mosaics dating to the late Byzantine period.

As amazing as all of this was, what stood out most from our experience was the warmth and openness of the people we met, beginning with Sezai, our guide, who spent countless hours arranging transportation, meetings, lodging, meals and tours for our group, and also acted as translator during our visits with Turkish host families and sponsors. This he did with grace and kindness. We saw this kind of selfless service in other members of Hizmet that we encountered during our trip as well.

When we asked some of our Hizmet hosts how they came to be involved in the movement, we heard stories of transformation that grew out of the faith and

PHOTO COURTESY OF SEZAI YETER



The group who visited Turkey in May appreciated the warmth and hospitality of their host family, the Dogans. (From left): Mandy Witmer, Phil Witmer, Pat Manske, Josie Winterfeld, Leon Kehl, their host’s brother and his wife, the Dogan family with their daughter, the grandfather, a friend, guide Sezai Yeter, Steve Manske, Ross Weber and Carol Weber. Also included in the tour were: Fred Martin, Wanda Wagler-Martin, and Will Winterfeld.

service they saw lived out by those they met in Hizmet movement, or from reading Gülen's writings. Some of these stories emerged during meals shared with our three Turkish host families, each of whom impacted us deeply with their hospitality and generosity. For example, one of our hosts, Huseyin, told us that earlier in his life, he had been struggling. The experience of visiting Konya, the burial place of the poet Rumi, and reading his words and teachings, moved him deeply. This, in turn, led him to Gülen's writings and the Hizmet movement, which transformed his life.

Others we met recounted their encounters with Hizmet as students. Hizmet provides scholarships to students to cover the

costs of tuition and board while attending high schools or universities in larger centres. Many live in intentional communities (Lighthouses) headed by an older student. It is this experience of faith modelled and lived out that has led many of these students to continue to make a similar commitment to a life of voluntary service.

I think I speak for our entire group when I say that it was hearing these accounts of personal transformation from our Muslim hosts and friends in Turkey and witnessing their commitment to their faith that was the highlight of our trip. We found ourselves challenged to reflect on the level of our own commitment to service and to putting others first. This is our

highest calling as human beings, and every religious tradition affirms this, including Islam.

Jesus lived this kind of life and called his followers to model it. When asked by a fellow Jew what the greatest commandment was, Jesus' named love of God as the first, and love of neighbour as the second (Mark 12:29-31). Similarly, Muhammad is reported to have said, "The best friend in the sight of Allah is the one who is good to his companions; and the best neighbour in the sight of Allah is the one who is good to his neighbours" (Bukhari, Faith, 31; Tirmidhi, Goodness, 28). ❧

Story of Joshua is about loyalty to God

STORY AND PHOTO BY TIM WIEBE-NEUFELD
CALGARY, ALTA.

Why bother with an Old Testament book like Joshua? This question was posed by presenter Gordon Matties during the first session of a Christian Faith Studies event sponsored by Mennonite Church Alberta, entitled "Joshua and the Legacy of Scriptural Violence."

For three days, participants gathered at Trinity Mennonite Church, south of Calgary, to grapple with biblical texts that seem to justify warfare, conquest, and ethnic cleansing. Some who read through Joshua in preparation for the study expressed discomfort with the graphic violence present in the text. Others wondered if a God of love could order the extermination of every man, woman, and child in a conquered people.

Rather than ignoring difficult passages like these, Matties suggested a profound engagement with them and with the themes that emerge from the book of Joshua as a whole. He led an excursion deep into scripture, examining and comparing passages from Joshua with others found throughout the Bible. Many of these comparisons reinforced Matties' description of scripture as a "text in travail," where

contrasting passages exist in a dialogue "giving birth" to greater understanding of God's redemptive work in the world.

Gradually a picture emerged of a book that affirms God's place as the primary agent of history in the world, and challenges God's people to be loyal to God alone.

Many participants found the implications of these themes to be striking in a culture where God's sovereignty is questioned and allegiances are strained.

Although reading the violent texts of the Old Testament may still cause discomfort, and questions remain, one thing is certain: those who took part in this study are unlikely to ever view the book of Joshua in the same way again!

Gordon Matties is professor of biblical studies and theology at Canadian Mennonite University in Winnipeg. He is author of the *Joshua* volume of the Believers Church Bible Commentary. ❧



Gordon Matties emphasizes a point at Mennonite Church Alberta's Christian Faith Studies event June 9-11 at Trinity Mennonite Church. Seventeen participants attended the main study sessions while ten others joined for an open evening session.

Metzger meets with Harmony Group

STORY AND PHOTO BY EVELYN REMPEL PETKAU

Manitoba Correspondent
WINNIPEG, MAN.

Members of the Harmony Group, formed six years ago by Mennonites seeking inclusion of LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer) in Mennonite Church Canada, recently engaged in earnest dialogue with Willard Metzger, executive director of Mennonite Church Canada. Metzger invited the Group's responses to the next steps of the Being the Faithful Church (BFC) discernment process at a meeting held at Bethel Mennonite Church on June 19. Several members of the General Board, MC Canada and MC Manitoba joined the circle of approximately 50 participants.

At the Assembly in Winnipeg, the General Board will be asking the delegate body if they have perceived correctly what questions need to be addressed next in the discernment process. The BFC 5.1 document they will present outlines the questions as follows: 1. God's gift of unity in Christ is not invalidated by our disagreement. How shall our unity in Christ be

maintained while understanding matters of same-sex relationships differently? 2. Most responses indicate a desire to be more compassionate and welcoming of those individuals who are same-sex attracted. How do congregations hope to reflect this desire? 3. In reviewing the trends what counsel do delegates have for the area and national church in light of the different understandings of compassionate responses towards persons that are in same-sex relationships?

Metzger said, "Our people are all over the place in how they understand the topic but the task force has determined that even in the midst of this there are some trends we recognize. Certainly there is a strong sense that there isn't any appetite to revisit the Confession of Faith but at the same time churches want to become more compassionate. We also heard that we don't want this to divide us. We want to remain together as a people."

Several wondered about the direction

the process was moving. "It seems to suggest that the discernment process is not going to work and therefore we are going to focus more on how we will maintain unity within MC Canada. It seems to suggest at some point, maybe 2016, the assembly will be asked to allow every congregation to discern for itself how it wants to respond to LGBTQ inclusion."

"We need leadership from the top. I would like to see some of the leaders commit themselves and say we are going to do what is right even if it goes contrary to some of the congregations."

"Were people in the LGBTQ community consulted or contacted in making this BFC 5.1 paper? I get very concerned about one group of people making decisions that effect the lives of other people so deeply."

Metzger responded that although he has talked with LGBTQ groups and individuals at different times, this community was not included. Metzger was urged to follow through on some of the commitments that were made two years ago, namely to draw into the conversation other social sciences and to be intentional in seeking out marginal voices.

Erwin Warkentin, who chaired the evening meeting, recalled, "The first BFC paper talked about three possibilities in terms of the end of the discernment process: the church can either repeat what it said earlier, it can change what it said earlier, or it can say something new. Is the national church ready to speak or no? If so, how long will it be before the national church will be able to speak and where is the leadership coming from?"

Metzger asked whether an option might be to allow the Confession of Faith, which states that "God intends marriage to be a covenant between one man and one woman for life," to continue to stand, while at the same time acknowledging that there are things we disagree on. "This is us having this conversation, congregations led by the same Spirit, the same God, coming to different understandings. We've never embraced that kind of option."

But participants indicated that as long as the Confession of Faith and the Saskatoon resolution of 1986 remain in effect, members of the LGBTQ community who seek to live out their faith in the MC Canada



Erwin Warkentin, a member of the Harmony Group and Willard Metzger, executive director of MC Canada.

community will continue to suffer pain and disenfranchisement. "Almost thirty years have passed since that resolution came into being and what has it done? When a person in our church came out as gay it gave us license to stamp 'gay' across their forehead and plaster 'abomination, unwholesome, etc' on their back and then when they were leaving our church doors we call after them 'but we love you.'" That memory shared by a father whose son came out as

gay 34 years ago resonated with others in the group. "Let's wipe this resolution off our books and then we can go on from there," he urged.

The group wanted the General Board to know that, "while the discernment process slowly works or maybe doesn't work, there are people suffering, afraid to speak out, and even some who see no alternative but to take their own lives." ❧

people received prayer for healing and other concerns, people were led to faith in Christ, and reports of God's answer to previous prayers were given. Several healings were announced as a result of our prayers!

On Sunday the worship service began at 8:30 a.m., lasting until 11 a.m. The singing was dynamic and the youth did interpretive dance to three songs that were beautifully choreographed. Scriptures were read aloud by all.

I preached and conducted the ordination through interpretation by Nhien Pham. We laid on hands and prayed, then the service concluded with the pastor's wife singing a beautiful song of love to God at her husband's ordination. This couple is a great team ministering together. We had a celebration lunch together, followed by an initial meeting of the accountability group that will support Pastor Khanh.

A second holy moment, when the emotions welled up and I could no longer speak or sing because of the significance of what God is doing, happened as we visited the land that has been purchased for the church building at Kratie. We prayed a prayer of blessing on that place where God has begun a great work, giving thanks, for God is good and his love endures forever. ❧

PERSONAL REFLECTION

MCBC ordains Mennonite pastor in Cambodia

STORY AND PHOTO BY GARRY JANZEN

EXECUTIVE MINISTER, MENNONITE CHURCH B.C.

As I participated in the ordination service for pastor Tran Dinh Khanh in Cambodia on June 8, emotions welled up in me. It was a holy moment as I realized the significance of what God is doing and what this ordination means for the Anabaptist/Mennonite movement in Cambodia.

A delegation of three people from Mennonite Church British Columbia (MCBC) travelled to Phnom Penh, Cambodia, on June 5. It included Nhien Pham of the North American Vietnamese Mennonite Fellowship and pastor at the Vietnamese Mennonite Church in Vancouver, Canh Ha representing the MCBC Church Health Committee and pastor of the Vietnamese Christian Church in Abbotsford, and myself as executive minister of MCBC.

After a day to settle in we had a tour of Phnom Penh, ending with dinner at the pastor's home and a youth worship gathering in the evening. The pastor's home is on the first two floors (including a multi-purpose room which serves as dining room, living room and a room for smaller church gatherings) with the church worship sanctuary on the third floor. There are also a couple of apartments attached to the back for church people who need housing.

Preparations are underway to revive a previous ministry at the city of Kratie with plans to construct a church building. We met the potential church planter.

Saturday evening we had another worship gathering for all who could make it. After each of these services there was a ministry time where many



Leaders from B.C., together with the local Mennonite church in Cambodia, pray for newly ordained Tran Dinh Khanh and his wife.

Dust settles on prison chaplaincy controversy

BY WILL BRAUN

Senior Writer

After a series of bumps and scares in recent years, a new system of federal prison chaplaincy has emerged, with a single company, rather than individual denominations, holding the chaplaincy contracts.

Not surprisingly, government funding for religious services in federal prisons has long been a dicey matter. According to long-time chaplain, and one-time inmate, Hank Dixon, there was a move in the 1980s to eliminate paid chaplains as a way to save Ottawa money. A backlash prevented that from happening, but the end result was that chaplains went from being employees of government to being contracted through their respective denominational bodies. This saved government some money, though not as much as if they had cut the service altogether.

In the fall of 2012, then Public Safety Minister Vic Toews announced that all part-time prison chaplain contracts would be cancelled. While money may have been a factor in this decision, it is widely believed that the main intent was to stop funding non-Christian chaplains, since nearly all of the chaplains from other faiths worked part-time. (Aboriginal spiritual care programming is entirely separate.)

In the end, Correctional Service Canada (CSC) backtracked again, but again, at the same time found other ways to streamline services. They requested proposals from bodies willing to take over administration of contracts for a number of chaplain positions. Some people in the field worried the contract for what is essentially privatization of chaplaincy might go to a company with a particular bias, a strong profit motive or lack of understanding.

In the end it went to Kairos Pneuma Chaplaincy, a New Brunswick-based organization started primarily by people already in the prison chaplaincy field, including



Dixon

Dixon. Kairos Pneuma now holds 91 of the approximately 100 full-time and part-time chaplaincy contracts in Canada.

There has been considerable continuity in terms of personnel, with many people remaining in the same positions just under different administration. However, Lloyd Bruce, one of the directors of Kairos Pneuma, says there have been changes too, including the increase to four full-time chaplains of other faiths.

The shift in service delivery raises three questions. First, how will it affect the quality of services? It appears there will be minimal change, though Dixon acknowledges that many of the chaplains will have taken a pay cut.

Don Stoesz sees some advantages in the new system. He has been a prison chaplain for 25 years and currently works under Kairos Pneuma at the Bowden Institution north of Calgary. In an email, he spoke highly of the employee-employer relationship he has under Kairos Pneuma, as well as the organization's commitment to chaplaincy.

A second question is about community chaplaincy, which involves services for people following their release from prison. These contracts currently remain with CSC. Department spokeswoman Sara Parkes said via email that "there are no current plans to implement [the single national contractor] model for faith-based community initiatives."

A third question relates to the government's level of ongoing commitment to chaplaincy. While there is generally a degree of uncertainty around government funding of all kinds, especially over the longer term, and while the current system might cost the government a bit less—that is not clear—no one is sounding alarm bells.

When asked if the changes reflect a trend of government backing away from chaplaincy, Dixon said, "I don't think so."

Administratively, a single contractor system makes sense.

Dixon is hoping for greater security, beyond the current two-year contracts, in the future.

Don Stoesz—who is completing his second book on prison ministry—raises a deeper question about commitment. According to the CSC website, Canadian law requires CSC to provide "access to an adequate level of resources (leadership, opportunities for worship, educational resources, religious articles, dietary requirements) to allow offenders to practise their religion or spirituality as fully as they desire (up to a level that is generally available to people in the community)."

Stoesz has a vision for chaplaincy that goes beyond just meeting a legal duty. He believes the commitment to chaplaincy should be rooted in provision of opportunities for rehabilitation not just religious rights. He points to a 1989 CSC mission statement that reflects this restorative focus.

Hank Dixon knows the rehabilitative value of chaplaincy. When asked about some people's concern over using tax dollars on prison chaplains, his answer is quick. "I spent nine years in prison for murder," he says. "I came to Christ in prison as a 19-year-old." Chaplaincy was "very crucial" to him.

Dixon says the demand for chaplaincy is high among inmates and the value of the service is very underrated in society. "We can open doors that other can't," he says. It is about pastoral care that changes lives and helps keep people from going back to prison. ❧

/// Briefly noted

Former moderator dies

Ron Sawatsky, 64, died unexpectedly June 27, after suffering from Lyme Disease for several years.

The first moderator of Mennonite Church Canada, he helped navigate the creation of the binational bodies of MC USA and MC Canada in 1999. A complete obituary notice will be printed later.



12 Scriptures Project at Bethel Mennonite Church

By HENRY FAST

Adult Education Committee, Bethel Mennonite Church
WINNIPEG

Participants in the Adult Education class at Bethel Mennonite Church were recently asked to select the scripture passage from the Bible that was most important to them and to their congregation. Through a process of dialogue and voting, they then narrowed down the list to only 12 passages.

The so-called "12 Scriptures Project" grew out of the Mennonite Church USA delegate assembly at Pittsburgh in 2011 that identified Christian formation as a key priority, "to increase our capacity as a community of faith to use the Scriptures as a faithful guide for daily living."

The Adult Education committee at Bethel designed a three-Sunday process. For the first Sunday, we recruited eight panel members to each select and present two scripture passages important to them and important to Bethel and to explain why. Panelists were selected from a range of demographics, including youth-seniors, male-female, recent and long-time attendees, parents and "academics."

For the second session, we invited all participants to come to class with one or two passages that they felt were important and share them with others in round-table discussion groups. Each small group was

then requested to agree on just two passages for presentation to the whole class. Through this process, including the sixteen passages selected earlier by the panelists and accounting for duplicate passages, we ended up with a total of 24 passages to choose from.

For the final Sunday, these passages were posted at tables around the class room along with bullet points of why those who had chosen it felt it was important. A bowl was placed in front of each of the passages. Each person was given 12 small stones with which to vote by placing one stone in 12 of the 24 available baskets. The dozen bowls with the most stones were the "winners."

It was with considerable excitement and anticipation to that we looked forward to the outcome of this exercise to discover which

- 1) Col. 3:12-15 Bear one another's burdens
- 2) 1 Peter 4:9 Be hospitable
- 3) Mic. 6:8 Do justice
- 4) John 14:6 I am the way
- 5) Rom. 12:1-2 Do not be conformed to this world
- 6) Phil. 2:1-11 Be of the same mind
- 7) Eph. 4:2-3 Maintain unity of Spirit
- 8) Prov. 3:5-6 Trust in the Lord with all your heart
- 9) Acts 8:26-40 Philip and the eunuch
- 10) James 3:13-17 Seek wisdom from above
- 11) 1 Cor. 3:11 No other foundation
- 12) John 3:17 That the world might be saved

passages would be selected. (See sidebar)

Our pastoral team is now using these texts as a basis for their sermons during the summer months, from June to August.

A concern for hospitality and bearing one another's burdens ranked high on the list. Interestingly, no one selected John 3:16, while 1 Cor. 3:11 came in second last. ❧

/// Briefly noted

Pastor's credentials withdrawn

Tym Elias, who was employed as a chaplain at the Winnipeg Remand Centre left his position with Manitoba Corrections in February 2014 prior to admitting to sexual misconduct. Elias is a member of Home Street Mennonite Church where he previously served as pastor for nine years. Mennonite Church Manitoba has withdrawn his credentials. He has no ministerial responsibilities within MC Manitoba at this point.

EVELYN REMPEL PETKAU

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Anabaptist conference in Montréal brings new hope

Stuart Murray Williams and Juliet Kilpin of the UK Anabaptist Network speak to Québec context

BY RICHARD LOUGHEED AND ANICKA FAST
MONTRÉAL, QUE.

Participants at the conference hosted by the Montréal centre for Anabaptist studies (CEAM—*Centre d'études anabaptistes de Montréal*) June 6 and 7 were destabilized and yet given new hope as they listened to presentations by members of the Anabaptist Network in the United Kingdom. Peter Enns of Terrebonne was so inspired that he proposed starting a local group for follow-up. Others began to see worship, publicity, finances and goals in radically new ways.

Perhaps because the presenters, Stuart Murray Williams and Juliet Kilpin, come from a type of Christendom with an official church which resembles Québec, they have had to respond and innovate in a way that seems foreign to the rest of North America. But participants at this event saw this as a needed message in Québec and probably increasingly in the rest of North America. They were thankful for the prophets and dreamers who visited Babylon and brought hope.

Murray Williams is the author of multiple books on church planting, urban mission, the emerging church and post-Christendom, some translated into multiple languages. Following 12 years of urban church planting work in London, he now teaches at Baptist College in Bristol.

Kilpin is one of the coordinators of Urban Expression, an innovative urban church planting agency. A Baptist pastor and teacher, she has church planting experience in East London, and is a consultant for new church planting initiatives, and co-author or editor of two books.

The Friday evening conference at St-Eustache MB church was geared toward youth, but attracted about 20 participants of all ages. In an engaging presentation interspersed with short discussion periods, Murray Williams and Kilpin encouraged



PHOTO BY ANICKA FAST

Stuart Murray Williams and Juliet Kilpin encouraged Anabaptists in Montreal to look to Jesus and to be creative in evangelism.

participants to “look up” in order to resist the dehumanizing elements of our culture and become more fully human.

Looking up, or consciously deciding to “make Jesus-shaped responses and decisions,” involves recognizing that we are already being “discipled” by the world through its pervasive dehumanizing influence, and that changing our reflexes will require consciously nurturing our imaginations by dreaming, telling stories, and taking risks.

Interspersed with the presentation were engaging stories about individuals and church groups who have tried to live out these risky, imaginative ways of demonstrating the good news. These ranged from the story of the forgiveness offered by the Nickel Mines Amish, to the story of a network of churches in Fremantle, Australia, who decided to gather resources to pay off the utility debts of the entire town in 2004 as a way of demonstrating biblical Jubilee.

The meetings continued on Saturday with a radical challenge to evangelize

differently to meet those in the post-Christendom culture. As resident exiles, like those in Babylon, believers need to put down roots, seek the good of the city, give up the idea of controlling and look for alternatives with a long view. Murray Williams even suggested that like the exiles in Babylon we have to consider whether God intended this change of post-Christendom for the good of the church.

As the translation into French progressed it was important to distinguish between post-Christendom (potentially good) from post-Christianity (negative). It was heartening for Québec participants to hear from people who understand the local culture, even from across the ocean.

The British pair realized how foreign any traditional evangelism appears and how hard church planters can work without getting anywhere. So they proposed lowering expectations and encouraging creativity. Using English understatement rather than American overstatement is their approach to touch those who are suspicious. Jesus, the model for Anabaptists, told stories, asked many questions, left mystery and loved the marginal people. Inspired by Anabaptist resistance to Christendom, the British organization Urban Expression of Murray Williams and Kilpin encourages and supports (but does not provide any finances for) creative approaches in many denominations.

Thanks to the initiative of Brian Bauman and the financial support of Mennonite Church Eastern Canada, Murray Williams and Kilpin, who were visiting Canada to teach at Tyndale Seminary in Toronto in June, were able to tack on a trip to Montréal.

The Montréal Centre for Anabaptist Studies, or CEAM, exists to promote dialogue between Christians and to encourage the development of academic theological reflection in a Québec context, inspired by a critical appropriation of Anabaptist history, theology, and convictions. CEAM organized the conference with the collaboration of MCC-Québec, the Association of Mennonite Brethren Churches in Québec (*Association des Églises des Frères Mennonites du Québec*) and the Mennonite Brethren theological school ETEM-IBVie. ☞

/// Briefly noted

Pastors in transition in Manitoba

Harold Peters-Fransen began as lead pastor at Elim Mennonite Church in Grunthal, Man. on September 1, 2013. He has been serving as interim pastor in various locations since 2000. Most recently he completed a position as interim lead pastor at North Kildonan Mennonite Church in Winnipeg.



Laurie Redpath began his first pastoral assignment as lead pastor at the Graysville Mennonite Church on January 8, 2013. He graduated from CMU with a BA in Theology in 2009 and was a member of Trinity Mennonite



Fellowship in Mather, Man., before coming to Graysville. He works part-time in carpentry.

Keith Friesen began as lead pastor of Grace Mennonite Church in Winkler in September 1, 2013. He was pastor at the Morris Baptist Church for the previous 4 and a half years and received his training at Providence College.



Sandy Hung began her position as Associate English/Youth Pastor at the Winnipeg Chinese Mennonite Church in August 2013. She attended Regent College where she received her M. Div. and pastored for two years at Tri-City Canaan Church in Coquitlam, B.C.



Heiko Giesbrecht began as half-time co-pastor at Steinbach Mennonite Church, on September 1, 2013, while completing his studies at Steinbach Bible College. He moved to a full-time position in May 2014 joining the team of two other co-pastors. His responsibilities include the Junior Youth programs, worship planning, leading and preaching.



Doug Unrau began as lead pastor of Lowe Farm Bergthaler Mennonite Church on August 1, 2013. He was working in IT and was a member of Foothills Mennonite Church in Calgary before attending AMBS. He graduated last spring.



/// Briefly noted

Pastors in transition in Eastern Canada

Joseph Raltong, pastor of the Chin Christian Church in Kitchener since November 2010, was licensed toward ordination on June 8. He received a Doctorate Degree by University of Jerusalem from Chennai, India, in March 2014.



Sean Sero began as the youth pastor at Poole Mennonite Church north of Stratford, Ont., on June 1. Sero has a Bachelor of Religious Studies from Heritage College in Cambridge. Although he has some experience with church plants, Poole is his first pastoral position.



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GOD AT WORK IN THE WORLD



“Mustache friends” Natalie Rosenberg (left), and Bronwyn Bergen had their faces painted by professional face painter, Val Martens.

MCC Summerfest Relief Sale

STORY AND PHOTOS BY DONITA WIEBE-NEUFELD
Alberta Correspondent

Alberta Mennonites have few opportunities for large fellowship gatherings. While the annual Mennonite Central Committee relief sale is a huge amount of work, when the weekend arrives, the atmosphere is decidedly celebratory.

On June 6-7, MCC supporters gathered in Sherwood Park from as far north as La Crete, and as far south as Pincher Creek, to raise funds for relief work, to renew acquaintances, and to enjoy the stimulating atmosphere of a diverse crowd united in serving God. For Barry Andres, chair of the organizing committee, it was his third time at the helm. Asked how the sale went, he replied; “Really well. The overall sense I’ve had is being overwhelmed at people’s willingness to be involved.” He noted that “involved” goes far beyond the generous financial giving, with many volunteers giving extraordinary amounts of time and skills for the cause.

A highlight of the 2014 event was the presence of Cindy Klassen, a Canadian long track speed skater with six medals to her name. Klassen, a Winnipeg native with

Mennonite roots, is a strong supporter of the work of MCC. “The organization is awesome. They are being the hands and feet of Jesus around the world. Everyone involved with MCC has made me feel like



Hannah Martens (left), Cindy Klassen, and Rebecca Janzen enjoy each other’s company at the “GO” booth where Martens and Janzen earned money for MCC by running and biking on the stationary equipment.

family,” Klassen said. Klassen was available throughout the day Saturday, visiting with people, encouraging participants using the treadmill and bike to raise money at the “GO” booth, and speaking with young people over lunch.

Inevitably, arranging a sale of this magnitude, coordinating hundreds of volunteers, sale items, food, and facilities involves challenges. Abe Janzen, director of MCC Alberta, is hopeful that organizers for the three sales locations in the province, Edmonton, Coaldale, and Didsbury, will be able to get together before the next sale to discuss the issues and opportunities at each venue.

Andres says that marketing to expand participation to include local people is tricky. The auction itself can sometimes be confusing when purchased items are donated back to be resold, or a feature quilt, such as the “water quilt” this year, is simply an opportunity to donate to a cause. “What’s become apparent is that it is a difficult event to attract people who are not already part of the cause. Who would go to an auction where you spend \$1,000 and then don’t take anything home?” Andres said.

The 2014 sale raised approximately \$175,000, a slight increase over the amount raised the last time Summerfest was held in Sherwood Park. ❧

Bible study inspires Botswana prison ministry

BY LYNDA HOLLINGER-JANZEN

Mennonite Church Canada/Mennonite Mission Network

On Sunday, May 4, Nathan and Taryn Dirks found themselves bouncing through a red-soil-and-thornbush landscape familiar to many as the stomping ground of Mma Ramotswe, the heroine of *The No. 1 Ladies Detective Agency* series. Like the famous sleuth from Botswana, the Dirks and six young leaders from Spiritual Healing Church were on a mission, driven to save people from injustice and the consequences of sin.

The Dirks, from Niagara (Ont.) United Mennonite Church, are jointly appointed by Mennonite Church Canada and Mennonite Mission Network to continue a ministry dating back to 1975. They walk alongside congregations of the African Initiated Churches of Botswana in areas of sustainable community development and Bible teaching.

“Given the large numbers of young adults in the African Initiated Churches, Nathan and I found that it was beneficial to connect with peers in our own age group,” Taryn Dirks said, describing the couple’s ministry since they arrived in Botswana 18 months ago.

Nathan Dirks said that the six youth leaders engaged in prison ministry are strong followers of Jesus who spend time reading the Scriptures to know what Jesus is all about. They try to live like Jesus, building loving relationships as they volunteer in local prisons, help in a school for special-needs children, and coordinate sports development projects.

“The Bible encourages us to serve people in captivity, in hospitals, and whoever needs our attention,” said Khumo Mosalagae, one of the youth leaders.

On this Sunday, the Dirks and the youth leaders headed to the village of Molepolole to fulfill a promise made to Moruti Madimabe, one of the key national leaders of Spiritual Healing Church and a professor at an agricultural college in Gaborone,

Botswana’s capital city. Madimabe was concerned about the exodus of young people from his congregation because, according to the youth, “there was no power in the church.” He wanted the Dirks and the youth leaders from Gaborone to share their passion for following Jesus.

In addition to developing youth programs, the couple worked to establish an introduction-to-the-Bible curriculum, some certificate programs, and topical Bible studies. In this way, service is informed by what is learned from immersion in the biblical message.

“There’s been great success in these areas because the young adults in our churches are some amazing people,” Nathan said. “In going to the places that Jesus calls us, we’ve been blessed with an abundance of unexpectedly awesome community, which keeps on growing.”

Jesus’ message inspires the youth to move out from the walls of the church and

into some places with formidable walls. One of their ministries takes them inside Gaborone’s First Offenders Prison.

“We look forward to worshipping in prison every Saturday,” Taryn said. “It’s actually our favorite place to do church. It’s a community there and everyone’s walls are down. So often in the churches outside of prison, we all keep our guard up.”

In the prison, people who committed horrible crimes are experiencing conversion.

“Hearing the stories of the inmates, and getting to know them as friends, we are seeing transformation from hate and selfish consumption, to love and selfless sacrifice. We are witnessing the power of God in its subtly revolutionary way,” Nathan said.

After the weekend visit, the Molepolole youth were infected by the contagious excitement of their friends from Gaborone. Plans were made for a follow-up visit to study the Bible together, before starting to serve the Molepolole community.

“We learn a lot every time we meet,” said Milton Madikwe, a leader in the Bible studies and the prison ministry. “Our hearts sing a song, ‘*Re ta thaba ha re kopana*’ (We are glad when we meet), for we always look forward to being together.”



Nathan and Taryn Dirks and a prison ministry team regularly worship with inmates in Gaborone. Nathan (back row, R) and Taryn (back row, third from R) are in Botswana to walk with African Initiated Churches through Mennonite Church Canada and Mennonite Mission Network.

Kylie saved me

How a daughter helped her father find himself

BY ANGELIKA DAWSON

Communitas
ABBOTSFORD, B.C.

Ian Newton's eyes brim with tears as he recalls the day his world fell apart. It started as a trip to a specialist with his wife Brenda and Kylie, their baby girl, to see if she had hearing loss. In all of 45 minutes, their day turned into one of "would nots." Kylie would not walk. Kylie would not talk. Kylie would not develop intellectually. Kylie would not develop like a normal child.

"I'll never forget that day," Ian says. "We were devastated."

While Kylie is beginning to prove the doctors wrong—she is learning to walk—she lives with many complex healthcare issues: she uses a wheelchair, she is tube fed and she is non-verbal.

The hardest part for him as a dad was letting go of the dreams that he had had for himself and his daughter, like walking her down the aisle at her wedding, something that Kylie will very likely not experience. But while the Newtons continue to live with, and adapt to, the extreme challenges that their daughter faces each day, Ian is clear that Kylie has made an enormous difference in his life. In fact, he says Kylie saved him.

Ian had always had a desire to teach and explored this career option after university. Instead, he chose to pursue a career in aeronautical engineering because the money was better. He landed a job that paid well, but was highly stressful and unfulfilling, and required him to travel a lot. He realized that his son Sam was growing up without him.

Then Kylie was born.

"Kylie came along and demanded a change," Ian says, smiling.

The stresses at work and at home were proving to be too much for him. He remembers calling Brenda one Thursday afternoon in complete despair, telling her that he just couldn't do it anymore. Brenda encouraged him to pursue his original dream.

"She said, 'Why don't you look into



teaching again?" Ian says. "Brenda's encouragement and Kylie's needs changed our lives overnight."

Their conversation motivated him to contact Simon Fraser University and University of the Fraser Valley, and by the end of that afternoon Ian was enrolled in classes for the following Monday and he walked away from his job. It's a decision he's never regretted.

"Being a teacher is the best thing for me," Ian says. "I'm passionate about what I'm doing. I love my students." And he credits it all to Kylie: "It's not about the money anymore. Kylie makes you stop and think about what you've got. She helped me find me. And it's this self-realization that helps

me connect with students and staff in a deep, meaningful way."

He's found that the one thing he loves most about teaching is also the thing he loves most about being a dad: watching kids discover. He beams as he talks about his son Sam, who has an inquisitive mind and is constantly challenging himself to learn new things. He is proud of the way Sam and Kylie are growing and changing.

The challenges of parenting and teaching are also similar.

"It's hard to know when to push and when to jump in and help," he says. "When do you let go and let your [children] discover for themselves?"

What he is sure of is that his experience of being a dad to Sam and Kylie is a rich one, despite the depth of the challenges that he and Brenda face as parents of a child with complex healthcare needs. It has also deepened his love and respect for Brenda, to whom he has been married for 18 years. "I know that we can survive anything," he says.

"I'm so glad we have Matthew's House here now," Ian says of the respite home in Abbotsford for families with children who have complex healthcare needs. "It gives us the space we need, just to have peace of mind so that we can rest." ❧



'Kylie came along and demanded a change,' Ian Newton says of his daughter who lives with many complex healthcare issues. 'Kylie makes you stop and think about what you've got. She helped me find me.'

Syrian refugee girls find light and hope

By LAURIE OSWALD ROBINSON

Mennonite Central Committee

Damaris, a 13-year-old Syrian refugee, still waits for her father to come home. More than five months ago she quit school when fighting between government and opposition forces began in her family's Aleppo neighbourhood. She and her family hid in the basement as the bombs fell. One day her father, a builder, went out to get some bread and never came home.

"To this day, we have no news of him," says Damaris, who fled to Lebanon with her mother, aunt, grandfather and four siblings. Her family survives on the money her mom and aunt make as seamstresses. (Damaris' real name is being withheld for security reasons.)

"We can hardly afford to pay the rent for the room we live in together," she says. "We pray daily for our dad to come back."

In the midst of these hard times, Damaris found a safe place at the House of Light and Hope centre, where 120 refugee girls affected by the Syrian crisis get support to deal with the trauma they experienced and the difficult circumstances in which they live. Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) supports House of Light and Hope, a ministry of the Greek Orthodox Church.

The centre is located in Nabaa, a very poor neighbourhood in the Beirut suburbs, where many Syrian and Iraqi refugees settled. Damaris and her family are part of an influx of 30,000 refugees that cross from Syria to Lebanon each week, according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

As rent and food prices increase and concerns about water supply and refugee status grow, girls are more at risk because families sometimes cope by forcing girls to beg, become sex workers or marry young, says Naomi Enns, an MCC representative for Lebanon and Syria.

"MCC is thankful that the team at House of Light and Hope offers a multidisciplinary approach," Enns says. Social workers, special needs teachers, psychologists and activity leaders offer care and make

referrals to doctors. Trauma care helps the girls share their struggles and learn positive coping skills. A weekly support group for mothers allows family life to improve or remain stable, she says.

The majority of the children at House of Light and Hope have also partially or totally missed their school year. There is

little room in the Lebanese public school, which also uses a very different curriculum than Syria.

"MCC is helping to offer at least these 120 children the right to smile and learn in peace and security," says Enns. "And we pray that the violence will stop. Most of these children simply miss their homes in Syria and the life they once had."

Since the Syrian crisis began in March 2011, MCC has allocated \$16 million in emergency food, shelter, household items, trauma healing and education support as well as peacebuilding and disaster response training in Syria, Jordan and Lebanon. ✎

PHOTO COURTESY OF HOUSE OF LIGHT AND HOPE



Damaris, whose father disappeared during the Syrian war, is finding emotional and educational support at the House of Light and Hope, an MCC partner in Lebanon.



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Goshen College students take an inside-out approach to justice in jail

By BRIAN YODER SCHLABACH

Goshen College
GOSHEN, IND.

Due to concerns regarding sentencing, only the first names of inmates are used in this article.

Sara Klassen's final class at Goshen College didn't take place in the Florida Keys or the African savannah or among Roman ruins, where many of her friends were studying during May Term. Her final class took place in a windowless room deep in the Elkhart County jail.

Klassen, along with 11 other GC students, took part in a class called the Inside-Out Exchange Program, which brings college students together with incarcerated men and women to study as peers behind prison walls. The course was co-taught by Carolyn Schrock-Shenk, associate professor of peace, justice and conflict studies, and Glenn Gilbert, utilities manager and sustainability coordinator at Goshen College.

During orientation on the first day, after clearing security, the Goshen College students toured the 400,000-square-foot Elkhart County Correctional Center, which has housing for 768 minimum- and medium-security inmates, and up to 168 maximum-security inmates.

"It felt like a people zoo," Klassen said. "That whole first day was a de-humanizing experience."

On the second day, the Goshen College students met the 12 "inside" students for



"Everyone was more engaged in this class than in any class I've ever taken," said student Sara Klassen.

the first time. These inmates were specifically recommended for the course by the jail staff. The class met in a stark room at the jail, sitting in a circle of chairs, alternating between "inside" students and "outside" students. After some icebreakers and get-to-know-you games, a circle of trust quickly began to form.

"As hard as that first day was, it was a complete 180-degree turn to go into class on the second day and almost immediately form this great bond with these guys," Klassen said.

In that first session, the group agreed on a covenant to use first names only, to refrain from judgment, to speak openly and honestly, and to be a place where everyone can let their guard down.

"After the first five minutes, seeing the warm smiles and friendly faces of the college students, I knew this would be different," said Mike, an inside student in a khaki jail jumpsuit. "They treated us as equals, and that created a bond with all of us, a friendship we could never forget."

A different approach to justice

The activities and conversation in the class centered around concepts of violence and non-violence, crime, the criminal justice system and the role of race, gender and class within it. They ended the course with lively and hopeful discussions about restorative justice and the roles of offender, victim and community.

A restorative justice approach has been shown to reduce the number of repeat offenders and to increase victim satisfaction. Interestingly, the first victim-offender reconciliation program in the United States began right down the road from the correctional facility in Elkhart 36 years ago by Goshen College alum Howard Zehr, known as the "grandfather of restorative justice."



Goshen College students and inmates at the Elkhart County Correctional Facility studied together in the Inside-Out Exchange program in May.

According to Elkhart County Sheriff Brad Rogers, programs like this, in which inmates are treated with respect and their voices are heard, are good for the inmates and ultimately good for the community.

"We're not just in the business of warehousing inmates. That doesn't do us any good," Rogers said. "We believe that programs like this change hearts and minds. In the interest of public safety, it behooves us to send them out better than when they came in, since most of these inmates do end up back in the community. This class empowers them."

The idea and numbers behind it are compelling, but you need only to talk to the students in this class to know that it's changing lives.

"I believe that if, in fact, I come back to any facility of incarceration, it will be as a volunteer, finally being part of the solution to the problem instead of part of the problem," Brian, an inmate in the class, wrote in his journal.

"Inside" student Mike added, "restorative justice offers opportunities to bring the two parties together and finds a way for all parties to be made whole. When I get out, I hope to carry this message on."

A "holy endeavor"

The international Inside-Out program was founded in 1997 at Temple University and Graterford Prison, both in the Philadelphia area, and has since spread to more than 100 colleges and universities in the United States and around the world. The program was founded on the idea that incarcerated

Schools directory

men and women and college students might mutually benefit from studying together as peers.

“If you came in this room and closed your eyes and just listened to what was going on, you wouldn’t know that you weren’t in a college classroom,” said Lt. Kris Klosinski, who manages the educational programs at the Elkhart County Correctional Center.

However, unlike Inside-Out classes at other universities, which meet over the course of a full semester, the Goshen College program was more intensive, with classes meeting almost daily over the course of the month of May.

This intensive schedule works well at a county jail, where inmates tend to have shorter stays as they await trial or serve short sentences. This is the first time an Inside-Out class has taken place within such an intensive timeline, which, according to Gilbert and Schrock-Shenk, helped make the experience even more moving.

“Education is a holy endeavour, and this has probably been the holiest endeavour I’ve ever had the privilege to take part in,” said Schrock-Shenk. “I was told during the Inside-Out training that these classes are powerful and transformative for many who participate in them. I believed it at some level, but honestly, I thought they were probably exaggerating. However, for the last three weeks I’ve been experiencing it and the word I’ve used most often is ‘amazing.’”

In their final session, the class invited Goshen College President Jim Brenneman and former president Vic Stoltzfus, who, along with Schrock-Shenk, helped clear several hurdles to get the class started. Several students provided personal reflections, and certificates were given to everyone in the class. At one point, the class launched into an emotional rendition of the hymn “Amazing Grace.”

Speaking to the whole group, Sheriff Rogers expressed gratitude for the class and hope for its future in the Elkhart County Correctional Center.

“We’re privileged to have Goshen College students here; it’s brave of them to come in and let their guard down and share their hearts. We went into it not knowing how it would go, but I’m excited

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about the outcome,” he said. “The success shows that it’s possible.”

Klassen couldn’t think of a better way to finish her college career.

“I felt so honoured that my last class at GC could be such an embodiment of everything that I’ve been studying in my peace, justice and conflict studies classes,” Klassen said. “Everyone was more engaged in this class than in any class I’ve ever

taken; there was this sense of privilege to be able to be together and share from such different places in life.”

“It definitely pushes me to want to stay involved,” Klassen added. “These inmates are a significant part of our community. This is our county jail, and our tax dollars go to work here, so it’s important to be aware and involved with what goes on here.”

ARTBEAT

BOOK REVIEW

Retelling the Story

Rewriting the Break Event: Mennonites and Migration in Canadian Literature. Studies in Immigration and Culture Series. Robert Zacharias. University of Manitoba Press, 2013, 227 pages.

BY MAXWELL KENNEL

In his new book *Rewriting the Break Event*, Robert Zacharias identifies a major theme running through four works of Canadian Mennonite literature. The author is currently a postdoctoral fellow at the University of Waterloo and is connected to Conrad Grebel University College.

Focusing on the Russian Mennonite experience, Zacharias draws upon his sources and highlights their focus on the ending of the Mennonite commonwealth in Russia and the migration of Russian Mennonites to Canada. The book then shows how the continual telling and retelling of this story

serves as a “break event” or a frame of reference which is vital for the identity of the Russian Mennonite community in Canada.

Al Reimer’s book *My Harp is Turned to Mourning* is read as a religious narrative, where Arnold Dyck’s *Lost in the Steppe* is read as a story with cultural or ethnic significance. Sandra Birdsell’s book *The Ruslander* is then interpreted as a narrative about trauma, where Rudy Wiebe’s *Blue Mountains of China* is understood as a “metanarrative” (a story about a story). Moving in order through these four novels, Zacharias shows how the

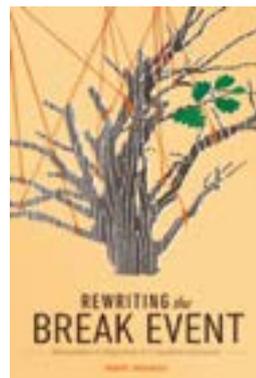
repetitive retelling and reinterpreting of the “break event” contributes to the identity of Russian Mennonites in Canada.

The introduction to the book outlines several ways in which the identity of a particular community is reinforced by the act of writing or telling stories. The introduction argues that the repetitive reimagining of a community’s origin is a multifaceted gesture. In one way, rewriting the break event of the Russian Mennonite story is a way of coming to grips with the trauma of migration. In another way, the story of exile is retold in order to keep the history of that exodus alive in the minds of a new generation.

Rewriting the Break Event is a work of considerable depth, written in an academic style for a scholarly book series. Despite its origin as a doctoral thesis, the book is elegantly written and assembled. Some familiarity with the novels that the book examines would be helpful for the reader, as well as an understanding of the vocabulary of literary criticism. However, these suggestions should not be barriers for the curious reader.

Zacharias’ book contains a wealth of insight, and is a careful reading of both its sources and the cultural landscape of Russian Mennonites. The book also contributes to the ongoing conversation about Mennonite writing, drawing upon the work of John L. Ruth and being influenced by the work of Hildi Froese Tiessen and Jeff Gundy. I would highly recommend it to those interested not only in *what* Mennonites write, but also to those interested in *how* Mennonites are writing.

Maxwell Kennel is a student in the MTS program at Conrad Grebel University College.





Rosthern Junior College principal Jim Epp (centre) made a cameo appearance as the bishop during the wedding scene in the school's production of *The Sound of Music*. Kenna Forrester (left) played the Mother Abbess, while Josef Beug (right) played Captain Georg von Trapp.

RJC students perform *The Sound of Music* to sell-out crowds

STORY AND PHOTOS BY DONNA SCHULZ

Saskatchewan Correspondent
ROSTHERN, SASK.

The halls were alive with *The Sound of Music* when Rosthern Junior College students presented the Rodgers and Hammerstein classic as part of their school's graduation weekend celebrations. The June 21 and 22 production marked the fiftieth anniversary of year-end musicals at the school. Music director Richard Janzen said, to his knowledge, the year-end musical became an annual event when Gilbert and Sullivan's *HMS Pinafore* was performed in 1964.

Janzen is uncertain why the 1966 performance of *The Merry Widow* was cancelled, but has heard that the school board got wind there would be dancing and decided to call it off. Dancing or no, *The Merry Widow* was performed in 1967. "The early musicals seem to have been chorally driven," said Janzen, "more like oratorios with costumes," but eventually involved more drama and acting.

The 1994 performance of *West Side Story* "pushed the envelope" in that it sent

a strong message that "violence doesn't lead to happy endings," said Janzen. That play opened doors to more daring works, including *Jesus Christ Superstar* in 2003.

Janzen ranks this year's production of

/// Briefly noted

Sarah Klassen wins Margaret McWilliams award

WINNIPEG—*The Wittenbergs*, a novel by Sarah Klassen, is winner of the Margaret McWilliams Award for Popular History, one of the oldest literary awards in Canada.



Sarah Klassen received the award at the Dalnavert Museum on June 7, 2014. Born in Winnipeg, Sarah Klassen became a teacher and also accomplished poet and fiction writer. She has won the Gerald Lampert Memorial Award, the High Plains Award for Fiction, the Canadian Authors Association Award for Poetry, and the National Magazine Gold Award for Poetry. Her most recent novel, *The Wittenbergs*, was short-listed for three Manitoba Book Awards and is also a finalist for a High Plains Award, winner to be announced this fall. Klassen lives in Winnipeg.

—Turnstone Press

The Sound of Music among his favourites for its strong performance and efficient set design. (To see a list of RJC's musical productions with links to photographs and videos, go to <http://bit.ly/1jhWhW5>.) ///



Maria Rainer, played by Kathleen Regier (centre back), teaches the von Trapp children to sing in Rosthern Junior College's production of *The Sound of Music*. The children were played by (left to right): Shenyce Buhler, Mikayla Neudorf, Alyssa Roy, Ryan Dickinson, Rachel Fehr, Ahren Klaassen-Wright, and Laura Ayres.

Nerding out

Bloggers unite to create online Anabaptist community

BY AARON EPP

Young Voices Co-editor

LOGO BY EDDIE GONZALEZ



The MennoNerds logo is named Rebstock in honour of Barbara Rebstock, an Anabaptist prophet from the 1500s.

PHOTO COURTESY MELANIE KAMPEN



Melanie Kampen says she enjoys participating in the MennoNerds community because it gives her the chance to participate in conversations she might not otherwise have.

According to Merriam-Webster.com, the word “nerd” is defined as “a person who behaves awkwardly around other people and usually has unstylish clothes, hair, etc.” or “a person who is very interested in technical subjects, computers, etc.”

Chris Lenshyn falls into the latter category, and he’s not just any kind of nerd—he’s a self-described “MennoNerd.” The 33-year-old, who blogs regularly about his faith at www.anabaptistly.wordpress.com, is one of the driving forces behind MennoNerds, a network of Anabaptists from around the world who connect through blogs, Twitter, Facebook and Google+ to discuss their faith.

In 2012, Lenshyn, a pastor at Emmanuel Mennonite Church in Abbotsford, B.C., was having a conversation on Twitter with Robert Martin, a 41-year-old software tester from Boyertown, Pennsylvania. The two had been reading each other’s blogs for some time, and along with some other Anabaptist bloggers they connected with via social media, began to wonder what it might look like if they started an online hub for their work—a sort of one-stop shop for people interested in Anabaptist blogs and conversation.

One of the bloggers created a website for the group, and they decided on the name MennoNerds.

“We were talking about how nerdy we were—talking about blogging on the Internet, making a website for other Anabaptist blogs—[and] we coined the term MennoNerds,” Lenshyn recalls. “[The name] is lighthearted, but as a blogging collective and social media community, [we] tackle tough stuff. Our nerdiness and Anabaptist values seem to connect us

together.”

MennoNerds.com features 43 syndicated bloggers of varying ages. Most are from North America, although four bloggers are from South Africa, Sweden, England and Australia. There is a MennoNerds group on Facebook with 565 members, and a MennoNerds Facebook page that 684 people have liked. Anyone interested can read the featured blogs, post questions and join the conversation.

Martin says the best thing about MennoNerds is that it connects Anabaptists from around the world.

“If we keep in mind that Jesus Christ’s church is not just the building on the street corner but the body of all believers... a network like this is very important because it makes the global perspective real,” says Martin, who started his blog, www.abnormalanabaptist.wordpress.com, in 2007 as a way to process the things he was learning as a graduate student at Biblical Theological Seminary.

While the blogs and conversations cover a variety of topics, key discussions of late have revolved around what it means to be Anabaptist, human sexuality and race in the church.

Last month, the community hosted a webcast panel discussion titled, “MennoNerds on Race, Mutuality and Anabaptist Community.” Panelists included a PhD student, a Christian Peacemaker Teams member, a Mennonite pastor and a church planter. All were of varying ethnicities, came from different parts of North America and are bloggers.

The MennoNerds community thought that a chance to talk about the issues via webcast and real-time question

submissions might be a way to talk about the topic more directly than via Facebook posts and blogs.

“The panel discussion was phenomenal,” Lenshyn says. “The conversation itself served the Anabaptist community very well because we were getting points of view from all over the place.”

Melanie Kampen, a Winnipegger who watched the webcast and participates in MennoNerds discussions, agrees.

“You had different people from different places in the Mennonite church talking about issues of race and racism, which are conversations that don’t tend to happen in our churches as much as they could—at least in the Mennonite church that I’m a part of,” the 24-year-old says.

The topic is important to Kampen because it’s a social justice issue and in the North American Mennonite church, white people still dominate the discourse.

“Mennonite theology and churches, to a large extent, haven’t taken into account,

or been attentive to, the experiences of oppression of people of colour in their own churches,” Kampen says. “In that way, it really just perpetuates the oppression.”

Martin says he isn’t sure what’s next for MennoNerds. Other than a book of essays written by MennoNerds contributors that will be published in the fall, it’s anyone’s guess as to what the community will do next.

“People ask, ‘What are your plans for the future?’” Martin says. “Plans? I haven’t planned it [up] to this point, so why start now?”

Lenshyn agrees.

“It’s just kind of fun to explore how technology can facilitate conversations like this,” he says. “It’s a good way to get a global, Anabaptist perspective.” ❧

You can watch the “MennoNerds on Race, Mutuality and Anabaptist Community” webcast, and join in the conversation, by visiting www.mennoners.com.

PHOTO COURTESY CHRIS LENSHTYN



Chris Lenshyn, an Abbotsford-based pastor and blogger, is one of the founding members of MennoNerds, an online community of Anabaptists.



Carrie Lehn and Paul Berg-Dick in front of the O-Town Ark.

The O-Town Ark: Intentional community for Ottawa students

BY RACHEL BERGEN

Young Voices Co-Editor
OTTAWA, ONT

Young adults are often transient people. They move away from home, go to school, find jobs, travel, serve abroad. While that’s challenging enough, finding a new community to connect with can be even more difficult.

That’s why many believe intentional communities can be beneficial for them.

Ottawa Mennonite Church (OMC) holds this belief and is in the process of establishing another intentional community.

The O-Town Ark is the brainchild of the

I’ve seen how important Christian community can be in terms of enriching lives and I want to help others find those connections here in Ottawa,” Berg-Dick says.



The kitchen of the O-Town Ark. The picture doesn't represent the final layout of the house.



The living room of the O-Town Ark. The picture doesn't represent the final layout of the house.

pastoral relations committee and Carrie Lehn, the youth and young adults pastor at OMC. In January the committee began discussing practical ways to support Mennonite young adults in the area.

"We realized if we had a house, we could serve a very practical need and be a ministry for them," Lehn says.

Luckily a friend of a church member put a suitable house up for rent. The O-Town Ark is located at 61 Lees Avenue. It's a four-bedroom house near the University of Ottawa and Carleton University, near downtown, and near major bus routes. Many church members have taken it upon themselves to donate furniture, money, and time to make the place suitable for renters by September 1.

The O-Town Ark has a large backyard with a barbecue, a porch and tenants have access to free WiFi and laundry. Rent ranges from \$550-\$600 per month.

Lehn will be renting one of the rooms so she can actively participate in the community. She will serve as the house co-ordinator.

"I'm looking forward to creating a space that's really welcoming and really hospitality-oriented. A place where people can come, meet others, and make connections so they don't feel like they're alone in this city," Lehn says.

"I like the idea of being involved in it and being really hands-on. I think it will be really good for me—I'm new to the city as well. It will allow me to really build into a community."

One of OMC's goals is for the Ark to become a hub for Mennonite young adults and the wider Christian community to engage with others who are living permanently and temporarily in the nation's capital.

Paul Berg-Dick sits on the pastoral relations committee at OMC and serves as a co-facilitator of the O-Town Ark.

He says intentional communities have impacted his family immeasurably—that's why he's so passionate about the Ark.

"My daughters both went to Conrad Grebel University College and lived in community there. I've seen how important Christian community can be in terms of enriching lives and I want to help others find those connections here in Ottawa," Berg-Dick says.

Three tenants will move in with Lehn in September. Berg-Dick has high hopes for the Ark and the future community members.

"I hope they'll make friends within that community and within the broader set of young adults who will drop into the house or who are involved in the events at the house. I hope we're able to establish some mentorships so we can enrich the students lives as well as the broader church community," he says.

Berg-Dick says the church will evaluate the Ark's progress in April and make changes as needed.

For more information or for application forms to live at the O-Town Ark, contact Carrie Lehn at carrie@ottawamennonite.ca or (613) 716-4663. ☞

PHOTO BY JAY LOLLI



Love and service are key themes throughout the seven albums singer-songwriter Matt Epp has released over the past nine years. "When You Know," a song he co-wrote and recorded with Serena Ryder, helped earn Ryder the 2014 Juno for Songwriter of the Year.

Living in a state of intention to love and serve others

Troubadour Matt Epp talks about Amoria, the Junos and starting over after seven albums

AARON EPP

Young Voices Co-editor

In the song "Working Holiday" from his 2009 album *Safe or Free*, Matt Epp sings about Newfoundland, California and Alberta all feeling like home. The singer-songwriter grew up in Crystal City, a rural village in Manitoba, and started his music

career in Winnipeg. He still has a base there, but given that he tours so much, he also spends significant amounts of time in Toronto, Spain and Turkey.

So where exactly is home for Matt Epp? "Amoria," the 33-year-old says by phone

from a tour stop in Halifax. “Amoria is my home base all the time.”

Don’t bother looking for Amoria on a map. It has a flag and a national anthem, but no physical location. Epp (no relation to the writer) explains that it’s a nation anyone can choose to be a part of.

“Amoria is the empire of love, and it’s an empire because it wants to take over the world,” Epp explains, pointing out that it takes its name from Amor, the Latin word for love. Ultimately, to be an Amorian is “to live in a state of intention to love and serve others.”

Epp’s creation of Amoria arises from his Christian faith.

“We’re called to follow Christ and be perfect without sin, and we know that we’re going to fail, [but] that doesn’t make us not a Christian when [we fail],” he says. The same idea keeps Amoria from being some idealistic cult or hippie dream, he adds. “It’s committing to live in a state to love and serve others where you keep trying [when you fail]. It’s your vow... and that makes you Amorian.”

Epp first introduced the concept of Amoria on 2011’s *At Dawn*, his fifth album and the first to feature his band, The Amorian Assembly. Love and service have always been key themes in Epp’s music, though, dating back to his 2005 debut, *You’ll Find Me Alone*.

Nine years later, Epp’s music continues to take him to exciting places. In April, he was one of the performers at a concert hosted by iconic Canadian rock guitarist Randy

Bachman as part of the 2014 Juno Awards.

Later that weekend, “When You Know” from Epp’s 2013 album *Learning to Lose Control*—a song he co-wrote and recorded with Serena Ryder—was one of the songs that earned Ryder the Juno for Songwriter of the Year.

“We were excited to have even such a small credit,” Epp says. “It’s encouraging when [our music] gets out to more people.”

Epp recently performed at Sam’s Place in Winnipeg as part of a Mennonite Church Canada Assembly event aimed at young adults. Later this month, he will perform at the Brandon Folk, Music and Art Festival in Brandon, Man. The troubadour hopes to start recording his eighth album later this year, and plans to spend the winter in Turkey, where his wife’s family is from. In spring he will head to Europe for more touring.

A year-and-a-half ago, the prolific artist’s seemingly relentless recording and touring schedule caught up with him, and he was treated for clinical exhaustion. Epp took time to stop and rest, and continues to choose his next moves carefully.

After seven albums, he feels like he is starting over.

“I want to take time to listen and really follow what God wants for me,” he says. “I’ve been following [God’s] lead and everything like that, but I started taking too much into my own hands. I learned my lessons and now I’m taking it slower and making sure I’m conscious with each decision.”

Visit www.mattepp.com. ☘

PHOTO BY JAY LOLLI



The oldest of seven children, singer-songwriter Matt Epp grew up in Crystal City, a village in southern Manitoba. Today, he and his wife have home bases in Winnipeg, Toronto, Spain and Turkey.

PHOTO BY BROCK HODGKINSON



Mennonite World Conference Assembly to meet July 21-26, 2015

North Americans to host PA 2015

BY PHYLLIS PELLMAN GOOD
Mennonite World Conference

For the first time, next-year's Mennonite World Conference Assembly will be held in the eastern U.S. in Harrisburg, Pa., July 21-26, 2015. The Assembly was last in the U.S. in 1978 in Wichita, Kan. Mennonite World Conference (MWC) staff are preparing for 6,000-10,000 people to attend. The Assembly is a reunion of the Anabaptist-Mennonite family worldwide, usually held every six years, meeting on one of the major five continents on a rotating basis.

Each day will begin with singing, led by a multinational worship team, with music from all continents. Each morning one

of MWC's four Commissions (Faith and Life, Missions, Peace, and Deacons) will present, and a young adult, selected by the Young Anabaptist group, will respond.

Everyone attending will join a small multicultural group of 15-20 people for fellowship and a deeper discussion on the morning theme. The same groups will continue to meet throughout the week. Afternoons will be for workshops, service opportunities, local tours, sports activities, and performances and exhibits in the Global Church Village.

The Assembly will include a children's

program. After morning singing, children will experience their own multicultural program all day, including lunch. There will also be a youth program (ages 18 and under). After morning singing, youth will meet for their own presentations, discussions and service projects.

The Global Youth Summit (ages 18+), an international young adult convention will take place July 17-19, three days before the Assembly, at Messiah College, Mechanicsburg, Pa., just across the river from Harrisburg. Its theme is "Called to Share: My Gifts, Our Gifts."

The theme for PA 2015 is "Walking with God." Speakers each morning and evening will work with biblical texts and our own stories and experiences of joy and grief, uncertainty and hope. The platform language will be English with simultaneous translations for Spanish and French speakers.

César García, MWC General Secretary, from Bogota, Colombia, says, "It isn't possible to have real communion with those with whom we don't communicate. It isn't possible to build a global community if we don't talk with each other. It isn't possible to rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep if we don't know each other's joys or sufferings."

Registration opens Aug. 20, 2014. For information and registration material, go to mwc-cmm.org/pa2015. For ongoing conversation about the Assembly, go to [Facebook.com/MennoniteWorldConference](https://www.facebook.com/MennoniteWorldConference). ❧

We turned **50** this year. Not bad for a local credit union that started out with \$22 in a cashbox. That got us thinking, "We need to thank our members for 50 awesome years!" So what did we do? We *sweetened* our 1 year GIC with 0.50% extra interest and we want to share this with you! Come in and celebrate our anniversary with some *icing* on our rates.



Who is included in Mennonite World Conference?

- 1.2 million baptized members of Mennonite and Brethren in Christ churches around the world. (There are a total of 1.7 million in the family, but not all are MWC members.)
- 101 national conferences (about 9,500 congregations)
- located in 83 countries
- 78 percent of baptized believers in MWC member churches are African, Asian, or Latin American.



Mennonite Savings
and Credit Union

www.mscu.com
1.888.672.6728

Calendar

British Columbia

Aug 21-24: Sharing Our Stories: A Celebration and exploration of Indigenous and Mennonite artistic traditions. Sts'ailes Lhawathet Lhalem Retreat Centre, Agassiz. For information contact MC B.C. www.mcbc.ca or 604-850-6658.

Sept 12-13: MCC festival sale and auction, TRADEX, Abbotsford.

Oct. 2: MC B.C. Fundraising dessert night at Emmanuel Mennonite Church, Abbotsford, 7:30 p.m.

Saskatchewan

Aug. 10: MC Sask Day in the Park at Scott Park, Saskatoon, 2:30-7:30 p.m. Games for all ages, evening concert by Becky Reesor and Sam Dlugokeki.

Aug. 16: Fifth annual Spruce River Folk Festival, at the Spruce River Farm, Prince Albert. Pipe ceremony at 10 a.m. "Landless band" conference at 11:30 a.m. Music begins at 1 p.m. For more information, e-mail gracemennonite@sasktel.net.

Sept 2-5: Fall Pastors' Gathering at Churchill River Canoe Outfitters,

Missinipe. Call MC Sask office for more details, 306-249-4844.

Manitoba

To Sept. 13: Mennonite Heritage Centre Gallery summer exhibitions. Moved by the Spirit, a multi-artist exhibit inspired by the life of Jesus, curated by artist Louise Tessier, and Awakenings, paintings by Faye Hall.

Aug. 26: Westgate Mennonite Collegiate's 10th-annual golf tournament, at Bridges Golf Club, Winnipeg.

Ontario

Aug. 8-18: CPT aboriginal justice delegations to Kenora allow participants to be allies to indigenous communities engaged in healing, resisting colonialism and struggling for sovereignty. For more information, visit cpt.org or e-mail delegations@cpt.org.

U.S.

July 24-27: Bridgefolk—the Mennonite-Catholic ecumenical organization—annual conference at St. John's Abbey, Collegeville, Minn.

Theme: "Mennonites and Catholics: An overflow of Christ's love." Keynote speakers: Vincent Guider and Elizabeth Soto Albrecht. For conference schedule and registration, visit www.bridgefolk.net.

Aug. 1-2: The 2014 Schürch (Shirk/Sherk/Sherrick) Family Association Reunion takes place at the Millersville University of Pennsylvania. For more

information, e-mail Sue Shirk at suesbug@msn.com or visit www.schurchfamilyassociation.net.

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

For Rent

Cottage For Rent

Quaint 3-bedroom Georgian Bay waterfront Cottage for rent. -Beautiful Views, Bruce Trail at the door for Hiking, Boat launch for fishing, Two open kayaks for paddling, Crystal clear Aqua Blue water for swimming, 15 min. drive to Tobermory. Great Price! \$840.00/week. Call 905-201-0876 or email graemeweston@rogers.com for reservations.

For Sale

Cottage for sale

Three bedroom cottage for sale at Chesley Lake, part of the Birchcrest Association. 160 feet lake frontage with shore well, deck and patio areas. Contact Jake Boldt for more information 905-934-0909.

Employment Opportunities

Office Coordinator

Green Acre Park is seeking a part time Office Coordinator. This is an engaging and flexible opportunity for an individual who is looking for a family friendly place where they can make a difference. Green Acre Park is a clean and quiet recreational park oasis at the outskirts Waterloo, Ontario. We offer seasonal and weekend camping and are designed as a place for families to relax and unwind.

The Office Coordinator is responsible for keeping the administration of the Park organized and running well. Tasks include managing accounts payable and receivable, payroll, guest contract renewals, some staff hiring and supervision, as well as shift scheduling. This job has lots of variety!

If you are someone who is keenly interested in helping enhance our tourism focused small business, inject energy, ideas and an attitude of continuous improvement and excellence, we would welcome your application. For the right individual, this job could grow in responsibility and develop into a management level position.

For a full description of this position please visit www.greenacrepark.com.



Interested parties should send resume and cover letter to info@greenacrepark.com by July 18th, 2014.



NOW HIRING

Chief Program Officer Abbotsford, BC

Leadership and social service meet! Communitas Chief Program Officer provides overall leadership and direction to all program related aspects of the organization in a collaborative team environment. Use your leadership and communication skills to develop and support organizational policies, procedures and culture. Invest in others through mentoring to make a difference.

For further job details and to apply, visit CommunitasCare.com/careers

Snapshots

PHOTO BY ORLAN MARTIN



Mennoite Disaster Service helped to clean up the debris after a EF2 tornado hit the town of Angus, Ont., on Tuesday, June 17. A total of 101 houses were damaged with 12 in need of demolition. MDS was on the scene on June 20 and 21 to help with clean up, with 12 volunteers on Friday and 35 on Saturday, according to Martin Durksen, MDS Ontario board chair. The work was completed on Saturday as firefighters and Canadian military personnel arrived to help.



Riders of all ages participated in Out-Spok'n IV for Affordable Housing held June 21, raising \$40,000 for MennoHomes to build a new three-storey apartment building in Elmira, Ont. Among those who rode on the Kissing Bridge trail that runs through Elmira were (from back left): Kyla Carswell (baby), Chris McPhee, Ian Carswell, Krestena Sullivan, Amie Brubacher McPhee and Sharon Martin Brubacher. Children (from left): Quinn Carswell, Micah Carswell, Ethan McPhee and Leah McPhee. There were 80 riders in total; as well those on the local trail, 14 cyclists rode 75 km from St. Jacobs to the Shand Dam near Fergus and back, and 15 motorcyclists enjoyed a back-roads tour between Elmira and Paris. The event wrapped up with a barbecue lunch and short program.