



C A N A D I A N  
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## A divisive debate

**T**he move to legalize same-sex marriage in Canada is raising public emotion to an intensity we don't often see in this country. Convictions run deep—politicians are breaking party ranks and church members are taking on their leaders as the debate divides society and church. Religion is back in the public discourse.

We in Mennonite Church Canada are drawn into this political debate because it touches on one of our fundamental beliefs—that “God intended marriage as a covenant between one man and one woman for life.” And yet we can't agree on how to respond to the proposed legislation. One suggested response (Resolution 6) divided MC Canada delegates right down the middle (see Aug. 4, page 12 and Aug. 25, page 19). And a statement from our denominational minister (Aug. 4, page 9) has some members concerned (see letters).

How should the church approach the issue of same-sex marriage? It may not be as simple as we first thought. Let me suggest some prerequisites for our response.

First, let's examine our motives. What are we afraid of? Are we dealing with the real issues? This legislation is not about undermining marriage or forcing churches to marry same-sex couples. It's important for us to distinguish between legal issues in a pluralistic society and what the church confesses. But this issue does have huge symbolic significance for both church and society.

Second, let's do some serious thinking about this issue. My files are bulging with insightful articles from church leaders, journalists and academics—let's take advantage of them. Just to restate a “traditional” notion of marriage is not nearly good enough. Nor is a call to maintain the “sanctity of marriage and family.” In our day of high divorce rates and

messy relationships, that “sanctity” is as likely to be found in a “same-sex family” as it is in any other family. We have to grapple with today's realities in honest, life-giving ways.

But to grapple with reality doesn't mean that we relinquish our ideal of marriage. For the church, the word “marriage” signifies not only a God-given model of companionship but the best environment for raising children. That is why many resist extending the word “marriage” to include other kinds of relationships.

Third, let's ask the difficult questions. Given the ideal of marriage that the church holds, should we not encourage commitment and fidelity wherever they are found? Should we support the extension of legal responsibilities and benefits to gay couples because they can help bring accountability and security to their families? These are questions the church should be asking.

Our Confession of Faith points the way. Article 19 on “Family, singleness, and marriage” goes far beyond a mere restatement of traditional notions. It recognizes the immense changes in our thinking about family in recent decades; it recognizes the shortcomings in all our relationships and that “not all things can be fixed as we would like.” At the same time, it reminds us of “the power of the resurrection,” focusing on the church as “a sanctuary of safety and hope” for families.

Fourth, let's recognize that Scripture and our Confession will not provide easy answers. We know that our Confession is a summary of our best theological thinking at the moment, not the final word. We know that some Bible verses make clear judgments but that many others emphasize grace. Can we hold those together as we work at a new synthesis for our time? May God guide us as we seek good news for families, both in the church and in our culture.—

**Margaret Loewen Reimer**

**We have to grapple with today's realities in honest, life-giving ways, but this doesn't mean that we relinquish our ideal of marriage.**

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## Website preview

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**Cover: A girl prays during children's worship time at the Mennonite World Conference assembly in Zimbabwe. Photo by Laurie Oswald.**



Winnipeg, Man.

## Being church, native style

Six years ago, Mennonite pastor Steve Cheramie Risingsun planted a church in Louisiana which is deliberately “contextualized and enculturated.” This means that the congregation seeks to honour Christ in native tribal ways, not only in worship but in “passages of life,” such as healing rituals, weddings and funerals.

This may not seem all that radical, given that Jesus was born into a Jewish culture, and that churches quickly took on the flavours of their contexts: Middle East, Greek, Roman and European.

But it took some doing for Cheramie Risingsun, who not only had to overcome the blatant racism of the American South but the negation of his culture by the church itself.

He shared his story during a pastors’ luncheon here in May, sponsored by Native Ministry of Mennonite Church Canada. Risingsun was here to attend the Native Missiological Symposium.

Cheramie Risingsun was a sickly child who kept losing weight in the hospital. Finally, his parents decided to do it “our way” and he was healed by traditional medicine. This experience sparked an ongoing interest in native medicine.

Growing up near New Orleans, “where you’re either black or white with nothing in between,” he experienced racism right from the beginning. As a pre-schooler, he remembers being struck on the head by a white man for drinking out of the “whites only” fountain. His increasing hatred of white people led to involvement with alcohol and drugs.

At age 17, Cheramie Risingsun heard the gospel of Jesus Christ for the first time. “It changed my life,” he said simply. But the onslaughts on his personhood and culture continued.

As a Christian, he was taught to forsake tribal spirituality and medi-

cine. He enrolled in a Bible college in Texas where he was immediately forced to get a haircut. As he went on to do a masters degree, all his “Indianness” was driven out.

When Cheramie Risingsun went back to work with his people, he was challenged, somewhat mockingly, by an elder to pray for the healing of his painful back.

“I was afraid,” Cheramie Risingsun said. “But I prayed and the Lord healed him!” Then a chief asked him to pray for the healing of his daughter and, again, the prayer was answered.

“This was the means by which God found me favour with my people,” he concluded. At age 27, he was elected chair of the tribal council where he served for seven terms.

Cheramie Risingsun’s re-education in terms of church life began in 1981 at a meeting of Messianic Jews. He saw this group being applauded for maintaining its traditional dancing and clothing while being affirmed for being Christian. He began to look differently at Indian culture and its relationship to following Jesus.

Cheramie Risingsun pastors the Native Christian Fellowship in Gretna, Louisiana and the Poarch Community Church on a Creek reservation in Atmore, Alabama. Both are Mennonite Church USA congregations.

The missionaries who began the Poarch church in 1951 were “very traditional: patriarchal, unaccompanied hymn-singing, white socks...” Now, the third generation of Christians have said, “This ain’t us; we like drums, powwows and stomp dancing.”

But older people still follow the conservative ways (ways which have long ago been left behind by the mother churches but “they didn’t come to tell us things had changed”), so the younger generation moves slowly out of respect for their elders.

For example, said Cheramie



Photo by Leona Dueck Penner

**Cheramie Risingsun tells his story to Manitoba pastors in May.**

Risingsun, “we haven’t brought in the drums or regalia but we do bless the children, hold native weddings and wakes.”—**Leona Dueck Penner, with Eric Olfert**

Winnipeg, Man.

## New models for native ministry

The title for the second Native North American Missiological Symposium, held here on May 29-31, was “Community: Native and Christian values, realities and solutions.” I wondered if a more appropriate way of encapsulating the theme might have been “Redeeming Christianity.”

Speakers included a wonderfully diverse group of aboriginal and non-aboriginal speakers from Episcopalian, Mennonite, Alliance and Salvation Army perspectives. Their audience, a mix of about 95 academics, clerics, and mission workers, responded with lively discussion.

Mennonite speakers were Steve Cheramie Risingsun, Cornelius Buller and Jonathan Dyck.

It was important to review some of the disasters in Christianity’s

Matheson Island, Man.

## Native community celebrates centennial

**A** Sunday morning worship service led by long-time Native Ministries workers Edith and Neill von Gunten and attended by over 100 people was one of the main events at the Matheson Island community's centennial celebration during the first weekend in August.

The service, held in a tent beside the Matheson Island chapel, was attended by local residents as well as guests from as far away as the United States and the Northwest Territories. Many of the guests had grown up on Matheson Island, a community of 130 people. Others had worked there as teachers or mission workers.

At the community's request, the von Guntens led worship and delivered the meditation at the service. There was lively singing by the congregation and special music by family groups and individuals. Dorothy Crate Settee played a small drum as she sang "Amazing Grace" in Cree, bringing tears to many eyes. Several former Native Ministries workers led in

scripture readings, prayer and a responsive reading.

There were a number of spontaneous testimonies at the service. Several people commented on how significant Native Ministries personnel had been in their lives. Trudie Unrau from Winnipeg, who with her husband Jake were the first Native Ministries workers at Matheson Island, talked movingly about how much she had been shaped by aboriginal people and their culture. She said she considers herself to be "part Indian."

A week before the centennial celebration, the worship tent was the venue in which 55 children from



Photo by Larry Kehler

**Girls from Matheson Island perform action songs they learned at their summer camp, while Neill von Gunten participates in the background.**

Matheson Island, Pine Dock and Riverton came together for the annual children's camp. This event, led by Edith and Neill von Gunten, was staffed by local people and a youth group from Berne, Indiana. This might be the last year this camp is held because of Mennonite Church Canada's recent cutbacks to Native Ministries.

The von Guntens, who have served in Native Ministries since 1976, were invited by the community to compile a history book about Matheson Island. It resulted in the production of a 620-page book entitled, *From Paddles to Propellers: The History of Matheson Island, a Fishing Community*. This very attractive book came off the press just in time for the celebration.

On Sunday, shortly after the service, an aboriginal person gave Neill and Edith an eagle feather and quietly told them, "You are part of us."

People in the community expressed concern about the future of the church now that the pastoral position has been cut by Mennonite Church Canada. Mention was made at the worship service of the many positive things that had happened in the lives of Matheson Island people because of Native Ministries personnel. The seeds of faith in Christ have been planted and have grown.—From report by **Larry Kehler**

interaction with North America's indigenous peoples, including the church's alliance with colonialism and residential schools. But the focus of the symposium was on the possibilities of the Christian message in native society.

Keynote speaker Mark McDonald, an aboriginal and Episcopal Bishop of Alaska, emphasized that the foundational resonance between the truth of Christianity and that of aboriginal understandings creates immense potential for the gospel to sweep through aboriginal society. There is almost a sense of a dam about to break, with the dam being the resistance created by the sordid history of the church's interaction with native society and the cultural barriers that cause Christianity to be seen as "the white man's religion."

Ray Aldred, a Cree consultant with the Alliance Church, issued a challenge that seemed to resonate with Mennonite experience in his paper, "The

resurrection (of) story." His thesis was that between the propositional truths of fundamentalism and the "accept everything" relativism of liberal theology, there must be a way of presenting the gospel that communicates with native culture.

"Hope for a truly aboriginal Christian spirituality lies in placing the gospel story as the first thing," said Aldred. "Could not a resurrected gospel story function as the story of Christian aboriginal people?"

Randy and Edith Woodley, of Cherokee and Shoshone heritage, proposed a new approach to native ministry—adaptable, biblical, respectful and non-denominational. Based in Alabama, they train native leaders for ministry.

McDonald reminded us that "the barrier to the harvest is largely in the hearts of those who are trying to bring the gospel. The gospel zone is growing!... The Navaho are coming to Jesus! The Cree are coming to Jesus! The Blackfoot are coming!"—**Eric Olfert**



# Sharing gifts in suffering and in joy

Each day at the Mennonite World Conference assembly in Zimbabwe focused on a different continent and a different aspect of the theme, "Sharing gifts in suffering and in joy." For more reports, see pages 16-22.

## Asia Day: Joy amid suffering

Shouts of "hallelujah!" rang in the worship hall on Asia Day, August 12. Ambrocio Porcincula of the Philippines urged the audience to add its voices to his high-volume preaching.

"Let us joyfully celebrate life in Jesus," he said. The joy he spoke of was accompanied by an awareness of suffering.

"Hundreds of millions of people around the world live without hope, without peace," he said. "The suffering is so great that I don't think you people from Europe, from Canada and North America, can understand it."

The theme of Asia Day was "Celebrating life amidst suffering and violence."

Some of the world's suffering, Porcincula said, is due to corrupt political structures. But sometimes people's suffering is due to their own sin—when people chase after false gods, when selfishness rules.

"When society loses its conscience, it is only a matter of time before you pay the consequences," he said. God's judgment teaches us the wages of sin, but "God's ultimate goal is our redemption."

Hendro Soeradi of Indonesia told of healing a split in the Indonesian Mennonites' GITJ conference. The group split in 1996, but in 1999 reconciliation was accomplished and relationships were restored.

Shant S. Kunjam of India presented the morning Bible study on Philippians 3:10-16. Philippians is a book of rejoicing, he said.

"Rejoicing means being fully anchored in

Christ, not despairing in any situation," he said. Christians are called to experience the mysteries of the fellowship of Christ's suffering.

"There are things that cannot be known apart from suffering for Christ's sake," he said.

Catholic archbishop Pius Ncube brought greetings to the assembly. Zimbabwe was once the second richest country in Africa, trailing only South Africa, he said. Now there is starvation.

"God is teaching us a lesson not to waste the gifts he has given us.... We will overcome, because as Christians we are people of hope."—From report by **Paul Schrag**

## Europe Day: Bearing fruit

Europe Day began with singing led by the International Choir, with songs from European countries. Ruthild Foth of Germany was recognized for attending 10 consecutive Mennonite World Conference assemblies.

The Bible study, based on John 15:1-17, was conducted in French by Claude Baecher and Marianne Goldschmidt of France. Although they come from close to where Anabaptism was born, that is no guarantee of quality fruit, Baecher said. Every generation must learn from Jesus to bear fruit.

Referring to Isaiah 5, Baecher said God was looking for justice and all he heard was the voice of suffering. Goldschmidt continued with the image of Jesus as the vine. The sap runs from the vine through the branches, creating a solidarity between Jesus and his followers.

Baecher played on the word *menoo* (Greek for "remain"), used 11 times in

**Ambrocio Porcincula of the Philippines prays after preaching on Asia Day.**





John 15. He emphasized the importance for *Mennonites* to remain in Jesus so that our fruit will *menoo*, remain. Remaining in Jesus results in joy, and love is the fruit of the joy that is shared—the sap that flows east and west, north and south.

Fernando Enns from Germany brought the evening message, based on Ephesians 6:10-20. The state of the church in Europe and in Bulowayo is similar to that of the church in Ephesus, he said. It was a time of uncertainty, gathering and orientation.

The church needs to put on the armour of God to fight inner battles, but also the battles of terror, war, starvation, corruption and torture.

“The word of God appears to be the only weapon of the church which is suitable for attack,” he said. But it is not the church’s sword, it is the Spirit’s sword. He also encouraged the church not to neglect the rest of the armour: the belt of truth—the key to reconciliation; the breastplate of righteousness—working for justice; the shoes of peace—overcoming evil with good; the shield of faith—“the trust that God’s possibilities do not end where ours do.”

Enns ended with two challenges: to be the church at home, and to work together with the worldwide church, sharing our convictions of peace.

Hansuli Gerber of Switzerland issued a third challenge—to find a way of sharing between churches in the north, where there are resources and programs, and churches in the south, who have ideas and human resources. Perhaps a percentage of the each dollar spent on reconciliation in the north could be sent to a similar project in the south.—**Susan Brandt**

## Latin America Day: Suffering with hope

The silent skit was jarring. A Latin American family was sitting down to dinner when armed men broke into the house and killed the father. Several scenes later, the impoverished family found its way into the embrace of a loving congregation. The story ended with the new Christians sharing the gospel with others.

The actors then moved through the



**International Choir members Herbert Nkaso of Zambia, Agus Setianto of Indonesia and Amos Lopez of Cuba sing on opening night of the assembly.**

audience, flinging seeds into the crowd to reiterate the message: all Christians are expected to sow the seeds of the gospel wherever they go.

The theme for Latin America was “In Christ we suffer with hope and celebrate with joy.”

Rafael Stábile described the context in which the church ministers in his country.

“Argentina is in ruins because of corruption at all levels of government, including justice,” he said in the morning service. “Unemployment is at 15 percent. In this dark picture the church is light and salt and is giving its witness.”

Ofelia Garcia, a pastor in Mexico, offered a litany of miseries in her context.

“In Mexico City, half live in poverty,” she said. “The weight of external debt inherited from generation to generation destines us to underdevelopment and dependence [on other countries]. Latin America can feel in solidarity with many in Africa.”

But hope is also emerging amidst the suffering. Felix Rafael Curbelo celebrated some recent changes in Cuba.

“All missionaries had to abandon the country in 1960,” he said. “We were bereft of any leaders.” Then in 1985 a revival broke out among Brethren in Christ churches. “We went from 200 members to 2,000 in 81 congregations today.”

The Mennonites in the Chaco region of Paraguay described the hope that their radio ministry offers to eight language groups. Ferdinand Friesen-Bartel described how a man, whose wife had been assassinated, travelled 200 kilometres to meet the manager of the radio station because he wanted to experience the kind of family life he heard described in a program.

Garcia, who preached during the closing service of the day, challenged the global family to become more aggressive in ministering to those who suffer.

“Why has the Anabaptist church, with such a rich theology of peace, not been able to permeate the world with a greater impact?” she asked. “If we want to find Christ today, it will be within the community of God’s kingdom that interprets the words and shares the bread.”—**Everett J. Thomas**

**Thomas**

**Continued on page 8**

## North America Day: Gift of unity

“The gift of unity in Jesus Christ is what we are celebrating,” said Mary Anne Isaak, speaker on North America Day. “We are a people from 65 different countries...but in Christ we are one body.” Isaak is a Mennonite Brethren pastor from California.



**A skit on Latin America Day depicts armed men breaking into a house.**

The participants on this day, ranging from a variety of singers to Canadian youth doing drama, reminded us of the day's theme, “Sharing gifts, receiving gifts.” Songs included a traditional spiritual performed by a multi-ethnic choir formed just that morning, and an impromptu performance by

members of a Cheyenne tribe.

In his message, Lindsey Robinson, Lancaster Mennonite Conference minister, contemplated Paul's second letter to the Corinthians, in which the apostle most transparently expresses his struggles with the church.

Paul was prodding the community to appreciate one other as gifts, said Robinson. “Giving ourselves to each other, sharing with each other, praying with each other, encouraging each other, and willing to lay down our lives for each other—all become a base for the powerful witness of God's grace.” In fact, congregations could become mentors to other congregations by their obedience to God.

As if to emphasize this, Robinson thanked the Zimbabwean church for its work in overcoming the many obstacles to hold this world assembly. That note drew thunderous applause and many “amens.”

As brothers and sisters facing a technologically advanced age in an ever-expanding global village, we need to continue to trust God as the source our lives. We must trust God to deliver us from the greed of self-sufficiency and covetousness, Robinson concluded. He reminded us that we know of God's goodness only because God became poor.

Harriet Sider Bicksler, an American born in Bulawayo to missionary parents, offered childhood memories of people and ministries in Zimbabwe and Zambia. Bicksler was revisiting many of these places as the leader of an Assembly Scattered group.

Mary Oyer, who has led singing at previous assemblies, directed the morning singing. Oyer, who now uses a cane, quipped that she looks forward to directing again at the next assembly, even if she has to use two canes to get there.

Ken Hoke, a representative from the North American Brethren in Christ churches, recognized Barbara Nkala, conference hostess, for her consistent encouragement. Hoke then encouraged participants to look at those around them and name the gifts they offer.—**Ron Ross**

## Africa Day: Rich in gifts

“What we have, we give.” This theme set the tone for Africa Day. Philip Okeyo, bishop from Kenya, noted that Africa is full of paradoxes—rich in culture but with many refugees and much poverty, rich in minerals; and rich in love.

Several of the speakers asked in different ways, “Can anything good come from Africa?” As the day progressed, it became clear that the African church has many gifts to offer the global church.

The day climaxed with a challenge by Siaka Traore of Burkina Faso, who built on the proverb: “A guest should not try to judge the value of a chicken offered to him.” In his culture, a host gives a chicken to a guest who then returns it to have it cooked for supper. Traore challenged the global church to accept the gift of the African chicken without judgment, without weighing it, and without comparing it with its own chickens. His challenge received resounding applause.

Worship, led by choirs from Zimbabwe, Zambia and the Congo, included a variety of African music. The congregation loved the songs that encouraged full body participation, emphasizing the point made by a Kenyan, “We use our whole bodies to praise the Lord.”

The morning Bible study on Romans 5:1-5, led by Thuma Hamukang'andu, bishop from Zambia, encouraged participants to be sure of their identity and relationship with God, because you can only give what you know you have. As Christians we are all acceptable before God. We all can give and rejoice, even in suffering.

Alemu Chekole of Ethiopia told of losing his sight at age 8 because of severe eye infections. He was one of the first students in a school for the blind run by Mennonite missionaries. He went on to become a high school teacher. He challenged participants to give all—whatever one has—to God.

In a workshop, Nzash Lumeya of Congo, who teaches at Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary in California, identified three mission frontiers in Africa: the migration of people, the



growth of world religions (especially traditional religion and Islam), and the intersection of poverty and AIDS.

He concluded with a question: What colour of skin does a missionary have? Churches in Africa and in North America still think the answer is “white.”

The evening worship included a footwashing service between Africans and people of the African diaspora. The Africans asked for forgiveness for not protecting their people from the slave trade. The Africans of the diaspora extended forgiveness. Together they expressed the desire to serve one other and the Lord together.

In the evening sermon, Traore identified the wide range of gifts Africa has to offer. He quoted a proverb that reverberates through African cultures: “Because we are, I am.” This is the gift of community. He identified the gift of gratitude to North Americans who came to share the good news of Jesus Christ with Africa. Africa offers the gift of human resources to share the gospel. It has spiritual life in abundance and the gift of time for human relations.

African cultures value hospitality, a gift that was much in evidence throughout the week.—**Arli Klassen and Keith Regehr**

## World Day: Banquet of gifts

The assembly closed on August 17 with World Day. The three-hour worship service was a banquet of stories, songs and testimonies from five continents. At times it became a raucous celebration of the miracles that allowed the gathering to happen in Bulawayo.

At the end, a solemn communion service had 7,500 participants breaking bread together.

“We are just completing a week that many people call a family reunion,” said new MWC president Nancy Heisey. “What makes us ‘family’ and how will our identity shape the way we live in the world?”

Drawing from Ephesians 5, Heisey,

from Harrisonburg, Virginia, described the text as “one of the early pages in a family album” which describes “who we’re not...those who carry on silly or suggestive conversations, people who are greedy, people who get drunk, people who are sexually immoral.”

Heisey also reminded the congregation of major efforts of the week, including a set of core convictions, a new global mission network and the work of the Peace Council.

“While we work on our faith statements...carry out our evangelism efforts...work for justice and peace in the world,” she concluded, “we can be sure that everyone who is found in our family album needs to be there.”

Ethel Sibanda, who led the Zimbabwe hosts’ prayer committee, described how they blessed the assembly site.

“We wanted to make the fairgrounds holy ground,” Sibanda said, “so towards noon we walked the streets, touched every building, cleansing it for the presence of the Lord. We prayed over the sticks of firewood that were cut for cooking our food. At the end of the day we declared before the Lord that this was holy ground.”

The firewood may have also blessed the food. Outgoing MWC president Mesach Krisetya, from Indonesia, suggested that the meals were a miracle.

“We had a lot of miracles during the week,” Krisetya said as he bade farewell after six years as president. “Jesus fed 5,000 people. MWC, with the help of Christ Jesus, was able to feed 7,000.”

Danisu Ndlovu, Brethren in Christ bishop who was elected vice-president of MWC’s General Council, thanked all the internationals for coming to “share in our suffering. There has never been a Christian conference in Bulawayo that brought so many people, so many tribes and so many colours. This is a taste of heaven.”—**Everett J. Thomas**

*These reports were written for Meetinghouse, a Mennonite Brethren in Christ editors’ group.*

**With the Africa Day slogan still on the stage, a woman prepares for communion before the concluding Sunday morning service.**



## How to be an embracing church

Will Schirmer, *Reaching Beyond the Mennonite Comfort Zone*, Cascadia, 2003.

**T**his book looks at the vital question of how to create an embracing Christian community without being exclusive. Schirmer speaks as an “outsider” finding his way into the Mennonite community, specifically the Swiss-American branch of that community.

Using personal anecdotes, Schirmer effectively explores stereotypes in both directions (Mennonite and non-Mennonite) and what it means to be a “good” Christian. A useful discussion of the overlapping circles of “belonging” that characterize our lives leads into an exploration of how family, church and Christian community “fit.”

Schirmer pulls no punches, offering a sometimes “bitingly helpful” critique of how Mennonites “do” community.

In his last three chapters, Schirmer offers practical ideas for moving forward, for positioning ourselves to “reaching out beyond the familiar.” Again, through anecdotes and experience, he suggests some innovative ideas to help our congregations become more truly missional.

Schirmer writes in an easily understood and often challenging style. At times I had to resist becoming defensive. Discussion questions at the end of each chapter help with self-examination and finding meaning for our church.

As a Canadian of Russian Mennonite background, I found Schirmer’s book unintentionally demonstrating his central concern. His unspoken assumption that all Mennonites are like his Swiss-American brethren creates a slight barrier for a reader like me. Let me illustrate.

One of my personnel problems as a

Mennonite Central Committee administrator had to do with styles of communicating. A Russian Mennonite volunteer couldn’t communicate what really mattered to him without bringing his passion to the task, waving his arms and raising his voice. His Swiss Mennonite “boss” was totally uncomfortable in that mode and repeatedly put off any discussion until the volunteer could “calm down and be reasonable.” The volunteer wasn’t interested in a low-key, “boring” discussion, and communication didn’t happen. Similar dynamics have happened around many an MCC Board table.

If we can get past Schirmer’s somewhat “exclusive” analysis, his challenges can be extremely useful for us to ponder.—**Eric Olfert**

*The reviewer is Mennonite Church Canada Witness Missional Formation and Partnership facilitator for Saskatchewan.*

### Publishing note

#### Spanish Bible study for women

A Spanish Bible study for women on the theme of hospitality is now available online in an easily-printable booklet form. In *Bread to Strengthen the Heart*, Heidi Regier Kreider offers activities, Bible study and closing prayers in short lessons designed for women’s groups. They were translated into Spanish by Zulma Prieto. A second series of lessons on Philippians is also available online. These resources are offered by Mennonite Women USA and Canadian Women in Mission at:

www.MennoniteWomenUSA.org/  
BSG.asp.—Mennonite Women release

#### Take note!

Canadian Mennonite has a new e-mail address:

office@canadianmennonite.org

**Canadian Mennonite**

#### Tribute to a marriage

**These life-sized statues of Nettie and Ray Baer stand in the entrance to their garage in Kitchener, Ontario. Ray made them shortly after their marriage in 1968. Now, at age 81, Ray is in a nursing home, blind and bedridden. Nettie comes to feed him breakfast every morning. Arnold Meyers, Ray’s friend and conversation partner for 70 years, recently got Ray to talk about the statues. Ray learned sculpture by reading books, along with trial and error, he said. He began these plaster of paris figures with a wood backbone frame, shaping the figures with styrofoam stuffing. Chicken netting holds the final layer of plaster in place. The figures are painted and sealed with urethane. The facial expressions gave him the greatest satisfaction. “Just think of the artistic skill and patience,” said Meyers. “He is still very pleased with his artistic achievement.”—From report by Arnold Meyers**



## Letters

Letters express the opinion of the writer, not necessarily those of Canadian Mennonite or the church. We publish as many as space permits, unless they attack individuals or become too repetitious. Letters are edited for length and style. This section is meant to provide opportunity for discussion and discernment.

### Legal not same as right

I am responding to a letter by Ken Drudge (July 14) pertaining to Mennonite pastors marrying same-sex couples. Do we depend on civil government to determine what is morally right rather than God's word? Making something legal does not always make it right.

A marriage performed in a Mennonite church should be between a man and a woman for a lifetime commitment.—**Elvin Ramer, Stouffville, Ont.**

### Computer language has spiritual parallels

Having earned my living by writing technical textbooks and educational materials, I have had the opportunity to use a computer, albeit with limited success. I find it intriguing that much of its function and terminology can be compared to one's spiritual life.

Some of the obvious comparisons are the following:

Insert—to add information to improve existing information.

Delete—to discard unnecessary or erroneous information.

Save—to put desirable information into memory.

These three are very important to the "renewing of one's mind" in the spiritual life.

Hacker—one who accesses programs by illegitimate means in order to disrupt normal operations. The ultimate hacker, of course, is Satan

who aims to disrupt and destroy one's spiritual life and testimony.

Virus—information put in by a hacker that spreads like an infectious disease. The virus of sin unchecked does similar damage to one's spiritual life and witness for Christ.

Upgrade—to improve the speed and capacity of one's computer—an ongoing process as technology is improved. Spiritual growth is also an ongoing process, achieved by prayer, worship, Bible study, meditation, fellowship and service.

Main Frame—A master computer with a large data bank that can be accessed by those who know the password or key. The greatest data bank is the Bible, and the key to accessing its wisdom is faith in what Christ accomplished for us on the cross. It contains the gift of righteousness which he earned for us there by paying the penalty for our sin, and the gift of the Holy Spirit "who will guide you into all truth," as we study and submit to God's guidance.

So, let's get reprogrammed and upgraded by "the renewing of our minds."—**Frank J. Thiessen, Winnipeg, Man.**

### Announcements go after offering

In reply to "Where do you put the announcements" (June 30, page 24), I have learned to put them after the offering. With the offering of money, we offer ourselves and our possessions. With the announcements we offer the life and work of our congregation and, often, the larger church.

One minister I knew put the announcements in that context. For example, "We all know that the organ needs to be repaired. The board will meet next Wednesday to deal with that matter, among others." His method increased awareness of the congregation's activities and who it was that made decisions.

—**M. Elizabeth Chapman, London, Ont.**

### Need joint assembly with USA

Apparently the "Welcome Table" theme for the 2003 Mennonite Church USA convention includes some major restrictions (Aug. 4, page 16). Canadians are not expected and don't appear to be wanted as planning partners.

This U.S. group seems to have so much agenda of its own that it doesn't want to consider a Joint Executive proposal to meet with its Canadian brothers and sisters.

As a member of Mennonite Church Canada, I am deeply disturbed and disappointed with this development. I strongly urge the MC Canada General Board to aggressively pursue conversations with the Joint Executive Council and MC USA to resume planning for a joint convention in 2005.

We should encourage the Youth Ministry Council to continue its planning for a 2005 convention in a separate location. As adults we need to meet with our church family in the USA. If we are serious about being one denomination then we should nurture that relationship. Unless this happens, we will permanently go our separate ways.—**Ralph Lebold, Waterloo, Ont.**

### Church acting like exclusive club

I remember distinctly the first time I was told that I was going to hell. Seated in my youth class, I listened to the youth pastor list off all those who would not be joining us in heaven.

I was hidden then, just beginning to understand my sexuality, but I had always known that I was different from my peers. As gays and lesbians were included in the condemned list, I received my first indication of how the church viewed me. Fortunately, a loving family and a connection with God not dependent on the human limitations of the church, kept me from sinking into self-hate.

Throughout the years, I have felt varying degrees of disappointment,



sadness, frustration and anger in regard to the church. I have left and I have come back, wondering how it is that so many people can make blanket proclamations about my relationship with God without knowing me.

The discussion over the word “marriage” has rekindled a debate long present in the church. Who is worthy? The details change, but the theme remains the same.

For years, believers have gone to their Bibles and plucked out of historical, cultural, and textual context verses to cast at those who do not fit their image of a proper Christian. Women, people of colour, divorced folks, and now gays have been targets of those who wish to keep the church under their control. These Christians adopt the divine position of deciding under what conditions others are worthy of God’s love and permitted to express this within the church. They act as though the church were an exclusive club.

Opposition to the marriage of two women or two men is merely an extension of the argument against gays and lesbians being members or leaders in the church. Regardless of the rationale—biblical, understanding of sexuality and marriage—this position is based in a belief that not all are equal, that not all are the creation God has planned, that gay and lesbian persons are not worthy.

This leaves me saddened for the church. The loss through this division, this exclusion, is tremendous. I know, however, that regardless of what the Mennonite Church decides about gays and lesbians in the church, I have a sincere and truthful connection to God and a sacred commitment with my partner.

The church can deny it, but thankfully God’s love is much stronger than human statements.—**Lisa Wenger, Kitchener, Ont.**

## Church must speak to state about poverty

I’ve been reading the newspaper with interest these past few weeks. Churches in Canada have made public statements about government policy, and people are debating whether the church has any place commenting on public debates.

As Mennonites, we know that we cannot obey the state blindly and must act on our conscience. In times like these we need to remember why we witness to the state. We speak to government because we love people with God’s love, and we cannot tolerate injustice.

How is our love convicting us in these times? I work in a church building that also houses a foodbank. Three times a week women and men who live in poverty file through for two bags of groceries. They come with children in tow. This parade of desperation is happening in every city in our country.

## What if peace prevailed in our families?

This year, the family “reunited” in the rolling green richness of Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. My mom, siblings and their partners and offspring gather annually, an event that requires more organization, cheerful flexibility and good will than we usually possess. Still, we find a way through the conflicts and commit ourselves to a similar exercise next year.

My brothers’ genealogy searches led to a Quaker ancestor who emigrated from England to Penn’s Woods in 1682. One morning, a number of us explored two old meetinghouses, searching the cemeteries for those long-gone forebears. Fittingly for the heirs of such a peace-making heritage, my family members now make their church homes in the “historic peace churches” — Quaker, Church of the Brethren and Mennonite.

Peacemaking flows through my bloodlines for over 300 years, yet neither my family nor other Christians have applied the concept to family relations. I still recall the power of the first sermon I heard addressing nonviolence in the family (at a Mennonite Central Committee-sponsored conference on domestic violence in 1990).

On a lighter note, my husband once challenged the family he’d acquired

through marriage by proposing an end to the swift (sometimes dagger-like) teasing rife to our gatherings. Amid protests, he reflected on his experience with a conflict resolution organization.

“They’ve made a commitment to avoid



teasing because of the confusing, potentially hurtful messages that are masked in such interactions.” He concluded, “It changes dynamics—for the better.” His proposal nudged us to consider how our teasing might be damaging our relationships.

What if peace prevailed in our families? What if we drew from our Christian peace heritage, and educated ourselves in communication and conflict to practise peace in our families?

What if we opened our eyes to seeing each other as God sees us, valuing each

person as precious regardless of age, creed, health, race and status?

What if we softened our aggressive self-centredness to listen exquisitely to each other? What if we overrode our timid passivity to voice clearly our unique contribution?

What if we spoke the truth honestly from our hearts? What if we laid down our weapons of manipulative games and power plays? What if we used our anger to address our brokenness? What if we stopped hitting our children?

What if we worked passionately to forge enduring relationships of justice and equality? What if we befriended other families to expand our circles of support? What if we shared our bread and other resources so that other families would know life and health?

What if we prayed daily for God’s limitless power to infuse our relationships with love and forbearance, especially in those relationships where there is conflict?

What if...peace prevailed in our families?

*The writer, counsellor and author, operates Family Ties in Winnipeg. This is the second column on the Mennonite Church Canada assembly theme, “What if...grace, peace and love prevailed?”*

In love we ache for people who live with hunger. In love we assail politicians with calls for justice. We demand a living minimum wage, and social assistance and disability benefits that do not impoverish.

I can think of no other political issue that so demands our passion than a rich country that pushes aside those in need and does not feed her children.

As we choose how to speak to the state, we should always remember why we speak. St. John of the Cross reminds us, “Love is the measure by which we shall be judged.”—**Carol Penner, MCEC Minister of Peace, Justice and Social Concerns**

### Clear same-sex position causes dilemma

I appreciated Sven Eriksson’s clear statement of the Mennonite position on same-sex marriage (Aug. 4).

Unfortunately that clarity creates a dilemma because the Confession of faith that leads Sven to declare same-sex unions unacceptable for Mennonite ministers also forbids the practice of remarrying divorced individuals. The confession states that not only is a marriage “one man and one woman” but it is also “for life.”

As a minister I performed a remarriage with the full blessing of the congregation. Many ministers have done so and it would not surprise me if most of our congregations include couples who have been remarried by a Mennonite minister.

So the dilemma is this: Do we refuse to remarry couples? Or do our pastors ignore the confession with regard to same-sex marriages as we have ignored it with regard to remarriages?

Or do we all need to take a deep breath and forbear with each other as each congregation tries to make its own best way? More clarity is needed.—**Bruce Hiebert, Abbotsford, B.C.**

### Marriage has never been static concept

The Sven Eriksson letter to Mennonite Church Canada pastors on same-sex marriages (Aug. 4) does little to move our churches forward on this controversial subject.

Eriksson’s warning that a re-definition of marriage to include same-sex couples will “significantly change the understanding and practice of marriage that have been held from ancient times” is based on a false premise. The understanding of marriage and family has evolved in significant ways ever since ancient times!

There has never been anything static about marriage or family, thank goodness! Abraham had problems with Sarah and Hagar and didn’t exactly leave us with a good example. Neither is Isaac’s long servitude before being able to marry his true love an inspiring example of marriage.

Solomon with his thousand wives, the Catholic view of marriage buttressed by Augustine’s low view of sexuality, women’s “traditional” vow of obedience to their husbands, the helplessness of a woman stuck in an abusive marriage—these are just a few areas in which our understanding of marriage has changed since ancient times.

Now our society is trying to catch up with the reality of a large number of committed, long-term, loving unions involving same-sex partners who are no longer willing to be relegated to a status of inferiority in our society. Many are faithful members of our churches and have been in their “unmarried” partnerships for many years through no fault of their own.

The debate around what to do with such unions has the possibility of becoming an ugly and divisive one. Mennonite churches are circling their wagons to defend the status quo. Some are threatening to withdraw if MC Canada does not stay the course.

There need be no threat to marriage here whatsoever. How can that which is based on love, as both gay and straight monogamous relationships are, threaten an institution which is set up to celebrate loving commitments?

Rather than lament and be fearful, I challenge our leaders to help us move beyond a mere reiteration of outdated perspectives. We made a good beginning at the St. Catharines assembly. We need to continue the dialogue. I believe that acceptance of same-gender marriages can open the door to renewed stability among us, and open wide the window of God’s blessing on us.—**Victor Fast, London, Ont.**

### MC Canada leaders appear to differ on ‘grace’

The August 4 issue carries in unique juxtaposition two issues Mennonite Church Canada wrestled with at its assembly in St. Catharines.

On page 6, Henry Krause, MC Canada moderator, asks: What if...grace prevailed? Krause makes a strong case for taking the risk of letting God make the decisions and for us to live with the consequences of such grace. He says, “As Mennonites I think we are grace challenged! We have a fear of being too gracious because we don’t know where it will lead.”

On page 9 is a letter on same-sex marriage to MC Canada pastors by Sven Eriksson. Eriksson is fearful that allowing same-sex marriages will put the whole concept of family into jeopardy. There is little of “what if...grace prevailed” in his letter.

Eriksson refers to the Confession of Faith article 19 to make the case that “therefore it is clear that conducting or blessing same-sex marriage is outside of our understanding and practice of marriage.” Yet when we accepted our Confession it was with the understanding that it would not be used as the final authority but would help us continue to explore what it means to be children of God.

In Acts 10, Peter visits Cornelius in Caesarea. Contrary to Jewish understanding, he enters Cornelius’ house and speaks the Gospel of peace and salvation. To Peter’s amazement, the Holy Spirit falls on Cornelius and his household, they are baptized, and the doors of Christianity are flung open to Gentiles. Grace prevailed.

But homosexuality is an abomination to God, according to Romans 1. True, but chapters 2 and 3 show all of us to be sinners and an abomination to God. It is here that the paradox of God becomes real—his grace made it possible for us to become children of God. We have no right to deny anyone that same status.

I find Eriksson’s perspective perplexing, hardly in line with that of his moderator and even less so with Jesus’ call to be agents of love, of grace.—

**Jake Nickel, Saskatoon, Sask.**

Winnipeg, Man.

## Signs of hope in Jordan and Iraq

**W**hen you love what you do, respect the people you work with, and feel that you are participating in a defining moment in a country's history, the stresses of living in a region of conflict don't seem that over-whelming. In fact, life can be rather invigorating.

That's the impression you get from Deborah Fast and Menno Wiebe who have been Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) representatives for Jordan and Iraq since August 2000. They were in Canada this summer with their children, Sophia, 9, and Stefan, 5, brimming with stories.

At Charleswood Mennonite Church, Deborah said she is "very excited" about MCC's priorities in Jordan, which include supporting peace and justice initiatives and partnering with local churches. She feels energized by the "more deliberate, forward looking emphasis on partnering with this ancient minority church which has roots that go back 2000 years!"

Menno had just returned from a trip to Iraq where MCC has three workers.

"There are so many stories I could tell you about Iraq," he said. "I could share personal stories about meeting a grieving woman in Baghdad whose only child had been killed in a bombing raid; or I could talk about the political situation; or about public health issues in a country where sometimes the only treatment available for an illness is clean water...or I could share a story of peacemaking."

When Christian Peacemaker Team workers were forced to leave Iraq towards the end of the war, they had a car accident and were taken to a hospital. The Iraqis did the best they could with their meagre supplies to treat the injured Americans.

"That sent a peace message," concluded Menno. "These are still very difficult days in Iraq but these kinds of stories help to pull us through."

In a conversation with *Canadian Mennonite*, Deborah spoke about being

amazed that Jordanians, after generations of conflict, are "still willing to imagine what peace would look like."

Menno added that in Iraq, despite everything, "I see a people whose bed-rock values, characteristic hospitality, good humour, decency have weathered it all.... The majority of the people grieve over the pillaging and the plundering" done by their own people after the war.

"But they're in a tough situation. They're not happy with the U.S. presence, but they don't have many options."

When asked how they and their children were affected by the war, Deborah said they were grateful that MCC gave them the choice whether to leave or to stay in Jordan.

"Most other outside agencies didn't give their workers that choice," she said. "We never doubted that we wanted to stay.... Thankfully for our children, it wasn't overly stressful."

Sophia asked a lot of challenging questions about people leaving, but the children's daily routines weren't affected that much. "Sophia only missed one day of school and some of their play areas were restricted."

About half the population of Jordan are Palestinian refugees. "Living there gives you a sense of the turmoil, the uncertainty, the anger," said Deborah.

Menno added: "The majority of the people have experienced conflict throughout their entire lives.... Life is on hold."

As for living "on hold" themselves, they agree that the political tensions affected their work, especially during the war in Iraq when meetings didn't happen, projects were interrupted, and everyone was glued to the TV. Dealing with a North American organization in such a setting can add stress. But they still love their work.

"Not to say I love it every day," laughed Deborah. "In Jordan everything you do requires a relatively intense human interaction.... When



**Menno Wiebe and Deborah Fast feel privileged to work in the Middle East.**

that is going well, it's energizing; but when I don't understand what's happening, it can be difficult.

"Overall Jordan is quite a conducive environment for what MCC does. There's a benevolent government relatively free of corruption, so it feels like we can actually get somewhere."

"MCC has been in the Middle East for 50 plus years," noted Menno. "MCC has positioned itself well and is recognized, respected and accepted. It's exciting to be a part of that."

The family returned to Jordan on July 24 for another three years.

—**Leona Dueck Penner**

### What we should know about Iraq and Jordan

**W**hen asked what they would like people to know about Iraq and Jordan, Deborah Fast and Menno Wiebe highlighted the following:

- "There's the issue of humanization," said Menno. "The Iraqis tell us: 'We've been reduced to a caricature; the focus has all been on one man, Hussein, who is evil.... We want to be seen as real people, not stereotypes.'"

- "That an ancient church exists in the Middle East," said Deborah. "They're very small and they feel their minority status [in their Muslim cultures]. But there is a desire that Westerners acknowledge their existence."

- Relationship building is highly important. "MCC is one of the few



Montreal, Que.

## Lots of variety at Montreal's first peace festival

A few drops of rain fell on Montreal's first-ever Peace Festival on August 9 and volunteers scurried to put tarps over the thousands of dollars worth of sound equipment. The sound man, however, wasn't worried. And the rain did hold off until the next day, a testimony to the prayers of the faithful.

The two-day peace festival (*Le festival de paix*) was held at the House of Friendship (*La maison de l'amitié*). It began with a community supper and a talk on nonviolent communication by Mary Dancilla Mukandongo, who has been working at the reconciliation of the Rwandan community in Montreal.

Saturday morning the festivities continued on the street with an ecumenical worship service. The service included music and peace-work sharing that crossed continents as well as denominational lines. The time of worship finished with a sharing of the peace around a beautiful dove drawn on the pavement in the middle of the street.

The afternoon was given over to young musicians. Music ranged from folk to rock, to rap and back again. The only condition given to the musicians was that one of the songs in each set had to be about peace. The variety of

music was a reminder that "peace" sometimes involves tolerating different tastes in music! The concert continued until 8:30 p.m.

Things were also busy inside the House of Friendship. The gymnasium had been transformed into an art gallery. Each artist had been given an old window to work with—the variety of results was astounding. Paint, stained glass, papers, inks and music combined to give glimpses into the complex reality of "peace."

For a modest price, a member of the Eglise évangélique de St-Laurent was selling Congolese food. The deep-fried delicacies were much appreciated.

Artists were also at work outside painting a mural on the wall of the House of Friendship. Lisette Laurin, an artist in the Mennonite church, had done the outlines previously, so anyone could wander over and lend a hand to the painting. One woman from the neighbourhood said she had always dreamed of painting a mural.

Situated beside the Mennonite Central Committee kiosk was a



**Painting a mural on the wall of the House of Friendship was one of the activities during the Montreal peace festival.**

smaller mural that kids made to send to Iraq. While the children enjoyed painting, parents could visit and learn more about MCC.

The House of Friendship, Montréal City Mission (a United Church ministry), TANDEM (a crime prevention program) and the Centre for Restorative Justice also had kiosks to share about their peace work in the city.

The festival planning committee included representatives of MCC Québec and the House of Friendship, headed by Daniel Genest of the Quebec Mennonite Council. Here's to a new Montréal tradition!—MCC Québec release by **Dora-Marie Goulet and Mylène Melançon**

organizations that places people in the region relatively long term," said Deborah. For example, Edward Miller's work in Iraq is not just to coordinate aid for MCC. He's also helping Iraqis tell their stories. In part, this is to counter the increasing feelings of division between "us" (westerners) and "them" (easterners).

We can see the damage from that division happening, said Deborah. "I hope...we can keep working at ways to counter that trend of dividing the world." To do that, MCC promotes visits and exchanges, including work teams such as Habitat for Humanity.

•This is a time for sharing—not just food and aid, but each other's stories. A Dominican priest in Baghdad told them: "Let's begin to listen to each other, think about how we repair the events of the last 50 years.... We need to understand each other and begin to heal."

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## Mennonite World Conference

Bulawayo, Zimbabwe  
August 11 - 17, 2003

Bulawayo, Zimbabwe

# Assembly 14: 'Everything we prayed for was answered'

**T**attered Bible in hand, Christopher Moyo summed up the Mennonite World Conference (MWC) assembly from a Zimbabwean's point of view.

"The spiritual food and the physical food both are very good," he said. When a man barely manages to feed his family, a full plate at a church conference is no small gift.

Gifts large and small were exchanged at the Zimbabwe International Trade Fair on August 11-17 when about 7,000 Mennonites and Brethren in Christ—more than 5,000 of them Africans—gathered for the 14th worldwide assembly.

It didn't take long for them to make the conference theme, "Sharing gifts in suffering and in joy," much more than words.

North Americans learned about responses to suffering as they heard about Zimbabwe's food shortages.

"I take my mind back into the rural areas, and I shed tears," said George Nyathi, food coordinator for Mennonite Central Committee and the Brethren in Christ church (BIC) in Zimbabwe. "We need your assistance. We need your prayers."

Africa women shared the gift of joy as they cheered and danced up to the stage where a Zambian choir was singing.

"What I enjoy most is the music," said Nomqhele Ndlovu of Zimbabwe. "Even if they are singing in another language, I still enjoy it."

Among many good things was the

way the assembly placed people from 58 nations into a new Anabaptist family portrait. This portrait had black and brown faces in the majority, reflecting the fact that more Anabaptists live in Africa than in any other continent, according to MWC statistics.

The assembly also placed a spotlight on the Brethren in Christ Church, an 18th-century offshoot of Mennonites. Zimbabwe's entire Anabaptist membership of 29,000 is BIC.

At worship services, the Zimbabwean BIC women's "church uniform"—white hats and white blouses—was the dominant clothing style in the crowd.

And the assembly gave visitors a glimpse into the lives of Zimbabweans, who are enduring drought, political unrest and inflation calculated at 364 percent this year.

"It's quite an honour that you are willing to come and share our sorrows," said Treziah Ndlovu while waiting in line for lunch. "You will witness what we experience and tell others. Life is getting tougher and

Worshippers hold hands while singing.



## Moving to the music

**F**or decades after coming to Africa, Brethren in Christ missionaries prohibited dancing in church.

A century later, worshippers at the Mennonite World Conference assembly let the music move them. The song *Hakuna Akaita Sa Jesu* (There is no one like Jesus) was the one that really got them going. It wasn't even in the assembly songbook, but worship leaders kept bringing it back by popular demand.

On Sunday morning, about 7,000 Anabaptists with smiles on their faces turned in circles and swung their arms as they sang: "There is no one like Jesus, no one is like him. We ran and ran everywhere. We went round

tougher each day.”

The assembly's official registration was more than 6,200. About 4,500 Zimbabweans registered. Among the 1,800 international guests, the United States had 737 participants and Canada 254.

Each day featured morning and evening worship planned by people from a different continent. On a stage in the Global Church Village display area, groups shared their music. Workshops and tours were other daily activities.

Before and after the conference, called Assembly Gathered, many international visitors took part in tours known as Assembly Scattered, visiting Anabaptist churches and attractions such as wildlife parks in several African countries.

Not the least of the assembly's many blessings was the fact that it was held at all.

“The hand of God was really mighty, because everything we prayed for was answered,” said Ethel Sibanda, a member of the coordinating committee in Zimbabwe.

Overcoming obstacles was like climbing mountains, she said. The biggest challenges were ensuring adequate security, food and fuel. “We felt each time God was levelling the mountains,” Sibanda said.—**Paul Schrag**

and round everywhere. We searched and searched everywhere. No one is like him.”

One way to tell that a song had generated special enthusiasm was to listen for the high-pitched “le-le-le-le-le!” from African women. An African song leader urged everyone to “make any sound you can think of.” He also encouraged people to wave their Bibles over their heads.

In the Sunday sermon, Nancy Heisey, the new president of MWC, said singing brings diverse people together.

“As we are filled with the Spirit, how do we respond? By singing!” she said. “That should come as no surprise to any Mennonite or Brethren in Christ person here, especially not after this week.”—**Paul Schrag**

## Council issues statement on Zimbabwe

It is inappropriate to come and say nothing about the situation in Zimbabwe, said Larry Miller, Mennonite World Conference executive secretary, to the newly elected General Council on August 17. Miller had been in conversation with church leaders over several months on preparing a statement.

The Council accepted a statement that is being published as a paid advertisement in Zimbabwe newspapers.

“As believers in God who wills the well being of all, and as followers of Jesus, the Prince of Peace, we lament situations of poverty, oppression, injustice, violence and war that exist in many parts of the world,” says the statement.

“Recognizing Zimbabwe's resilient people and rich natural resources, and having experienced the warm welcome and gracious hospitality of the hosting Brethren in Christ Church, we especially grieve and deplore the current situation of suffering in this country.”

Examples of the current situation include:

- “The fear and brutality that result from political oppression and conflict, excessive police powers and arbitrary arrests, and legislation that curtails democratic expression and free assembly.”
- “The hardship and exploitation that result from economic breakdown, profiteering and corruption, shortages of all kinds, unemployment and endemic poverty.”
- “The malnutrition and death that result from a humanitarian crisis of major proportions, caused by mismanagement of the economy, drought, massive shortages of food, medical supplies and services, and the scourge of HIV/AIDS.”

The statement goes on to list causes of “great joy and deep gratitude” that include:

- “The commitment of all parties to the current mediation talks...”
- “The prophetic voice of the church for justice and peace and the courageous role of its leaders...”
- “The tenacity, passion, endurance and non-violent action of Zimbabwe-

ans in the face of deep distress.”

“We will carefully monitor developments” in the next months, concluded the statement, which pledged to continue advocacy for justice, food aid, assistance to those at risk from HIV/AIDS, “and fervent intercession before God that justice will flow like a river to bring healing and hope to a weary land (Isaiah 58; Amos 4).”

The statement is signed on behalf of the General Council by “Dr. Nancy Heisey, President (2003-2009), Dr. Larry Miller, Executive Secretary, and Dr. Mesach Krisetya, President (1997-2003).”

### Message to churches

The Council issued a second statement to MWC member churches around the world. It is both a report on Assembly 14 and a call to prayer for Zimbabwe.

“Everyone in attendance was overwhelmed by the ‘grace of hospitality’ demonstrated by the host Brethren in Christ Church,” said the statement. It noted that the assembly received greetings from 13 Christian world communions and international organizations, representing “more than three-fourths of the world's two billion Christians.”

The statement also noted General Council decisions (see Aug. 25 issue and stories below).

“While it is difficult to communicate the thrill and joy of this Assembly, we were conscious this event did not belong to us alone. We were continually aware of those who prayed for months for the presence of God's Spirit and for a tranquil situation....”

“Join us in thanking God for the inspiration of this occasion. Listen carefully to those who attended for insight into the reality of the church in Africa. Invite facilitators from the Global Gift Sharing project...to explore the meaning of ‘sharing gifts in suffering and in joy’ in your situation.”





## Shared convictions

**M**any of Mennonite World Conference's member churches have no written confession of faith. During the assembly in Zimbabwe, the MWC General Council accepted a statement of shared convictions for study by churches. The following are the seven central beliefs:

1. God is known to us as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, the Creator who seeks to restore fallen humanity by calling a people to be faithful in fellowship, worship, service and witness.
2. Jesus is the Son of God who showed in his life and teaching how to be faithful, and through his cross and resurrection redeemed the world.
3. The church is a community of those whom God's Spirit calls to turn from sin, acknowledge Jesus Christ as Lord, receive baptism upon confession of faith and follow Christ in life.
4. The faith community, under Holy Spirit guidance, interprets the Bible in the light of Jesus Christ to discern God's will for our obedience.
5. The Spirit of Jesus empowers us to trust God in all areas of life so we become peacemakers who renounce violence, love our enemies, seek justice and share our possessions with those in need.
6. The faith community gathers regularly to worship, to celebrate the Lord's Supper and to hear the Word of God in a spirit of mutual accountabil-

ity.

7. We seek to live in the world without conforming to the powers of evil, witnessing to God's grace by serving others, caring for creation and inviting all people to know Jesus as Saviour and Lord.

The Council also agreed to retain the name Mennonite World Conference but add a descriptive subtitle: "a community of Anabaptist-related churches."

Nancy Heisey of USA took over as president of MWC; Danisa Ndlovu, Brethren in Christ bishop of Bulawayo, was named vice-president. Elected to the executive committee were Fimbo Ganvunze (Congo) and Joshua Okello (Kenya) for Africa, Joren Basumata (India) and Eddy



**Nancy Heisey, new MWC president, looks on as Danisa Ndlovu, bishop of the Brethren in Christ Church in Zimbabwe, gives the benediction at the closing service.**

Sutjipto (Indonesia) for Asia, David Villalta Benavides (Costa Rica) and Peter Stucky (Colombia) for Central, South America and the Caribbean; Markus Rediger (Switzerland) and Thijn Thijink (Netherlands) for Europe, and Naomi Unger (Canada) and David Wiebe (Canada) for North America. The term for all is six years.—From MWC release

## New organization will change missions

**F**or more than 100 years, churches in North America undertook mission efforts in Africa, Asia and Latin America. Now the churches that emerged from those efforts have their own identity and want to discern for themselves where their mission should be.

Meeting in Bulawayo, representatives from Mennonite World Conference churches voted to create a new mechanism that will begin to shift mission leadership to churches in Africa, Asia and Latin America. Called the Global Mission Fellowship, the plan calls for regional meetings on each continent every three years "for encouragement, vision-sharing, networking and cooperating in mission."

"This is a very significant shift," said Stanley Green, who chaired the committee that created the proposal. "Now the vision for Africa, for example, will originate in Africa and be shaped in Africa and then North American agencies will need to discern how we can participate."

But the question of funding the regional gatherings was a concern.

"These gatherings will cost a lot of money," said Chizuko Katakabe, from Japan. "Is it right to spend the money on such gatherings rather than on sending missionaries?"

In addition to questions about how to fund the new fellowship, its relationship to Mennonite World Conference has not yet been clarified. Nancy Heisey, the new MWC president, noted the Global Mission Fellowship would not be similar to other MWC councils.

One reason for the lack of clarity is that mission organizations often relate to Christian groups that are not members of MWC.

The formation of this mission fellowship will change the way North American mission agencies coordinate their work. Currently, most agencies participate in the Council of International Ministries for coordination purposes.

However, the Global Mission Fellowship calls for a North American regional meeting that is accountable to the Fellowship.—From Meetinghouse report by **Everett J. Thomas**



**Silva Nguluba of Zimbabwe carries her suitcase to the bus headed for home.**

## Youth Summit tackles common concerns

**A**nybody can count the number of seeds in an apple, but only God can count the number of apples in a seed."

With this image, Ronald Lizwe Moyo welcomed delegates and other young people to the first Global Youth Summit. On August 7-10, over 220 young people from 28 countries gathered in Bulawayo to discuss the challenges facing Christian young people today.

Dreams of organizing a youth summit began several years ago. A five-member committee, with one representative from each continental region, set out a three-phase plan.

Phase one was a survey to discover the most pressing challenges facing young people. Over 1,500 surveys were completed globally. Phase two was gathering in Bulawayo, and phase three is an action phase. Of the participants, 27 were official delegates: 6 from Africa, 5 from Europe, 5 from Asia, 3 from North America, 8 from Latin America.

The delegates from Canada were Jennifer Egan of Winnipeg (Mennonite

Church Canada) and Hannah Sehl of Kitchener, Ontario (Mennonite Brethren conference).

During the summit, participants talked and listened, prayed, worshiped and played together. Continental caucus groups met each day to discuss the survey results and to brainstorm about how MWC and local churches could help work at solutions.

It was fascinating to see common themes emerge: employment/unemployment issues, violence, pluralism, education, traditionalism in worship, and youth feeling their voices are not heard in the church.

By the end of the second day, delegates had reached a preliminary consensus on the main issues and



Young women enjoy worship at the Youth Summit.

suggestions for how to respond. Five delegates were selected to present the results to the MWC General Council.

A high level of energy characterized the three days. The youth shared a sense that this event could bring about positive changes. Many commented that they now have a greater appreciation for belonging to a global church.

Each continental group led in worship during the summit. In the closing worship, Elina Ciptadi from Indonesia shared a dream she has had since childhood of making the world a better place. She asked God to use her. Now she was seeing her dream come true.

Many youth share such a dream, but by themselves feel powerless to make a difference. The Global Youth Summit provided a forum for them to express their concerns and their commitment to make a difference. Their concerns were serious and don't have easy answers. But here in Bulawayo, seeds were planted. Only God knows what amazing things might grow out of this gathering.—Meetinghouse release by **Wendy Janzen**

## Peace Council works on central platform

**T**he Peace Council of Mennonite World Conference was launched at the Calcutta assembly six years ago. This year's meetings in Bulawayo continued the creation of a unified peace platform for member churches.

Since the last meeting in Guatemala City in 2000, the Council had collected stories from 13 member churches that illustrate the church's peace stance.

The common elements in the stories were used to summarize the three areas important to developing a peace stance: levels of relationships involved in peacemaking, central virtues, and practices that can help develop peacemaking in our churches. This summary became a springboard for discussion.

Ironically, the meeting itself demonstrated the challenges of arriving at a unified statement. The first challenge was setting up an electronic system for translating the discussion. Further, even at this third meeting of the Peace Council, General Council members were still unsure whether to attend this

forum or what it was to accomplish.

Still, significant progress was made. The first day, internationally-mixed groups of 10 people discussed the levels of relationships and the virtues of peace. On the second day, small groups broken down by continent considered practices that might generate peacemaking.

Initial meetings had come up with five levels of peacemaking relationships: Making peace with God, within churches, with neighbours, with other Christians and faiths, within nations and between nations.

Groups here added peace with oneself, within families, and with neighbours. Two additional suggestions were peace with the environment and peace with enemies.

The reports from churches indicated five practices that help Christians become peacemakers: catechizing (faith teaching), worship, prayer, Christian education and global awareness.—From Meetinghouse report by **Ron Ross**





# Assembly14



**Precious Dladla of Zimbabwe washes the feet of Deusiene Martins of Brazil during a ceremony in which Africans apologized for their ancestors' cooperation with the slave trade.**



**At top, Brethren in Christ pastor Ephraim Disi talks about being HIV positive in a workshop on AIDS. Above and left, assembly participants at worship.**

**suffering and in joy. Sharing gifts in suffering and in joy. Sharing gifts**





Women sew blocks for an AIDS quilt during the assembly. It will be used for AIDS education.



Above, African women in their 'church uniforms.' At right, Nzash Lumeya, centre, leads prayer during the Global Mission Fellowship gathering.



Siaka Traore of Burkina Faso preaches on Africa Day.

Suffering and in joy. Sharing gifts in suffering and in joy. Sharing gifts in

## Feeding the 7,000

**A**mong the many miracles at Africa 2003, surely the greatest was the feeding of the 7,000.

How does one provide two meals a day for that many people in a country with a severe food shortage, amid an economic crisis, in a kitchen lacking commerial equipment?

With ingenuity, planning, an army of workers and the implacable faith of chief planner Thoko Ndlovu, who began working on the plans two years ago.



**Ndlovu**

Each day, assembly goes consumed 1,200 kg of mealie meal (the basis of a maize porridge called *sadze*), the beef from six to eight cattle, 1,200 kg of potatoes, 500 kg of rice and 7,500 oranges or other fruit—plus tonnes of vegetables and salads, juices and tea. And all cooked in gigantic cast-iron pots over open fires.

“I’ve always been positive,” Ndlovu said. “I think it was really God’s guidance we were able to procure that food.”

Negotiations with the grain marketing board in the northern part of the country, where food is more plentiful,



**Women prepare food for 7,000 conference goers using wood fires and kettles.**

ensured that there would be enough maize. Chickens were ordered from a Brethren in Christ farmer. Small market gardeners were contracted to grow a variety of vegetables.

Forty beef cattle, provided by the Wanezi mission station some 80 km away, were shipped live, butchered and refrigerated in a city abattoir. Ndlovu herself donated the reusable plastic utensils.

For many local participants, some of whom paid the equivalent of \$1.00 US

to attend, the luxury of eating meat daily made this a special celebration.

But planning a menu for all these different nationalities was the greatest challenge, Ndlovu said. “We tried to make it as simple as we can.” The food was from recipes developed in Ndlovu’s “hobby” job catering to large functions.

As the head of a luggage manufacturing company that employs 1,700 people, Ndlovu is well-equipped to manage labour-intensive operations. Nearly 120 workers were recruited from local clubs and schools, supplemented by international volunteers. Some had the task of washing up outdoors in large tubs. Ndlovu’s two daughters took on the job of laundering 300 dish towels daily.

Not everything ran smoothly. The day before the assembly began, she received a call saying that 100 Zambians had just arrived, famished from a day on the bus without food. She started the cooking fires in her own yard and began to prepare a meal. When a supplier failed to deliver, she often had to go into the city to find things. The final day of the assembly brought another 5,000 people for the noon meal.

In Zimbabwe, the welcoming *Woza* (come) was never experienced more heartily than at the table.—From Meetinghouse report by **Doreen Martens**

## Youth staff ‘global village’

**T**he MWC assembly grounds included a “Global Village” of kiosks displaying cultural artefacts from many countries. The village was created and staffed by 23 youth stewards from 4 continents.

At each kiosk, resembling a Zimbabwean home, visitors sampled food, art and stories. At Latin America’s booth, youth served *mate* tea from Paraguay. At the Asia booth, children enjoyed getting painted “tattoos.” From Africa came paintings, carvings and baskets.

The kiosks also served as places of conversation and relaxation.

Barbara Khumalo of Zimbabwe directed the project, which began when the youth stewards arrived on July 28.

“The first week...we shared our life

stories, worshipped together, and learned about Zimbabwe,” she explained. “Then we set to work creating the kiosks. We had no set plan, so we had to use our imaginations and trust each other.”

Many youth stewards agreed that the highlight was building relationships with one another.

“We really got to know each other well,” said Alissa Bender of Ontario.

The group also shared challenges. They sometimes wished they had clearer expectations of their tasks. They also faced the suffering of their Zimbabwean hosts. In three weeks, two Zimbabwe youth faced deaths in their immediate families.—From report by **Melissa Aberle-Grasse, Malawi**



Kelowna, B.C.

## Kelowna congregation responds to tragedy

The Okanagan Mountain Park fire, which has swept into Kelowna, was on the hearts and minds of the First Mennonite Church congregation here on August 24 as pastor Clare Neufeld led an “open service” of sharing, scripture, singing and prayer.

Neufeld felt that the service that had originally been planned—as well as a sermon he had been preparing—just didn’t feel appropriate in the circumstances. Congregational leaders agreed.

“My hope was to create an informal setting where we acknowledge each other as family of the faith, sit in the ‘ashes of our silence,’ lament to the Lord together, praise God for favours granted...fears faced,” Neufeld said. “I thought we could readily lead each other in worship as we served each others’ emotional, spiritual, and other needs...showing our solidarity and unity in Christ in this time of threat and suffering.”

Several members spoke of being evacuated and of dealing with the drastic consequences of this unpredictable catastrophe. Harry and Gertrude Loewen had been informed the day before that their beautiful home had been completely destroyed, along with some 68 homes in their neighbourhood. Only a short distance away, the home of Victor and Marg Doerksen was spared.

Over 900 forest fires have been raging in one of the driest, hottest summers on record in British Columbia, affecting many in the southern part of the province.

As the fire approached Kelowna there was little time for removing valuables from the homes. Loewen’s large library, for example, could not be rescued. Other church members also had to be evacuated, although their homes were not damaged. The Doerksen family was evacuated twice, moving first to their children’s home in what seemed a safer area, only to be told the next day to vacate that home.

The evacuation in Kelowna was a massive effort, with a third of the population, about 30,000 people, having to leave their homes. Many

marvelled at the great job done by countless volunteers.

First Mennonite is standing by, ready to serve food to fire-fighters if called upon, and to work with Mennonite Disaster Service (MDS) when its strategy has been decided. MDS is planning a large-scale clean-up and restoration service for this and other areas in British Columbia, including Barrier near Kamloops.

In the midst of the upheaval,

Neufeld says that the congregation is still able to praise God.

“It has become abundantly clear that God in his mercy, grace and love is still working for our good, even in the midst of this so-called tragedy,” he said. “We are grateful for the fact that no lives have been lost, and that the fire is by now considered to be 60 percent under control.”—**Vic Doerksen, with Angelika Dawson**



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Anata, West Bank

## Israelis and Palestinians join to rebuild homes

Over the past 15 years, the Yamani family's homes have included a tent, a shipping container and several houses demolished before their eyes. Hashem and Rabikha Yamani and their seven children currently live in a tent that they fashioned from steel rods, plastic sheeting and corrugated tin.

Now a Palestinian and an Israeli organization are supporting their efforts to build a permanent home, partially through a Mennonite Central Committee grant. The Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions and the Jerusalem Center for Social and Economic Rights, a Palestinian organization, are building the family a new home in Anata, believed to be the prophet Jeremiah's home town.

"The Israeli volunteers who come here to help on our house are so important," says Hashem. "They give my children a different picture of Israelis than that of the soldiers."

In 1987, the Yamani's house in Yatta, south of Hebron, was destroyed

by Israeli authorities. Five years later they had moved to Anata, where again Israeli authorities tore down their house. Desperate for a place to live, the family moved into an empty shipping container.

"The authorities came to us with a warning—"You can't stay here," recalls Hashem. "But I didn't leave. I had no other place to go."

One day while he was working as a tile maker, "people came and told me that soldiers were surrounding our container. I went right away—and there was the container, being destroyed. Imagine watching that, and you can't do anything about it. Your wife is thrown over there, your kids are screaming—it destroys our hu-



MCC Photo by Ed Nyce

**Fred Schlomka (left) of the Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions assists Palestinian Salim Shawamreh, whose home has been destroyed by Israeli security forces four times.**

manity, to see that and not be able to do anything."

They moved in with his wife's family while Hashem constructed their current tent.

The Yamani family's story is not uncommon here. Israeli authorities accuse the residents of not having proper building permits

"We want to get permits," says Salim Shawamreh, who has had four homes destroyed. "I tried three times for my house, and was told 'no' each time. The second time they told me that it's not possible because 'your land is on a slope.' Jerusalem itself is on a mountain! I can't build because I'm on a slope?"

Much of the land where Israel is demolishing houses is outside its legal, pre-1967 war boundaries.

Whether or not the new house will last is unknown. Hashem and ICAHD were unable to obtain permits, but they consider rebuilding a form of nonviolent resistance. Hashem is encouraged that Palestinians and Israelis are working together to rebuild his home.

MCC is contributing \$28,000 this year to help rebuild Palestinian homes.—MCC release by **Ed Nyce**



Photo by Ed Nyce

**These Palestinian children participated in a summer day camp which Mennonite Central Committee helped to sponsor. The 25 camps, held July 1-20, involved nearly 3,000 children, many from the Khan Younis refugee camp in the Gaza Strip. The camps, organized by the Culture & Free Thought Association, a partner organization of MCC, began with a street carnival and parade. Camp activities included art, music, dancing and sports activities. When a main road was reopened by the Israeli Defense Forces, camp directors took the children swimming in the Mediterranean. The camps also provided a forum for the children to analyze their lives under occupation. MCC provided \$10,500 toward this project.—From MCC release**

Mayfair, Sask.

## Hoffnungsfelder churches celebrate 75 years

**T**he Mayfair Mennonite church was filled to capacity on the morning of July 26 for a service of hymn singing. It was the start of a two-day celebration of the 75th anniversary of the three Hoffnungsfelder congregations: Mayfair, Rabbit Lake and Glenbush.

During the afternoon, the church yard in Rabbit Lake was the location for a picnic of watermelon and *rollkuchen*. Guests took the opportunity to walk through the well-kept cemetery while remembering the pioneer families. Pete Penner made coffee the old-fashioned way by boiling water in a giant outdoor cooker and then brewing coffee in cream cans.

Supper was held at the Glenbush church for more than 200 people. A memorial garden with flowers brought in memory of loved ones added beauty to the front of the church. More than 60 people showed up for choir rehearsal after supper with conductor Vic Peters of Calgary. A sing-along in the church yard followed, to the sounds of guitar, mandolin and autoharp.

A huge, wooden map of Mennonite homesteads—both of early settlers and current members—had been prepared by Herman Klassen and

Alvin Wiebe. A Hoffnungsfelder history book, compiled under Marlene Martens' leadership, was available for sale. Each church had also prepared a display of historic photographs.

On Sunday morning, Rabbit Lake Hall was the venue for worship. The mass choir and by a mostly youth orchestra provided special music. Our theme was stones, spiritual and memorial. People had been asked to bring stones for a display and to write what its significance was.

Dave Neufeld of Herschel, who participated in the Hoffnungsfelder preaching rotation in the 1980s, gave the morning message.

"Every stone has a story," he said, "of such things as history, loss, challenges, beauty, success, choices, hard work, determination and miracles." Neufeld reminded us that before our short

history began, there was the long history of the First Nations people. These stones symbolize our responsibility to promote healing and understanding.

Some of the stones represent that which is needed for strong churches and godly lives: faithful prayers, and God's mercy for our failures. If the results are success and affluence, it is entirely because of God's blessings. Therefore, Neufeld stressed, our celebration must be done with gratitude and humility.

Don Unger acknowledged all those who were present at the founding of the Hoffnungsfelder church.

The afternoon featured mainly storytelling. Hugo Martens of Chicago, who hadn't been back here for 50 years, said that his 96-year-old mother told him he must attend this celebration and report back to her. Carrie Dueck, granddaughter of Bishop Daniel Loewen, spoke of how inspiring it was to listen to her grandfather's stories and to meet people who knew him.

Thanks to local volunteers for making this celebration the good and God-honouring event that it was.

—Naomi Unger




Photo by Naomi Unger

**People pack the Mayfair church on Saturday morning to begin the 75th anniversary celebrations.**



**The memorial garden at the Glenbush church includes window frames from the original church building.**



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Didsbury, Alta.

**Bergthal church celebrates 100 years**

The Bergthal Mennonite Church here celebrated 100 years of faith on July 25-27. The church grounds became a beehive of activity as campers, friends and family began to assemble Friday evening.

People shared joys and tears as they perused the excellent pictorial display assembled by Kathy Peters. Vintage vehicles, machines, hymnbooks and Bibles were also on display. By Saturday supper the crowd had swelled to over 450 people.

A highlight of the Saturday evening program of music and praise was an alumni choir of nearly 80 voices. All ages contributed to the celebration—particularly moving was an intergenerational children’s story written by Joanne Peters and assisted by Denise Derksen and Lorna Brown.

The Sunday morning service attempted to summarize 100 years in 2 hours. Past leaders were recognized and Lydia Derksen was presented with flowers for her 53 years of service as pianist/organist. Henry Georzen presented historical vignettes.

Former pastors Dave Letkemann, Norman Bergen, Menno Epp and Werner Froese reflected upon God’s movement through Bergthal, and on the richness of the diversity and unity that has characterized this congrega-

tion. This body has been blessed through disagreements, changes, healing, learning and many calls to ministry and missions. That which has not divided has made us stronger. Thanks be to God!

In the afternoon, Dave Epp provided an informative cemetery tour. This concluded with the unveiling of a memorial stone cairn with brass sculpting crafted by Eldon Neufeld. It commemorates the lives of Abraham and Elizabeth (Henrichs) Neufeld, Gerhard and Helena (Wiebe) Neufeld and Jacob C. and Katharina (Hiebert) Neufeld.

In May, the church celebrated the renovation of the basement into inviting Sunday school and meeting rooms. Fundraising for the project included a “parable of the talents” in which people signed up for a \$10 talent to tend for the basement fund. Later, people shared their stories.

May the spirit of this time follow

each person as we look to God to continue working in us and through us.—**Diane Jonson**

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St. Jacobs, Ont.

## Building bridges to Benin

**S**t. Jacobs Mennonite Church has been building bridges to Benin over the past years. The first bridge was constructed when Nancy Frey Yoder went to work at the Benin Bible Institute (BBI) in Cotonou. Her letters and pictures were a constant link to life in Benin.

In 1996, the school requested help in erecting a building. In 1997 Bob and Sue Shantz of St. Jacobs joined a group of people to help make this a reality, building a second bridge.

In 2001, Marcellin Danhouno, administrator of BBI, bridged the gap between countries by visiting Canada. While in St. Jacobs, he observed Vacation Bible School in progress. He was very excited and wondered if this program could be introduced, through BBI, to Benin.

In 2002, Nancy Frey Yoder and her family came home to visit and she discussed the possibility of VBS. The St. Jacobs Community VBS collected



**The St. Jacobs group that taught Vacation Bible School in Benin this summer, from left: Dave and Lisa Carr Pries, Doug and Gloria Shantz and Kim Freeman.**

supplies and raised money to purchase and translate a curriculum. Marcellin's vision began to take shape.

After a year of planning and fundraising, five people from St. Jacobs—Dave and Lisa Carr Pries, Kim Freeman, and Doug and Gloria Shantz—were ready to spend two weeks this summer introducing the first Vacation Bible School in Benin.

The curriculum was *Loving God*, part of the series from Faith and Life Press. The first week, beginning on July 22, was spent familiarizing about 30 leaders with this method of teaching. Eager to find new ways to nurture their children's faith, they soaked up the ideas.

They asked many questions about how children can learn while "playing" and were intrigued by the information about faith development. When they tried the activities, they realized that "doing is understanding."

The second week, from July 28 to August 1, the Beninese leaders observed and helped the Canadian group lead 100 Beninese children through the program. The enthusiasm and gratitude of the leaders and children was overwhelming.

So much learning happened in those two weeks. So many connections were made. And the bridge building continues. This year we are again raising money for Benin. This fall we hope to have Augustin Ahoga, president of the BBI Board, come to visit us.

And who knows what other opportunities God may have in store for us as we seek to span the distances to build relationships and do God's work.

—Gloria Shantz

### Myth #7

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Rosthern, Sask.

## Skits and music add to Rosthern celebrations

**R**osthern Mennonite Church celebrated “100 years of God’s grace” on July 4-6. People came from other provinces and many places in Saskatchewan to help the congregation celebrate its centennial.

The motto for the event was “From the fullness of his grace we have received one blessing after another” (John 1:16).

There was much visiting as people met on Friday night over supper and at the historical display compiled by Helen Dyck. The evening program was chaired by church chair, Tina Siemens



**Waldemar Regier speaks at the Rosthern anniversary.**

who read a poem that had been written for the 75th anniversary.

Rudy Froese, retired pastor, dressed up as a professor to speak about “the vary and various roots of Rosthern,” including various options on how Rosthern got its name. He also gave a brief history of the congregation. Froese had also written several skits for the occasion, performed by Abe Letkeman, Ron Derksen and Les Nickel.

The setting for the skits was a coffee shop with the three men discussing various topics: the coming of immigrants to Rosthern, getting permission to build the church, women’s voting rights and changing from German to English.

The weekend celebration included



Photo by Bill Neudorf

**Irma Neudorf plays the new grand piano at Rosthern Mennonite. The piano was a centennial project dedicated during the anniversary weekend.**

lots of music. Ted Janzen led congregational singing and rehearsed a choir for the Sunday service. Other groups included the Hale quartet, a mixed group and a women’s quartet. A video on the history of the church, put together by Mark Wurtz, was shown on Friday.

There was lots of reminiscing. Frank Dyck talked about being church janitor and treasurer for 25 years, Katherine Hooze about being the organist for many years. Ed Enns shared memories of pastors.

Waldemar Regier from Ontario, pastor at Rosthern from 1970-78, spoke about the transition from German to English, the mortgage burning and the beginning of the Alliance Church that involved people from RMC. That was hard on the

pastor, he said.

He was also part of the misspelling of the word “Mennonite” on the cenotaph in front of the church.

The Sunday morning service was the highlight of the celebration. The church was beautifully decorated with flowers. Rudy Froese told the children’s story, using a measuring tape to show the length of 100 years.

Waldemar Regier, the guest speaker, spoke about the “Source of grace” based on John 1:14-16. Our ancestors felt God had given them this land as an act of grace. We have received one grace after another and these gifts are to be used for others, he said.

Current pastor Craig Friesen led the communion service. A dinner concluded the weekend.—From report by **Irma Neudorf**

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Osler, Sask.

## Osler recalls rich and tumultuous 75 years

In 1928, Osler was a small hamlet of fewer than 100 people serving nearby Mennonite farms. A group of Mennonites gathered in the school to worship whenever a *Reiseprediger* (itinerant preacher) would happen by.

That year, Mennonites from three backgrounds met to formalize their fellowship. There were Mennonites that had come from the U.S. with names like Boldt, Russian Mennonites like Kasdorfs and Brauns, and Old Colony Mennonites like Driedgers and Brauns.

John G. Rempel, a pastor from Langham, surveyed the community and found 51 persons who wished to establish a congregation. At 60 cents an hour, Heinrich Klassen designed and built the original building with its signature roof. It cost \$7,000. Jacob J. Boldt financed the project and became the first pastor.

At the anniversary celebrations on August 2-3, a readers' theatre group recalled the church's sometimes



This choir sang at the Osler Mennonite Church 75th anniversary celebration.

tumultuous 75-year history. It told of the church's 28-month closure in the 1930s when payments could not be made, and the 1951 crisis when pastor Jacob H. Pauls offered to resign over the Janz revival meetings.

From 1976-81, Ernie Hildebrand led the church in opposing Eldorado Nuclear's proposal to build a uranium refinery five miles from Osler. The readers' theatre also spoke of "voiceless" people like Mrs. J.W. Friesen who lost two infant sons in the 1930s and the enfranchisement of women in the 1960s. They talked of the conflicts caused by the divorce and re-marriage issue in the 1970s.

Readers noted that the new building, completed in 1998, cost 35 times more than the original church. Finally, Joel Sawatzky, a recently-baptized university student, asked whether the church would remain strong if young people did not develop loyalties to the

church.

Jennifer Banman's photographic display traced events from the earliest years to the present. Following a traditional *Faspa* on Saturday afternoon, Grace (Day) Wiens, church organist in the 1940s, returned to play once more. Sandra (Boldt) Horst, a pianist in the 1970s and 1980s, returned to play on Sunday.

A choir made up of several generations sang on Sunday under the direction of the church's three song leaders—Ben Buhler, Keith Boldt and Loretta Sawatzky. Jacob Pauls, pastor from 1938 to 1963, answered questions from Menno Epp, the current pastor, about his years as an unpaid minister.

A catered dinner was served to 175 members and guests. Finally, the flowers were distributed to place on graves of loved ones in the adjacent cemetery.—**Jake Buhler**



The pulpit from the original Osler church built in 1928 was on display for the anniversary weekend.

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Winnipeg, Man.

## Houmphan has a vision for Thailand

**P**at Houmphan is committed—to Christ, to sharing the gospel, and to church planting in Thailand. He and his wife Rad have been ministering to the Issan people of northeast Thailand since 1996. His goal is to plant seven churches before he retires.

The Houmphans began their faith journeys as refugees from Laos in 1979. They became engaged to be married in a refugee camp in Thailand. With sponsorship from Grace Mennonite Church in Regina, the Houmphans found a new home in Canada.

“I told myself that if I came to this land of opportunity, I would do everything to study hard, so I can get a skill, get a good job, get money... I didn’t want to suffer again,” said Pat.

He contemplated engineering or medicine. “However, God changed the whole thing.” A speaker at a mission festival seemed to be calling him to minister in Buddhist-dominated Thailand.

After some struggle, Pat gave in to his calling. Studies took him to Swift Current Bible Institute and Mennonite Brethren Bible College, then graduate studies in B.C.

After some church planting experience (Grace Laotian Mennonite Fellowship in Regina), he was ready. But he knew that God had to call Rad as well.

“My life was just starting to get better here,” said Rad. The two translated the *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective* into Laotian. This experience and “the love of God” shown through Bethel Mennonite Church in Langley, convinced Rad that she was ready to go.

Northeast Thailand has 21 million Issan people, with a language similar to Laotian. Outreach is “very slow work” in a land dominated by Buddhism for thousands of years. Houmphans’ ministry focuses on relationship building through activities such as teaching English, mercy ministries (Pat always carries basic medicines), Vacation Bible School for children, and hospitality. By establish-



Photo by Rad Houmphan

**Pat Houmphan (left) prays with a family in Thailand.**

ing a single relationship, they gain access to a circle of families and friends.

Contextualizing ministry for emerging Thai churches is important, said Pat. People are accustomed to sitting on the floor. The posture for prayer (kneeling with hands placed palm-to-palm below the chin) has a long history. Western hymnody does not translate well into a tonal language, so they sing local music accompanied by appropriate instruments.

Because bread and grape juice is not commonly available in villages, Pat uses sticky rice and local fruit juice. Buddhism is full of ceremony, so Pat uses candles and ritual.

Contextualized ministry is a radical move among churches in Thailand, said Pat. “But Mennonites are always radical, right?”

New believers face psychological persecution from friends and family. Statistics suggest it takes five years for new believers to become rooted in their faith. Buddhism has a lot of good teaching, but it is missing two main concepts: creation and a saviour. “Their theology tells them to help themselves.”

While the four spiritual laws are not helpful at all in Thailand, the Jesus movie is. “Thai people love to see; they

don’t like to read.” A dream for Pat is to buy a projector so he can go from village to village and show the Jesus movie.

Working at a holistic gospel with socio-economic development is another item on Pat’s list. Many people are still very poor. “We want to address the social concerns,” he said.

More recently, Houmphans have begun working at leadership development. After six months of training, participants are encouraged to lead a worship service, and after one year to preach a sermon. They are currently leading 26 believers and 20 children.

The couple is supported by Mennonite Church Canada Witness and Mennonite Mission Network. They returned to Canada this summer so Rad could have surgery.

“I feel much better every day and am overwhelmed by your love and care,” Rad reported in mid-August. Pat has returned to Thailand and Rad was to return on September 6. Their daughter, Rachel, is beginning studies at the University of British Columbia this fall. Son Philip goes to school in Malaysia.—MC Canada release



Chunchon, South Korea

## Crossing the stream to follow Christ

The mountain stream cascades through the valley into a quiet pool. On a rock ledge overlooking the pool, 60 members of Jesus Village Church sit in the shade of overhanging trees. On a sand bank across the stream, two tents wait.

Our worship leader, Cha Sung-do, stands on a rock in the stream. He asks us to become quiet and listen. We hear birds calling. We hear the stream gurgling. We see trees, varied and green, stretch up to the distant mountaintop.

Our worship moves through silence to prayer, songs of praise, testimony and preaching.

Cha recalls how the first Anabaptists took the risk of publicly declaring their commitment to Jesus Christ through the act of baptism. He calls today's eight candidates, along with four members of the leadership team, to cross the stream on the stepping-stones.

I eagerly enter the clear pool,



**Eun-soo Pak, having offered a moving faith story, prepares to receive her baptism.**

followed by Yoon-Shik Lee, Brother Nahm and Daniel Ahn. Sixteen-year-old Yo-han Chung is the first to follow us into the water. Daniel calls out, "Do you accept Jesus Christ as your personal saviour and lord of your life?"

Yo-han's voice echoes through the

mountainside, "Yes, I do!" So we immerse him in the stream. As he surfaces, loud shouts of "Hallelujah!" and cheers and clapping burst from the congregation seated on the rock.

The fourth candidate is Christina Ahn. She has been my student for the past 10 months and I have come to appreciate her quiet, solid faith. I reach out to help her into the water.

Now I call out the question in English and Christina answers, "I do." We gently immerse her, and again hallelujahs ring out.

The final candidate is 48-year-old Eun-soo Pak. Her powerful testimony moves us to tears. As she enters the baptismal water, her face radiates peace and joy. She knows the meaning of death in a personal way, having lost an only son in a traffic accident. But that loss ultimately brought her to faith in Jesus.

The candidates re-cross the stream to join the congregation. They are met with wild flowers picked by children, a bouquet of roses, a gift-wrapped Bible and their baptism certificate.

After picture taking, we eat a lunch of beenin-bop—a rice and vegetable dish—watermelon and two huge birthday cakes. These eight people are the first to be baptized in this Anabaptist community.—**Erwin Wiens**

*Erwin and Marian Wiens from Windsor, Ontario, have worked with the Jesus Village Church since July 2002. They are sponsored by MC Canada Witness and Mennonite Mission Network.*

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Abbotsford, B.C.

## Menno Home celebrates 50 years

The Mennonite Benevolent Society celebrated its 50th anniversary at Columbia Bible College here on May 24 by revealing new plans for its Menno Home, hospital and residences. The plans include a new tower at the centre of the property and two new residences.

The new buildings will be phased in beginning in 2004 and concluding in 2020. The society is currently proceeding with adding 75 more supportive housing units, beginning next year.

About 600 members and friends gathered at Columbia Bible College to celebrate 50 years since the society was formed in 1953. From an initial four residents admitted in June 1954, the society has grown to become one of the major long-term care organizations in the province, serving about 500 residents.

Through a powerpoint presentation and a video, the assembly was given a glimpse of residence life and of the staff, volunteers and boards who have provided care based on the principles of the Christian faith, regardless of

ethnic or religious background.

The evening of praise included a violin solo by Calvin Dyck, accompanied on the piano by Betty Suderman. Speaker Jake Tilitzky encouraged the assembly to continue serving mind,

body and soul.

A few weeks later the society met for its annual meeting and continued the celebration. Ed Pankratz of Langley was re-elected chair and Vic Ewert of Vancouver vice-chair.—Society release

### Pioneer mission workers killed

**Bulawayo, Zimbabwe**—A Brethren in Christ (BIC) couple who served for 30 years in Zimbabwe was killed in a traffic accident here on August 5. Alvin and Thata Book, from the United States, were beginning a six-month service assignment at the Ekuphileni Bible Institute in Zimbabwe. They were returning from Bulawayo with supplies when their vehicle collided with a large truck. A student travelling with them had only minor injuries. Because of the upcoming assembly, many North American friends attended the memorial service at the BIC church here. Books also did mission work in the Bronx, N.Y. In 1992, they decided to learn Spanish



**Alvin and Thata Book**

and helped with church planting in Venezuela for seven years. The couple was buried here next to Jesse Engle, one of the first BIC missionaries to Africa.—From BIC release

**Five junior youth and three parents from Wanner Mennonite Church in Cambridge, Ontario, display 18 school kits they assembled over the past year for Mennonite Central Committee. From left: Cassie Mader, Caitlin Zvanovec, Nicole Zvanovec, Nicole Neufeld, Connie Mader, Dorothy Grove, Sandy Zvanovec, Sarah Penner, Kristen Penner and Marg Strom (coordinator). The youth brought items for the kits to their monthly gatherings. Dorothy Grove helped the group to sew the bags. On June 8, the school kits were presented as an offering. The speaker that morning was Arli Klassen of MCC Ontario.—From congregational report**



Photo by Steve Weaver

**Noor (left) from the Elwiya Orphanage for Girls in Baghdad receives a relief kit from Waleed Al-Abrashi from the agency, Enfants du Monde—Droits de l'Homme. On July 7, the 66 girls at the orphanage received 33 kits supplied by Mennonite Central Committee and distributed by Enfants du Monde. MCC shipped more than 41,000 relief kits to the Middle East in 2003. About 1,600 will go to an impoverished community in Baghdad.—From MCC release**

## People & Events

**Phnom Penh, Cambodia**—Lay Rotana participated in Youth for Peace, an organization here supported by Mennonite Central Committee. The youth, whose families lived through the violent years of Khmer Rouge rule and civil war, conducted workshops addressing such things as domestic violence. Studies show that up to 58 percent of Cambodian children have witnessed domestic violence. Youth for Peace teaches young people to, voice their concerns and develop ideas for addressing problems in society.—From MCC release



Rotana

## School notes

### Seminary grad

**London, Ont.**—Susan Nickel, a member of Valleyview Mennonite Church, graduated from the Winnipeg Seminary Consortium on June 1. She was based at Canadian Mennonite University. She is currently working towards accreditation with the Canadian Association of Pastoral Practice and Education.



Nickel

## Scholarships for peacemakers

**Akron, Pa.**—Attending the Summer Peacebuilding Institute at Eastern Mennonite University this spring were 182 people from 37 countries. Mennonite Central Committee provided scholarships for 13 of them. One was Peter Siemens of Brazil, whose grandfather received MCC aid in Ukraine in the 1920s. Siemens is helping to start a Centre for Peacebuilding for Mennonites in Brazil to help churches facing division. Siemens hopes it can also help families and communities deal with conflict. Saeed Daof, a Muslim recipient, is director of the Center for Peace and Development of Mindanao, Philippines, in one of the country's most volatile regions. He has mediated discussions between government officials and a rebel faction. Siemens, Daof and the other MCC-supported participants recently shared their experiences at a chapel service for MCC staff.—From MCC release

## Transitions

### Births

**Adamson**—adopted by Celine and David, Laird Mennonite, Sask., a son, Samuel Mark (born April 4).  
**Alexander**—to Angela and Scott, Sherbrooke Mennonite, Vancouver, a son, Joshua William, Aug. 28.  
**Dyck**—to Leesa Fast and Alvin, Douglas Mennonite, Winnipeg, a son, Owen

Zachary, Aug. 12.  
**Enns**—to Christine and Harold, Sargent Ave. Mennonite, Winnipeg, a daughter, Abigail Margaret, Aug. 2.  
**Ens-Coe**—to Tanya and Jason, Douglas Mennonite, Winnipeg, a son, Brayden Isaac, Aug. 14.  
**Fieguth**—to Betty Pries and Paul, Waterloo North Mennonite, Ont., a son, Thomas Paul Pries, Aug. 18.  
**Funk**—to Michelle and Jason, Laird Mennonite, Sask., a son, Hudson Andrew Bryant, June 8.  
**Mackie**—to Judy and Scott of Regina, Laird Mennonite, Sask., a son, John Alexander, Feb. 4.  
**Pilkey**—to Jana (Dyck) and Brad of Toronto, Wildwood Mennonite, Saskatoon, a daughter, Grace Olivia, July 14.  
**Wahl**—to Karen and Michael, Fort Garry Mennonite, Winnipeg, a daughter, Laura Anne, July 25.  
**Wiebe**—to Kathy and Ken, Douglas Mennonite, Winnipeg, a daughter, Brooklyn Kate, July 18.

### Marriages

**Baughan-Smith-Bauman**—Sam and Sue, Community Mennonite, Drayton, Ont., Aug. 27.  
**Braun-Nilsson**—Russell (Berghaler Mennonite, Morden, Man.) and Lori, in Sparwood, B.C., Aug. 2.  
**Brenneman-Schlegel**—Dan and Kristy, East Zorra Mennonite, Tavistock, Ont., Aug. 16.  
**Friesen-Mantler**—Colin and Trina, c July 5.

**Friesen-Martens**—Tim (Morden Sommerfeld Church) and Tanya, Berghaler Mennonite, Morden, Man., June 28.  
**Giesbrecht-Haussecker**—Doug and Leslie, Grace Mennonite, Regina, in Gimli, Man., July 26.  
**Janzen-Wiebe**—Tim and Ericka, St. Jacobs Mennonite, Ont., Aug. 23.  
**Kroeker-Derksen**—Steven (Rosenort Fellowship Chapel, Man.) and Carri, Berghaler Mennonite, Morden, Man., Aug. 16.  
**Mantyka-Dueck**—Shawn (Ukrainian Catholic) and Jennifer (Wildwood Mennonite, Saskatoon), at Nutana Park Mennonite, Saskatoon, July 19.  
**Sayavong-Suliyalangsy**—Yorn and Wanhchai, Grace Mennonite, Regina, Aug. 23.  
**Woelcke-Willms**—Reynold and Carla, Coaldale Mennonite, Alta., Aug. 10.  
**Wright-Martens**—Aaron (Baptist) and Amanda, Coaldale Mennonite, Alta., July 19.  
**Yoder-Luitjens**—Eric and Julie, Grace Mennonite, Regina, Aug. 9.  
**Znidaric-Klippenstine**—Mark and Vicki, Grace Mennonite, Regina, July 26.

**Deaths**

**Epp**—Vern, 58, Laird Mennonite, Sask., Feb. 12.  
**Giesbrecht**—Bob, 50, Laird Mennonite, Sask., Jan. 5.  
**Ramseyer**—Don, 71, Mannheim Mennonite, Ont., April 12.  
**Shantz**—Marjorie, 78, Community Mennonite, Aug. 22.

### Baptisms

**Berghaler Mennonite, Morden, Man.**—Tony Bueckert, June 8.  
**Laird Mennonite, Sask.**—Greg Redekopp, Sandra Galambos, Kathy Miller, Jodie Teichroeb, Jeff Jepsen, Tyler Dueck, Tom Bergen, Matt Bergen, Brett Galambos, June 8.  
**Mannheim Mennonite, Ont.**—Ryan Shantz, June 22.



**Sociologists Cal Redekop, Paul Peachey and Leo Driedger were honoured by the Anabaptist Sociology and Anthropology Association at its July meeting in Hillsdale, Michigan. Redekop, now retired in Virginia, taught at four Mennonite colleges, including Conrad Grebel, and researched topics ranging from Old Colony Mennonites to authority and economics as related to Anabaptism. Peachey taught at Eastern Mennonite College and worked with MCC in Japan before becoming active in ecumenical peace issues. For 20 years he taught at the Catholic University of America in Washington D.C. Driedger, who taught at Canadian Mennonite Bible College and the University of Manitoba, has written 18 books and many articles.—From reports**

**Employment opportunities**

**VOLUNTARY SERVICE ASSIGNMENTS**

International Guest House, Washington, D.C., a mission project of Allegheny Mennonite Conference, has two openings for assignments, one immediately and one in August. Contact:

**International Guest House**  
 1441 Kennedy St. NW, Washington, DC 20011  
 Phone: (202) 726-5808; E-mail: igh-dc@juno.com

The Elmwood MB Church in Winnipeg invites applications for a full-time

**BILINGUAL ASSOCIATE PASTOR**

who will provide leadership for the German language ministries as well as for the caregiving/visitation ministries of the English and German congregations.

Please direct inquiries and resumes to:

**Elmwood MB Church**  
**Pastoral Search Committee**  
 c/o Jacob Funk; Home Phone: (204) 669-0300  
 145 Henderson Hwy.,  
 Winnipeg, MB R2L 1L4  
 Phone: (204) 668-3244; (204) 667-8133  
 E-mail: embc@mts.net  
 Website: www.mts/~embc



MENNONITE CENTRAL COMMITTEE ONTARIO  
 invites applications for the position of  
**YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULT ANIMATOR**

This position requires a person with a commitment to Christian faith, active church membership and non-violent peacemaking. MCC Ontario seeks an animated and engaging person who can challenge and inspire young people and has experience with refugee issues.

The Youth and Young Adult Animator will take the lead on new and exciting programs with youth and young adults, with a strong emphasis on promoting and running the refugee simulation "In Exile for Awhile".

Position is half-time for one year. Deadline: September 30, 2003. Position available in October.

Send resume and cover letter to:

**Cath Woolner, Mennonite Central Committee**  
 50 Kent Ave., Kitchener, ON N2G 3R1  
 E-mail: cathw@mennonitecc.on.ca

Camp Elim near Swift Current, Saskatchewan requires a  
**MANAGER (1.0)**

to begin as soon as possible. Responsibilities include facility upkeep, administration, guest relations, camp promotion, and support of the summer camp program. Camp Elim operates Christian summer camp and year round rental programs. This position is ideal for someone with a strong commitment to the Christian faith, motivation to build on an expanding program, and familiarity with camping ministry.

For more information:

**Camp Elim (306) 627-3339**  
**or Ben Dyck (306) 773-7063**  
**E-mail: camp@campelim.ca**

**Chief Nursing Officer**  
**Concordia Hospital**

Concordia Hospital is seeking a Chief Nursing Officer to lead the nursing department. The successful candidate will be responsible for the overall management of the nursing department, including budgeting, staffing, and quality improvement. The candidate must have a minimum of 10 years of nursing experience, with at least 5 years in a leadership role. A Master's degree in Nursing is preferred. The position is full-time and permanent. Applications should be sent to the Human Resources Department, Concordia Hospital, 1000 University Avenue, Winnipeg, MB R2L 2M9. Please include a cover letter and resume with your application.

The successful candidate will be responsible for the overall management of the nursing department, including budgeting, staffing, and quality improvement. The candidate must have a minimum of 10 years of nursing experience, with at least 5 years in a leadership role. A Master's degree in Nursing is preferred. The position is full-time and permanent. Applications should be sent to the Human Resources Department, Concordia Hospital, 1000 University Avenue, Winnipeg, MB R2L 2M9. Please include a cover letter and resume with your application.

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Should you wish to learn more about this leadership opportunity, please contact the Human Resources Department at Concordia Hospital. We are an equal opportunity employer. For more information, please contact the Human Resources Department at Concordia Hospital, 1000 University Avenue, Winnipeg, MB R2L 2M9. Please include a cover letter and resume with your application.

**Announcement**

**Coaldale Mennonite Church** invites former members and friends to celebrate with us our:

**75th Anniversary of God's Faithfulness**

Saturday, October 11- 7:00 pm program  
 Sunday, October 12 - 10:30 am worship service  
 Lunch to follow  
 2:00 pm afternoon service  
 Faspa to follow

**Phone: (403) 345-3363; Fax: (403) 345-5303**  
**E-mail: cmchurch@telusplanet.net**  
**Coaldale Mennonite Church**  
 2316-17 Street  
 Coaldale, AB  
 T1M 1G3

**For rent**

Bachelor Apartment available immediately in Toronto. Quiet neighbourhood, five minute walk from subway, laundry facilities included. Call Tim at (416) 265-4621 or email: timreimer@on.aibn.com.

Room for rent close to U of Waterloo. Quiet neighborhood. Partially furnished, private entrance & bath. Available immediately, \$400 incl./month. (519) 576-6256.

Mature responsible long-time Toronto resident/part-time grad student of Theology looking for quiet, clean, well-kept unfurnished 1 bedroom flat or apt. References available. Please call (416) 921-7798 and leave a message.



**Advertising Deadlines:**  
**for October 6 (Sept 23)**  
**for October 20 (Oct 7)**



## Mennonite Church Canada

### Tote bag maker goes extra mile

Anne Neufeld of Coaldale, Alberta, went the extra mile by inserting notes into the 25 bags she sewed for the Mennonite Church Canada assembly in St. Catharines. The notes promised a donation to MC Canada on behalf of the bearer.

Her note read, "This tote bag was sewn for you with care, and with a prayer that God will bless you as you serve Him through Mennonite Church Canada. I will pray for the sessions, for those who are in leadership, and for you as a participant. May God grant you wisdom as various issues are dealt with and decisions



**Anne Neufeld with the tote bags she helped to sew.**

made. May his blessings abound through you."

Neufeld said her project "gives me the joy of giving to the church, and somebody else perhaps gets an idea." What motivates her is commitment to the work of the wider church.

"We need to belong to a larger [church] than just us," she said. "My heart is still with the larger church."

Canadian Women in Mission volunteers sewed nearly 1,500 tote bags for assembly goers. At \$5.00 each, sale of the bags raised over \$400 for MC Canada ministries. The majority of the bags were returned and will be re-used at future assemblies.—MC Canada release

## Mennonite Church Manitoba

### Camp songs available on CD

For the past three or four years, song writers have gathered for a workshop every spring. With the Camps with Meaning curriculum in hand

they write new songs for the summer camp session.

"We are particularly blessed this resource comes to us so tailor made," said Bob Wiebe. "Over the years they have produced over a dozen songs that can be used as new worship music for the churches as well."

Some of that new music is now available on a CD, "Peace—Live It!" Released in July, the 29 songs are a collection from the last several years of camp.

Sandra Friesen, organizer of the recording, pulled together senior camp staff from previous years as well as the Junior Choir from Sargent Avenue Mennonite Church in Winnipeg, directed by Lori Wiebe.

Some of the songs are by the 2002 song writing team:

## Reflections on Assembly 2003

Several things stick in my mind as I reflect on the Mennonite Church Canada assembly in St. Catharines.

**Time:** "You are so close, so terribly close, to allowing God's Spirit to move people in worship. Why not...yield to the Spirit's prodding, and see where it will take you? It appears as though you are stifling the moving of the Spirit with tightly controlled time allotments."

This was one of Peter Stucky's comments when I asked him how he was experiencing our assembly. Knowing his Latin American spirit, I can suggest that he needs to contextualize worship in our setting. Knowing the spiritual hunger in our own people, I wonder if he has a point.

I was dismayed by the paralyzing trauma experienced by a Laotian church leader who was told that he had to stick to a three-minute time-slot. "The tyranny of time," I thought as I watched him struggle to overcome his fear of the clock.

Delegates repeatedly expressed the need for "more time to talk." It makes me ponder someone's suggestion that we have an assembly every two years. How would we handle the "tyranny of

time" if we met only every other year?

**Input:** I was struck by the careful attention to financial detail, both in the reporting and the discussion. I look forward to the time when we can devote that same energy to other details for ministry at home and around the world.

I was inspired by Tom Yoder Neufeld's application of Ephesians to our church life. Why is it that the biblical books always seem to be more relevant when our seas are a bit stormy? I was energized by the ability of Five on the Floor, the bluegrass-gospel group, to lead a tired audience to theological levity. Thank you.

**Process:** A poignant moment came when a young adult Council member pointed to her role in the difficult decision-making process and bluntly asked: "Do you still trust me?" We struggle to get young adults involved in the church. Can we support them when they do?

One sentence in the *Canadian Mennonite* report caught my eye: "Perhaps the least acknowledged grief was that of the conference leaders who had to make the painful decisions and face the delegates." Thank you, Margaret Loewen Reimer, for your sensitivity in "hearing"

## From our leaders

this at the assembly.

**Pain and vision:** At times it felt like there was tension between the need to grieve what has been lost and a desire to look forward in trusting vision to face the challenges of the church. I wondered about that tension. Is it not possible to look back at the pain through eyes of vision, and to look forward to the challenges with the knowledge of pain? Pain and vision can be simultaneous experiences. Pain and vision are not adversaries but comrades on our journey of faithfulness.

**Gratitude:** Overall, I feel an overwhelming sense of gratitude for the church. The time it spends, the ministry it promotes, the sensitivity to process it represents, and the pain it experiences within a framework of theological vision are causes for gratitude. I sense an increasing conviction that our society needs such an alternative: one that is based on a healthy dose of revelation from "above" rather than only our muddied wisdom from "below."

Jack Suderman, executive secretary of Witness, MC Canada



Darryl Neustaedter Barg, Phil Campbell-Enns, Barrette W. Plett, Loretta Friesen and Bryon Moyer Suderman. Other artists are Gord Sawatsky, Lori Franz and Rick Hoepfner Mueller. Neustaedter Barg produced the CD.

The recording is available at all three camps and at Mennonite Church Manitoba offices.

### Mennonite Church Saskatchewan

## Gift for languages draws Friesen to China

A gift for languages and a desire to use those gifts for God's purposes is leading Cari Friesen to China to teach English for two years.

The 25-year-old Saskatchewan woman has lived in Africa (former Zaire, now Congo) and Brazil. She also served as an Overseas Mission Volunteer (2000-2001) in



Cari Friesen receives a blessing from Jack Dyck (Mount Royal pastor), uncle Don Friesen (right) and other family members.

Burkina Faso with the Commission on Overseas Mission. Friesen speaks French and Portuguese, and has a Music Ministry degree from Canadian Mennonite Bible College (2000).

Friesen sees her English teaching as an opportunity to be a Christian witness to students.

"Being myself as a Chris-

tian, my presence there, my interactions with people—all of that relates to my ministry there," she said. Friesen is supported by Mennonite Church Canada Witness in partnership with China Educational Exchange.

Chongqing, where she will teach, is a long way from her home church, Mount Royal Mennonite in Saskatoon, but

Photo by Marianne Siemens

Friesen hopes that the church can "find ways of staying connected so they can learn about what they are [involved in] and also helping me stay connected with the church," she said.

Friesen is part of a family mission tradition. Extended family members have served in Zaire, Mali, Taiwan, China, and the Ukraine.—From MC Canada release

### Mennonite Church British Columbia

## Women's retreat will focus on the garden

The BC Mennonite Women in Mission retreat is scheduled for October 18-20 at Camp Squeah. The theme for the weekend is, "The Christian journey: Exploring the rhythm of the garden," with guest speakers Angelika Dawson and Benita Warkentin.

Using scripture, music, displays and readings, each session will explore the lessons of the garden in each season and how these parallel our spiritual lives. Other highlights of the weekend include music arranged by Barbara Nickel and Amy Dueckman, and the annual silent auction.

Women are encouraged to bring items for this auction—anything from homemade crafts, baking or canning to purchased items. Proceeds from the auction make it possible for financially challenged women to attend the retreat. Blessings Bookstore will be on hand as well.

Registration forms will be available in the congregations by mid-September. For more information contact Pam Roseboom at (604) 823 6848.

*Unless otherwise credited, the articles in TheChurches pages were written by: Leona Dueck Penner (Mennonite Church Canada), Maurice Martin (Eastern Canada), Evelyn Rempel Petkau (Manitoba), Karin Fehderau (Saskatchewan), Donita Wiebe-Neufeld (Alberta), Angelika Dawson (B.C.). See page 2 for contact information.*

## Letter from Colombia

*The following is from an August 19 letter by Rudy and Helen Baergen, MC Canada Witness workers in Colombia.*

This past weekend we were both in La Mesa where I am doing some teaching for several weekends, and Helen is assisting in forming a choir for the church's 50th anniversary. Next weekend I will return to Ecuador to provide some input on Anabaptist ecclesiology at the first retreat of the Mennonite Church in Quito. Helen will do some music workshops.

Meanwhile, we are putting the finishing touches on one part of an Anabaptist Sunday School curriculum for Latin America, a project which has been headed for the last six years by Henry and Helen Dueck, with some 130 writers from across Latin America.

The war in this country continues to cause devastation. A few weeks ago I preached in the Teusaquillo church where Peter Stucky is the pastor. This church has opened its doors to displaced people and they come by the dozen with their desperate stories.

With the influx of new people it becomes almost impossible for the church to maintain a sense of identity and community. What a contrast from many of our churches in Canada where we develop extensive mission strategies to attract new people!

On the Sunday I was there, a couple shared their burden of having a daughter kidnapped a year ago and no word since. A young father asked me about Canada and then asked me for money. Another father told me he had been turned down by the Canadian embassy in spite of the fact that two of his brothers had been killed.

A middle-aged woman came to tell us that she and her family were leaving the next week for Canada to settle in Stratford. She survived an attack which left her with three bullet wounds. Leaving her beautiful country, her culture and family felt like a mixed blessing to her.

The theme of my sermon was that God will provide, focusing on Abraham's desperate faith in the face of God's incomprehensible "testing," the call to sacrifice his son and thus his future. Seldom has Abraham's faith seemed so audacious, so assuring. The hush of the audience assured me that the story struck a chord.

The Teusaquillo Church is taking seriously the conviction that they are part of God's provision. Let's remember and support our brothers and sisters on the front line of incredibly difficult situations. Remember the Colombian pastors in prayer. Let us not be remiss in accepting the part that we have to play in the equation of God providing.—

**Rudy and Helen Baergen**

## Mennonites and multiculturalism

**Winnipeg, Man.**—"Mennonites and the challenge of multiculturalism" is the title of a conference at the University of Winnipeg on October 18. The event is sponsored by the Chair in Mennonite Studies.

The keynote address will be "The challenge of multiculturalism in Canada" by Jean Augustine, Secretary of State for Multiculturalism. Other topics are Teaching Mennonite Studies, Singing Mennonites and Writing about Mennonites. Speakers include Harry Loewen, Al Reimer, Ted Regehr, Hildi Froese Tiessen and James Urry. Contributors to the music section are Henrietta and Rudy Schellenberg, Ed and Mily Hildebrandt and Tim Snider.

For more information, contact Roy Loewen, phone (204) 786-9391, e-mail: r.loewen@uwinnipeg.ca.—From release

## Farewell for Ron Rempel

**Waterloo, Ont.**—A farewell dinner and "roast" for Ron Rempel will be held at Elmira Mennonite Church on October 18. It will be an evening of stories, humour and food, remembering Rempel's 24 years as editor and publisher of *Canadian Mennonite*.

Host of the evening will be Ivan Emke, former columnist. The dinner begins at 6:30 p.m. Tickets are available from Betty Dyck at (519) 669-8314.

## Evening to focus on Ukraine

**Winnipeg, Man.**—Jake and Dorothy Unrau, who have just returned from service in Zaporyzhyzha, Ukraine, will be featured in a Ukraine Dessert Night at First Mennonite Church here on October 5. The event begins at 7:00 p.m.

Unraus will tell stories

about how God is transforming lives and how you can help. The couple were Mennonite Church Canada Witness workers.—MC Canada release

## UN seminar on religion and conflict

**New York, N.Y.**—Post-secondary students are invited to the eighth annual Mennonite Central Committee United Nations seminar here October 2-4. The topic this year is "Religion: Fuel for world conflict or healing salve?"

Speaker will be Joseph Liechty, scholar and mission worker in Northern Ireland for many years. UN officials, ambassadors and partner organizations will also be on hand for discussion on hot-spots such as Israel/Palestine and Kashmir.

For details, contact MCC United Nations, phone (212) 223-4062, e-mail: unoffice@mcc.org.—From release

## Calendar

### British Columbia

**September 20:** MC British Columbia all-pastors' meeting. **September 27:** MCC B.C. Fall Fair at Civic Centre, Prince George.

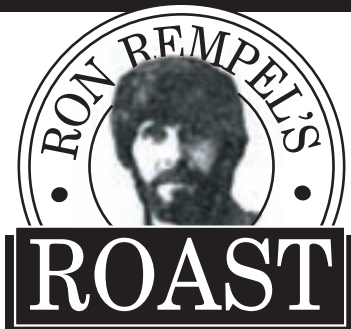
**October 6-8:** Pastor/spouse retreat. Contact MC British Columbia for details.

**October 8, 14, 16, 18:** Mennonite Church British Columbia Listening Meetings, 7:00 p.m.: Emmanuel Mennonite, Abbotsford (8); Sherbrooke Mennonite, Vancouver (14); First Mennonite, Greendale (16). First Mennonite, Kelowna (18) at 10:00 a.m.

**October 17-19:** Women in Mission retreat at Camp Squeah with speakers Angelika Dawson and Benita Warkentin.

**October 18:** Mennonite Historical Society of B.C. banquet with speaker John B.

## Plan to Attend



An evening of song, stories, humour and food remembering 24 years of service

Featuring: Ivan Emke  
Master of Ceremonies

Saturday, October 18, 2003  
Elmira Mennonite Church  
Elmira, Ontario  
Dinner & Program: 6:30 pm

Tickets: \$25 per person  
available from  
Betty Dyck  
(519) 669-8314

## Orie in Paraguay

Can parents name their son Orie? asks Korny Neufeld in the May 16 *Mennoblatt*, published in Filadelfia, Paraguay. Obviously, he answers, because the Millers from Indiana, USA, gave their newborn this name in 1892. And a street in Filadelfia is named after him.

The article goes on to describe the contributions of Orie O. Miller to the Mennonite colonies in Paraguay. After studies at Goshen College, Miller was three times a candidate for the ministry, but the lot never fell to him. The son of a wealthy farmer and partner in his father-in-law's shoe factory, he entered a life of business.

But he felt called to serve the church as well. In 1919, Miller travelled to Beirut and participated in relief efforts in Syria and Armenia. In 1920, he organized aid for Mennonites in south Russia through the newly-formed Mennonite Central Committee. Many of our forebears owe their lives to him, notes Neufeld.

At age 28, Miller was named executive secretary of MCC. For Mennonites in Paraguay, Miller was the "essence" of MCC, says Neufeld. He personally helped Mennonite refugees from Russia settle in Paraguay and Brazil, organizing aid and negotiating land prices. He visited the Chaco area about 20 times. His last visit was in 1970.



Toews. Call (604) 853-6177, e-mail: archives@mhsbc.com.  
**November 1:** MCC B.C. annual meeting.  
**November 6-8:** Mennonite Disaster Service informational evenings: Vernon Mennonite (6), Greendale MB (7), Peace Mennonite, Richmond (8), 7:00 p.m. Reports from MDS volunteers.  
**November 7-9:** Scrapbooking retreat at Camp Squeah. Contact Christa Lynn Nikkel, e-mail: nikkel@telus.net.  
**November 29:** Mennonite Church British Columbia special delegate meeting at Bethel Mennonite, Aldergrove.

**Alberta**

**September 27:** Mennonite Historical Society of Alberta meeting in LaCrete. For details and transportation, contact Dick at (403) 241-1819 or Irene (403) 275-9550.

**Saskatchewan**

**September 19:** MCC building renovation fundraiser, West Portal Mennonite Brethren Church, Saskatoon.  
**October 1:** Pastors' gathering on "Learning while leading."  
**October 17:** MCC Saskatchewan Support Circle workshop at Grace Mennonite Church, Regina, 7:00 p.m.  
**October 17-18:** Women in Mission retreat.  
**October 18:** MCC Saskatchewan Support Circle workshop at Rosthern Mennonite Church, 10:00 a.m.  
**October 19:** MCC Saskatchewan Support Circle workshop at Massey Place Community, Saskatoon, 2:00 p.m.  
**October 25:** Alumni Volleyball Tournament at Rosthern Junior College.  
**October 31-November 1:** MCC Saskatchewan annual meeting at Laird Mennonite Church.  
**November 14-15:** MC Saskatchewan Bible Conference with Harry Huebner at Grace Mennonite Church, Regina.

**Manitoba**

**September 20:** Morris MCC Relief Sale.  
**September 21:** Welcome Party for young adults moving to Winnipeg, at Home Street Mennonite Church, sponsored by MC Manitoba Young Adult Council.  
**September 26-27:** Brandon MCC Relief Sale.  
**September 26-27:** Canadian Mennonite University Homecoming weekend. Friday evening: Faculty concert at 7:00 p.m. and Live@CMU for youth with Radiantsonchild, 7:00 p.m.  
**September 28:** CMU president's installation at Portage Ave. MB Church with speaker Stanley Hauerwas, 3:00 p.m.  
**October 4:** Equipping Conference with Ministers and Deacons Conference at Winkler Bergthaler Mennonite Church.  
**October 11-12:** 50th anniversary celebrations at Graysville Mennonite Church. Phone (204) 828-3359.  
**October 17-18:** Women in Mission fall retreat at Camp Assiniboia. Speaker: Kathy Giesbrecht.  
**October 18:** MC Manitoba special delegate meeting.  
**October 23-25:** Youth ministry course and conference at Canadian Mennonite University with Rick Bartlett.  
**October 25:** Preaching workshop at Springfield Heights Mennonite Church, Winnipeg.  
**October 30-November 2:** MEDA 50th anniversary convention at Fairmont Hotel, Winnipeg. Call 800-665-7026.  
**October 31-November 2:** Quilting retreat with Val Pankratz at Camp Moose Lake.  
**November 1, 8:** Preaching workshops at Grace Mennonite Church, Brandon (1) and Plum Coulee Bergthaler Mennonite Church (8).  
**November 7-9:** Quilting retreat with Meg Suderman at Camp Moose Lake.

**Ontario**

**September 14:** Celebration at Altona Mennonite Meetinghouse near Stouffville, 3:30 p.m. Call (905) 640-1536 for details.  
**September 29 and 30:** Seniors retreat at Hidden Acres Camp (choose one day). Theme: Reflections on world conference with Ray Brubacher. Call (519) 625-8602 or 888-9642.  
**October 18:** Farewell dinner for Ron Rempel (former *Canadian Mennonite* editor) at Elmira Mennonite Church.  
**October 20, 21, 27, 28:** Regional meetings for Mennonite Savings and Credit

Union, 7:30 p.m. Elmira Mennonite (20), Wellesley Mennonite (21), MSCU head office, Kitchener (27), UMEI, Leamington (28).  
**November 14-15:** Mennonite Central Committee annual meeting in Stouffville. Speakers: Ed Nyce, Ron Mathies and Don Peters.

**United States**

**October 2-4:** MCC United Nations seminar for post-secondary students. Phone (212) 223-4062, e-mail: unoffice@mcc.org.

**Subscriber services**

**How to subscribe:**

- Individuals who are part of Mennonite Church Canada or one of its five area conferences can ask to be placed on their congregation's group subscription list. The subscription is paid by the conferences.
- Others who wish to order a subscription can use this form. See contact information below.  
 Rates: \$31.00 for one year (includes \$2.03 GST); \$50.00 (Can.) to U.S.; \$69.50 (Can.) for overseas.

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- Changes will be made immediately but may take 4-6 weeks to take effect because of printing schedules.

**Contact information:**

Canadian Mennonite, 490 Dutton Drive, Unit C5, Waterloo, Ontario N2L 6H7  
 Phone: (519) 884-3810 Toll-free: 1-800-378-2524 ext.221  
 Fax: (519) 884-3331 E-mail: office@canadianmennonite.org



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2003

