

# CANADIAN MENNONITE

June 20, 2016

Volume 20 Number 13

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pastors who  
moonlight pg. 4



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## EDITORIAL

## A pastor's holy moments

DICK BENNER  
EDITOR/PUBLISHER

We expect a lot from our pastors, especially the part-time ones who are forced to be bi-vocational. They speak candidly about their roles and their congregation's expectations in this issue beginning on page 4, as interviewed by our Saskatchewan correspondent, Donna Schulz.

Are we getting enough bang for our buck, to use a cliché? Yes, and more, in most cases. Our expectations as congregants are high, perhaps in some cases unrealistic. Would we put in as many hours in our workplaces and not demand commensurate compensation? Or carry the same emotional load as much pastoral care demands?

Somehow we assume that because this is a "calling" rather than a well-defined position with specific duties and hours, it doesn't really matter how this might affect our pastor's well-being. In some cases, we feel they are made of steel and have limitless levels of energy because "God will give them the resources to do the job."

One of them confesses that she "went through a year of burnout because I felt so fragmented." That is not a good reflection on the congregation. While we are hesitant to say this amounts to pastor abuse, it might come close. Healthy congregations with a good grasp of what the pastoral role demands give their leaders space for family time, self-care and a spiritual director who pastors the pastor.

One anonymous full-time pastor experiencing burnout in a moment of candour listed a number of frustrations such as: congregants expecting house calls but not telling the pastor they need one; having your work, social, family and spare time all wrapped up in one place; people thinking the pastor doesn't work very much; having lots of responsibility but little authority; having to be an expert in a hugely diverse number of responsibilities.

Much as we would like to think this is the exception, rather than the rule, we should take a second look. If the future of our faith community pushes us toward more part-time pastors, an assessment of our expectations is crucial. We do not want to create a situation in which the pastoral calling and position becomes less and less attractive to those wanting to enter the ministry.

Perhaps our seminaries, while focusing on training pastors, should offer adult courses for congregational lay leaders on how to care for their pastors, giving helpful pointers on expectations versus how to preserve the emotional and spiritual vitality of their leaders.

But there is another side to what sometimes is perceived as a dilemma. It is the gift of "holy moments" for the pastor, so well described by Craig Barnes, president of Princeton Theological Seminary, in a recent "Faith matters" column in *Christian Century*.



In graphic terms, he describes some of the most intense moments for pastors: "A phone call beckons you to a home where a teenager has died of suicide, and when you arrive, the family looks at you as if you know what to say. You hold a baby and carry it through the holy waters of baptism [or in our case, dedication]. At a fresh grave an old widower lingers next to you after you've buried his lifelong lover, then reaches out to take your hand. And every Sunday you stand behind a pulpit looking out at pews filled with people who believe you can offer them a word from God."

Then Barnes asks a profound question: "Why do you, a flawed mortal, get such holy moments? Even your gratitude is so humbling that at times you wonder if you can continue."

He goes on to describe our great leaders—pastors—as mostly "just true believers in a cause. And most people around them had faith that [their leaders] could make a difference."

That is the privilege of their calling. We hold our pastors, part- or full-time, in high esteem. They are, after all, God's representatives in our closely bonded fellowship of believers. Theirs is a sacred trust that we should regard and guard. We should be aware, for instance, that before every contentious congregational meeting, as Barnes describes it, every pastor silently prays, "Dear God, let this cup pass from me."

Being a pastor should not put these kinds of pressures on them. Each pastor is a gift that, with proper receiving on the part of congregation, "keeps on giving." But we have to do our part to protect and nurture that gift over the period of that leader's term of service.

## ABOUT THE COVER:

Besides his year-round ministerial duties at Eigenheim Mennonite Church, near Rosthern, Sask., Allan Friesen works each summer as an interpretive guide at the historic Fort Carlton Provincial Park, teaching school children and tourists about the fur trade and the signing of Treaty 6. Read about more bi-vocational pastors beginning on page 4.

PHOTO: MARYVEL FRIESEN, SPECIAL TO CANADIAN MENNONITE

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Award-winning  
member of the  
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## GOD AT WORK IN THE CHURCH FEATURE

# Meet the pastors who moonlight

*Bi-vocational ministry offers challenges and blessings for pastors and their congregations as both try to balance part-time salaries with sometimes full-time expectations*

BY DONNA SCHULZ

SASKATCHEWAN CORRESPONDENT

Someone once said, “There’s no such thing as part-time pastors, only part-time salaries.” If this is true, a lot of congregations within Mennonite Church Canada are getting good value for their money.

Bi-vocational ministry has become increasingly commonplace as churches decrease in size and can no longer afford full-time pastors. Even large congregations who employ pastoral teams frequently have one or two part-time ministers on their payroll. For better or worse, part-time ministry is here to stay and may become even more prevalent in the future.

For many bi-vocational pastors, there’s more than a ring of truth to this article’s opening statement. Hired to work 20 or fewer hours a week, they feel they are pastors 24/7.

Rob Wiebe ministers at Church of the Way in Granisle, B.C., and works at a sawmill in Burns Lake. “Even when I’m sitting in that forklift at work I can’t really take that pastor hat off,” he says. “How do you determine when you’re not ministering?”

Carrie Martens of Stirling Avenue Mennonite in Kitchener, Ont., agrees. “I am a pastor all the time,” she says. “Since it’s a vocation and a calling, it’s not something that is easily turned off at the end of a day.”

Terry Goertzen of Jubilee Mennonite in Winnipeg adds, “Even when I’m doing my other job, I’m still a pastor. This is my life orientation.”

### **Managing their time**

Not all pastors share this viewpoint. They also may see ministry as their calling, but they keep track of their hours. Crisis visitations or special events may require them to work extra hours some weeks, but those hours are banked for a less busy time.

Ray Friesen and his wife Sylvia share a half-time position at Emmaus Mennonite Church in Wymark, Sask. “The church’s expectations are that we be careful about the hours worked,” Ray says. “We have to be deliberate about it.”

Wildwood Mennonite in Saskatoon has been intentional about

*‘People are trying to respect the fact that I have to say no to some things. They just don’t want me to say no to their things.’  
(Sara Erb, a bi-vocational pastor serving Breslau Mennonite Church in Ontario)*

PHOTO BY AARON EPP



*Andrea De Avila, a half-time pastor at Sargent Avenue Mennonite in Winnipeg, receives an honorium for her half-time position as MC Canada's file manager.*

PHOTO BY DAVE ROGALSKY



*Sara Erb, a pastor at Breslau (Ont.) Mennonite, is the curator of MC Eastern Canada's 'The Exchange,' an online service and material-sharing site modelled on Kijiji. She is pictured making a presentation at the annual church administrators day.*

PHOTO BY DONNA SCHULZ



*Krista Loewen, associate pastor at Wildwood Mennonite, Saskatoon, also works as a server at the Station Arts Tea Room in Rosthern, Sask.*

keeping its expectations in line with Krista Loewen's part-time associate pastor contract. "I've heard stories where youth pastors are given part-time salaries with huge expectations," Loewen says, "but this is not my experience."

Erika Enns-Rodine, who is on the pastoral team at First Mennonite in Winnipeg, says, "The congregation and lead minister do not have demanding expectations for the staff, and I think it helps that there are four of us ministers to share the load."

### **How pastors supplement their income**

Bi-vocational pastors supplement their income in many different ways. Some, like Gerald Neufeld, are employed in other church-related work. He pastors Mennonite Japanese Christian Fellowship in Surrey, B.C., and serves as music coordinator for Emmanuel Mennonite in Abbotsford. Others work for para-church organizations: teaching on a contract basis at a Bible college, doing administrative work at an area church office, editing Sunday school curricula, writing for a church periodical. Still others find they can earn extra income through pulpit supply for other congregations.

Many pastors' secondary employment is totally unrelated to the church. Some work in construction or maintenance jobs. Others work the checkout at their

local grocery store or as servers in restaurants. Some pastors are business owners or farmers.

Understandably, secondary jobs impact ministry. Part-time pastors may have to opt out of some church activities because of their other jobs.

Sara Erb of Breslau (Ont.) Mennonite knows this isn't easy for congregations to understand. "People are trying to respect the fact that I have to say no to some things," she says. "They just don't want me to say no to their things." Having secondary jobs may also mean part-time pastors have little time off. Erb says, "Time off from any one position means I'm working somewhere else."

Goertzen agrees. "I'm never off," he says. "I'm forced to say no to opportunities that I would like to say yes to, on both sides."

### **Keeping two balls in the air at one time**

Juggling two part-time jobs can also be exhausting.

"Two part-time jobs don't equal one full-time," says Martens. "They both overflow and it's hard not to be ministering seven days a week."

Friesen agrees. "Trying to do two jobs half-time takes more energy than doing one job full-time," he says. "When I was primarily a pastor, that was easy. Bi-vocational ministry is far more difficult."

Greg Thiessen of First United Mennonite in Vancouver echoes this sentiment: "Two half-time jobs is always going to be more than a full-time job."

Lois Siemens balances ministry at Superb Mennonite near Kerrobert, Sask., with a part-time job, pulpit supply and a personal business. She confesses, "I went through a year of burnout because I felt so fragmented."

Financial insecurity can also be an issue. Like Siemens, pastors may live in rural areas where there are few jobs available. Or, like Erb, they may find their training has made them so specialized that they're not qualified for many other jobs. "There's not a whole lot of wiggle-room to try new things or use your gifts in other ways," Erb says. Add to this the reality that many part-time pastors don't earn enough at either job to qualify for health benefits.

### **The advantages of bi-vocational ministry**

While most pastors admit bi-vocational ministry is challenging, many feel the advantages outweigh the disadvantages.

Gerry Binnema of United Mennonite in Black Creek, B.C., operates an aviation safety business. He says bi-vocational ministry offers "two places where you can feel competent."

Harry Harder pastors Pleasant Point Mennonite near Clavet, Sask., and raises

sheep. He feels part-time ministry is ideal because it affords him numerous identities.

Part-time ministry can also be flexible. Bruce Jantzen's responsibilities at Laird (Sask.) Mennonite allow him to participate in his family's farming operation. He says, "I like being part-time because I feel more relaxed in time scheduling and less constricted regarding my ability to farm on the side."

Urban pastors appreciate the flexibility of their part-time positions, too. Andrea De Avila of Sargent Avenue Mennonite in Winnipeg says, "The advantage is that I don't have to be in the office nearly as often. During the week, if I really plan ahead, I can be gone for several days in a row and still [tend to] my pastoral duties."

One distinct advantage for some part-time pastors is the reality check that comes with working in the secular world.

Harold Schilk says that when he was a full-time pastor, his congregants suggested he really didn't know what the real world or real work were all about. Now, as part-time pastor at Springridge Mennonite in Pincher Creek, Alta., he says, "I don't get that comment anymore. It's important to keep contact with the world. It informs my ministry and my sermon writing."

Allan Friesen of Eigenheim Mennonite, near Rosthern, Sask., works as an interpreter at a provincial historic park and he also farms. He says being in the workforce helps him relate to congregants with jobs, while farming helps him better understand other farmers in his rural congregation. "Full-time ministry can leave you out of touch with what congregants are dealing with," he says.

Ray Friesen agrees: "I think a pastor's world can get too small. Your whole world is the church, and you run the risk of not being worldly enough. Being in the world is really good. It helps me to think about my Christian faith."

Some pastors say their seminary education didn't prepare them for bi-vocational ministry.

Goertzen believes this is because "seminary engages with ideas, not real human beings." And while it was good to study those ideas, Goertzen wishes

his education had included a practical component as well.

Although Schilk feels called to his current ministry, he wonders, "Would I have spent as much time and energy getting my M.Div. if I'd known I'd be working part-time?"

### **New pastoral paradigms**

Ray Friesen thinks bi-vocational ministry "can work very well as long as pastor and congregation want to make it work well," but adds, "There will have to be new pastoral paradigms."

Martens agrees. "I think churches are going to need to take a step back and re-imagine their needs [or perceived needs] in relation to their responsibility to hire pastors in a sustainable manner," she says. "The desire to have specialists in our churches, while at the same time having reduced funds, is leading churches to half-, quarter- and even smaller positions."

She offers a model that may work for larger congregations: "I wonder what it would be like if churches hired fewer people for larger more general positions, and then we all found ways to share our specialties across several churches or even more broadly in the area church."

What might new pastoral paradigms

look like in rural areas where small congregations are more concerned about having someone in the pulpit on Sunday morning than they are about specializations? For some churches, sharing a minister may be an option. For others, providing affordable housing and extended health coverage may help supplement a part-time income.

In both urban and rural settings, congregational support will need to be part of any new paradigm. Churches will need to have realistic expectations of part-time pastors. Secondary jobs will necessarily take time away from ministry. Supporting a part-time pastor may mean congregants picking up the slack, doing tasks their pastor is unable to do. Supporting a part-time pastor will also mean being gracious and forgiving when tasks are left undone or aren't done to everyone's satisfaction.

Pastors will continue to accept part-time positions because they feel called by God and the church. They will continue to give more time and energy to their work than the hours for which they are paid. Congregations will do well to consider the realities of bi-vocational ministry, recognizing that its challenges and blessings are theirs as well. ❧

### **/// For discussion**

1. Has your church ever employed part-time ministry staff? Do you think having a part-time pastor is more of a blessing or more of a challenge? Is it common for pastors to struggle with too many expectations for the work hours they are paid? Does it happen more with part-time pastors?
2. Donna Schulz writes, "Bi-vocational ministry has become increasingly commonplace as churches decrease in size and can no longer afford full-time pastors." Is this true in your region? When does it make sense for smaller congregations to share a pastor? Under what situations is it better to hire a bi-vocational pastor?
3. Schulz comments that if a congregation moves from having a full-time to a part-time pastor, some tasks might be left undone. What might these tasks be? Do congregations expect less professional training for part-time pastors?
4. Does Mennonite Church Canada provide good guidelines for congregations regarding remuneration for pastors? What are some other ways in which congregations can support their pastors?

— BY BARB DRAPER

## VIEWPOINTS

## /// Readers write

We welcome your comments and publish most letters from subscribers. Letters, **to be kept to 300 words or less**, are the opinion of the writer only and are not to be taken as endorsed by this magazine or the church. Please address issues rather than individuals; personal attacks will not appear in print or online. In light of the many recent letters on the topic of sexuality, we will edit any letter on this topic to a paragraph and post the rest online at [www.canadian-mennonite.org](http://www.canadian-mennonite.org). All letters are edited for length, style and adherence to editorial guidelines. Send them to [letters@canadianmennonite.org](mailto:letters@canadianmennonite.org) and include the author's contact information and mailing address. Preference is given to letters from MC Canada congregants.

## ✉ Reading the gospels led reader to 'faith in a living Christ'

RE: "THE BIBLE is full of shortcomings and biases" letter, May 9, page 10.

As a Christian who is new to the Mennonite church, it has been a wonderful rollercoaster of theological discovery, learning how the early Anabaptists looked into the living Word of God and came away changed in belief and in their daily living, willing to die and even risk the lives of their wives and children for the convictions that stemmed from their prayerful reading of Scripture. I, too, was changed, abandoning my epicurean agnosticism after reading the gospels and coming to faith in a living Christ.

But according to Barry Heinrichs, "the Bible is a collection of stories written by human beings just like us . . . subject to the same shortcomings and biases of any

*(Continued on page 8)*

## FROM OUR LEADERS

## Not a fragile faith

WILLARD METZGER

In a recent Bible study, we were looking at John 20 where Jesus appeared to the disciples. Gathered behind locked doors, Jesus appeared in the midst of them and said, "Peace be with you." Then he did an amazing thing. He breathed on them and they received the Holy Spirit.

This is a significant development. It was a graduation. They would now carry on the faith—not by receiving more teaching by Jesus, but by listening to the Holy Spirit. It was an empowering. It was an unleashing of the law written in their hearts.

It would be easier if Jesus had stayed around. But now, in the safety of community, followers of Jesus listen for the Holy Spirit to draw out the law written on their hearts. Faith was not left fragile. Rather, it was entrusted to the power of the Holy Spirit.

This biblical account has made me



wonder about the character of our faith.

A fragile faith must be defended. It must be protected. But a confident faith is free to face uncertainty. It is able to navigate through complexity.

A vulnerable faith must be propped up by constructs that refute uncertainty. But

*A robust faith does not need to know the future, only that the God we worship holds the future.*

then it is a faith imprisoned by unquestioning conviction.

But unquestioned faith is a flimsy faith. It is a faith ready to be shaken by the first real disappointment of life. It is a faith that avoids death, rather than a faith that embraces the promise of resurrection.

A faith fearful of death remains locked in a present that was constructed by the past. An uncertain faith produces confidence by entrenching itself in what is known or in what is thought to be known.

Our faith is not a fragile faith. Born in persecution, it rooted itself in the confidence of resurrection. It was a faith that in death sang harmonies with the unseen future.

Our faith is not bound by past constructs. While aligned to the timeless truths revealed by Jesus, it is freed by the Holy Spirit to emerge in new and constant relevancy.

A robust faith does not need to know

the future, only that the God we worship holds the future. An unshakable faith is reconciled to uncertainty, knowing that the only definite is the grace of God's transforming and redeeming power.

This is the faith we hold. This is the faith we profess: An assurance in the gift of the Holy Spirit to guide us in faithfulness and confidence. Now is the time to let our faith shine.

*Willard Metzger is Mennonite Church Canada's executive director.*

(Continued from page 7)  
story you or I would write.”

It seems to me that he views the church as a book club. But if this is the case, I can't for the life of me figure out why he attends. The church would be the oddest book club that has ever been: We only read one book regularly, most people in the book club claim the book was authored by God, we have a bizarre

initiation ritual involving a “fake” drowning, and we have a very odd habit of telling members how to behave!

When I believed as Heinrichs did, I wanted nothing at all to do with the world's oddest book club. But that's not what I see now. As a Christian, I see human beings gathering together, struggling to understand God through his living Word, and encouraging and

## FAMILY TIES

# ‘You say goodbye, I say hello’

MELISSA MILLER

A long time ago, my high school physics teacher defined work as moving something from one place to another. “You could work all day trying to move a boulder,” he expanded, “and if you hadn't actually shifted the position of the boulder, technically speaking, you wouldn't have worked.” His definition left its mark on my teenage brain. I do not know how accurate his description was, but I recall it as I enter an employment transition.

In a few weeks, I will end the pastoral work that has occupied me for the last nine years. Stretching my teacher's definition, I can cite many examples of work in the life of a pastor. I have moved a number of things from one place to another, sometimes physically, often metaphorically. In a typical week, I have listened for the Spirit's guidance as I read Scripture, and then moved words from my head to the computer, and then to the congregation in Sunday's sermon. I have gathered ideas from different sources, then created a proposal for others to consider. I have bent my knees, moving downwards to see the gap in a child's gum left by a “lost” tooth. I have moved to the hospital bedside of

a senior labouring for breath, traced a cross of oil on his forehead and recited the Twenty-third Psalm. I have raised my arms to extend a benediction at the end of the service.

It is a privilege and an honour to work as a pastor. It is a gift to listen for God's voice and then speak with it to people. By and large, congregational ministry is respected, valued work, whether or not there is “movement.” I am sad to see it come to an end.

The new work calling to me is family work. For some time, I have yearned to be closer physically to my mother. At age 85, she is facing a multitude of challenges related to vision, hearing, mobility and pain management, losses that add up and



*Is a family caregiver doing God's work similar to that of a pastor's?*

sap her feisty spirit. She has significant assistance from family who live near her, and I am glad for those supports.

At the same time, I long to be at my mother's side, and half a continent stretches between us. I have been surprised by the intensity of this internal call, yet it is as clear and compelling as any other calling I've received. I want to

companion my mother as she faces the trials of aging: listen to her stories and share cups of tea, sit on the porch and watch the birds, attend medical appointments as she weighs decreasing options, sort photos and clean out closets, and cheer her strengths and soothe her fears.

So I will say goodbye to one kind of work, in order to say hello to another kind. I am grateful beyond words that it is possible for me to say yes to this calling. I have the freedom, time and means to unhook from other responsibilities and offer assistance to my family member in need.

Is this work? Is it respected and valued? When we hear someone say, “I provide quite a bit of support to my parents, or grandparents or aunt,” do we see the ministry in their care? Is a family caregiver doing God's work similar to that of a pastor's? Does their work move something from one place to another? Might it be a heart that is being moved, the heart of the one in need or maybe the

heart of the one offering care? Or maybe both? Maybe even God's heart is in the equation: “O God, prosper the work of our hands” (Psalm 90:17).

*Melissa Miller (familyties@mymts.net) has a passion for helping people develop healthy, vibrant relationships with God, self and others.*

helping one another to follow in the footsteps of Christ as disciples on a mission that transcends our own mundane stories and shortcomings.

**NATHAN SWARTZ, CLINTON, ONT.**

*Nathan Swartz is an elder of Kingsfield-Clinton Mennonite Church.*

### ✉ **Eastern Canada wants to be kept informed, have a say in Future Directions**

**RE:** “FINDING GOD in my neighbourhood,” May 23, page 24.

While capturing well the many inspiring moments at the Mennonite Church Eastern Canada assembly, Dave Rogalsky missed one crucial piece in his reporting on the vote on the Future Directions Task Force proposal. Assembly delegates approved a resolution that called for an opportunity to vote on a proposal that would take into account both the work of the Task Force and the feedback to it. To miss the feedback piece is, in my view, to misrepresent the vote at the area church assembly.

Indeed, for many delegates like myself, approval was contingent on that feedback being taken into account in shaping a more fully developed proposal. We should be grateful to the Task Force for the intense engagement the Future Directions process has provoked on such critically important matters as the relationship between the local congregation and larger church; the nature, content and reach of mission or “witness”; and representation in decision-making at a national level.

With their vote, MC Eastern Canada delegates wanted to make sure that this engagement leaves its mark on any reshaping of MC Canada. They were concerned not only to be “kept informed,” but also to have a say.

**TOM YODER NEUFELD, WATERLOO, ONT.**

*Tom Yoder Neufeld is a member of First Mennonite Church, Kitchener, Ont.*

### ✉ **Poetry helps writer deal with partner’s dementia**

**RE:** “A LIVING death,” May 23, page 2.

I identified with the pain and grief in Dick Benner’s editorial as I also have a loved one with dementia to whom I’ve been married for 54 years.

There is much misunderstanding about the disease among the general public, and people seem reluctant to learn about it and other mental illnesses. Attitudes have not changed much in more than 50 years, it

seems, as I came across an article by Delmar Stahly in the April 5, 1960, *Gospel Herald*, entitled “Fear of mental illness being dispelled.” He stated that “indications are that a transformation in attitude is in progress.” The progress indeed is slow, as we are still working at it today.

I find that writing helps me cope, so I offer two short poems about dementia:

It is a thief / who steals one piece of my loved one’s brain / and comes back for more at will / relentless / with no thought of consequences / or how it hurts his target / or the loved ones around him. In the end it will leave / just an empty shell / curled in a fetal position / waiting to die as he waited to be born.

Alzheimer’s feels like an endless spiralling stream / of fearful anguish / drawn ever downward by the weight / of helplessness and hopelessness / falling towards darkness / despair and loss, ever stealing joy / and magnifying the unknown. Yet occasional flickers of light / flashes of memory / smiles of recognition / spontaneous tender touches / thank you for tasks of care completed / whispered prayers of thanksgiving / send hope rising for hidden blessings / waiting to be received.

**LEAH BOEHM, KITCHENER, ONT.**



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## ✉ Reader expresses concern for 'so-called Mennonites'

I AM DEEPLY disturbed by the current action and direction the so-called Mennonites—followers of Jesus Christ, our Saviour—are taking, as they fall away from the Holy Bible and go about their own worldly pleasures. We are only transients on God's earth. The Bible is the most authoritative reference for everyday living and for all occupations of man's desires and initiatives.

Please, as followers of Christ, read this book without doubt or question. Believe the unseen; it's all there. It is relevant for today's society. Trust and obey God's will and teachings, or suffer the consequences of eternity in hell.

We are now in the end times. There are promises made throughout Scripture, from Genesis to Revelation. These promises or prophesies are in motion right now, as I write. Do not tarry. Praise God now.

HANS G. NICKEL, SASKATOON

## ✉ Bible verses, friends and family help youth through depression

RE: "LEADERS BEING equipped to build up the church," May 23, page 20.

This is such an important topic to me. A couple years ago, when I was 15, I was hospitalized with depression. My youth pastor, mentors and friends were huge supports during that time. Even when I was at my worst, and was super rude and mean, none of my family or friends left my side or stopped praying for me. Because of the way they stood by me, I know that God, who is even stronger than them, will never forsake me.

I'm now in recovery and making good progress with help from my community. I'm even serving as a junior youth mentor! Having my whole youth group behind me, never giving up, some of them even braving the children's psychiatric hospital, made me want to be there for others in the same way. It was so important for me to have mentors and older girls believing in me.

Volunteering has helped me in my recovery as much as it's allowed me to help others. Most days it really

lifts me up to be like a big sister to the girls, make them smile or laugh, let them know I'm available. They are always on my mind, and I am honoured to walk with them through the crazy years of junior high.

To others dealing with mental illness: Know that you are always loved. I know it sounds clichéd, but God is always there, ready to listen, to be there for you in just the way you need most.

Two verses that really help me through my struggles are Song of Songs 4:7: "*You are all together perfect, my darling, there is no flaw in you*"; and Romans 8:28: "*and we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him and have been called according to his purpose.*"

It can be hard to imagine when you are in the midst of deep pain, but I am now seeing so much of the good God can work through a dark story. Please know that God can heal and use your story too.

NAME WITHHELD BY REQUEST

## ✉ Repentance is needed as well as grace

RE: "ASSEMBLY: PRAY for grace" editorial, June 6, page 2.

Thank you for your call to give and receive grace at the Saskatoon assembly. It is an important word to us all. It is also not enough.

Mennonite Church Canada congregations deserve to have some resolution, some movement forward that takes us out of the Being a Faithful Church (BFC) cul-de-sac we find ourselves in, and places us in a path we can embrace with joy and vigour.

The path forward suggested by the BFC Task Force will splinter our communion, mar our collaborative relationships with sister confessions—Mennonite Brethren, Evangelical Mennonite Mission Conference, Evangelical Mennonite Conference and Brethren in Christ, among others—and place us in a trajectory where we will be aligning ourselves with those confessions that are currently withering under the hot sun of secularism in Canada.

I suggest we search for a different path. A path to renewal that begins with repentance by all. Grace is not enough. We also need to repent of our self-willed ways that explain away the parts of Scripture we don't like because it doesn't fit our ideology, and then pray for grace.

WALTER BERGEN, ABBOTSFORD, B.C.

## /// Correction

The recent Sister Care seminar for Manitoba women was organized and hosted by Mennonite Women Manitoba. Incorrect information appeared in "Learning how to listen is a journey," June 6, page 18. *Canadian Mennonite* regrets the error.

## /// Milestones

### Births/Adoptions

**Derksen**—Emmeline Clare (b. April 30, 2016), to Laura and Jeremiah Derksen, Waterloo North Mennonite, Waterloo, Ont.

**Driedger**—Leo René Leis (b. May 17, 2016), to Joel Driedger and Karen Leis, Nutana Park Mennonite, Saskatoon.

**Evans**—Aleia Miriam (b. June 2, 2016), to Robert Evans and Susan Toman, Ottawa Mennonite.

**Janzen**—Elim David (b. May 19, 2016), to Karla Reddekopp-Janzen and Matt Janzen, First Mennonite, Edmonton.

**Shantz**—Lilly Gabrielle (b. May 27, 2016), to Colin Shantz and Gabrielle Walsh, Shantz Mennonite, Baden, Ont.

**Siemens**—Bennett Ezra Sinnaeve (b. April 10, 2016), to Ryan Siemens and Sandra Sinnaeve, Grace Mennonite, Prince Albert, Sask.

**Valle**—Luna Rae (b. May 26, 2016), to Hugo and Carmen Valle, Mount Royal Mennonite, Saskatoon.

### Baptisms

**Thomas Buhr, Bethany Bezooyen, Tyler Bezooyen**—First Mennonite, Edmonton, May 15, 2016.

**Lukas Winter, Dylan Beam, Victoria Plumtree**—Shantz Mennonite, Baden, Ont., June 5, 2016.

### Deaths

**Braun**—Anne (nee Thiessen), 93 (b. Nov. 30, 1922; d. April 8, 2016), First Mennonite, Winnipeg.

**Falk**—Victor, 90 (b. Feb. 22, 1926; d. May 28, 2016), Morden Mennonite, Man.

**Friesen**—Irmgard, 93 (b. Jan. 26, 1923; d. March 16, 2016), First Mennonite, Winnipeg.

**Giesbrecht**—Peter, 70 (b. Jan. 1, 1946; d. Feb. 15, 2016), First Mennonite, Winnipeg.

**Hiebert**—Elfriede (nee Siemens), 75 (b. July 21, 1940; d. March 12, 2016), First Mennonite, Winnipeg.

**Loewen**—Evelyn, 61 (b. Dec. 4, 1954; d. May 22, 2016), Winkler Berghaler Mennonite, Man.

**Loewen**—Henry, 86 (b. May 18, 1929; d. April 30, 2016), First Mennonite, Winnipeg.

**Loewen**—Victor, 80 (b. Dec. 30, 1935; d. Feb. 28, 2016), First Mennonite, Winnipeg.

**Musselman**—Gloria Fern (nee Ruby), 83 (b. Aug. 21, 1932; d. March 3, 2016), Rockway Mennonite, Kitchener, Ont.

**Penner**—John Sr., 88 (b. Feb. 21, 1928; d. May 25, 2016), Douglas Mennonite, Winnipeg.

**Regier**—Gerda (nee Neufeld), 80 (b. Nov. 2, 1935; d. April 4, 2016), First Mennonite, Winnipeg.

**Schmidt**—Margaret (nee Goertzen), 87 (b. Jan. 2, 1929; d. May 11, 2016), Sargent Avenue Mennonite, Winnipeg.

**Schroeder**—Anne (nee Penner), 98 (b. Oct. 3, 1917; d. May 20, 2016), First Mennonite, Winnipeg.

**Susgin**—Hubert Richard, 89 (b. April 11, 1927; d. May 8, 2016), St. Catharines United Mennonite, Ont.

**Thiessen**—Mary (nee Bergen), 90 (b. May 1, 1925; d. Feb. 27, 2016), First Mennonite, Winnipeg.

**Tiessen**—Mary (nee Froese), 91 (b. June 20, 1924; d. May 22, 2016), Leamington United Mennonite, Ont.

**Warkentin**—John, 80 (b. Sept. 15, 1935; d. May 11, 2016), Bethel Mennonite, Winnipeg.

**Wiens**—Maria, 94 (b. Feb. 14, 1921; d. Jan. 18, 2016), North Kildonan Mennonite, Winnipeg.

## A moment from yesterday



Alexander Fast (1888-1942), front row right, and his second wife Selinde Fast (1894-1973) fled to Germany from Russia during the Russian Revolution and were immigrants to Canada in 1928. In this photo, taken in 1933, they are at the Winnipeg train station with friend C.F. Klassen (behind Alexander), leaving for British Columbia. Mennonite immigrants have not always been welcomed in Canada, being considered a danger because they came from a communist country even after passing government screening of the day. Sadly, our world continues to produce refugees.

*Text: Conrad Stoesz / Mennonite Heritage Centre*

*Photo: C.F. Klassen / Mennonite Heritage Centre*



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## FUTURE DIRECTIONS VIEWPOINT I

# Can MC Canada become a 'we'?

GERALD GERBRANDT

**O**ne thing became very clear during the Future Directions Task Force conversation: In the imagination of most of us, Mennonite Church Canada is an “it” or a “they.” Currently, we experience the larger denomination—including the area churches—as an entity apart or distinct from the local congregation. We may affirm the services the denomination provides, or the programs it delivers, but these are “it” doing things for “us.”

MC Canada competes with congregations for resources and attention, and pastors easily treat assemblies as a responsibility or obligation. Staff conveying greetings from MC Canada at congregations or regional assemblies only supports that impression.

Whatever the cause—the adoption of budgets and growth of programs, the shift to lay leadership and the professionalization of assemblies, or the merger of 2000—reversing this trend will require hard work. After all, localism is prominent, with larger identities under siege all around us. But the Christian church is called to be counter-cultural. As kingdom cells, we must nurture an identity not simply shaped by the world around us.

To get at the larger picture, I begin with three convictions:

- **THE CHRISTIAN** church is first and foremost the worldwide body of Christ. Indeed, this is the most important reference of the word “church.” As such, the church is a seamless garment transcending geographic and denominational divisions. Our tendency to speak of Anabaptist distinctives works against appreciating this conviction.

- **THE LOCAL** gathering of Christians is the foundational unit within the larger church. This is where real people worship and fellowship together, and witness to

others. The congregation, however it may be formed, is the flesh and blood of the organic whole, out of which the worldwide church and denomination are formed.

- **MC CANADA**—its programs, congregations and members—is a critical middle level between congregation and the worldwide church. Although an imperfect body, it remains the primary vehicle by which congregations participate in, dialogue with, benefit from and contribute to the larger church. It serves as the passageway between the congregation and the larger church with resources, wisdom and identity flowing both ways.

Local gatherings of Christians, as well as church as the worldwide body of Christ, are enduring “givens” already present in New Testament times. Even taking into consideration MC Canada’s predecessor bodies, it is less than two centuries old. Despite this contingent nature, I believe it remains the best way for congregations to participate in the larger body of Christ and to nurture biblical convictions important within Anabaptism. In the face of contemporary pressures towards localism, building up that middle level must be a priority.

This is not a defence of the status quo, nor an argument for greater centralized programming. In fact, it requires that we change the way we work together so that the middle level becomes more critical in shaping our identity and mission, so that it truly inspires and holds congregations accountable as part of the larger body of Christ. But this will only happen once we experience the national body not as an “it” but a “we.” It will require greater congregational participation in that larger church, not less.

Critical in this reimagined model are local pastors. The conferences preceding

MC Canada began as gatherings of congregational leaders and lay ministers, for whom these gatherings were life-giving. At such events they reflected on their theology, challenged each other’s understandings, fellowshiped together and held each other accountable. Over time, they became persuaded that the mission of God would be furthered by programs undertaken by the congregations working together. They began as “we” working together, and evolved into “it” doing things for us. The programs did not drive the identity but developed out of it.

The proposal to develop a Congregation of Ministerial Leadership is one suggestion for fostering that congregational ownership of the larger body. Retired pastors, theologians and others might well be included, but its core would be congregational leaders. This body is not tied tightly to the larger structure, but that may also be one of its strengths. Its focus then can be on larger questions, and not on administering major programs, with potentially a renewed Faith and Life Committee developing out of it. The suggestion that congregations broaden their leadership beyond paid pastors to include lay or non-paid ministers is also important.

Obviously one proposal alone cannot carry the weight of fostering a greater “we.” Other recommendations of the report also contribute. A national program in pastoral leadership development, and a national vision and strategy for higher education, fit an understanding of congregations as the building blocks of the whole. Integrated communication with congregations, with a common look and branding, will help. A significant program, such as Witness, in which congregations participate and rally, is also important. Regular gatherings for study, worship and fellowship are critical.

Moving from the denomination as an “it” to a “we” will not happen overnight. But it is a crucial step in nurturing a greater sense of identity in and with the larger church, the body of Christ, with a significant presence and witness in our society. ✎

*Gerald Gerbrandt was a member of the Future Directions Task Force.*

## FUTURE DIRECTIONS VIEWPOINT II

# Stronger regions weaken national church

WALDEMAR REGIER

I have always been part of the Mennonite world, having been called to Jesus Christ in my early years; active in the fellowship of the church throughout my youth; and trained by the church through Canadian Mennonite Bible College, Winnipeg, Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, Ind., and Colgate Rochester Crozer Divinity School, Rochester, N.Y. I was ordained into pastoral ministry in 1964, just at the time of transition to professional ministry in Canada. As a pastor, I participated fully in the larger fellowships of the Mennonite church in North America, including numerous levels of integration decision-making meetings. I retired in 1999, having served four congregations during my tenure.

I view the Future Directions Task Force proposals as a swinging of the pendulum, rather than an attempt to discover something new in structure and intent of the church. What I observed over my ministry was high-energy participation in the Conference of Mennonites in Canada, as it was then called. I observed over the decades an increased concentration of decision-making at conference by leadership, a decrease of cross-conference conversation and substantial debates over issues of life and mission.

With this shift, delegates tended to feel less valued in attending and supporting the conference-wide mission. An increasingly bureaucratic system was being built up, with less interest in the local congregation's well-being and vitality. Less money from the local congregations meant that more funds were sought from individuals, especially for larger national and international projects. From this point of view, a renewed focus on congregational life is certainly a healthy corrective.

However, the other side of the coin has to do with the vitality of a national fellowship in which decisions and mutual support constitutes part of what "church" is. You could say that you can't keep the family together if you don't have meaningful family gatherings, where things are debated, discussed and learned in the framework of that meaningful context.

Although the rather defensive attempt by the study group to explain the "myths and realities" of the Future Directions project, the very attempt at making a new proposal is suspect by virtue of it being initiated by the national church from the beginning!

The loss of a meaningful national fellowship is precisely the reason a group like Evana is waiting in the wings to usurp its place. Unfortunately, this move-

*There has been a growing decrease in financial support for the so-called national church.*

ment seems to have spiked on the issues of sexuality and the struggling attempts by the larger national body to find some common ground. A stronger congregational polity would allow congregations to follow the leading of the Spirit as they were able. And a more loosely meaningful wider fellowship would allow congregations that freedom to be different while remaining in fellowship.

We are already five years too late in re-studying and revising the *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective*. Church pastors are now using this tired document as a prescriptive statement of our faith, rather than as a descriptive statement of our faith when it was written.

There has been a growing decrease in financial support for the so-called national church. This has been a problem for some time and is a symptom of something deeper going on. It is fine, and very necessary, to search for renewal in the church, and, if that comes, financial issues resolve themselves. Just watch how the Evana budgets will flourish as our own global mission is forced into decline.

But that success is not evidence of spiritual renewal as such, but is simply the taking up of the political space of something that was there before. Fortunately, Evana is honest enough to admit that its whole project is precipitated on the "one man-one woman" definition of marriage in the *Confession of Faith*. Everything else seems not to be at issue. And that is where I find it problematic.

Let me also add that stronger regionalism has brought about the weakening of the national reality. I have had increasing sadness about the whole integration process in our region. I always objected to the region named Mennonite Church Eastern Canada, which always implied a Mennonite Church Western Canada.

The concentration of area church programming and leadership trying to fill the broader mission will also eventually falter with the eventual reduction of resources, as has happened in the Canadian and American contexts.

The issue is, as the Task Force rightly identifies, a confusion of identities. But throwing the baby out with the bathwater has not been the solution here. Solutions might lie in the regular gathering of the church nationwide, if not to make decisions, then at least to worship and commune together like Mennonite World Conference, so that we can feel the fellowship.

In addition to such fellowship, *Canadian Mennonite* is the one major instrument that gives us a sense of identity across Canada. If we lose that, too, we lose any meaningful identity of our Mennonite family across Canada. ❧

*Waldemar Regier is a member of Waterloo-Kitchener United Mennonite Church in Waterloo, Ont.*

## LIFE IN THE POSTMODERN SHIFT

## The pursuit of truth (Pt. 6)

TROY WATSON

In an article entitled “Has militant atheism become a religion?” published on Salon.com (March 24, 2013), primatologist Frans de Waal writes, “In my interactions with religious and nonreligious people alike, I now draw a sharp line, based not on what exactly they believe but on their level of dogmatism. I consider dogmatism a far greater threat than religion . . .”

Dogmatism is a presumptuous confidence that one’s opinions, principles, ideas or beliefs are irrefutably true, often accompanied by insufficient consideration of evidence and other perspectives. It is also one of the greatest obstacles to the pursuit of truth for believers and sceptics alike.

A quote, usually attributed to French author André Gide, that has become a dogmatic axiom for many sceptics and “free thinkers” today is: “Trust the one who seeks the truth, but doubt those who say they have found it.”

This principle is appealing on the surface, but it’s self-defeating. When anyone presents this statement as truth, I should doubt it, if I actually apply what it teaches. The one proclaiming it is claiming to have found truth, namely, that I should doubt anyone who says they’ve found truth. By its own logic I should doubt the truth of this principle and the one presenting it as truth.

This highlights one of the basic problems with scepticism: It is self-refuting and hypocritical at its core. Scepticism claims it’s impossible to have adequate justification to believe something is true—with the exception of its own



premise. Very few sceptics direct their scepticism towards their own scepticism. This is the problem with dogmatism in general: We see the speck in everyone else’s eye while remaining blind to the log in our own.

I have a wise friend who has taught me a great deal about life and spirituality.

However, I’m puzzled by his routine criticism of church dogma and our claim to absolute truth. Many of his critiques are justified and reasonable, but what I find curious is how boldly he speaks about the universal truth of his own beliefs.

One day he was talking about the Law of Attraction, so I asked him if it was true. He looked at me as if I was new in town and told me, of course it was.

“Is it Absolute Truth?” I asked.

He smiled, knowing what I was getting at, and admitted he believed it was.

“Isn’t that dogma? You are claiming the Law of Attraction is absolute and universal truth, yet you can’t prove it any more than I can prove the resurrection of Jesus. Aren’t you doing what you accuse the church of doing?”

He received my rebuke with grace and, in return, has frequently pointed out my own dogmatism, for which I’m grateful. We all need honest friends to gently help us see our own dogmatic tendencies, because we all have them. Even our scientist friends.

On Aug. 4 of last year, Existential Comics released a humorous tweet effectively undressing the dogmatism of scientism. In it, a scientist asks a philosopher, “Why does philosophy matter?”

“I don’t know. Why does science matter?”

“Well because scie . . .”

“And you are doing philosophy.”

This comic was a response to scientists, most notably Stephen Hawking, claiming philosophy was dead and that scientific reasoning is the only way to know things. The irony is, the only way scientists can prove this claim is to use philosophy, and in doing so they refute their premise, because philosophy is an entirely different way of knowing.

Dogmatism thrives in our world, in secular as well as religious environments. It divides us, causing us to react to others, instead of receiving them. It is consumed with proving our positions and disproving the positions of others, rather than listening and learning, making honest and humble dialogue next to impossible.

*Scepticism claims it's impossible to have adequate justification to believe something is true—with the exception of its own premise.*

I believe the church is called to be a cure for dogmatism, not an incubator of it. However, for most of our history this hasn’t been the case.

I’m convinced the dogmatic battles of competing ideologies in our churches make us inhospitable dwelling places for the Prince of Peace. It doesn’t matter what the issue is, or what side of the issue we’re on, when we become dogmatic we pervert the priorities of Christ’s teachings. Dogmatism exalts truth above love, and when this happens the pursuit of truth is usually used as a weapon to control, rather than as an instrument of peace that sets people free.

To be continued . . . ✎

*Troy Watson is pastor of Avon Mennonite Church in Stratford, Ont.*

## GOD AT WORK IN THE CHURCH

# Youth Assembly 2016 cancelled

*Only 20 percent of expected youth delegates actually signed up*

BY DAN DYCK

Mennonite Church Canada

**Y**ou plan a party for 200, with games geared for groups of 20. Food quantities have been tallied and overnight lodging arranged for guests who are coming from far away. And then you find out that only a handful of the invited guests are able to come.

That's the kind of disappointment—and news—that Kirsten Hamm-Epp and her team of planners have to convey to the 41 youth and sponsors who had already registered for Youth Assembly 2016, as well as those who may have still been planning to register: “Youth Assembly 2016 is cancelled.”

Based on advance polls in the fall of 2015, the team planned for 200 youth. But those numbers did not materialize before June 1 of this year, the date when commitments had to be signed for venue rentals, meals, lodging and certain programming plans.

The team reached out to churches with an urgent plea to state their attendance intentions. Many pastors and youth sponsors indicated they had strongly encouraged attendance. Over the May long weekend,

50 churches responded, noting that large numbers of youth had already fundraised intensively to attend the Mennonite World Conference assembly in 2015, while many youth are serving at area church camps this summer or are engaged in other activities.

“These are things we want to affirm,” said Hamm-Epp. “World Conference was a fantastic experience for youth last summer, and serving at camps is a huge part of the overall church experience for a lot of youth.”

Planners exhausted many possible alternatives to make Youth Assembly 2016 work with small numbers in a more intimate setting. But even with dramatic changes to lodging and programming, the event still faced a projected financial loss of approximately \$20,000.

Hamm-Epp and her team have reached out to all registered groups and presenters already registered for Youth Assembly 2016. They will be reimbursed for their registration costs.

As conversations about the cancellation took place, Hamm-Epp said that sadness, confusion and frustration were displaced

## /// Briefly noted

### Montréal pastor ordained

• **LUCILLE MARR** was ordained at the Mennonite Fellowship of Montréal on May 29 to confirm her ministry as chaplain at the Presbyterian College, Montréal. She is the college's academic dean and adjunct professor, teaching courses in Canadian Church History and Women in the Christian Tradition in the Faculty of Religious Studies. She is a member of the Centre for Research on Religion, having also served on the executive of the Mennonite Historical Society of Canada and the Canadian Society of Church History. Marr was called to the Mennonite Fellowship of Montréal as copastor with her husband, Jean-Jacques Goulet, in 2001; in 2005, she became sole pastor and served until spring 2011.



**Lucille Marr**

—BY DAVE ROGALSKY

with a new idea. “While the big event has been cancelled, the youth of Saskatchewan are still planning to make their voices heard and will be gathering together over the assembly dates for a canoe trip! All youth are welcome,” she said.

Anyone who would like to be part of “#thecovenantcrew 2.0” should contact Hamm-Epp at [youthminister@mcsask.ca](mailto:youthminister@mcsask.ca).

Ben Cassels, minister of transformation at Waterloo North Mennonite Church Waterloo, Ont., offered encouragement in an e-mail to the planning team. “I'd like you and everyone else who has been working so hard on the youth assembly piece to know that your work and efforts are hugely appreciated! It is hugely frustrating and dispiriting when you invest lots of time and energy into something and it struggles to get going. So thank you to all of you!”

Any youth who are not attending Assembly 2016 but wish to speak into the Being a Faithful Church and Future Directions Task Force discussions are strongly encouraged to give their input to their congregation's adult delegates. ///

MC CANADA FILE PHOTO



*Although Youth Assembly 2016 was cancelled due to low numbers, the youth of Saskatchewan will be gathering together over the assembly dates for a canoe trip, says Kirsten Hamm-Epp, left, Mennonite Church Saskatchewan's area church minister for youth programming. Other members of the Youth Assembly Planning Committee, are, from left to right: Val White, Sarah Unrau and Katie Wiebe.*

# Returning to their roots

*Saskatchewan camp celebrates 75 years and finds blessing in its history*

STORY AND PHOTOS BY DONNA SCHULZ

Saskatchewan Correspondent  
ROSTHERN, SASK.

The history of Youth Farm Bible Camp is, in no small sense, the history of Mennonite Church Saskatchewan. In the early 1940s, the Mennonite Youth Society began holding retreats at the Dominion Experimental Farm, just south of Rosthern. Several individuals saw the neglected farm as an ideal site for the ministries of Saskatchewan Mennonites. Henry W. Friesen, Isaac Epp and J. C. Schmidt spent a full year in prayer to discern whether or not they should purchase the farm.

In 1943, Schmidt sent a letter to the federal minister of agriculture, J. G. Gardiner, stating the society's interest in purchasing

the farm and outlining their plans to open an orphanage on the site, as well as to move Rosthern Bible School from its location in the town of Rosthern to the farm. Later that year, the society purchased the farm for \$5,000, naming it the Mennonite Youth Farm.

Mark Wurtz, the Youth Farm's current director, says the society saw the farm—which celebrated its 75th anniversary on June 4—as a place for mission and evangelism, and also as a place to serve “the least of these” (Matthew 25:40). He adds that these goals continue to be reflected in the camp's mission statement: “To share Jesus with

people and provide a place to serve.”

In the following years, along with the proposed orphanage, the Youth Farm established homes for intellectually and physically disabled children and adults on its campus. In addition to holding annual retreats, the Youth Farm also trained young adults and sent them to northern communities to teach at Vacation Bible Schools. The Youth Farm funded these ministries by operating an award-winning dairy that sold pasteurized milk to the town of Rosthern for a number of years.

The dream of relocating Rosthern Bible School to the Youth Farm campus did not materialize. However, in 1965 a summer camp ministry did. Friesen became its director and was a driving force behind its success.

His son Willi recalls: “Dad was not scared to ask anyone to be a guest speaker at camp.” This included such well-known Mennonite personalities as Palmer Becker and Myron Augsburg. When Willi teasingly asked his father, “Why don't you ask

PHOTO COURTESY OF YOUTH FARM BIBLE CAMP



C. Schmidt—front row, second from left—and Henry W. Friesen—back row, right—were two of the founding members of the Mennonite Youth Farm. Friesen was a driving force behind Youth Farm Bible Camp for many years; his wife Helen—back row, second from right—continues to reside at the Youth Farm.



During the week leading up to the Youth Farm Bible Camp's 75th-anniversary celebration, supporters were invited to participate in a 75-hour prayer vigil. This tree features prayer requests for the upcoming summer camp season.

Billy Graham to speak?" the elder Friesen looked thoughtfully at his son and replied, "I wonder how you'd get hold of him?"

Joyce Adrian was another key figure in the camp's history. In 1971, she felt that God was leading her to start Bible studies for girls. Soon there were Bible studies for boys as well. Eventually, Adrian's Bible studies grew into a movement called Truth for Youth, which saw up to 400 youth gathering on Saturday evenings to watch movies, play games and hear music bands.

Wurtz says about 100 people enjoyed a traditional camp lunch of watermelon and *rollkuchen* (Russian Mennonite-style fritters) at the anniversary celebration. Afternoon activities included old-fashioned races and games, traditional camping activities, and time for visiting and reminiscing. An evening banquet was followed by a thanksgiving worship service in

the camp's chapel.

Wurtz has been with the camp for 15 years and says, "I am at my happiest here." He is inspired by the camp's history and is working to reclaim its roots. He sees the camp's corn maze as a means of returning to the farm's agricultural past. And just as the three men who helped found the Youth Farm spent a year in prayer before purchasing the farm, he wants the Youth Farm to continue to be rooted in prayer. Leading up to the anniversary celebrations, staff invited supporters to join them in a 75-hour prayer vigil.

This summer, Youth Farm Bible Camp will offer 11 program weeks of camp for children, teens and adults with intellectual disabilities. Wurtz believes Friesen, who died in 1991, would be proud of the camp as it is today. "A lot of seeds have been planted and watered at this place, and a lot of people have grown in their faith at this place," he says. ☘

## /// Staff change

### Pastoral transition in Saskatchewan

#### • TERRI LYNN PAULSON

has been hired by Osler Mennonite Church as pastor of faith and community. Although the congregation has had youth pastors and youth leaders in the past, this three-quarter-time position is a new one. Paulson says she will be working with youth, "fostering their faith in the context of the larger church community." She will be working alongside the congregation's lead pastor, Patty Friesen. Paulson's background is in agriculture. She earned a master's degree in environment and sustainability from the University of Saskatchewan. She has volunteered with Christian agricultural organizations in the United States and in Gambia, West Africa, exploring how faith intersects with agriculture and growing food. She has also spent time reflecting on her own faith at Regent College in Vancouver.

—BY DONNA SCHULZ



**Terri Lynn Paulson**



*The Mennonite Youth Farm, in its earliest incarnation, included a dairy. Milk that was not used on site was sold in the nearby town of Rosthern, Sask.*

For more photos and a video, visit [canadianmennonite.org/myf75](http://canadianmennonite.org/myf75). View a 1957 film depicting the early history of the Mennonite Youth Farm and the Saskatchewan Mennonite Youth Organization at [yfb.com/1957](http://yfb.com/1957).



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PHOTO COURTESY OF GERHARD LUITJENS



*Hope Mennonite Fellowship of North Battleford, Sask., left the area church on April 30 over theological and same-sex issues.*

## Hope Mennonite withdraws from MC Saskatchewan

*Same-sex marriage part of more serious theological rift with the area church*

By DONNA SCHULZ

Saskatchewan Correspondent  
NORTH BATTLEFORD, SASK.

**H**ope Mennonite Fellowship withdrew its membership from Mennonite Church Saskatchewan effective April 30.

Several years ago, members became concerned by what they saw as a lack of accountability within the area church. A Safe Church Policy that included statements about sexual orientation was posted on the MC Saskatchewan website before it was ratified at the annual delegate sessions in 2014. At that time, Hope Mennonite proposed an amendment to the policy, which would have removed the section on preventing discrimination and referred it back to council to be reworded and included

in a hiring policy; the amendment was narrowly defeated.

A year later, Hope Mennonite, along with members of other congregations, presented a motion calling for an area church-wide vote on whether or not pastors credentialed by MC Saskatchewan should be allowed to perform same-sex marriages. The decision of the delegate body to suppress the motion “really had

an impact on some of our members,” said Pastor Gerhard Luitjens, who has served the congregation for eight years. According to him, members of Hope were angered by the decision to suppress the motion and not allow any discussion, and that personal comments made by members of Nutana Park Mennonite Church in Saskatoon toward members of his congregation had been deeply hurtful.

In the end, the same-sex marriage issue was deemed to be indicative of a more serious underlying theological rift. “There is a very, very big split in all Christian circles between the belief in what God says and the idea that I can decide what God has to say,” said Luitjens. “What God says comes from above and is truth. It doesn’t change. . . . Menno Simons said that if you lose the concept of the Word of God, you’ve lost everything. That’s where I am, that’s where the people in our church are.”

Luitjens said this was not an easy decision for his congregation. For six to eight months prior to the vote, they met monthly for prayer in an effort to discern God’s will for the church. The resulting secret ballot vote was unanimously in favour of withdrawing. Luitjens added that attending non-members were also given opportunity to voice their views and each of them also expressed a desire to withdraw from the area church.

Hope Mennonite began informally in the early 1950s when a group of young Mennonite women who were training as psychiatric nurses at the Saskatchewan Hospital began meeting together. According to the Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online, North Battleford Mennonite Church, as it was known then, was officially founded in 1959, and the congregation changed its name to Hope Mennonite Fellowship in 1986. Currently, the church has about 20 members, with an average Sunday morning attendance of between 30 and 40.

Two years ago, the church also hired Abel and Sonya Zabaleta to minister to Colombian refugee and Honduran

*In the end, the same-sex marriage issue was deemed to be indicative of a more serious underlying theological rift.*

immigrant families who had started attending. Over the years, the congregation, together with the Hoffnungsfelder Mennonite churches of Glenbush and Rabbit Lake, Sask., has operated a thrift store that supports a number of local ministries.

Hope Mennonite is currently exploring the possibility of joining the Northwest Mennonite Conference of Alberta.

“Some of our members are not really fussy about not belonging anywhere,”

Luitjens said, adding that his congregation would continue to support organizations like Mennonite Central Committee, Rosthern Junior College and Youth Farm Bible Camp.

“We don’t hold any animosities or hatreds,” said Luitjens. “Many of us have family members that are still involved with MC Saskatchewan. We’re not trying to pull anybody else with us. Basically it was a decision that we made in our church.” ❧

## A hedge of protection

*MC Manitoba’s ‘Healthy boundaries’ seminar strives to safeguard those behind the pulpit and those in the pew*

BY BETH DOWNEY SAWATZKY

Manitoba Correspondent  
CARMAN, MAN.

**F**orty Mennonite Church Manitoba clergy attended the area church’s biennial “Healthy boundaries” seminar, held this year at Carman Mennonite Church. Led this spring by clinical psychologist Lois Edmund, the conference is mandatory once every four years for all credentialed MC Manitoba pastors.



Lois Edmund

Topics covered at the seminars include “Boundaries defined and their importance in ministry;” “Healthy congregations and healthy pastors;” “Strategies to reduce pastoral misconduct;” and “MC Manitoba policy on professional misconduct,” among others.

Moses Falco of Sterling Mennonite Church, Winnipeg, attended this year for the first time. Falco says he appreciated how the seminar framed boundaries as serving both congregations and pastors by protecting the interests and limitations of each. “It is vital for [the area church] to be proactive in educating us on topics like these,” he says. “As a young pastor in my first year of work, I am so thankful to be part of a larger church that values educating and resourcing their leaders.”

Tim Wenger of North Kildonan

Mennonite Church, Winnipeg, also attended for the first time. He concurred with Falco, saying, “As a new, young pastor, I hadn’t realized how much trust people put in me. I didn’t realize I was in fiduciary relationships with everyone in my congregation. I look up to so many people in my congregation, not realizing that they also

look up to and trust me to care for them and their children. The workshop gave me an appreciation [for that reality],” he says.

Wenger feels that public awareness of this seminar could be particularly important now, in the wake of recent church abuse crises worldwide: “It is important that people know we are proactive in learning about safe boundaries. Ministers have been in privileged positions for a long time. People have placed a lot of trust in us, and too many, including Mennonites, have betrayed this trust. As stories of abuse are revealed, the relationships between other pastors and congregants are eroded. Hopefully, by participating in workshops like these, we can demonstrate our commitment to care for our congregations and prove ourselves worthy of their trust.”

Ken Warkentin, MC Manitoba’s

executive director, supports the seminar and brooks no argument about where the fault lies when things go wrong between church leaders and congregants. The burden of culpability, he says, lies with ministers. “A pastor cannot have an ‘affair.’ Because of the very nature of a minister’s position of power and trust, [misconduct] within [MC Manitoba] is always termed abuse.”

Warkentin says he considers ministry an “at-risk profession,” one in which boundary politics come into play. “Whatever a person’s reasons for joining the ministry, whether it be their own sense of need or calling, serving other’s needs, or whether they’re encouraged into it by their community recognizing personal charisma and gift, the reasons are rarely predatory. Still, pastors are vulnerable in different ways to make significant mistakes, and the intimacy of pastoral work can blindside a person.”

Virginia Froese, Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Manitoba’s abuse response and prevention program coordinator, agrees. “Pastors are involved in the

*‘People have placed a lot of trust in us, and too many, including Mennonites, have betrayed this trust.’  
(Tim Wenger)*

most intimate places of peoples lives, often during times of stress, struggle and great need, making them especially vulnerable to boundary violations,” she says. “Because of this, it is critical to equip pastors to have strong, healthy boundaries.”

Froese hopes that greater public knowledge of the “Healthy boundaries” seminar will “open the door for congregations to talk with their pastors, and other leaders or caregivers in their congregations, about ways to create healthy boundaries and prevent violation.” ❧

MCC’s “Understanding Sexual Abuse by a Church Leader or Caregiver” resource is accessible online at [mcc.org/media/resources/1136](http://mcc.org/media/resources/1136) or at any MCC office.



# Seniors explore cross-cultural Mennonite story

BY FERNE BURKHARDT

Special to *Canadian Mennonite*  
NEW HAMBURG, ONT.

“The future of the church depends on being intercultural,” Rudy Baergen told mostly mono-cultural participants at the Hidden Acres Seniors Retreat on May 2 and 3. Baergen, currently interim pastor at Waterloo-Kitchener United Mennonite Church in Waterloo, Ont., is the son of immigrants from Ukraine and has been a pastor, teacher and professor in Bolivia and Colombia as well as in Canada.

Newcomer groups may need time alone to regain a sense of identity before intercultural efforts begin, Baergen cautioned, but established churches must intentionally reach beyond themselves to be a faithful church. “It is not easy work,” he said, an observation reiterated by Brian Bauman, Mennonite Church Eastern Canada’s missions minister, who added, “Most of the biblical story is not the easy route.”

Bernard Sejour, the second speaker, embodied the day’s theme, “Strangers no more; sharing gifts of grace.” Sejour, missing school in Haiti for five years and orphaned by age 15, grew up amidst injustice

and misery. He got help to go to high school and law school. As a lawyer, he met Anna, a Mennonite Central Committee worker in Haiti. Wondering why she did what she did, he discovered Mennonite values and embraced them.

Sejour, endangered by his social justice work, fled to the U.S. A small Mennonite church in Kansas City welcomed him with love. Now ordained, he is a ministry partner with MC Eastern Canada, networking with community organizations and churches in Ottawa and Quebec. He says he is the fruit of seeds of love, peace and hope planted by Mennonites who now must receive the gifts of “fruits” like him.

A lively interchange happened when Bauman interviewed relative newcomers to the area church. Noramy Gonzalia from Colombia came to Indiana and then to Kitchener, Ont., at age 10. She identifies as both Spanish and Canadian, and speaks “Spenglish.” Gonzalia said being part of two cultures is a plus as a youth worker at First Mennonite Church, where

English and Spanish people worship separately and together. She sees herself as a bridge-builder.

Fanosie Legesse, born in Ethiopia, now pastor at Zion Mennonite Fellowship in Elmira, also participated on May 3. Legesse, who studied at Meserete Kristos College, a Mennonite Bible school in Ethiopia, is also a product of seeds Mennonites planted. God led him and his Canadian wife to Canada, where singing in church is different from African music, he said, but “God enjoys every style of worship.”

Responding to Bauman’s invitation, several attendees spoke of their discomfort as strangers when they moved to a new country, serving as missionaries or volunteers.

Bauman commended the planning committee for helping seniors explore welcoming strangers, saying, “Everyone showed such respect and appreciation for the presenters from different cultures [who] were so happy to be able to share some of their cross-cultural Mennonite story.” ❧

HIDDEN ACRES MENNONITE CAMP PHOTO COURTESY OF FRED ZEHR



*Maurice Martin, left, and Ray Steinmann chat about the cross-cultural nature of the Mennonite story at this year’s seniors retreat at Hidden Acres Mennonite Camp, New Hamburg, Ont.*

## /// Briefly noted

### B.C. student makes Goshen College’s Dean’s List

• **DO WON PARK**, a senior with a major in history and art who hails from Emmanuel Mennonite Church, Abbotsford, B.C., is one of 221 Goshen College undergraduate students recently recognized for



**Do Won Park**

excellence in academics on the 2015-16 spring semester Dean’s List. The Dean’s List includes traditional undergraduate students earning at least a 3.75 grade-point average while completing at least 12 hours of course work for a letter grade. Only grades from the designated semester are included in the Dean’s List selection process. The college initiated its Dean’s List in the fall of 1999 and it celebrates the achievement of students who have met high academic standards. —Goshen College

## GOD AT WORK IN THE WORLD

PHOTO BY DONITA WIEBE-NEUFELD



Chief Calvin Bruneau, left, Roger Epp, and Isaac and Millie Glick are pictured at the Mennonite Historical Society of Alberta's 2016 spring conference with a display of a model canoe and jams from people the Glicks worked with in northern Alberta.

PHOTO BY DARIAN NEUFELD



Donita Wiebe-Neufeld holds a stone hammer that her father found while cultivating years ago. It makes her wonder, who lived on the family farm east of Didsbury, Alta., before her family did? Who used this ancient tool to break bison bones or to pound in pegs to hold down the hide covering for a tent?

## Mennonite historical assumptions challenged

BY DONITA WIEBE-NEUFELD

Alberta Correspondent  
EDMONTON

Participants at the Mennonite Historical Society of Alberta spring conference, held on April 30 at Holyrood Mennonite Church, Edmonton, spent time “Rethinking Mennonite history in light of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission,” the theme of this year’s event.

Roger Epp, professor of political science at the University of Alberta, an honorary witness at some of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission gatherings and author of *We are all Treaty People*, told the crowd that many Mennonite settler histories need to be looked at again, and the places where they intersect with indigenous history need to be recovered.

He experienced an epiphany of sorts a number of years ago while visiting a museum in Oklahoma. “Our family history didn’t account for the Cheyenne people who had survived Custer’s attack,” he said.

“My family arrived in the land rush that followed. I didn’t know, until I was in the county museum looking at a map, that my ancestors owned land in the checkerboard right next to Cheyenne land.”

This part of his history didn’t fit the story as he had understood it to that point. “There is a Christian gloss on the settler paradigm that is dangerous, where the land stands in for the ‘promised land,’” he said. “How easy it is to insinuate ourselves into that story of Exodus. . . . Who gives a thought for the Canaanites when you are taking possession of the ‘promised land’? We know this cannot be disentangled from the dislocation and deliberate starvation of indigenous people.”

Isaac and Millie Glick saw the destructive results of Indian Residential Schools first hand, having spent a lifetime of working alongside indigenous people. On behalf

of Mennonite Central Committee, they helped communities develop successful programs in the areas of education, health and gardening, and coordinated more than a hundred Mennonite Voluntary Service workers. In both Sandy Lake and Chipewyan Lake, Alta., the Glicks helped with schools.

He said they experienced a people “used to being pushed down, pushed back and ignored . . . [but] mutual respect quickly occurred when they were treated with respect. We knew very little about ‘Indians’ and ‘residential school’ and ‘Doctrine of Discovery.’ . . . Our assignment, as a one liner, was to see what could be done to help people help themselves.”

Chief Calvin Bruneau of the Papaschase First Nation presented a first-hand account of the ongoing story of his people. He told

*(Continued on page 22)*

(Continued from page 21)

of the struggle to uncover and reclaim the history and identity of those who were defrauded of their land and scattered in the late 1800s.

Born in Bonnyville, Alta., Bruneau's grandmother married a non-status Métis, and, according to the Indian Act, lost her status and had to leave her community. Bruneau moved in the 1980s to Edmonton, where he grew up. In 1995, he found out from relatives that his family is descended from Chief Papaschase.

Bruneau was heavily involved in the struggle to have Edmonton's Rossdale burial ground recognized and protected when plans to expand a power plant were threatening to destroy it. The site is now a

memorial where 31 Papaschase ancestors, as well as other early inhabitants of Fort Edmonton, are buried.

A story told by Epp helps put Mennonite settler history arm-in-arm with indigenous history and challenges common assumptions and stereotypes. "Almighty Voice" is a name many Alberta students remember from social studies lessons, which told of a young indigenous man who was accused of stealing a cow, shooting a police officer, escaping prison and leading the North West Mounted Police on an 18-month manhunt. The hunt resulted in Almighty Voice and two of his relatives being cornered by police officers, shot at with cannons and killed in a grove of trees near Duck Lake Sask., on May 30, 1897.

When the story is retold, with more pieces coming to light, the picture of the young man changes. The cow in question was not stolen, but was slaughtered against government rules so Almighty Voice could feed his family, because the government was not coming through with promised aid for the starving people. He would have been released from jail within a day; however, an officer at the jail taunted him by saying he would be hanged. Almighty Voice believed the officer, and escaped. Convinced his life was in danger, he shot another officer who refused to listen to his warnings not to approach. After that, he was on the run until his death.

The Mennonite connection is a woman from Tiefengrund, Sask., named Amelia Wiehler, who was a friend to Almighty Voice. He once risked his life to get groceries for her, travelling across ice in winter. She, in turn, provided a safe place for him to stay.

Participants left the conference encouraged to rethink their own settler histories and to recover stories and relationships alongside their indigenous neighbours. ❧

*'Our family history didn't account for the Cheyenne people who had survived Custer's attack. My family arrived in the land rush that followed.'*  
(Roger Epp)



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## GOD AT WORK IN US

# 'This profession found me'

*Associates Resourcing the Church begins a new phase*

STORY AND PHOTO BY DAVE ROGALSKY

Eastern Canada Correspondent  
WATERLOO, ONT.

Growing up in an immigrant family prepared Betty Pries to see God's presence in the struggles of life. Her grandmother's "story-based faith" came to her through stories from Russia under communism, fleeing the Soviet Union during the Second World War and homesteading in Paraguay. In spite of struggles, and perhaps even because of them, there was a pervasive sense of God at work in the world and of being dependent on God.

Pries believes that there are some things that people only learn through suffering. Leaving university in the early 1990s, intent on carrying on with a master's degree in theology, which she eventually completed, Pries was tapped on the shoulder to work in a mediation centre in Winnipeg, where this spirituality stood her in good stead. As a new Canadian family, they were "in the world, but not of the world," looking for other ways to do things than was common around them. "This profession" of working with individuals, businesses and congregations to find hope and a future "found me," she says.

In 2003 and now in Ontario, Pries was working with congregations in many denominations, mediating, visioning and restructuring, when Andrew Reesor McDowell, former moderator of Mennonite Church Eastern Canada, wondered aloud with her about forming a more official organization to make sure congregations were adequately resourced.

Three years later, together with McDowell and Sue Steiner, Associates Resourcing the Church (ARC) was born. From the beginning, all the associates have worked in both church and business settings, although the business work was still considered freelance. Recently rebranded



as L3 Group, ARC is now one arm of the business. Based on ARC's core values of "love, listen, lead," the associates have brought all their work under one roof.

Pries has also worked at coaching individuals; with area churches, most recently MC B.C. in developing its priorities of being "Anabaptist, missional and connected"; and with MC Canada.

While beginning and working from a Christian perspective, over the years Pries has had a growing confidence to speak about the spiritual basis of what she does, as well as more invitations to do so from those with whom and for whom she works.

She sees the biggest challenges in the 21st century as being the search for meaning, purpose and belonging—all spiritual longings. The work of L3 is transformational, helping businesses and

congregations find their deep passions and developing ways to fruitfully fulfill them. Pries invites groups to "honour God's presence in the room" as she works.

Each of the associates in L3, which now includes non-Mennonites, agree to have a daily spiritual practice as part of their lives and work. They listen to each other and pray together, giving them a sense of being grounded and a sense of humility.

Pries's own spirituality is a contemplative practice of deep listening to God, something that stands her in good stead as she listens to groups and to God, in order to help her clients to health and fruitfulness. "God is already at work, is already here," she tells groups. Her goal is to help them hear and see God among them so they can move from despair and confusion to hope and joy.

Contemplative spirituality, according to Pries, has the potential to connect people from evangelical, Roman Catholic, mainline and Anabaptist traditions, as it can encompass evangelical missional thinking, Catholic *missio dei*, mainline peace and justice work, and the Anabaptist "peaceable kingdom."

Pries believes everyone lives in a place of dependence, that "there is something out there that is bigger than us, that we need to live with our hands open," and that when individuals, groups and congregations do this, "blessings emerge." She believes this is part of a "deep spiritual foundation," citing Franciscan friar Richard Rohr: "We desire to change because God loves us, not so as to have God love us." ❧



*Betty Pries leads a recent workshop for Mennonite Church Eastern Canada called 'Pastors in the 21st century'. She is pictured showing how the polarities of 'open' to God at work in the wider world and 'centred' on Jesus can speak past each other, rather than complementing and building on each other.*

## ARTBEAT

# 'Mennonite' composers headline concert at WLU

STORY AND PHOTO BY DAVE ROGALSKY

Eastern Canada Correspondent

WATERLOO, ONT.

**W**ilfrid Laurier University (WLU) celebrated the 40th anniversary of its Faculty of Music with a concert on April 3 that featured the premiere of works by two composers with Mennonite roots and connections.

Glenn Buhr, WLU's professor of composition and director of the Improvisation Concerts Ensemble, comes from Mennonite roots in Gretna, Man. His grandfather left the Mennonite church to join the Canadian military in the First World War; besides that, he married outside the faith and became a lawyer, basically sealing his outsider status.

Buhr often notes that he seems to struggle with similar issues as his grandfather and to exhibit similar beliefs. The insider/outsider feeling is common among artists, especially ones who create at the vanguard of their profession and society. Buhr's music, infused with jazz harmonies and rhythms, as well as 21st-century leaps in dynamics with dips into sources as diverse as Stravinsky, Prince, Bach, and jazz greats Thelonious Monk and Duke Ellington, is not easy-listening music.

But, at the same time, Buhr notes that his grandfather's honesty about what he believed resonates with him, saying he has toyed with joining a Mennonite congregation. The pianist at the concert playing Buhr's "Piano Concerto No. 3" (2015), Kennan Reimer-Watts, attends a Waterloo Mennonite congregation and Buhr appreciates the support its members give Watts.

Buhr's piano concerto, a symphonic piece in three movements with a featured solo instrument, begins with a movement based on variations of "Same Old Sorrow," a song Buhr wrote a number of years ago as a parody of the jazz standard, "You Don't Know What Love Is." The second

movement brings the piano forward almost to the point of improvisation. Buhr says he sees this movement as "centring, quiet, circling down." The last movement is based on a chord progression from Monk in his song "Bemsha Swing"; it has a clown-like bass line and repeats it in 21 variations.

The concerto was commissioned by WLU professor emeritus Ralph Elsaesser, who passed away before this performance.

The second piece was written by Stephanie Martin, musical director for the past 19 years of the Pax Christi Chorale, and also a professor of music at York University, both in Toronto.

She writes in the notes to "Babel: A Choral Symphony," that the commission to write this piece came as she; her dad Abner Martin, founder of Menno Singers in the Waterloo Region; and members of

WLU's music department were listening to the Penderecki String Quartet from WLU play one of Bartok's string quartets. Sealed with a handshake, the commission gave her something to focus in the dark time after the untimely death of her husband.

Martin, an alumna of WLU, composed music to "Babel," a poem written by her sister Carol Martin from the point of view of the builders of the tower in Genesis 11. Instead of trying to somehow storm heaven, the builders are artists, creating a work of wonder out of their God-given creativity. When God destroys the tower and confuses their language, they are shattered, confused and very, very angry. The poem ends with humanity wondering, "Why did God grant words at all?" and deciding to go on creating art that God "can't abhor."

In setting this to music Martin used six movements. In the first, a tower of metal garbage cans and other metal containers crash in a cacophony of smashing sounds. The tower was created by the percussionists with little guidance from Martin except that much noise is necessary at the "X" in the score. The following movements for orchestra, choir and soloists, take listeners through the aimless wanderings of the people, including an angry tenor aria that is responded to by a lament by the choir. In the fifth movement, the piece turns to



*Pictured from left to right: Paul Pulford, who conducted the orchestra for Glenn Buhr's 'Piano Concerto No. 3'; Stephanie Martin, who composed 'Babel: A Choral Symphony'; Buhr; and Lee Willingham, who conducted Martin's piece, at the April 3 world premiere of the two works as part of the 40th anniversary of WLU's Faculty of Music.*

resolve, resulting in a joyful conclusion “with the hope that time can turn back, can fetch the age of gold.”

WLU, which appeals to music students from many backgrounds, had four of the 150 student singers find the anger against God unpalatable. In her blog, Martin noted that “some students are boycotting

my work since they consider it ‘blasphemous.’” The issue was resolved before the performance and three of the four agreed to sing. In many ways, the conflict spoke to the theme in “Babel” of trying to create and finding that not all agree with what is appropriate.

Martin speaks of her spirituality as one

based on worship in the church. She feels herself a “citizen of the world,” but very attracted to, and at home in, monastic settings where Gregorian chant and liturgical form support her relationship with God.

Martin will leave Pax Christi in the summer of 2017, in order to have more time to compose and fulfill commissions. ✺

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<http://mds.mennonite.net>

**ONLINE NOW!**at [canadianmennonite.org](http://canadianmennonite.org)**What I learned while walking the Camino**

Alvin Thiessen's spiritual pilgrimage meant walking the 800-kilometre trek on the Camino de Santiago, in northern Spain.

[canadianmennonite.org/walking-camino](http://canadianmennonite.org/walking-camino)

**Loving the enemy in Burkina Faso**

Christians in a farming community found a way to avoid making traditional fertility offerings while building peace with local leaders.

[canadianmennonite.org/loving-enemy-burkina](http://canadianmennonite.org/loving-enemy-burkina)

**Into the woods**

Seventy-five years ago, a generation of Canadian Mennonite youth was on the move, as a result of their stand as conscientious objectors.

[canadianmennonite.org/alternative-service-adventure](http://canadianmennonite.org/alternative-service-adventure)

**Becoming the people of God is a messy business**

The biblical vision of the people of God is not sameness but diversity, declared Arli Klassen, speaker at the annual Ralph and Eileen Lebold Fundraising Dinner.

[canadianmennonite.org/gods-people-diversity](http://canadianmennonite.org/gods-people-diversity)

**Briefly noted****Cousins write family saga:  
*Daughters in the House of Jacob***

ABBOTSFORD, B.C.—Two Canadian Mennonite women, one a pastor and the other a professor, introduced their new book, *Daughters in the House of Jacob: A Memoir of Migration*, at the Mennonite Heritage Museum on June 4. Cousins Dorothy M. Peters, adjunct assistant professor of religious studies at Trinity Western University, and Christine Kampen, co-pastoral elder at Highland Community Church in Abbotsford, had been working on the book for three years. Kampen grew up in Mennonite Church B.C. congregations and attended both Canadian Mennonite Bible College in Winnipeg and Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Elkhart, Ind. Reading aloud passages from the book, the two women traced their individual callings to teaching and ministry to Jacob Doerksen, their preacher/teacher grandfather. Although Doerksen died while Kampen's mother Betty and Peters' father Len were still teenagers, the two cousins feel they knew him through stories from their parents. In the course of researching their family saga through letters, pictures and documents, the two uncovered some surprising stories going back to their great-grandmother. *Daughters in the House of Jacob* is published by the Mennonite Brethren Historical Commission through Kindred Press.

—STORY AND PHOTO  
BY AMY DUECKMAN



*Signing copies of Daughters in the House of Jacob are Christine Kampen, left, and Dorothy Peters.*

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# Sharing faith through teaching Sunday school

*For Benjamin Weber, working with youth is a way to use the gifts God has given him*

BY AARON EPP  
Young Voices Editor

Some teachers want their lessons to run smoothly, but not Benjamin Weber.

"I like a healthy amount of chaos," says Weber, 29, who teaches the youth Sunday school class at Stirling Avenue Mennonite Church in Kitchener, Ont. "I open the floor and let them ask me about anything. Usually it's about current events, so we relate that back to the topic at hand."

Weber has taught the class for the last four-and-a-half years.

"I believe God has given me this gift of fascination for things, a good memory for knowledge and the ability to impart that knowledge in a semi-coherent way, so I

whether he wanted to re-join the Mennonite church or follow a different religion.

"It wasn't a knee-jerk [decision] to return to the Mennonite church," he says. "I wanted to learn about all the faiths in the world so I could make a good decision. . . . It never hurts learning about other people's religions. If anything, it only makes your own faith stronger."

In addition to Weber's studies, struggling with some bouts of mental illness led him back to Stirling. He had become socially withdrawn and wanted to return to Stirling because he was familiar with the

*'I think the Christian that can't question and doubt is a shallow Christian.'*  
(Benjamin Weber)

want to use that gift any way I can," he says, adding with a smile: "I've gotten positive feedback, so I know I'm not completely corrupting the youth."

Weber has not always been this passionate about church involvement, though. After growing up at Stirling, he stopped attending church for seven years in his late teens and early 20s.

"There was no definitive break, just a gradual process of going less and less," he says.

At the same time, his interest in religion led him to study it at Wilfrid Laurier University in neighbouring Waterloo. Weber used his studies to think through

people there, thinking it would be a good place to reignite his social life.

Weber was baptized when he was 26. He was serving on Stirling's Faith Formation Committee when someone asked him if he would teach the youth Sunday school class, which consists of a handful of students in grades 9 to 12.

Weber and Carrie Martens, pastor of faith formation at Stirling, devised a three-year teaching plan that looks at both the Old and New Testaments, and covers topics like Anabaptist distinctives, women in the Bible and Christian tradition, and human sexuality. There is quite

*(Continued on page 28)*

PHOTOS BY D. MICHAEL HOSTETLER



*Benjamin Weber is a member of Stirling Avenue Mennonite Church in Kitchener, Ont.*



*Benjamin Weber has taught the youth Sunday school class for four-and-a-half years.*



*Benjamin Weber, in the striped shirt, uses the topics that the class covers as a launching point to talk about current events.*

*(Continued from page 27)*

a bit of flexibility within the teaching plan for Weber to explore whatever he thinks will most connect with the church's youth.

During a recent series on the gospels, the discussions centred around how Jesus' parables relate to North American life today. This led to a discussion about reconciling religious faith with science.

"Science is all about questioning and doubt, and religion is often seen as just being about dogma and following the rules," Weber says. "I think the Christian that can't question and doubt is a shallow Christian. I think it's important to question everything you hear. That's why I encourage my students to question me."

Martens says it is Weber's confidence in what he believes and his ability to field questions from the youth that make him a successful Sunday school teacher. "He's not threatened by what they ask," she says. "It makes it really easy to have open dialogue, because the conversation remains fluid."

She adds that Weber has had a profound impact on many of the youth, some of whom have mentioned his influence when talking about their decision to be baptized.

"Benjamin is very unique in his ability to analyze information, in his ability to

inspire questioning or direct conversation [and] in his ability to intuitively know what will kind of have purchase with youth," Martens says, adding that Weber's passion for digging deeply into matters of faith is coupled with a quirky sense of humour. "He has the ability to laugh at himself, which the youth really appreciate."

Weber keeps a handful of poetry books in the classroom where he meets with the youth, and ends each class by reading a poem. "Poetry opens your mind and makes you think harder, and I just think it's a good way to end classes," he says.

While he draws inspiration from writers like C.S. Lewis and T.S. Eliot, Weber says one of his biggest influences is William Tyndale, the 16th-century priest and scholar who translated the Bible into English because he believed everyone should have access to it. "I want all knowledge to be available to everyone, and then people can take that information and make their mind up with that, and they can find the truth, and hopefully find God through that," Weber says.

"I'm very much a believer that faith affects everything you do," he adds. "[Faith] is a big part of my life . . . and I hope to share that with other people." ❧



*Paul Plett calls Citizen Kane 'such an amazing representation of what film can do.'*

## The power of film

*Filmmaker Paul Plett talks about five movies that have influenced his life and work*

BY AARON EPP  
Young Voices Editor

"Watching great films is a very spiritual experience for me," says Paul Plett. "It hits a tuning fork in [my] heart and my whole soul reverberates."

The 30-year-old, who attends Home Street Mennonite Church in Winnipeg, is not only an avid film watcher but makes films himself. He recently completed work on *Northern Folk*, a documentary about folk music in Canada, as well as a three-minute science fiction film for children about a day in the life of a hologram.

He now has two more projects in development, including *Seven Points on*

*Earth*, a documentary about seven Mennonite farming communities around the world, as well as a post-apocalyptic science fiction feature about the relationship between a man and a woman who are making their way through a desolate valley to a transport ship.

*Canadian Mennonite* asked Plett to talk about some of the films that have influenced him:

- **CITIZEN KANE** (1941)

Considered by many to be the greatest film of all time, this mystery drama

explores the life of fictional publishing magnate Charles Foster Kane. Auteur Orson Welles co-wrote, produced, directed and starred in the film. He was in his early 20s at the time. “It’s such an amazing representation of what film can do,” Plett says. By the time Welles made the film, he was already known as an innovative storyteller, having directed and narrated an adaptation of the H.G. Wells novel *The War of the Worlds* as a radio drama in

• **KOYAANISQATSI** (1982)

*Koyaanisqatsi* is an experimental film that Plett describes as a “poetic documentary.” There is no dialogue or narration, just footage of cities and natural landscapes from across the United States juxtaposed with music by composer Philip Glass. Watching *Koyaanisqatsi* showed Plett a different way to make documentary films and influenced his 2013 work, *A Documentary About Love*, as well as

*George Lucas’s classic tale about a battle between good and evil ‘a long time ago in a galaxy far, far away’ ... remains one of [Plett’s] favourites to this day.*

1938. “[Welles knew] how to break down barriers and do stuff that’s different,” Plett says.

• **STAR WARS: EPISODE IV—A NEW HOPE** (1977)

George Lucas’s classic tale about a battle between good and evil “a long time ago in a galaxy far, far away” was one of Plett’s favourite movies as a child, and it remains one of his favourites to this day. “That one was hugely influential for me just thinking about what I really love about movies and the kind of movies I want to make,” he says. He calls watching the film “a religious experience,” likening “the Force” to another way of describing God. “In the context of this world, in this fantasy, in this space opera, they’re talking about the Spirit in our lives and how it binds the world together and connects everything,” Plett says.

• **APOCALYPSE NOW** (1979)

“Nothing prepared me for what it was,” Plett says of Francis Ford Coppola’s film. “It unravelled my mind as I watched it for the first time.” The film follows Captain Benjamin L. Willard (Martin Sheen) on his mission to assassinate Colonel Walter E. Kurtz (Marlon Brando). The production was plagued by problems, from sets destroyed by torrential downpours to Brando showing up overweight and not having learned his lines. That Coppola was still able to make a masterpiece in spite of those obstacles is part of what makes the movie great, Plett says: “That, to me, is the greatest example of a truly inspired director in his prime.”

*Northern Folk*. “They’re both poetic docs. They do have dialogue and music, but they’re more collage-based,” Plett says. “The idea is that the audience is going to put it on and it’s more of a meditative experience watching it, as opposed to [having someone] narrating it.”

• **THE PRINCESS BRIDE** (1987)

Combining romance, fantasy, adventure and comedy, *The Princess Bride* tells the story of a farmhand named Wesley who must rescue his true love, Buttercup, from an evil prince. “It’s just a perfect movie,” Plett says. “It [didn’t have] a huge budget, but it’s still super magical. . . . It’s really funny, really well made; there’s a love story and there’s a magical element to it.” *The Princess Bride* is the type of work Plett aspires to. “If I could make one movie . . . that is to people what *The Princess Bride* is to me, then I’d be happy.” ☘

Visit [ode-productions.com](http://ode-productions.com) to find out more about Paul Plett’s own films.



PHOTO BY AARON EPP



*Watching great films is a spiritual experience for Winnipeg filmmaker Paul Plett.*



*For Paul Plett, watching Star Wars: Episode IV – A New Hope is ‘a religious experience.’*



*That filmmaker Francis Ford Coppola was able to make Apocalypse Now, given the obstacles he faced, is part of what makes the film great, Paul Plett says.*

## UpComing

### Learn how to care for God's good creation

We're already implementing creation care practices. Let's share what we're doing. That's the message behind "Caring for God's good creation," a seminar taking place on July 10 at Wanuskawin Heritage Park, 15 minutes northeast of Saskatoon. The event is scheduled to follow Mennonite Church Canada's Assembly 2016. The seminar was organized by the Service, Peace and Justice Committee of Mennonite Church B.C. and Mennonite Creation Care Network (MCCN). It is designed to bring interested groups and individuals together to share best practices. Individuals and groups are invited to bring material supporting their ideas and approaches to creation care to share with other attendees. An MCCN creation care curriculum adapted for a Canadian audience, "Every creature singing," will be introduced at the event, with encouragement to share it with congregations across the country. The seminar will consist of three sessions. The first examines the state of the world today; the second looks at practical resources; and the third will use music, video and other artistic expressions to encourage imaginative participation. For more information, or to register, visit [bit.ly/creation-care-seminar](http://bit.ly/creation-care-seminar).

—Mennonite Church Canada

## UpComing

### Put 'peace in action' this summer

WATERLOO, ONT.—Youth in Waterloo Region can discover community through peace during the week of Aug. 8 to 12. The sixth annual Peace



Camp is a day camp run at Conrad Grebel University College. Youth aged 11 to 14 can experience a week packed with exciting activities, crafts, games and field trips, all with a social justice spin that encourages them to inspire lives, strengthen ties and make peace happen in Waterloo Region. This summer's Peace Camp theme is "Peace in action" and focusses on empowering youth by teaching them that no matter who they are or what they like to do, they can be peacebuilders. Campers will become more aware of how their skills and passions can create peace in their own lives and in global and local communities. For more information, or to register, e-mail camp director Rebekah DeJong at [daycamp.peacecamp@uwaterloo.ca](mailto:daycamp.peacecamp@uwaterloo.ca).

—Conrad Grebel University College

### Renewal decade to commemorate 500th anniversary of Anabaptism

BOGOTÁ, COLOMBIA—From Feb. 12 to 19, 2017, Anabaptist-Mennonites from around the world will gather in Augsburg, Germany, to celebrate the opening event of Renewal 2027 in conjunction with meetings of the Mennonite World Conference (MWC) Executive Committee. Renewal 2027 will be a 10-year series of events—culminating in 2027—to commemorate



Alfred Neufeld

the 500th anniversary of the beginnings of the Anabaptist movement. MWC representatives from Europe have planned a day-long public conference on Feb. 12, 2017: "Transformed by the Word: Reading the Bible in Anabaptist perspectives." Occurring 500 years after Luther's famous appeal to *sola scriptura* launched the Reformation, the conference will explore how Anabaptist-Mennonites around the world have engaged Scripture in the past and how Scripture continues to be relevant today. "After 500 years," says Alfred Neufeld, MWC's Faith and Life Commission chair, "it is time for us to ask the challenging question: 'Do we still have anything in common with the founding mothers and fathers of the Anabaptist church? Should we? Can we?'" Neufeld chairs the planning committee for the 2017 event that includes Arli Klassen of First Mennonite Church, Kitchener, Ont.

—Mennonite World Conference

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## Calendar

### British Columbia

**Oct. 14-16:** Women's retreat, "Piecing together our identity," at Camp Squeah, Hope, with speaker Song Yang Her. Register at [mcbc.ca/womens-ministry](http://mcbc.ca/womens-ministry).

### Saskatchewan

**Aug. 6:** Seventh annual Spruce River Folk Festival, at Spruce Home, 20 kilometres north of Prince Albert on Highway 2. Pipe ceremony at 10 a.m. Music from 1 to 8 p.m. For more information, or to volunteer, call Heather Driedger at 306-763-6224.

### Manitoba

**July 11-15:** Pioneer Day Camp at Mennonite Heritage Village, Steinbach, for children aged 5 to 8.

**July 29-Aug. 1:** Pioneer Days at Mennonite Heritage Village, Steinbach. Activities include steam-powered threshing, music and food.

**Aug. 8-12:** Pioneer Day Camp at Mennonite Heritage Village, Steinbach, for children aged 9 to 12.

**Aug. 10:** Heritage Classic Golf Tournament fundraiser for Mennonite Heritage Village, at Quarry Oaks Golf Course. Spaces are limited.

**Sept. 18:** "Supper from the field," at Mennonite Heritage Village, Steinbach,

at 5:30 p.m. Held in conjunction with Open Farm Day.

### Ontario

**Until Dec. 26:** New exhibit at the Mennonite Archives of Ontario at Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo: "Conchies speak: Ontario Mennonites in Alternative Service."

**Until Aug. 13:** "Stories in Art from Iraqi Kurdistan," at Conrad Grebel University College Gallery, Waterloo.

**July 1-3:** Family camping weekend at Hidden Acres Mennonite Camp, New Hamburg. Pitch a tent, park a trailer or camp in a cabin. For more information, or to reserve a cabin, call 519-625-8602.

**July 17:** Riverdale Mennonite Church, Millbank, is celebrating its 70th anniversary with David Brubacher speaking on God's faithfulness at 10 a.m. Everyone welcome.

**July 23-24:** Wideman Mennonite Church 200th-anniversary main event, Markham, Ont. (23) barbecue at 5 p.m. (RVSP to [widemanchurch@gmail.com](mailto:widemanchurch@gmail.com)), followed by hymn sing at 7 p.m. (24) worship service at 10 a.m., followed by a noon potluck lunch, and stories and music at 2 p.m.

**July 31:** Vineland United Mennonite Church 80th anniversary celebration. Worship service at 10:30 a.m. with lunch and program to follow. Please RSVP at 905-562-4422.

**Aug. 4-7:** The Sherk/Shirk/Schürch reunion, in Waterloo. Activities include

bus tours, seminars, a children's program, auction and banquet. For more information, e-mail [schurch.gathering@gmail.com](mailto:schurch.gathering@gmail.com).

### U.S.

**July 28-31:** The 15th-annual Bridgefolk conference for sacramentally minded Mennonites and peace-minded Catholics takes place at St. Benedict's Monastery in St. Joseph, Minn. Theme: "I desire mercy: Practising the works of mercy." For registration information, visit [bridgefolk.net](http://bridgefolk.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](mailto:calendar@canadianmennonite.org). For more Calendar listings online, visit [canadianmennonite.org/churchcalendar](http://canadianmennonite.org/churchcalendar).**



## Employment Opportunities



**Employment opportunity**

Camp Valaqua is seeking an assistant cook for July and August. Work as part of a team providing meals for campers and staff this summer. We are the camp of Mennonite Church Alberta, located in the foothills NW of Calgary. \$400/week plus room and board.

**Call or email: 403-637-2510, [manager@campvalaqua.com](mailto:manager@campvalaqua.com)**



**First United  
Mennonite Church**

Associate Pastor

**First United Mennonite Church (FUMC), located in Vancouver B.C., is looking for a part time-pastor (.5 FTE) to engage and serve our culturally diverse urban neighbourhood. We hold to the Anabaptist theology, are members of Mennonite Church B.C. and Mennonite Church Canada and are looking for a pastor to join our team as we continue to develop our relationships with Christ, each other and the community.**

Ideal candidates would have the following:

- Capacity to relate to various age groups and cultures
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- Ability to work in a team environment
- Commitment to Anabaptist theology and practice
- Post-secondary religious education
- A completed Ministerial Leadership Information Form

We are looking for a pastor who is outgoing and can relate to a variety of people, a person who has a missional outlook and a servant's heart, who is good with children and might even be musical. We are willing to look outside the box in the way that we do church, as long as it includes following Jesus and his teachings.

Interested candidates are encouraged to contact the search committee at [john@dixonmc.com](mailto:john@dixonmc.com).

## Classifieds

### Volunteer(s) Wanted

Foothills Mennonite Church Guest House is seeking a host(s) beginning in late August. The Guest House serves people from outside the city of Calgary visiting and/or supporting loved ones in the hospital. We are seeking an individual or couple able to make a 2-3 month (or longer) commitment to this volunteer position. Lodging and a food allowance are provided. For information contact Darrel Heidebrecht at [dgheidebrecht@gmail.com](mailto:dgheidebrecht@gmail.com). For information about the Guest House visit [www.foothillsmennoniteguesthouse.ca](http://www.foothillsmennoniteguesthouse.ca).

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God at work in the Church

# Snapshots

PHOTO BY LAMONT REDDIG



*Ken Reddig, left, receives an Association of Manitoba Archives Lifetime Achievement Award on May 19 from membership chair Andrew Morrison, centre. Archivist Conrad Stoesz, right, of the Mennonite Heritage Centre, Winnipeg, presents Reddig with a painting by Ray Dirks, curator of the Heritage Centre, in appreciation for Reddig's life-long work in preserving many aspects of Mennonite history. Working as a pastor and a professor of Greek and Old Testament, Reddig secured, among other accomplishments, the approval and funding for the Mennonite Heritage Centre Gallery that continues today. He retired from his archival career in 2008 but continues to collect and tell stories from his home in Pinawa, Man., and is active in a number of community projects, including working with sexual abuse victims out of his own experience of abuse. He represents MC Manitoba on the Canadian Mennonite board.*

AMBS PHOTO BY MARY E. KLASSEN



*E. Annika Krause, centre, of Sherbrooke Mennonite Church, Vancouver, was awarded a master of arts degree in theological studies at the 2016 Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary commencement service on May 17 in Goshen, Ind. She is pictured with two of the seminary's Canadian faculty: Andy Brubacher Kaethler, assistant professor of Christian formation, left, and Allan Rudy-Froese, associate professor of Christian proclamation. Krause was the only Canadian among the 18 graduates.*