

CANADIAN
Mennonite

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Not even an eye for an eye

Since the start of the war between Hezbollah and Israel in the middle of July, I've been keeping track of death statistics on both sides of the border. As I write this, a cease-fire has just begun and I'm praying it will hold.

During the first week of the conflict, our attention was largely on our government's efforts to get its citizens out of harm's way as fighting escalated (see p. 20 for our interview with evacuee Bechara Azar). However, by July 20, 306 people had already been killed in Lebanon and 31 in Israel. Two days later, there were 350 Lebanese dead and 34 Israeli dead.

On July 30, an Israeli missile strike on a house in Qana in southern Lebanon killed 28 people (including 16 children) and left 13 missing as of when recovery efforts stopped. The Israeli military later showed a video dated two days before their attack showing how the village had been used as a launching point for missile attacks by Hezbollah against Israel. This village is likely the place where Jesus performed his first miracle, turning water into wine at the wedding feast. There is no feasting in Qana now.

On August 1, three weeks into the war, Lebanon had 750 dead and Israel had 54 dead. By August 8, the totals after a month of attacks were 998 Lebanese and 102 Israelis killed with 3,493 Lebanese and 690 Israelis injured. (All figures are from BBC reports based on data from the Lebanese government, Israeli military and police and the non-governmental organization Human Rights Watch.)

What struck me throughout was that while the totals kept rising, the ratio between deaths was quite constant. Every week, about 10 Lebanese were killed for every Israeli killed.

This also does not include Israel's increased military

strikes in Gaza, which have killed about 140 Palestinian people and one Israeli soldier as of July 26. These have been largely ignored in the larger conflict, as has the fate of the kidnapped Israeli soldier, Gilad Shalit, presumably still being held somewhere in Gaza.

I don't want to imply there is some kind of horrible target quid-pro-quo going on between Hezbollah and Israel over how many dead each side can deliver. While Israel has made much more of an effort than Hezbollah to warn civilians to leave, the facts show that both sides have repeatedly been using mass collective civilian punishment as a military strategy.

Hezbollah launched 3,050 unguided rockets, some packed with 14 kilograms of ball bearings, that make no distinction between military and civilian targets. In addition to human harm, more than 300 buildings were destroyed according to Israeli police.

Israel's air force and army responded with large-scale destruction of Lebanese civilian infrastructure, including 6,900 residences, 145 bridges and overpasses, and 29 major airports, ports, sewage treatment plants, dams and electrical plants according to the Lebanese government. At least some Israeli attacks fired artillery shells with cluster munitions into civilian areas; these wide-area weapons largely harm civilians.

Old Testament law limited response to violence to be no more than the harm first done, at least between two Jews. Jesus went much further in his command to love our enemies, and did so in a time when Israel's enemies were Roman troops occupying their land. What's been happening these past weeks is very far from either response.

—Tim Miller Dyck

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Cover: A Congolese mother is "on the road towards democracy" with her young child after attending an informational meeting led by Mennonite pastor Pascal Kulungu, who ran for office in the capital city of Kinshasa. For coverage of the Congo election, see page 24. Photo by Ray Dirks.

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La Salle, Man.

Sowing seeds, harvesting faith

In the manner of farmers everywhere, Ernie Wiens carefully sows his seeds each year, and then works diligently towards reaping their eventual harvest. And in more than 30 years of working the soil near Glenlea, Man., he and wife Charlotte have enjoyed their share of plentiful harvests.

But unlike most farmers, Wiens has also been sowing seeds of a more sacred nature, and equally reaping spiritual fruit. That's because he combines farming with part-time lay ministry at the nearby Glenlea Mennonite Church.

The Wiens didn't set out down these dual paths. Sure, Ernie grew up on a farm and studied agriculture, but after finishing university in 1967, he fell into teaching at Mennonite Collegiate Institute in Gretna, Man. Then, after he and Charlotte were married, they volunteered in Botswana with Mennonite Central Committee (MCC). She worked as a nurse, he as a teacher. And they loved it.

But when word came that Ernie's father, who farmed with Ernie's brother, was stepping back from the operation, they decided their next move would be to the farm. "With my dad pulling out, it was a bit much for my brother," Ernie says. "I kind of dragged Charlotte to Africa and then had to drag her home." They moved onto the farmyard, shared with Ernie's brother Ed and his wife Trudy, and joined forces on the dairy and grain operation. That was in 1975.

Ed's son Reg eventually took on the dairy himself, but they farm the land as a threesome, growing a mix of cereals, oilseeds and pulses. They have 1,035 hectares in total, with Ernie's share around 405 hectares.

Meanwhile, just as Ernie was fully immersed in farm life, the church began to call. Members saw in him "preacher material." He wasn't so sure, but eventually he agreed and was ordained in 1987.

Keeping the farm tended and the congregation nourished has taken dedicated balancing—and long hours.

"I certainly feel the conflict sometimes when it's the busy time on the farm, and there are church responsibilities," he admits.

Ernie says it is possible to combine ministry work with farming because he shares the church work with two other people. That generally leaves him preaching every third Sunday, while also doing some teaching and leading Bible studies. It helps that many of the 140 church members are also farmers.

"Historically, the church has always been gracious," Ernie says.

Charlotte has taken it all in stride.

"It's been okay because my father was also a pastor. This wasn't totally new to me," she says.

But as they head towards the end of active farming—Ernie is 58, Charlotte, 56—they are starting to re-evaluate their farm lives. Although they've made a good living, too many wet years have taken their toll. Last year, they managed to seed only two-thirds of their cropland, and only harvested about half of that.

Meanwhile, their three children show no signs of taking over the farm, although eldest son—Matthew, 31—actually has a master's degree in agriculture. But his focus is organic farming. He and some friends recently bought land to set up a community organic farm.

"He challenges me on our farming practices," says Ernie.

With ever-rising input prices, Ernie can see the allure, although he isn't convinced organic farming can work well in Manitoba. Still, when asked what they'll do in retirement, Charlotte laughs. "Maybe join Matthew," she says.

They are also drawn towards Africa again.

They have always chosen to seed



Photo by Carol Thiessen

Ernie and Charlotte Wiens check out the winter wheat in one of their fields.

their lives with rich experiences, whether in Canada or abroad. For three years in the '80s, Ernie worked in the overseas office at MCC in Winnipeg, while farming evenings and weekends. Some years, they hosted international students from Finland on the farm. And Ernie also helps with an annual growing project for the Canadian Foodgrains Bank.

What energizes him particularly is chairing an inter-church committee that brings together different denominations for common worship and fellowship. Called the Meridian Inter-church Committee, it includes representatives from four Mennonite, three Catholic, three United Church and two Lutheran congregations.

"There's so much fragmentation in our world all around us and it's so vital that we come together, rather than drift apart," explains Ernie.

"Some of my best 'God moments' have been by myself out on the field enjoying God's creation," Ernie says. "There's nothing I like more than being out on the Prairie on a nice day, swathing a field." He sees it as being an integral part of God's creation, as "being co-creator with him."

—**Carol Thiessen**

Egypt

Healing and teaching in the land of the Sphinx

Canadian Mennonite profiles four Canadians who are currently serving in various capacities with Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) in Egypt. MCC photos by Gladys Terichow.

Gloria Dueck

In many impoverished communities in and around the capital city of Cairo, children born with physical and mental disabilities face a bleak future. Which is why the work of Gloria Dueck, an occupational therapist from Arborg, Man., is so important.

Specializing in children's developmental needs, Dueck works with children, teachers and parents in the Seeds of Hope School—a school for 70 children living with all levels and types of disabilities run by the Egyptian Coptic Orthodox Church.

"There are so many needs. The whole environment in Egypt is not geared for people with disabilities," explains Dueck, whose service term ends in May.

To ensure that teachers will have ongoing access to information on issues pertaining to child development and disabilities, Dueck spends her evenings developing a written curriculum for use as a training resource when she leaves.

Dueck is also leaving another legacy. Shortly after beginning her placement, she realized she could contribute to the children's nutritional needs through providing milk for a weekly meal. When her sister, Rose

Dueck, heard about the need for milk, she raised enough money so that the children could have milk every day. This project has now expanded to a broader relief effort, with MCC providing milk grants of \$1,650 to the Seeds of Hope School's Kindergarten and pre-school programs.

Nelson Heppner

"I live on the Nile. I see it every day—it's mind boggling," exclaims Nelson Heppner, a Canadian working in Egypt under MCC's one-year SALT (Serving and Learning Together) program for young adults.

Living on the banks of this historic river, and meeting people whose ancestral roots in Egypt date back thousands of years, has ignited his interest to learn more about the country's history, religions and cultures. "It's a completely different world," says Heppner, noting that anything older than 100 years is considered historic in his hometown of Steinbach, Man. "The 80-year old tractor at the Mennonite Heritage Village



MCC SALT (Serving and Learning Together) worker Nelson Heppner of Steinbach, Man., lives on the banks of the Nile River at a Coptic Orthodox Church retreat centre near Beni Suef in Upper Egypt.

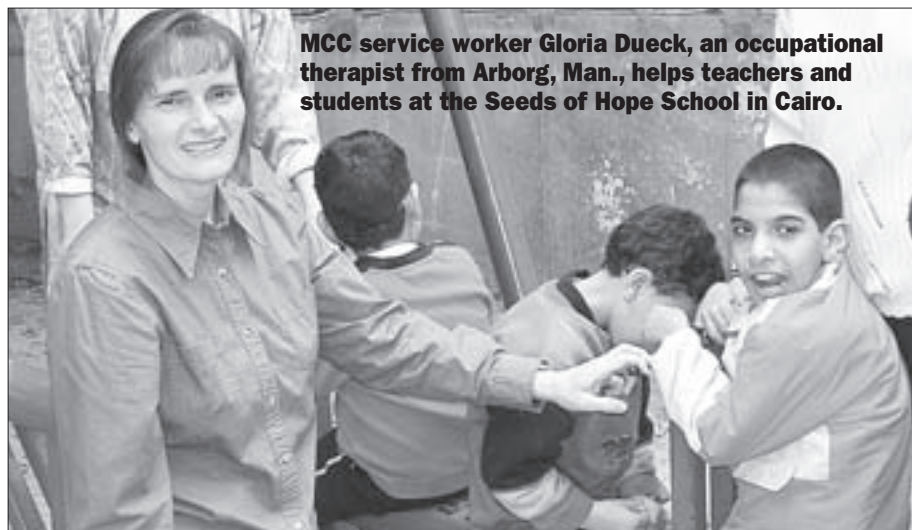
seems rather insignificant in comparison to Egypt's history."

Heppner lives in Upper Egypt (the southern part of the country) at a Coptic Orthodox Church retreat centre across the river from Beni Suef, a provincial capital of about 200,000 people, 120 kilometres south of Cairo. He assists teachers in the English program at the church's elementary school in New Beni Suef, a new planned city across the Nile River. He also teaches English to adults three evenings a week.

Living in Egypt reminds him of biblical stories relating to Egypt. One of the most significant events that continues to be celebrated there is recorded in the New Testament—Mary and Joseph's flight to Egypt when Jesus was an infant. Although Beni Suef is not an official site on the map that traces the route of the Holy Family, the church has sacred landmarks in the region to commemorate the journey.

Heppner's one-year term ends in July.

Continued on page 6



MCC service worker Gloria Dueck, an occupational therapist from Arborg, Man., helps teachers and students at the Seeds of Hope School in Cairo.

Egypt From page 5

Sandy and Barrette Wiebe Plett

Sandy and Barrette Wiebe Plett, both originally from Winkler, Man., started a three-year placement with MCC last November to train English teachers in Egypt. "The catalyst was the tsunami. It forced us to turn our thoughts to the wider world," says Barrette, who left his teaching position at Winnipeg Mennonite Elementary School to work in Egypt. Sandy served as the director of summer camps and youth ministries for Mennonite Church Manitoba prior to their departure to Egypt.

The Pletts live in Assiut, a city of about 400,000 in the Nile Valley, about 300 kilometres south of Cairo. They spend their time with English teachers in classroom settings and share ideas on teaching techniques.

The long-term goal is to start a training centre for teachers working in the nine schools run by the Synod of the Nile Presbyterian Church in Upper Egypt.

School supplies and teaching resources are inadequate, says Barrette. Teachers don't have the time or incentive to plan because they teach different classes on a regular basis and provide private tutoring services in the evenings to help children pass their exams.

"Teachers are unbelievably warm and open to our suggestions," says Sandy. "We only suggest things that we think could be possible for teaching under these circumstances."

MCC currently has 15 service workers and staff in Egypt, a country of 76 million.

—MCC release by **Gladys Terichow**



MCC service workers Barrette and Sandy Wiebe Plett of Winnipeg (formerly of Winkler, Man.) teach English to Egyptian teachers in Assiut.

Cambodian refugee finds joy in serving

Thirty-six-year-old Siyano Prach, a Cambodian-born Mennonite Disaster Service (MDS) volunteer, spent his youth in refugee camps after fleeing Pol Pot's killing fields. The experience left a deep impression on his life, so much so that he has committed himself to doing what he can to improve the lot of his people.

Prach, a long-term volunteer for three months, works as a labourer and construction helper at the newly designed elevated panel houses MDS is erecting along the Pointe Aux Chenes bayou on the Louisiana Gulf Coast.

Site foreman Carl Grimson, a retired millwright from Montana, is impressed by Prach. "He learns by watching and sees what needs to be done and then does it. He's a good worker," says Grimson.

What is not apparent from watching Prach work is his deep-seated motivation. "I want to do whatever I can to help—to live life to the fullest by giving to others," says Prach. "I want to learn how to start an organization and be a proper director. I want to help people to do what they can. Right now, I am learning the ropes."

Under the brutal rule of Pol Pot, leader of the Khmer Rouge, about 1.7 million Cambodians died from starvation, overwork, torture and execution in less than four years. Prach's family had their house taken away by the regime and then were

moved from the city to a rural area. They moved from place to place, trying to stay one step beyond the reach of the Khmer Rouge.

When he was 12, Prach remembers his father asking him and his two brothers if they wanted to go west. Not realizing that this meant a separation from his family, Prach agreed. Through his tears the father said Buddhist blessings on them and sent them on their way to the border with Thailand.

That was the beginning of his youth, which included being robbed, beaten and abused, all the while longing for home. But into his darkness shone a beam of light. He met some Christians in the one of the camps. In his loneliness they made him feel welcome and loved. As a result, he accepted Christ and was baptized.

The three brothers spent 18 months in Khao-I-Dang Refugee Camp before being offered refugee status and being allowed to come to Canada. The brothers arrived in Winnipeg in November 1984, but eventually migrated to Quebec, where an uncle had a restaurant. Prach worked there, learned English and worked at finishing his high school and post-secondary schooling at Concordia University.

He became a substance abuse counselor, but after awhile was disillusioned by people who were dissatisfied despite having so much. Now he is working with an opinion research company doing surveys. He says he is fortunate that his employer understood his desire to help others and gave him the time off to volunteer in



Siyano Prach stands on the deck of the newly designed panel house in Pointe Aux Chenes, La., being built by Mennonite Disaster Service in response to the 2005 hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

Louisiana.

"Through it all I always felt blessed," he says. "I did not compare myself to those who have plenty, but to those who are still in Cambodia struggling."

Prach first heard about MDS in Montreal, where he attended an Anglican church. Just after the 2005 hurricanes in the Gulf Coast, a church member shared a slideshow about her experience with MDS in Wauchula, Fla.

"Wow, that's what I would like to do," thought Prach. "I can't just sit by and watch it on TV. I am impressed with MDS—it shows a different aspect of wealth."

—MDS release by **Bruce Hildebrand**

Photo by Bruce Hildebrand

Raising spiritual children

In April, Mike Perschon, long-time youth pastor (now at Holyrood Mennonite Church in Edmonton), gave a passionate sermon on how the church needs to go about reaching its youth and the generations to come. We present it to you, along with a spiritual confession of faith by “young prophet” Sarah Johnson and a feature interview with Josh McDowell (author of Evidence That Demands a Verdict), as a way of spurring thinking and church discussion on this vital task for our church. Ed.



As a church we struggle with the idea that having spiritual children changes our lives. What’s the future for youths in our conference? It’s a repeated question. Why don’t the youths want to come to our church? Why don’t the youths stay in our church? The real question, though, is, “Were they ever here?”

When I first got to one church that I worked for, I had people coming up to me within the first two weeks asking when are we going to see some baptism services. And I’m thinking of the Bible study I had with these kids the other night. I asked them some basic questions about Christianity and they couldn’t tell me anything about their faith. And I’m thinking, I’m not sure they’re Christians so I’m not putting them in any water or

splashing anything on top of them until I know for sure!

We’ve got this model of youth and children’s ministry where we usher them out of our worship services part-way through. It’s half time—the sermon part is coming—and what are we telling them? It’s going to get so boring! We are telling them that you go there and do your thing and we’ll stay here and do ours.

And we do the same thing with youth ministry. We give youths their own pastor. And we call them pastor, but what we really mean is “fun director.”

Churches say they want their youth pastors to give Bible studies. No, they don’t! I did a whole semester of Bible study this one time—and they were creative Bible studies and they were interactive Bible studies, Bible studies they should have really got—and you know what happened? At the end of that the parents came to me and said, “Our kids aren’t having any fun anymore.” I knew then that my job was fun director.

We say we want young people in the church, that we want them to be part of our church. But I’m not fully convinced that we are ever really ready for what that means.

We say we want youths to become involved And what that means is we would like them to usher. We want them to work in the sound booth. We want them to maybe read the Bible.

But if one of them decides—and I know this from experience—that they are going to be a musician in the church, they are told they are

Continued on page 8

We call them [youth] pastor, but what we really mean is ‘fun director.’



Children *From page 7*

going to have to learn to play some hymns.

I said, “Just as soon as some of those older folks learn the choruses and lead them, I’m willing to go to the young people and tell them that they can learn some hymns.”

But I don’t expect that from my seniors. I don’t want them to do choruses; it’s painful for them and it’s painful for me. The youths doing hymns is that kind of painful.

How not to welcome youths

I was working in a church this one time and a young boy came out to the service; he would have been in about Grade 6. By himself he just showed up one morning. And he plunked himself down on the pew.

The time comes around for us to sing—and in this particular church there were numerous books, including the Bible—and when it came to the

Suddenly we are talking about the integrity of the carpet and what happens if one of those kids spills some pop on the carpet!

singing time he went for the Bible. He wasn’t sure what to do; he had no idea what he was doing in church and he was just trying his best to sort of figure it all out. And people just kind of looked at him and wondered at the novelty—what a curiosity!

He came up to my Sunday school class and we were reviewing a popular film and its relationship to Scripture and things he might be able to learn about Christian life. And he enjoyed himself so much that he came back the next week and he brought his brother and his sister.

During our service we had begun to serve coffee and pop. And the kids drank lots of pop. We sent those kids home wired every week to their parents who weren’t coming with them.

At the church’s next business meeting somebody raised the issue about the young children who had been coming and drinking so much pop. And I’m thinking on the list of things that we have to care about as a church, this is on page 200. But suddenly we are talking about the integrity of the carpet and what happens if one of those kids spills some pop on the carpet!

What happened was that the parents of those kids got a phone call: Please don’t send your kids until you’re willing to come with them.

Welcoming the ‘generations to come’

I got an e-mail at one church that started out with, “I remember the days when we would come to church and it was quiet and peaceful and we’d meditate before the service... and now

A personal confession of faith

About two years ago I lost a lot of faith. I cannot explain why or how this happened, only when. Suddenly believing just did not make sense anymore. My experience is far from unique, especially among my young adult peers, although it was personal and powerful. Unfortunately, it is also my experience that feelings of doubt are something we do not often discuss as a community of faith.

the young prophets

Eventually, I decided I was focusing too much on what discourages me with regards to Christianity and the church:

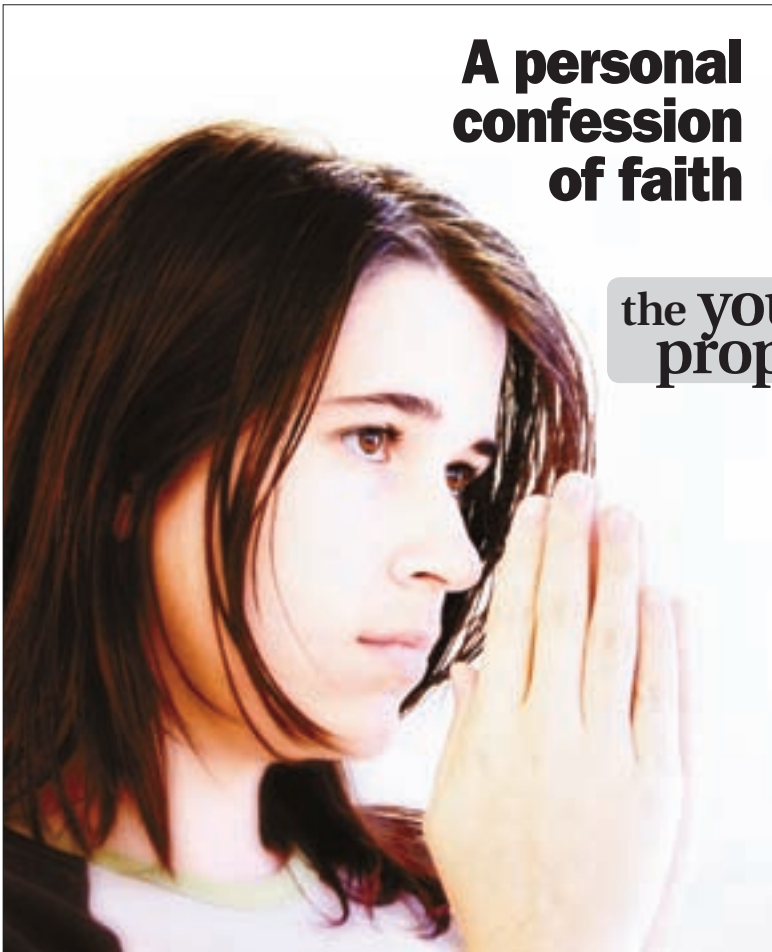
- What I don’t believe;
- What I don’t understand; and,
- Why I don’t want to identify myself as Christian.

I set out to articulate the positive dimensions of my faith:

- What I do believe;
- Why I do call myself a Christian; and,
- Why I am active in the church.

The confession that emerged is not so much about answers, but the way in which I hope to ask questions. It is not about a lack of belief, but, instead, it is about a new way of believing. It is a confession of the moment. It is flexible and open to change as more is doubted, more is searched for and more is lived out. Openness to revision is the foundation of this confession of faith.

I cannot tell a dramatic story about how my faith was reborn and I am glad of that, because I cherish the search and the brief moments of faith I have now more than all the confidence and security of the past. I would never want to go back.



Stock photo

we got these kids in the church and they are making all this noise.” And then at the very end of the e-mail, “I don’t understand why we are losing our young families.”

I thought, “Did you read the first part of your letter?”

Genesis 9:12 says God’s covenant with Abraham was for all “generations to come.” That exact phrase—“generations to come”—is found 39 times in the NIV. But if you extrapolate its meaning, we see future generations shows up more than 100 times. It seems to be important to pass the torch to the next generation.

Psalms 22 says that not only the future generation will be told about the Lord, but they will proclaim his righteousness to a people yet unborn. What our fathers have told us, we will not hide them from our children. We will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the Lord, so that the next



iStock photo

generation will know them—even the children yet to be born!

In the pastoral epistles to Timothy, the torch is passed from Paul, who had started a ministry, and now is passing it on to someone else.

In Mark 10:14, Jesus tells the disciples to “let the little children come to me and do not hinder them.” But what do we do most of the time with the way we communicate the gospel? We hinder them. We use a lot of difficult words—even for adults.

Somebody has said the church is always one generation away from extinction. How do we turn it around? We have to think about that when we talk to a child, that we change the way we speak.

I can’t answer the question, “Why is the sky blue?” with, “Well, the sun’s rays refracting off the ozone layer causes a

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A personal confession of faith

- I used to believe in God, but now more than that I believe in seeking God.
- I used to believe in Christ, but now more than that I believe in following Jesus.
- I used to believe in the Spirit, but now more than that I believe in waiting for God’s inspiration.
- I used to believe in heaven, but now more than that I believe in creating heaven on earth.
- I used to believe in salvation, but now more than that I believe in regeneration.
- I used to believe God created the earth, but now more than that I believe in exploring the complexity of creation.
- I used to believe God created humanity, but now more than that I believe God works through human nature.
- I used to believe in the Bible, but now more than that I believe in learning from the experience of others.
- I used to believe in prayer, but now more than that I believe in sighs too deep for words.
- I used to believe in worship, but now more than that I believe that life is service.
- I used to believe in the church, but now more than that I believe in human solidarity.
- I used to believe in baptism, but now more than that I believe in commitment and loyalty.

- I used to believe in communion, but now more than that I believe in community.
- I used to believe in love, but now more than that I believe in loving everyone always.
- I used to believe in hope, but now more than that I believe in living with optimism.
- I used to believe in faith, but now more than that I believe in the necessity of doubt.
- I used to believe in truth, but now more than that I believe in the quest for knowledge.
- I used to believe in knowledge, but now more than that I believe in mystery.
- I used to believe in true and false, but now more than that I believe in paradox.
- I used to believe in black and white, but now more than that I believe in colour.
- I might not believe in very much, but more than that I believe that little is enough.
- I might believe that little is enough, but more than that I believe there is always so much more to discover.

—Sarah Johnson

The 20-year-old author is a fourth-year religious studies major at Conrad Grebel University College at the University of Waterloo (2006-07) with a minor in economics. She is active as a member of First Mennonite Church, Kitchener, and the Conrad Grebel chapel program. She plans to pursue further schooling in the area of church history.

Suddenly believing just did not make sense anymore. My experience is far from unique...



Children *From page 9*

change in the prismatic make-up of your ability to perceive through your optic nerve.” No. To a child, a suitable answer is, “Because God thought it was pretty.”

We must make sacrifices to bring the gospel to the next generations. I believe the key is Romans 14. That passage says that the stronger brother is supposed to put up with the failings of the weak—the young and arrogant, like I was. Now I’m old and arrogant, but the young people and the children have put up with whatever we throw at them because church isn’t supposed to be fun! It’s supposed to be a place where we learn values and how to behave properly in church.

People of God, now is the time to be willing to minister to the generations who are yet to come. But take heart in this because I truly believe that if we invest in the youths in the next generation, they will return the favour.

[Youths] will begin to appreciate the tradition that they stand upon if that tradition will appreciate them now.

It will not happen immediately. You will have to endure possibly spilled grape pop, but at some point God is faithful. He will open in their hearts the care and the love for the people who have served them.

They will begin to appreciate the tradition that they stand upon if that tradition will appreciate them now.

As Jesus, washing the disciples’ feet, said for us to love each other in a servant manner. We have to be able to say, I am going to totally give it up! I’m going to give up my hymns! I’m going to give up my quiet service! I’m going to give up my orderly worship! I’m going to let it fly! And I believe that God is going to give it back to you.

The people of God must build an ethos that serves the generations yet to come, so they can hear and they can know that the torch will be passed.

—Mike Perschon

Listen to an audio recording of this sermon at canadianmennonite.org.

Rebuilding the foundations

Speaker and author Josh McDowell never intended to be a defender of the Christian faith. In fact, as a skeptic, his goal was just the opposite—until he learned that the Bible was the most historically reliable document in all antiquity. His discovery that Christ’s claim to divinity was true changed the course of McDowell’s life forever. He has since spoken to more than 10 million youths in 84 countries and on 700 university and college campuses. His new book explores the impact of a cultural view of Christianity that has distorted how church youths understand God. McDowell was interviewed by Canadian author and humorist Phil Callaway.

Phil Callaway: I’m reading *The Last Christian Generation*. Isn’t the title a little sensational?

Josh McDowell: Yes, but with substance. I’m trying to raise the alert level. I’m saying we’d better wake up. I wish to God I never had to write this book, but over the last 10 to 12 years I’ve sensed trends and realized that as a church we are in trouble. This is a definitive statement on the condition of the church and the optimistic solution to it.

The problem is not with the kids; it’s with their parents and leaders. It’s not about North America; it’s about the church. In North America we saw the last Christian generation years ago. But now we’re seeing the last Christian generation within the body of Christ.

Still sounds sensational.

McDowell: It’s a crisis. Right now within 12 months of high school graduation over 80 percent of our kids are walking away from the church. If we keep doing what we’re doing, it will soon be 90 percent.

According to [American pollster George] Barna, 65 percent of our church kids either suspect or believe there is no way to tell which religion is true. In 1994, half of evangelical Christian kids said, “There is no truth apart from myself.” Now, it is a staggering 91 percent.

If there is no truth, then you cannot say that Jesus Christ is the Son of God; only that he’s a son of God. Francis Schaeffer said that our culture had become post-Christian. I

believe now he would say it’s become anti-Christian.

You say that only 33 percent of church youth say the church will play a part in their lives when they leave home?

McDowell: In other generations it’s never been lower than 55 percent. If we don’t make some drastic changes, once this generation marries and has children, they will not return to the church the way the Buster generation has—to a certain extent.

What surprised you the most about the statistics in this book?

McDowell: The effect of relationships upon a child’s belief system. It blew my mind.

Why are our young people turning their backs on the church?

McDowell: They’ve been raised with programs and events, not with a process-driven ministry where the Word of God was internalized into their lives. We have a lack of relationship with mom and dad, with leaders in the church, with significant adults in their lives.

What engenders beliefs? It’s our relationships. What causes a young person to want to believe your truth and follow it? It’s relationships.

In Psalm 26:3, David said, “I’ve been constantly aware of your unfailing love and I have lived according to your truth.” If he had not seen that unfailing love, he would not have lived according to the truth.

Research shows that parents have a 300 percent greater influence on a child's spiritual or theological belief than their pastor or youth pastor. So a lot of it comes down to the parents.

In Psalm 86, David prayed a prayer that every parent in the church would hope their child would pray: "Teach me your ways, Oh Lord that I may live according to your truth." Now what is the motivation for that? David said, "For your love for me is very great."

That's why David prayed that prayer. That's why he wanted to believe.

Belief in the truth followed the relationships. It's the same today. If kids do not have those relationships at home, it will have a direct effect on their belief system.

What are some practical things churches should address to change things?

McDowell: We must understand the condition of the church or our solution will miss the bull's eye.

Second, we must realize we're losing our kids—not because they're not hearing truth—but because we're not building relationships with them.

Third, we can't raise children programmatically. We've got to raise them with process.

There are three dimensions to biblical truths:

- God is passionate about his relationship with us and a child needs a relationship with the truth-giver.
- Then, is that truth credible? Is it

truly true? Young people have to be convinced of that.

• Third, how does that truth affect me in my experience and relationship with others?

Jesus said, "You will know that they are my disciples," not by their convictions, but "by their love for one another." Truth was given to be lived out in relationships, but we have failed to show kids how that can happen.

When you look at these things, do you ever get a sense of hopelessness?

McDowell: Yes, I really do. When we do a pastors' briefing and the overwhelming majority of pastors sit there and take no notes. If ever there's a time when I just want to throw up my hands and walk away, it's then.

My heart goes out to senior pastors. They've got to be everything to everyone and still try and hold their families and marriages together. I do everything I can to inform them what's going on and trust God the Holy Spirit to do his work. My optimistic approach is that if we can get back to teaching truth as a relational process, we will have a revolution.

What advice would you have for parents?

McDowell: Build a relationship with your kids. God's Word without relationships leads to rejection. Rules without relationships lead to rebel-

lion. You can be the greatest teacher of truth in the whole world, but if in the depths of their hearts, your kids do not believe that daddy loves them, they're going to walk.

You've also got to be able to show that "truth" is credible. I can hardly ever find anyone, including senior pastors, who can give me one intelligent reason they believe the Bible is true or historically reliable, or why they believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

With your children you'd better be able to explain to them why the resurrection is true, why the Bible is true and historically accurate, why you can trust it.

What are you hoping this book accomplishes for the kingdom?

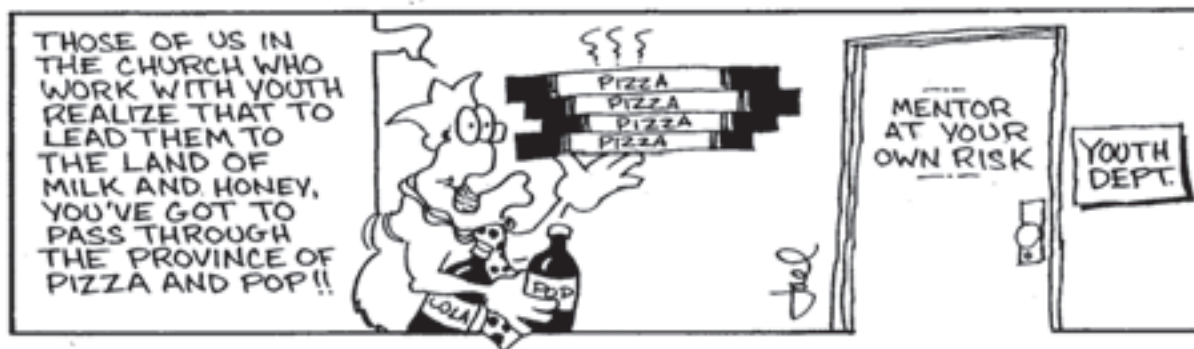
McDowell: I hope God will use it to wake up the church. We're asleep. I want to see a revolution take place that will take us back to a biblical paradigm of truth, where pastors and parents will start teaching relationally. If we do that, I guarantee we will see a change.

—**Josh McDowell** with **Phil Callaway**

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Pontius' Puddle



Real issues from 'reel' life

As a self-declared film buff, it is rare to find the DVD player in my house without some movie in it—whether a comedy, action, sci-fi or a drama. Much like the culture they are produced by, movies are products of society. Cinema provides us with an honest—and oftentimes frank—commentary on our society. The most recent Star Wars movie, *Episode III: Revenge of the Sith* (2005), could be considered George Lucas' commentary on the current American political situation.

Films like *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy (2001, 2002, and 2003) or *The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* (2005) have the ability to take us to another place, allowing us to leave behind the real world. Film can teach us lessons and ask us questions about our own frailty and limitations. It can also push us to confront issues or fears that society is struggling with. In the action film *The Island* (2005) or the drama *Gattaca* (1997), audiences are presented with ethical questions surrounding genetic cloning and engineering.

As Christians, we should view films critically—not necessarily to strip them down and take away their entertainment value—but rather to notice messages that might be presented by the director. We need to ask what the film is saying between the lines of dialogue, amongst the visual effects, or with subtle camera angles and symbols. *Superman Returns* (2006) and *E.T.* (1982) are both loaded with religious symbolism; watch them through this lens, looking for Christological imagery, and you will see the films in a whole new light.

During the Faith, Film and Fiction class at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary, we approached a number of different films and short stories, focusing on such elements as the author or director, the historical settings, and the meaning of the work in cultural and social settings, as well as the moral or ethical meaning of the film.

We analyzed the films in relation to Scripture or Christian doctrine, and ultimately explore different religious themes portrayed in the film. The professor had us reflect on what personal experiences are aiding or hindering us in our interaction with the film.

Using these approaches I have discovered a couple of “diamonds in the rough” which might have been overlooked.

Life as a House (2001) explores the damage that divorce causes and the subsequent reconciliation between estranged spouses and a father and his son. Another movie about reconciliation—and growing up—is *Garden State* (2004). The story follows Andrew Largeman (Zach Braff) as he returns home to New Jersey for his mother's funeral after nine years away. There he begins to connect with his past and discover his future. Both of these films are rated 14A for language and portrayals of drug use and sexuality.

Thirteen (2003) is a powerful story about Tracy Freeland (Evan Rachel Wood), a 13-year-old girl who just wants to fit in. Parents and youth leaders would do well to watch this film, as it takes viewers on the teen's downward spiral as she explores drugs, sex and petty crime in the company of her cool but troubled best friend—from a youthful point-of-view.

Though good films may not be “true” or “real” in the sense that they portray reality, they should not be considered any less valid. Each film provides a front row seat from which we can learn truths about ourselves, our society, culture and world. Keeping this in mind can enhance the movie experience and allow us to see films in an alternative way, perhaps even finding Jesus at the movies.

—Craig Neufeld

The author is a second-year student in the master of divinity youth ministry program at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, Ind. He is a member of Bethany Mennonite Church, in Virgil, Ont.



Suggested screenings by theme

Belief

- *Signs* (2002) [PG]
- *The Matrix* (1999) [AA]

Growing Up

- *Thirteen* (2003) [18A]
- *Wit* (2001) [PG]

Reconciliation

- *Garden State* (2004) [14A]
- *Life as a House* (2001) [14A]

Social Issues (Genetic Cloning/Engineering)

- *Gattaca* (1997) [PG]
- *The Island* (2005) [PG]

Fantasy

- *The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* (2005) [PG]
- *The Lord of the Rings* (2001, 2002, 2003) [14A]
- *E.T.* (1982) [PG]

Alternative Jesus Films

- *The Last Temptation of Christ* (1988) [R]
- *Jesus of Montreal* (1989) [R]



Arts note

'Crucified' Madonna on tour

American pop star Madonna is drawing record crowds with her international “Confessions” tour but also stirring controversy—by performing part of it hanging from a cross made of disco mirrors and wearing a crown of thorns. “I don't think Jesus would be mad at me and the message I'm trying to send,” Madonna said. “Jesus taught that we should love thy neighbour.” As she sings the ballad “Live to Tell” from the cross, images of Third World poverty flash on video screens representing the 12 million children orphaned by AIDS in Africa.

—ENI release

Waterloo, Ont.

Memoir recalls commissioning for first woman pastor

The face of leadership in the Mennonite Church “has changed significantly during the past 50 years,” noted Henry Paetkau, president of Conrad Grebel University College, at the annual fundraising banquet for the Lebold Endowment for Leadership Training. “Through his many involvements in a variety of key roles, Ralph Lebold helped lead the church through those changes.”

This year’s banquet celebrated the publication of *Strange and Wonderful Paths: The Memoirs of Ralph Lebold*, which chronicles Lebold’s life through periods of rapid social change from the 1960s to the ’90s.

According to Herb Schultz, retired MC Eastern Canada pastor and conference minister, “Ralph Lebold’s journey has profoundly impacted the calling and equipping of church leaders in Ontario and beyond. His call, preparation, vision and service fostered development of new programs in an era when pastoral leadership styles and demands changed drastically.”

In his memoirs, Lebold recalls the first commissioning service for a woman pastor in Ontario—Doris Weber. For the occasion, he preached a sermon based on Acts 10—the visions of Peter and Cornelius—that opened the door for Peter to minister to the

Gentiles. Similarly, Lebold suggests, “God was calling us in new directions by being open to women as God’s ministers.” He notes that this was a pivotal event in opening the door for other women to serve in active leadership roles in the Mennonite Church.

In recognition of his role in introducing women to ministry roles in the church, this year’s banquet also celebrated “Three decades of women in ministry: Reflections on the changing face of leadership.” A panel of speakers, moderated by Marianne Mellinger, coordinator of Leadership Formation for MC Eastern Canada and supervisor of the master of theological studies ministry option at Conrad Grebel, included female representatives of women in ministry from the 1970s to the present.

Martha Smith Good, a now retired pastor, was the first woman minister called to serve in the Mennonite Conference of Ontario in 1977. When she first came from Kansas, she thought Ontario had already dealt with the issue of women in ministry. She soon discovered, however, that she was actually a pioneer herself.

Lebold encouraged her to persevere, saying that the conference needed only to experience competent women ministers, after which there would no longer

be an issue or problem. Good felt she was “on trial” at first, but eventually she became the first woman to be ordained in the Mennonite Conference of Ontario and Quebec.

Renee Sauder, currently an interim pastor at Waterloo North (Ont.) Mennonite Church, didn’t think she would be permitted to be a minister when she grew up in Ontario. But despite the lack of female pastor role models, her sense of God’s call was so strong that she pursued ministry anyway.

Sauder said that when she was called back to Ontario as a pastor years later, the situation had changed dramatically. What she experienced at that time was like “a stream of life-giving water for a woman parched for hope that there would someday be pastoral equality.”

Unlike Sauder, Wendy Janzen, now a pastor at St. Jacobs (Ont.) Mennonite Church, recalled that she knew she could be anything she wanted to be as a child. She was affirmed in her calling to ministry and came to Ontario in the 1990s because of MC Eastern Canada’s support for women in ministry. Janzen has not felt any inequality due to her gender, but encourages women pastors to find a balance between personal life and work.

MC Eastern Canada conference minister Muriel Bechtel provided some statistics on women in ministry. Currently, 35 percent of MC Eastern Canada pastors are women, compared to 25 percent of pastors in MC Canada and 22 percent in the U.S.. As well, half of all seminary students are women. —Conrad Grebel release by **Jennifer Konkle**

The annual fundraising banquet for the Lebold Endowment for Leadership Training at Conrad Grebel University College in Waterloo, Ont., celebrated the publication of *Strange and Wonderful Paths: The Memoirs of Ralph Lebold*. Lebold is pictured autographing a copy of his book for his brother and sister-in-law, Clare and Gloria Lebold.



Conrad Grebel photo

One 'flick' you must see

Crokinole. A Gillies Lake Production, 2006; directed by Joshua Steckley and Jonathan Steckley; 81 minutes; not rated.

Billed as “one ‘flick’ you must see,” *Crokinole* is the creation of Jonathan and Joshua Steckley, cousins originally from New Hamburg, Ont.

With wit and humour, but without condescension, the Steckleys manage to create a documentary about the sixth annual World Crokinole Championships in Tavistock, Ont., near Kitchener, in 2004, that feels like a “mockumentary.”

The movie, with many an aside and visual cul-de-sac, manages to portray the real people involved, taking their game—crokinole—with utmost seriousness. The creation of professional quality boards, secret waxes to polish the surface, copied styles, hours of practice, and the history and etymology of the word “crokinole,” are all fodder for the cameras.

Willard Martin, whose immortal line—“That’s a Cadillac”—ends the movie, does a take on Red Green’s “handy man’s corner” about creating and selling high quality crokinole boards that is hilarious. And while the audience is often left laughing,



A player lines up a shot in *Crokinole*, a film of the sixth annual World Crokinole Championships in Tavistock, Ont., near Kitchener, in 2004, made by Jonathan and Joshua Steckley, cousins originally from New Hamburg, Ont.

none of the participants are ridiculed; they are allowed to gently make fun of themselves through their words and actions.

Unlike Christopher Guest’s *Best in Show* and *A Mighty Wind*, the Steckleys did not script their characters’ lines. Editing from more than 60 hours of footage, they, in fact, tried to redeem each character. “We could have made it a lot worse,” said Josh, noting that a more critical version of the film once existed, but the cousins decided that it would be ungracious to the people involved to caricature them.

Martin’s filmic redemption comes as one of his boards is auctioned at the New Hamburg Mennonite Relief Sale. “Every dollar spent here goes to relief,” he says as his board brings in \$200.

The decision to tone the movie down

came from the directors’ deep personal faith. This same faith features in their dreams for the future—to create more low budget movies. Joshua says that they hope to use his master’s degree in political science and Jonathan’s love of movies to create a satirical look at politics, asking the question “What is real?” In an era of sound bites and staged rallies, they want to uncover the truth behind the fiction, so that Christians can make better-informed political choices.

Already an underground hit at Conrad Grebel University College, *Crokinole* is a movie for both crokinole buffs and those who want an evening of light “Mennonite” entertainment. It leaves viewers with the question, “Do we take ourselves too seriously?”

To order a DVD copy of the film, visit crokinolemovie.com.

—Dave Rogalsky

Solo, Indonesia

Christian and Muslim dialogue builds bridges

Muslim-Christian Peacemaking Committee in Solo hopes that dialogue between leaders from both sides of the conflict will help to build bridges of respectful understanding between Indonesian Muslims and Christians.

Recently, the committee decided to publish, in Indonesian, a book authored by Badru D. Kateregga and David W. Shenk entitled *A Muslim and A Christian in Dialogue*. In 24 chapters, Kateregga, a Ugandan Sunni Muslim, and Shenk, an American Mennonite

Christian, share their faith perspectives and respond to each other’s questions.

Mennonite pastor Paulus Hartono, from the Muria Synod, and Muhammad Dian Nafi, a Muslim leader on the peacemaking committee, are among Indonesian leaders who have worked at peacemaking since tensions between Muslims and Christians brought tragedy to this city in 1998.

Within the Indonesian context, both Muslims and Christians who are committed to peacemaking welcome guests to come, learn and share their journey.

The Christian Church in Indonesia, a predominantly Muslim nation, is growing quite rapidly and is concerned about cultivating goodwill. It views its commitment to peacemaking as complementary to its presence, service and witness within Indonesia.

—EMM release by Jewel Showalter

John Howard Yoder: Mennonite ecumenist

Nation, Mark Thiessen. *John Howard Yoder: Mennonite Patience, Evangelical Witness, Catholic Convictions*. Eerdmans Publishing, Grand Rapids, 2006, 211 pages, \$24.99.

It is probably true that nobody knows more about John Howard Yoder’s work than Mark Thiessen Nation, associate professor of theology at Eastern Mennonite Seminary. In this book—a reworking of Nation’s doctoral dissertation at Fuller Theological Seminary—Nation draws extensively on Yoder’s published work,

but also on a vast but unpublished body of writings, including personal letters and memos, to which Nation has access. Nation's command of this material alone makes this book an important introduction and exposition of Yoder's thought.

The biographical chapter that anchors the book does a fine job of showing Yoder to be working from a matrix of Mennonite, European and American influences. But Nation's larger purpose is to demonstrate Yoder's commitment to an embodiment of ecumenical patience. The framework Nation uses as a way to give an account of Yoder's ecumenism is to show that his work embodies Mennonite patience, evangelical witness and catholic convictions.

This framework enables Nation to explore issues such as the Anabaptist roots of much of Yoder's work. Nation claims, "One could argue that Yoder's entire academic career was committed to communicating in broadly Christian terms what he learned through his studies of 16-century Anabaptism in the 1950s in Europe."

Further, Nation explores such issues as Yoder's understanding of the nature of faithful Christian unity, peace theology and Christian responsibility that must be "cross-shaped."

While the primary strength of Nation's book is his exposition of Yoder's thought, also very instructive are the conversations with other theologians carried on by Nation, often contained within the numerous footnotes. However, one looks in vain for substantive criticisms of Yoder. Indeed, Nation cautions against that very thing.

Stanley Hauerwas, in his foreword, suggests that Nation's book is not written in a hagiographical mode. The point is well taken, but Nation can and should move beyond the very brief "considered criticisms" that he offers near the end of the book.

One of Nation's rather gentle criticisms consists in suggesting that Yoder's views "could have been enriched by deep reading in certain recent writings by political philosophers. His own perspective might have been updated in light of this reading." Nation is not specific about which political philosophers Yoder might

have benefited from reading, and in what ways his views could have been updated.

Yoder's own response to such a comment might well have been that he was more interested in deepening his understanding of the Lordship of Christ, rather than expanding his specific knowledge of political philosophy. This does not mean that Yoder would disavow such an enterprise out of hand, but that gaining command of some field of knowledge would not be a necessary prerequisite to understanding questions of Christian political responsibility.

Further, as Gerald Schlabach has suggested, Yoder's persistent focus on the unfaithfulness of the Christian church, especially in Christendom, which he sees as Constantinian, actually hinders ecumenical conversation.

Given Nation's evident command of Yoder's body of work, and the conversation around these kinds of ideas, he is well-positioned to extend these kinds of critical but constructive discussions, which would have added more strength to an already interesting, instructive and important book.

—**Paul Doerksen**

Arts note

Choral concert for peace

The World Peace Forum in Vancouver last month included a choral concert at UBC's Chan Centre. "Choral Peaces" featured choirs from Canada, the U.S. and Australia singing peace related songs. The 175-voice "Doukhobors and Friends for Peace Choir" opened the concert with "Peace is Flowing Like a River," reflecting the belief that the Earth and all its inhabitants are sacred, and that water which provides nourishment and cleansing is the life blood of the planet. "Toil and Peaceful Life" commemorated June 29, 1895 when, in Tsarist Russia, several thousand Doukhobors destroyed their weapons, thus rejecting the use of violence and force. "Let us Renounce the Ways of the Old World" reminded listeners that peace and freedom will not be won through fear and force, but through mutual love and respect.

—**Henry Neufeld**

Strasbourg, France

Two new translations of *From Anabaptist Seed* completed

Translations of *From Anabaptist Seed* by C. Arnold Snyder in Amharic and Vietnamese have been completed.

The Vietnamese translation—by Mennonite Church Canada Formation Council member Hoa Van Chau and Ngan Van Tang of Winnipeg Vietnamese Mennonite Church—is scheduled for release in October.

The 5,000 copies, to be printed in Vietnam, will be distributed in both Vietnam and among Vietnamese Anabaptists in North America.

The North American Vietnamese Mennonite Fellowship and Eastern Mennonite Missions in the U.S. will cover the \$2,500 publication cost.

The Amharic translation was released in April by Meserete Kristos College in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The book was translated under the supervision of the office of the college's academic dean, Woudineh Endayelalu.

The college will use the book as a text and local churches will use it as reference material in teaching from an Anabaptist perspective. It will also be available for purchase by Meserete Kristos Church members.

The book's presentation of basic Anabaptist doctrine and principles of identity and faith has become a popular choice for study groups around the world.

From Anabaptist Seed: The Historical Core of Anabaptist-Related Identity was commissioned by Mennonite World Conference (MWC). The book, first released in English in 1999, is now available in 15 languages.

"Interest in the book remains strong. It is short and accessible," said Snyder, as yet another printing of the English version was being bound at Pandora Press in Kitchener, Ont.

The book was the first selection for MWC's Anabaptist/Mennonite Shelf of Literature, inaugurated in 2002.

—MWC release by **Ferne Burkhardt**

Letters

Canada called to Middle East peacebuilding

The following letter was sent by Mennonite Church Canada general secretary Robert J. Suderman to Prime Minister Stephen Harper on Aug. 2. A copy of the letter was also sent to Peter MacKay, Canada's minister of foreign affairs.

As a church of the historic and well-respected Peace Church tradition, Mennonite Church Canada is deeply concerned about the escalation of violence that we have recently witnessed in Lebanon, Israel and Gaza. We are distressed to see the actions of combatants on all sides of this conflict that have already destroyed many lives, including civilian families, and permanently marred livelihoods, homes, and vital infrastructure of the nations. We believe that, especially in such difficult international conflicts, God calls us all to nurture a new imagination that reflects the peacemaking model of Jesus Christ and therefore contemplates the possibilities of surprises that only God can bring about. We are called to seek responses to conflict that do not involve violent initiatives, violent retaliation strategies, revenge or all-out warfare.

MC Canada currently has workers in Israel who work at building bridges of understanding between Jewish and Christian and Muslim peoples of that region. As a Peace Church, our work in Israel involves peacebuilding that crosses both religious and political boundaries. Our denomination is an active member of Mennonite Central Committee, which has worked with Palestinian and Israeli partners in the Middle East since the late 1940s in relief, development and peacebuilding ministries.

Our concern, however, goes beyond the immediate crisis in the Middle East. We are concerned about what appears to be a multi-faceted and intentional escalation of public

This section is a forum for discussion and discernment. Letters express the opinion of the writer only, not necessarily the position of Canadian Mennonite, the five area churches or Mennonite Church Canada. Letters should address issues rather than criticizing individuals and include contact information. We will send copies of letters referring to other parties to them to provide an opportunity to respond in a future issue if their views have not already been printed in an earlier letter. Please send letters to be considered for publication to letters@canadianmennonite.org or to Canadian Mennonite, 490 Dutton Drive, Unit C5, Waterloo, ON, N2L 6H7, "Attn: Letter to the Editor." Letters may be edited for length, style and adherence to editorial guidelines.

advocacy, decisions and actions that foster the increasing militarization of the Canadian mind, psyche, soul and imagination. We have noted advocacy coming from you and your office that closely resembles the logic of military solutions so evident in the Bush administration in the U.S.

We have noted the shifting assignment for Canadian troops from their traditional peacekeeping role to active and proactive military combatants in Afghanistan. And we have noted the decisions and heard the public rationale advocating for the remarkable increase for military spending in the Canadian budget.

These are all symptoms of a desperate need for a new imagination in addressing the evils of our world based on other than military paradigms. As a fellow Christian, we know we can appeal to you from this framework and exhort you to find strategies that are more in keeping with that which is so foundational to our common faith.

It is in this spirit of peacemaking that we call on you, Mr. Prime Minister, to use your influence to issue statements that favour peaceful solutions, and call on all sides to observe an immediate cease-fire in the Middle East.

The insistence on diplomatic solutions, rather than military accomplishments, is of vital importance to the lives of many in Lebanon, Gaza and Israel. We ask that you avoid aggravating tensions further, and that you do not advocate the justification of the violence and war or signal that Canada indeed might support or favor the escalation of war.

We are thankful for Canada's history as a peacebuilding nation. As a Peace Church, we are committed to

voicing our concerns for peace and justice in the world.

On behalf of MC Canada, I urge you and your government to act quickly to promote the ways of diplomacy and peace within this current crisis, and to open all of us to the possibilities of surprise by humanity and by God's activity in the world.

—Robert J. Suderman

Home-grown cooking still the best choice

I appreciate Will Braun's concern about spiritual health and connecting it with the food we eat ("The spiritual health of Ronald McDonald," June 12, page 15).

For the church to take the lead in choosing wholesome food, grown in rich, healthy soil, is imperative, I think, and I am glad to read this article expressing concern and action in that regard.

For many years, I elected to avoid sugar, but I also thought it was good to eat in restaurants at times—to save time for more important activities than shopping, preparing and eating food, and cleaning up after the event. I have learned, however, that to select vegetables grown in my own garden is the greatest culinary pleasure, one that grocery stores and restaurants cannot compete with.

—Eunice Yantzi, Toronto

Vietnamese persecution could very well be political

Thank you for your brief story on the church in Vietnam ("Church rebuilding halted, leaders re-arrested," June 12, page 17).

For several years, I have been fol-

lowing the story with keen interest. For the first time, the issue of political activism was raised and implied that perhaps part of the persecution is political in nature. Based upon a number of factors, I have long suspected this.

However, there are many opportunities for thanksgiving and praise for God's work in Vietnam, and we need to continue our prayers for our brothers and sisters there. We need to pray for good judgment and wisdom in those in leadership, both here and aboard.

—Doug Durst, Regina

Ukrainian land restitution needed for 'real healing'

I agree with Robert Peters, who wrote in a letter to the editor ("Mennonites must seek Ukrainian compensation, June 12, page 16), "[W]e must seek

appropriate restitution from Ukraine before real healing can happen."

I brought forward one possible path for working toward restitution—a real estate investment company. (See "Mennonite groups oppose land speculator," Jan. 23, page 20. Ed.) It is not the only path. However, I firmly and pragmatically believe that the restitution of our lands will occur only with a financial transaction; it will require a significant investment in the Ukrainian economy.

For me, this all began with a trip to the Molochansk region in 2005, where I visited the town of my father's birth. I was struck by the Ukrainian caretakers' warm welcome, and surprised by their exclamation, "We were wondering when your family would return because this is your land." They know how much we lost. The land, and

our buildings which still stand, tell the story of the violence that forced us to flee.

I believe the time has come for us to find a way to return, through investment or otherwise. Only through restitution can "real healing" happen. —Paul Willms, Everett, Wash.

Congregants should share at least five times a year

It is troubling to discover that Arthur Boers has found support in his critique of congregational sharing ("Thank you for sharing," April 3, page 10). Such sharing is crucial in that it is perhaps the only structured time in which the congregation meets and interacts as a community. I was disappointed to read Kevin Drudge's response ("Sharing

PHIL WAGLER



Outside the box

Weddings or funerals—which do you prefer? While officiating a community wedding I received a great compliment through the mostly inebriated mouth of a best man who, in introducing me prior to the obligatory pastoral blessing upon the nuptial meal, recapped boisterously my message in all its brilliant homiletic poignancy. I must have hit a home run if even he remembered the point. Maybe water to wine would help on Sunday mornings too?

No doubt weddings are wonderful. The beginning of a home—especially a Christ-centred home—is truly worthy of great joy, honour and celebration. It is a moment harkening back to a very good Creation, always a declaration that the Fall will not be tolerated, for a man and a woman will leave mom and dad and cleave to each other despite the serpent's attempt to destroy this mini-church.

Yet not everyone marries. Many remain single. Still others experience what it is like to have loved and lost. And there are always a few at a wedding under protest. For them, this day is a reminder of emptiness, bitterness and painful longing. This is why, in my mind, funerals trump weddings. You see, unlike marriage, death is for all of us—young and old, male and female, rich and poor, married, divorced or single.

At a funeral we're all in the same boat. We all hurt. We're all free to uncover the real us. This day is a stark, blatant reminder that all of us, without fail, will reach an expiration date.

Not that I like to see people suffer. That would be mercilessly morbid. I like funerals because we are all caught by the presence of death—caught by our own mortality as "time sweeps away all that is not immortal" (hymn writer Isaac Watts). On any given day, at any given funeral,

Holy dying

But, above all, Christians should die well.

human beings are caught and desperate for escape, and hence the soil for the seed of the Good News at a funeral is much more fertile than at weddings.

In the 18th century Jeremy Taylor penned a little book, *Holy Dying*, and rightly pointed out that the test for whether or not we believe in the hope of Jesus' resurrection is not passed on on fair-weather days (like weddings), but in those moments when we find ourselves "on the margin of the grave."

Christians should marry well. We should celebrate the covenantal union of man and woman better than anyone else, for marriage is God's idea. A Christian wedding should speak that life is to be embraced and enjoyed.

But, above all, Christians should die well. We live and die with the hope of resurrection. This truth is central to our faith without which we might as well eat, drink, and make stupidly merry. A Christian funeral should speak that the party has only just begun.

At the bookends of Jesus' ministry you find a wedding celebration (John 2) and a funeral (John 11). Jesus began his ministry encouraging joyous celebration of the good things and ended it with the hope that in him life does not end, even though we die. Do you believe this?

In recent months I have had the honour of watching two saints die well. Carol Erb Gingerich, missionary servant in Afghanistan, and Clive Ollies, pastor of Riverdale Mennonite in Millbank, Ont., are both living on beyond the margin of the grave. Their lives and funerals were appetizers of a wedding feast yet to come. Party on.

Phil Wagler is one of the pastors at Zurich Mennonite in Ontario. You can reach him at phil_wagler@yahoo.ca.

Sharing *From page 17*

covenants could set time limits," July 10, page 12).

Drudge mentions times in which sharing has been inappropriate or misguided. But in my 40 or so years of attending church I have heard many a ridiculous sermon, but no one has suggested eliminating or restricting that part of the service, although the quality of the sermon is far more central to worship than the sharing time.

That Drudge and Boers want to hold our services to standards is commendable. However, one suspects that sharing is under attack because it is the one aspect of our service that isn't controlled. Sharing time is unpredictable. It can be embarrassing to discover details of other lives; we often don't know what to do about it. Still,

sharing time binds us together. We might not always like it, but unless we commit ourselves to it we risk the greater danger of isolating ourselves in worship even more than we presently do.

Is sharing always positive? Of course not, but rather than impose arbitrary restrictions, let us provide positive examples. In fact, the only requirement for sharing that I could support is that every member of the congregation share some facet of their life at least five times a year!

My congregation has recently abandoned sharing altogether and I fear for its future because of it. Please pray for us.

—**Ramon Rempel, Kitchener, Ont.**

Magazine must continue to challenge readers

I would like to add my words of appreciation regarding the current direction given by the *Canadian Mennonite* board and editorial staff. I have been able to identify with many of the DeskTop editorials as Tim Miller Dyck grapples with real-life issues both within and without our denomination.

I give high marks for your "Nurturing global Anabaptism" series (April 17, pages 16-17) that challenged us both by the vibrancy and the needs of our spiritual kinsfolk around the world. Since I have visited some of those younger churches, reading their stories becomes an emotional experience for me.

Outside the Box and New Order Voice address with vigour two often di-

AIDEN ENNS



New Order Voice

The lure of wealth is losing its brilliance. I'm learning to value fewer things—simple, more durable things. I have a bias towards previously used, less-electronic items. In some ways, and maybe this is subconscious, I'm preparing for the collapse of our commodity-saturated, unlimited-growth economy.

In other ways, I'm fumbling towards a world without poverty. In theological terms, I'm seeking God in all things, especially the mustard seed.

As a highly educated and relatively rich person, I'm troubled by the growing gap between the rich and the poor. A recent example was given by Ron Sider in *Canadian Mennonite*. He said one quarter of the world's Anabaptists own almost 90 percent of all Anabaptist wealth ("Sharing: A radical way to empower the global church," July 10, page 6). Then he called for a "massive revival" in North America to reallocate wealth within our global Christian family.

I hope a seed of this revival begins to sprout in me. I draw inspiration from people who question the foundation of consumer capitalism, who explore the richness of prayer and contemplation, and pursue the virtues of sustainability and generosity.

Sallie McFague, in *Life Abundant: Rethinking Theology for a Planet in Peril*, dissects the contemporary economic worldview that assumes self-aggrandizement and greed. She contrasts that with an ecological economic worldview that focuses on interdependence and need. She reminds us that "individuals cannot thrive apart from the wellbeing of the whole."

In *Unfettered Hope: A Call to Faithful Living in an Affluent Society*, Marva Dawn explains how our society loves technology and machines. Sure, technology provides

Making affluence history

convenience, but it also disconnects us from each other and can lead to a poverty of spirit. It's unconventional to suspect things "new and improved," but I'm starting to see them as an expensive trap.

Richard Rohr, an author and Franciscan priest from New Mexico, is the founder of the Centre for Action and Contemplation. Part of the journey of contemplation is the journey into emptiness, he says in his book, *Simplicity: The Freedom of Letting Go*. Living under capitalism, in an affluent society that always wants and expects more, it is hard for us to empty ourselves. "The more we own, ironically enough, the less we enjoy," he writes "This is the paradox that lies within all material goods." For the sake of inner abundance, I need outer scarcity.

A recent influence in my life is the Mennonite mystic, Clarence Bauman (1928 to 1995) who taught discipleship and spirituality at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary. Together with his wife Alice, he built a hermitage on the grounds of Camp Squeah in B.C. About the hermitage he said, "It is here that the will of God is discerned, that shallow options of man are transcended and that the lost wasteland of the soul is recovered." I want to go to that hermitage, physically and metaphorically.

Here in the rich sector of the world, where conspicuous consumption is the norm, perhaps the best way to make poverty history is to celebrate conspicuous non-consumption and make "affluence" history. A journey towards contemplation subverts my desire for wealth. I hope this seed spreads and blossoms into a massive revival among Anabaptists and beyond.

Aiden Enns is the publisher of Geez magazine (www.geezmagazine.org). He is a member of Hope Mennonite Church in Winnipeg and sits on the Canadian Mennonite board.

**For the sake of inner abundance,
I need outer scarcity.**

vergent aspects of the one gospel. Your many other varied topics demonstrate a truly Anabaptist emphasis on taking seriously all aspects of Christ's gospel.

"Disciplining the church" (May 15, pages 11-15) brought to mind the enlightening 1960s "Concern" series of booklets containing reflections and dissertations by the then young theologians Marlin Jeschke, Walter Klassen, Jacob A. Loewen, John W. Miller, Samuel Shoemaker and John H. Yoder, among others. They helped us think about the potential blessings offered to the church if only we were willing to be "radical" enough in taking Jesus seriously in many aspects of communal living that we have preferred to water down.

I would invite *Canadian Mennonite* to further challenge our denomination with the full implications of believer's baptism and church membership; all the communal—in contrast to the now-popular subjective—ramifications of the Lord's Supper; the discerning and nurturing strength of an interdependency within the body of Christ; being both a welcoming and a disciplined church; being vibrantly evangelical and socially sensitive; and being both threateningly prophetic and peaceable.

—**Ivan Unger, Cambridge, Ont.**

Clarification, corrections

- Vern Ratzlaff requested that his role at Aberdeen (Sask.) Mennonite Church be described as "part-time pastoral care" ("The Churches," July 10, page 35).

- Re: "Mennonites have a history of making a difference" letter, July 10, page 13. Roger Friesen pioneered the micro-loan initiative in South America, but he was working for Mennonite Economic Development Associates, not Mennonite Central Committee, at the time.

- Cari Friesen's name was incorrectly spelled in the caption for the front-page picture of the Edmonton 2006 Assembly's worship team in the July 31 issue. The back page picture of the aquarium in the same issue was taken at the Delta South Edmonton hotel, not at First Mennonite Church.

Canadian Mennonite regrets the errors.

Conservatives 'crack down' in the wrong places

Re: "Justice minister cracking down on crime in Canada," July 10, page 14.

Your report on Vic Toews' "legacy" makes two interesting claims:

- The two bills in question will in some way prevent crime; and,
- Toews attributes his approach to crime prevention to his Christian faith.

The two pieces of legislation simply place criminals in prison and extend their stays. Evidence, especially from the United States but also in Canada and other countries, shows that merely placing people in prison for extended periods of time leads to a high probability of their re-offending within two years of release. Therefore, the effect of Toews' initiatives will be to remove selected criminals from the community until after the next election.

A lack of concern with preventing crime is evident in what the Conservative party has chosen not to do:

- Maintain the gun registry; and,
- Include in the federal budget resources to address causes of severe poverty in aboriginal communities within Canada.

When investigating a crime involving guns, the gun registry enabled police to place an immediate charge if a suspect had an unregistered gun. This immediate charge gave police time to assemble evidence on whether or not the suspect was involved in the initial crime under investigation. As such, this gun registry was likely one of the more effective crime prevention measures passed in the recent past by the Government of Canada.

Toews may view crime prevention as the prerequisite for success of all other programs. Programs that deal effectively with severe disparities in the distribution of income and wealth

are also prerequisites for a successful crime prevention program.

—**Henry Rempel, Winnipeg**

Human salvation

I am writing in relation to Peter Harris's wonderful article on page 6 of the June 26 issue—"The gospel and nature conservation." It is painfully true, as he says, that the idea that God's good news is just about saving souls is far from being biblical. The biblical revelation is that it is God's purpose to save the whole human being and the human being was not whole without the earth and all that we call nature, and will not again be whole without the manifested salvation of the earth and all that we call nature.

God did not rest in the creation of the human being until he had created a reproductive being that began with not one, but two, individuals united as one. And what we are—our corporate nature—is completed by the responsible relationship with the garden in which it was made. Therefore, in God's Word, the ultimate description of salvation comes in the words, "God creates new heavens and a new earth."

The good news is not, as we might be tempted to think, that we can be saved from our responsibility as members of the human race for corporate responsibility for our planet and all its creatures. Salvation from this responsibility would be no salvation at all. The good news is that the opportunity for us to fulfill the purpose for which God created us on the Earth to begin with has been saved.

If we want to return to the fully biblical understanding of salvation, we must begin to learn about our corporate identity and nature, first as God created it in the beginning, and then as he has redeemed it in and through the Messiah. Indeed, we must begin to understand the mystery of Jesus' corporate, redeeming relationship of sacrificial love with his people, Israel. For out of this relationship comes the good news of hope and salvation for the whole human being, together with the world in which—and for which—the human being (individually and corporately) was created.

—**Max Kirk, Abbotsford, B.C.**

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Winnipeg

From death to destruction: One man's escape from Lebanon

On July 28, Bechara Azar, a Lebanese Canadian from Manitoba arrived in Winnipeg after being evacuated from Beirut. His plans for a month-long visit home to mourn the passing of his father were disrupted by “a rain of bombs” signalling the outbreak of a war with Israel that has killed hundreds of Lebanese civilians, left personal lives in chaos, and devastated the infrastructure and fragile economy of his country.

“The bombing started at the airport just two hours after my arrival in Beirut early on July 13,” Azar said at the airport, sounding jet-lagged and dazed. “My brother had told me about the kidnappings of two Israeli soldiers [which Israel used as justification for its incursion into southern Lebanon] when I arrived. We expected some problems in the south, but not on this scale.... It never crossed my mind that there would be such a huge bombing campaign in Beirut! We heard the

bombs very strong in the nearby suburb where we stayed,” he continued. “You could feel the vibration... and the pressure pushing against you....”

In such a chaotic setting, holding a memorial service for his father in the Greek Catholic (Melkite) Church became impossible. Instead, the family shifted into survival mode—as they had many times in the past—extending hospitality to about 15 refugees, and helping Azar's sister and family, whose husband works in Jordan, escape to the Jordanian embassy.

“That was very dangerous, getting her there,” said Azar. “Ten minutes later, the road was bombed and a helicopter shot down. It was quite a moment. We thought we wouldn't get back.”

As for his own evacuation, initially he thought the war might stop at any time and he would take the road to Jordan. “But the road kept getting more dangerous,” he said. So when his wife, Joan Barkman Azar, phoned to say that Canadian citizens did not

have to wait to be called by the embassy to get onto the evacuation ships, he decided to go to the port to see what would happen. He was surprised when he showed his passport to a Canadian soldier, who told him he could go straight on board.

Thinking he was going to Cyprus, Azar actually ended up in Turkey. “There were about 200 people on the ship, including young families,” he said. “It was an okay journey. They did a good job,” he said of the Canadian rescue mission. After staying for a night in Turkey, Azar continued on by air to Montreal and finally arrived in Winnipeg on July 28, where he was warmly welcomed by his wife and a small group of well-wishers, including friends from Aberdeen Evangelical Mennonite Church in Winnipeg, where they attend.

Azar is glad to be safely back in Canada, but he is clearly distressed over those he left behind, especially his mother, with whom he hardly had time to visit.

“She's a very strong woman. We went through many wars together,” he said ruefully. “Bombs, shrapnel in the house in 1982.... But the bombs are bigger now and shelters are no use.”

“I don't know why [the Israelis] are doing this,” he agonized. “They say it's because Hezbollah is using villagers as human shields. But there is no army there. These are just accusations....”

According to Azar, Israel's most recent incursion into Lebanon just “creates more enemies. It doesn't help the peace process. It will affect people for years to come. But if war stopped, they would forget.”

While he appreciated the Canadian government's assistance in getting out of Lebanon, Azar is upset at Canada's response to the war itself. “I don't understand why they respond as they do,” he said. “They just talk about violence on one side. At least they should condemn violence on both sides. Canadians should be writing to their governments, but I don't think it's going to change,” he sadly concluded.

—Leona Dueck Penner



Photo by Leona Dueck Penner

Joan Barkman Azar welcomed her husband Bechara back to Winnipeg after his evacuation from Lebanon last month. He had gone to Lebanon to mourn the passing of his father with his family.

MCC accepting donations for Middle East crisis

Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) has launched an appeal to help people in Lebanon and Gaza who are suffering because of the current conflict.

About a half-million people in Lebanon are homeless and many have little hope of returning to their homes or businesses, which have been severely damaged or destroyed by Israeli military strikes, says Rick Janzen, a director of Mennonite Central Committee's (MCC) programs in Middle East and Europe, who has recently returned from Beirut.

"A long-term humanitarian crisis is inevitable," Janzen says. "People don't have homes to go back to; there are literally city blocks of housing that are now uninhabitable. There are no services and streets are full of rubble. When the bombing stops, where will they go?"

He expects access to food, medicine and other supplies will become more difficult.

"Inflation on some items is already 500 per cent," he notes.

Contributions to the MCC appeal will help partner organizations in Lebanon meet basic needs of displaced people finding refuge in parks, streets, schools and other government buildings.

An emergency response of \$45,600 has been allocated to provide emergency assistance to people fleeing the fighting. About 100 families are living in a makeshift refugee camp at the Sanayeh public park in Beirut, about two blocks from the MCC office.

Financial support from MCC makes it possible for MCC's partner organizations in Lebanon to distribute food, water, medicine and mattresses to people living in the park and other temporary shelters. A more comprehensive MCC response is being developed to meet the long-term needs of the displaced people.

MCC is also working with partner organizations in Gaza, where tight border controls and damage to electrical power plants and other infrastructure exacerbates ongoing economic hardships and trauma. In Gaza, MCC provided \$29,600 to a partner organization that works with children and teenagers. [See "Palestinian group gets MCC aid following Israeli attacks," July 31, page 20. Ed.]

MCC has been working in partnership



MCC photo by Bassam Chamoun

Volunteers help make food for displaced people in Sidon.

with local organizations in Lebanon since 1977. In recent years, MCC has been working with local partners to strengthen projects that support peacemaking and justice programs.

People wishing to contribute to MCC's response should mark their contribution "Middle East Emergency Assistance."

To stay abreast of MCC's emergency relief work in the Middle East, visit mcc.org and follow the "Middle East Emergency Response" link.

—MCC release by **Gladys Terichow**

Syracuse, Ind.

Middle East Christian ministry in jeopardy

As Mennonite workers in Israel and Lebanon sorrowfully followed reports of the Israeli bombardment of Lebanon and Hezbollah rocket strikes on Israel last month, they faced the possibility that their ministries could be compromised or even ended.

Several workers from the Middle East met as part of a larger gathering in northern Indiana hosted by Mennonite Church Canada Witness and Mennonite Mission Network just days after Hezbollah kidnapped two Israeli soldiers to set off the latest round of hostilities. The workers asked to remain anonymous due to ongoing security concerns.

"So many innocent people are struggling because of Hezbollah and because of Israel," a worker in Lebanon said. "They destroy so many people's lives."

A worker from Lebanon recounted looking forward to an unusually smooth North American ministry assignment, but said, "In just one week, our lives here have been radically shifted." Without knowing whether they will be able to return to their friends, belongings and ministry, the worker continued, "I feel I'm suddenly stranded in the U.S."

One Jerusalem worker said residents in and around the Gaza Strip are separated from the range of the rockets currently being used by Hezbollah. However, tensions between the Israeli government and the Palestinian Hamas group continue to escalate, as an Israeli soldier kidnapped by Hamas has still not been freed. Fears of resumed suicide bombings were again resurfacing, said the worker.

Despite the danger, the workers in Israel plan to return and those assigned to Lebanon hope they too may be allowed to resume their work, if any of it remains after the bombing stops.

Workers also expressed concern that tourism to Nazareth Village, which witnesses by showing visitors a slice of Jesus' first-century life, would disappear.

Pacifist Christian voices muted

The voices of Christians in the region, especially pacifist Christians, have not been heard locally or globally, since most outsiders see the conflict as simply Muslims versus Jews, a worker from Israel said.

"The Christians are ignored, even by the president of the United States. At the practical level, they also don't exist," the worker said. Christians, he continued, must move past supporting or hating Israel. "If we take Christ as our bottom line ethically, violence is never justified," said a worker in Lebanon. "It doesn't lead anywhere. It just spirals downward."

In Lebanon, Christians constitute a large portion of the population. A worker said that, despite the fact that Christianity is often limited to a politi-

Continued on page 22

Ministry *From page 21*

cal and legal identity, and pacifism has taken little root, many Lebanese Christians do seek to follow Jesus in their lives and reflect critically on the use of violence.

Lebanese Christians, as well as Muslims, have no desire to return to civil war. They have shown remarkable strength over the last several years, said a worker, resisting the temptation to violence.

Although a civil war ended in 1990, Lebanese society is now again under great stress as masses of people—both Muslims and Christians—flee the south to escape the Israeli bombardment.

In Israel, where only a small percentage of the population is Christian, there is no unified Christian voice for peace due to disagreements over the Zionist movement.

“Why should your Christian voice be a better Christian voice than the other Christian voices that are louder?” an Israeli worker asked. “The voices that are heard usually serve U.S. and Israeli national interests—those are

What you can do?

Pray for:

- Mennonite workers in the Middle East, their colleagues, friends and families affected by the escalation of violence, destruction, and evacuation.
- Innocent parents, children and families who have already endured generations of conflict, that they might yet know peace.
- The aggressors, that they may see the senselessness of their actions and reconcile their positions.
- Those without power who feel bound to follow orders.
- A conscientious objector movement in Middle Eastern militaries and around the world.
- Leaders in the region, that they may act on what they surely already know—that violence only begets violence.
- Influential leaders around the world, that they may wield their power for good.
- Hope for all those in despair.

Encourage:

- One another in your communities, demonstrating the love of God and the peace of Christ in your families, congregations and social circles.
- Mennonite workers you may know in the Middle East with personal notes of encouragement and hope.

Give:

- A financial gift of hope to a ministry in the Middle East. Mennonite Church Canada supports ministries in Jerusalem and Nazareth.

The latest escalation of violence will surely result in a decline in tourism and travel. These ministries rely in part on visitors from around the world. Your gift at this time will help bridge a gap until the situation once again becomes safer for travellers and employees of these ministries.

—MC Canada release

the voices with money behind them.”

The workers are asking for prayer for the region and for the ministries at risk due to the continuing attacks.

—MC Canada Witness/MMN release
by **Ryan Miller**

Migrant workers forgotten in Israeli-Hezbollah crisis

It's been called the “new slavery.”

Inexpensive to hire, migrant workers from Asia, Africa and Eastern Europe in Lebanon and Israel are often abused or treated as chattel as they work to rebuild infrastructure or are hired as domestic help—a status symbol for many who used to be able to afford cleaners and cooks.

These are the first people to be forgotten when crisis hits, said a Mennonite worker in Lebanon, who was attending meetings of MC Canada Witness/Mennonite Mission Network workers in Syracuse, Ind., last month.

Missiles exchanged between Israel and Lebanon as a result of the recent escalated conflict between Hezbollah and Israel raise serious concerns about migrant labourers, said the worker, decrying the higher value placed on western lives.

“I don't think their [migrant workers] embassies will get them out. I wonder how they will get out,” said the worker. “There is no voice who speaks for them.”

—MC Canada Witness release
by **Dan Dyck**

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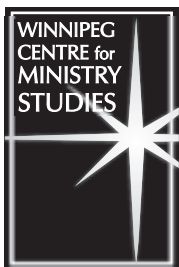


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Bardalah, West Bank

Water for West Bank village

Not much has changed over the years in the village of Bardalah in the northern Jordan Valley of the West Bank. The Palestinian residents of this village continue to live very close to the land, depending largely on agriculture for their subsistence.

Recently, Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) and Catholic Relief Services partnered with the Palestinian Hydrology Group in a hydrology project in this small Palestinian village of 2,700 people. Growing fruits and vegetables, such as tomatoes, cauliflower, and squash, can be challenging in the climate of the Jordan Valley.

This project built four cement pools in the 40-hectare community to collect rainwater in the winter season and store it in the summer, benefiting 90 farmers. In addition to the pools, 500 metres of new irrigation pipes were installed.

This is the third phase of a joint hydrology project to provide emergency assistance to Palestinian farmers affected by the Israeli separation barrier. It has included projects in Bardalah's neighbouring village of Ein el-Beida in the northern Jordan Valley and in the West Bank village of Jayyus, where the separation wall has cut off more than 300 families from their farmland.

Palestinian livelihoods continue to be devastated as more land continues to be expropriated for the construction of the 700-kilometre separation barrier—a network of concrete walls, electronically monitored barbed-wire fences, patrol roads and trenches—built not on the internationally recognized boundary referred to as the “Green Line,” but on Palestinian land.

When the Israeli occupation of the West Bank began in 1967, the Israeli military began to dismantle and prohibit the water well pumping facilities the villagers of Bardalah depended on for their agricultural development, leaving them only with the option to buy water from Israeli water companies. Israeli policies constraining the supply of water to these communities

has made it very difficult for farmers to irrigate their fields. The newly constructed pools will help farmers by providing them with free access to water for their lands.

Between 1976 and 1988, MCC was engaged in a rural development program that focused on protecting Palestinian land and water rights, both of which were under attack from the Israeli occupation.

The village of Bardalah was the site of one of the first projects in the old program, mainly due to their outdated irrigation methods and the fact that their lands were under threat of confiscation from nearby settlements. In addition to introducing drip irrigation methods and providing material at a cheaper cost, MCC also trained farmers to fit and maintain drip systems, distributing the necessary tools so that farmers could be self-sufficient in the assembly and repair of pipes.

Had it not been for these efforts, not only would Bardalah have faced the serious danger of running out of water for agriculture, MCC worker Ibrahim Matar believes that their land would



Mennonite Central Committee and Catholic Relief Services recently partnered with the Palestinian Hydrology Group to provide residents of Bardalah in the Jordan Valley with four cement pools to collect rainwater in the winter season and store it in the summer, relieving the need to buy expensive water from Israeli companies.

MCC photo

have been expropriated. “With the support of MCC, Bardalah villagers were able to surround the settlement with fields supplied by drip irrigation systems, stymieing land confiscation,” he says.

And to this day, despite the destructive effect of Israeli army tanks driving through the farmland of Bardalah, three kilometres of drip irrigation line installed with the support of MCC in the mid-1970s continues to function.

In this context, the seemingly mundane tasks of farming become a form of resistance.

—**Timothy Seidel**

The author is an MCC peace development worker living in Bethlehem.

News brief

Indian leaders divided on HIV numbers

Church health activists in India have rebuked their government for downplaying the extent of HIV infection after a UN report said the country now has the highest number of people living with the virus in the world. The 2006 report on the global AIDS epidemic released on May 30 by the Geneva-based UNAIDS program said

an estimated 5.7 million Indians were living with HIV, compared to 5.5 million South Africans. “Obviously 5.7 million is not the correct number,” India’s health and family welfare minister Anbumani Ramadoss told reporters, triggering criticism from Dr K. M. Shyamaprasad, executive director of the medical and health board of the Lutheran churches in India.

—ENI release

Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo

Congo holds long-awaited elections

On July 30, the people of the Democratic Republic of Congo voted freely in national elections for the first time in more than 40 years. And for the first time, the three Congolese Mennonite denominations—whose combined membership totals 194,000—took an active role in electoral politics, fielding candidates and encouraging church members to vote.

Pascal Kulungu, a Mennonite Brethren candidate for parliament, said that his objective is to encourage the government to work for peace in eastern Congo, where militias continue to fight in the wake of the civil war that officially ended in 2002.

But Kulungu said that he and other Mennonite candidates lacked the money to pay for big political campaigns. Wealthier candidates distributed food, clothing, cash and other gifts to people at rallies. “People have that culture of getting something from parliamentary candidates,” Kulungu said. “It’s tough.”

The United Nations helped to conduct the election—a monumental effort that involved 50,000 voting centres, hundreds of thousands of poll workers, and tens of thousands

of Congolese volunteers who observed the voting process to verify that it was conducted fairly.

Congo’s national council of Protestant churches organized teams of election observers in the capital city and several other parts of the country. At the invitation of Congolese Mennonite churches, Mennonite Central Committee organized a group of 22 observers from Canada, England, Holland and the United States to assist in this effort.

Despite fears of political violence,

Waterloo, Ont.

Election observing is part of a missional response to the world

When Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) put out a request for volunteers to join an election observation team in the Democratic Republic of Congo, it was overwhelmed.

The official team was joined by two other teams—one from Menno Simons College (CMU) in Winnipeg and another from Waterloo North Mennonite Church in Ontario.

The Waterloo North team included Dave Klassen and his two daughters, Aleda and Kara. The Klassens have a long history with the Congo. Aleda and Kara were born there when their parents were working there for MCC in the 1980s. Dave’s parents served in the Congo as well. A high point for Aleda was meeting a church leader who had been baptized by her grandfather.

Mary Lou Klassen explained that politics in Africa is different. Party politics is little known. The 33 presidential candidates represent different groups in the country, each nominating someone whom they think will care for their needs.

Mostly the observers had high praise for the election itself, as well as the con-



Photo by John Robinson

Kara Klassen, a Canadian Mennonite election observer from Waterloo North Mennonite Church, worked with Jeremie Ngoya, a Congolese Mennonite election observer, at a voting centre in the capital city of Kinshasa.

tinuing compilation of the individual polls.

David Ott, a Waterloo North observer now living in Ottawa, had a more difficult experience, as the poll he was assigned to had a number of irregularities reported.

Dave Klassen noted that seeing the compilation efforts in action he could see how it could take weeks to complete the vote totals. And then there might be a need for a run-off if none of the presidential candidates received more than 50 percent of the vote.

The Canadian Mennonite observers were invited by the Congolese Mennonites, who gave them the opportunity to interact with a group of women theologians for worship and conversation.

These women see the church’s involvement in the election as part of their missional lives.

“These theologians care for other women,” Aleda wrote home in an e-mail. “When asked what they do in response to various women’s issues, they each listed similar activities: helping widows and the elderly in the church; assisting single mothers; counselling victims of violence, sexual or otherwise; and educating young women driven to prostitution in a desperate attempt to earn a little cash.”

Tim Sauer said that a sermon about the problems of money was “obviously aimed” at the North Americans.

—**Dave Rogalsky**

the scene was mostly calm and orderly. The observers reported a few difficulties in the voting process, such as voting centres that opened late and six-page ballots with 33 presidential candidates and hundreds of parliamentary candidates to choose from. However, the consensus was that the voting process ran smoothly and without partisan interference.

It was the first multi-party election in Congo since Mobutu Sese Seko seized power in 1965, ruling as a dictator for 32 years. When Congo's civil war officially ended in 2002, a transitional government was installed, with former rebel leaders serving as vice-presidents.

The election was the first for the vast majority of Congolese voters.

Philomene Matondo, a 40-year-old Kinshasa woman, said she cast her ballot in the hope that Congo will become a more democratic country. "I want elected officials who will try to accomplish every promise that they make," Matondo said.

Congo's problems are enormous, however. Although it has many valuable natural resources, misrule and civil war have left the Congolese people among the poorest in the world. Basic public services and infrastructure are severely lacking—no paved roads connect Congo's vast rural regions, and school teachers and medical workers are paid next to nothing. In Congo's troubled eastern region disease and hunger kill one in four children before their fifth birthday.

Organizers say they will announce the election results in several weeks and hold a run-off election in October if no presidential candidate wins a majority.

Sidonie Swana Falanga, a Congolese Mennonite election observer, asked for prayer on behalf of the Congolese people during this uncertain transition period. "I am asking you to pray for us, that we will have calm in our country and that we will have changes that people want to see," she said.

—MCC release by **Tim Shenk**

Seoul, Korea

Korea Anabaptist Center hosts Yoder Neufeld on lecture circuit

South Korea is a remarkable land, alive with economic activity and endless apartment complexes, whose recovery from the Korean War into a fully industrialized nation is nothing short of remarkable. In it, Christianity has become the predominant religion.

Yet Korea also bears many scars. It is now the last remaining country to still be divided as a result of the World War II Allied victory. Most South Koreans still hope for eventual reunification with their brothers and sisters in the North.

It is in this context that the Korea Anabaptist Center (KAC), whose mission is to develop and provide resources, education, training and relationships in the Anabaptist/Mennonite faith tradition, invited Tom Yoder Neufeld, director of the graduate theological studies program at Conrad Grebel University College in Waterloo, Ont., to be its guest speaker this spring.

Sponsored by Mennonite Church Canada and KAC, Yoder Neufeld spent three weeks visiting churches, seminaries, and Christian groups across South Korea, speaking to audiences that ranged from 20 to 300 on the topic of "Peacemaking as the imitation of God," and the theme of social justice throughout the entire Bible.

Presentations to seminary students

were especially invigorating, as pupils always energetically engaged him with many difficult and challenging questions.

It was a challenge for Yoder Neufeld to keep his answers to the complex theological questions brief. Imagine a Mennonite theologian—in less than 10 minutes—being asked to reconcile the Old Testament passages where God seemingly orders violent acts or approves of them, when half that time is taken up in translation.

Questions such as this, and Yoder Neufeld's interpretation of Romans 13—where Paul talks of submitting to the authority of the state in light of U.S. President George W. Bush's foreign policy—kept coming up.

Yoder Neufeld's time in Korea ended with a talk at the UNESCO building, where he met with various social action groups. Many were interested in his reading of the Bible, one that is not stressed much in the Korean church in general. Listeners concluded that Korea needs to develop resources and educational material on a peace theology that emphasizes Jesus' way of peace and working for social justice, so that future generations can learn ways to make peace as an alternative to war.

Yoder Neufeld was interviewed for NewsNJoy, a well-known Korean Christian magazine, in which he was featured on the front page and had the feature article on peacemaking.

—MC Canada release by **Douglas Friesen**

The author is a member of Waterloo (Ont.) North Mennonite Church and a volunteer for the Korea Anabaptist Center, serving for a year as a web administrator through Mennonite Central Committee's Serving and Learning Together (SALT) program.



Students at the Korea Baptist Theological University and Seminary discuss theological matters with Tom Yoder Neufeld, right, and Kyong-Jung of the Korea Anabaptist Center, left, after Yoder Neufeld's lecture.

Photo by Douglas Friesen

Winnipeg

Reaching out to others the goal of new MCC bi-national chair

Ron Dueck, newly elected chair of the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) bi-national board, grew up in a family where the organization was a household name. But it was a decision he and his then fiancée, Wendy Innes, made prior to their marriage almost four decades ago, that led to a lifetime of MCC commitments, culminating in his latest appointment.

During his university studies he met Innes and they agreed they wanted to do “something with meaning in our lives” after marriage, he says. To that end, they attended Urbana '67 to explore possible service assignments with various organizations represented there. “We got the best reception from MCC,” says Dueck. “It connected with our lives and interests.”

In 1971, they signed up for a three-year teaching assignment at a small Norwegian Evangelical Pentecostal mission secondary school in rural Swaziland, where he taught agriculture. That experience set the focus for their lives, especially since the first of their two children was born there.

They returned to Manitoba in 1974. Despite the busyness of raising their family, serving on the Kleefeld Evangelical Mennonite Church ministerial team as deacons, and work pursuits, they “always kept up MCC connections in some way,” he says.

Since 1976, the Duecks have attended most local MCC alumni meetings and all of the MCC Southern Africa triennial alumni retreats held across North America. Dueck served as church delegate to MCC meetings and as MCC Manitoba vice-chair prior to becoming chair of MCC Canada in 2000.

Among his duties as MCC's newest bi-national chair, Dueck chairs four bi-national executive meetings a year—including two in Akron, Pa., one in Winnipeg and the other at the MCC annual general meeting, and attends two annual Mennonite World Conference (MWC) meetings, and the MC Canada and MC USA annual

general meetings. “But the committees do a lot of the actual work,” he says.

Vision for MCC

Dueck's vision for MCC emphasizes the importance of partnering in a global Mennonite fellowship through MWC. “These churches are more and more involved with MCC's relief and development programs in their regions,” he says. “So this will be part of our discussions in the next few years... how we partner as a global Mennonite fellowship, as opposed to being a ‘sending’ agency.”

He also sees the need to increase inter-faith discussions. “I see that as very important,” he says. “Not only inter-church conversation, which is happening already, but inter-faith.”

During an MCC trip to Iran earlier this year, Dueck participated in discussions with local clerics and learned how strong Islamic teachings on peace and faith-related issues really are. “I had heard very little of this from their point-of-view,” he admits. “The clerics were telling us how, when they were deliberately getting into the peace program, they decided to start with the Mennonites because [they said], ‘When you came to us offering assistance during the earthquake in '79-'80 and the refugee crises during the war in Iraq, we found out that that you didn't lie to us. We found out you had an interest in charity and you were able to walk with us. You dialogued with us and shared your faith without demanding that we convert.’”

Mennonite reaction to such discussions has been mixed. “Many people say they appreciate this emphasis... while others say you're being hood-winked,” he says.

Governance and structural issues are important to Dueck. “[MCC] has evolved into 12 distinct groups over 85 years,” he explains. “We need to

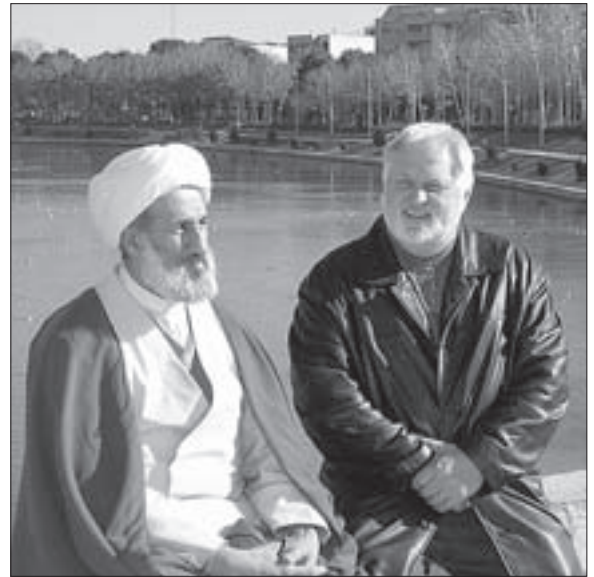


Photo courtesy of Ron Dueck

Ron Dueck, right, the newly elected chair of the Mennonite Central Committee bi-national board, is pictured conversing with Esfahan, a Muslim cleric, during a recent visit to Iran.

look at how the MCC vision works within this [structure]...in terms of accountability and efficiency.” And as more disparate groups of churches and non-Christians have begun to support MCC, he worries about meeting such a wide range of expectations. “We've just established a task force which deals with this,” he says.

The issue of providing such material resources as relief buckets and wheat is a concern for Dueck. “There's a question about how efficient that is,” he acknowledges. “Buying locally, you can get more for the money spent, but you lose that hands-on energy of [North American] volunteers. It's clear MCC can use all the resources we have. It's more a question of where do we focus our energy?”

Current events like the crisis in the Middle East are always on Dueck's mind. “It's one of those conflicts which are hard to resolve, he says. “I was interested to hear [Prime Minister Stephen] Harper say, ‘People should know violence begets violence,’ which is interesting when applied only to one side. Obviously, there are very strong feelings on both sides. I don't know how this will be resolved, but it will take a long time. Meanwhile, local MCC staff in Lebanon are saying it's very difficult for them.”

—**Leona Dueck Penner**

Calgary

MB church votes to allow female lead pastors

The Women In Ministry Leadership motion has passed.”

With this sentence, Willy Reimer, moderator of the Canadian Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches, wrapped up Gathering 2006's most critical piece of business—one that everyone knew would define the convention and the future of Canadian Mennonite Brethren.

The decision delegates made last month—to “bless each member church in its own discernment of Scripture, conviction and practice to call and affirm gifted men and women to serve in ministry and pastoral leadership”—marked a significant turn in a decades-long slog through the question of women and ministry in the Mennonite Brethren Church.

When it was announced that the motion had received the support of 77 percent of voting delegates, the room remained quiet. An attempt at applause died with a solitary handclap or two, an “Amen” reached only a pocket of delegates' ears. The delegation's muted response reflected an understanding that this resolution was, in one person's words, “a motion of respect.”

It did not ask Mennonite Brethren to adopt a uniform theological stance on women in ministry leadership. “It is evident that individuals and congregations practise a diversity of convictions based on different interpretations of Scripture,” the resolution stated. It asked, instead, that diversity of practice be accepted within the denomination on this “non-confessional issue.”

The delegation's response also reflected procedural carefulness, even caution, shown by the Board of Faith and Life (BFL) during its three-year round of discernment about Women In Ministry Leadership (WIML) that began in 2003 after the Manitoba conference requested that the national BFL re-visit the question. A call for unity had accompanied the process at every step.

Delegates to Gathering 2006 had

three opportunities to speak to the WIML resolution—two workshops hosted by BFL, which drew the highest attendance of all workshops, and the plenary discussion before the vote the following day. Many spoke, often passionately, offering a variety of affirmations or concerns, but the conversation generally remained cordial and careful.

Exploration of biblical issues involved Paul's letters to the churches, the gospels and Acts, the “restrictive” texts, and historical issues in the Ancient Near East.

BFL vice-chair Ken Peters showed delegates a thick red binder representing the resolution's history: letters, survey results, findings of study conferences, and other documents. Complicating the board's task, he said, was the fact that these results showed Mennonite Brethren “split right down the middle.”

Many delegates who spoke expressed appreciation for the board's thorough work. Asked why BFL would bring a recommendation forward when views were so divided, Peters responded that BFL must not “be intimidated” by divisive issues. “Its mandate is to lead as well as reflect back,” he said.

Mennonite Brethren have dealt with other “deep conflicts” in the past, noted participants in the “Where do we go from here?” workshop presented by the BFL and provincial conference ministers. These include the language transition from German to English, non-resistance, and mode of baptism.

Some delegates, however, contended that this matter was different, or questioned the distinction between polity and confessional issues. Others expressed concerns or hopes about the resolution's implications for the future.

One pastor said he fears the issue will “fragment” his congregation.

Two pastors noted that young women are coming to them and asking that men be encouraged to take spiritual leadership.

“Let's dedicate as much time, energy, money to men leading,” urged

Mark Burch of Kelowna, B.C.

The BFL's own list of “implications” reiterated calls for unity as well as its counsel that the matter “remain at the level of polity.”

Delegates were reminded that if the proposed resolution had not passed, the recommendation approved in 1999, “that women be encouraged to minister in the church in every function other than the lead pastorate,” would have remained in effect. Several people pointed out that there was still much work to do even on that.

Several delegates expressed the wisdom of compromise they saw in the resolution, and gave compelling pledges of their own commitment to trust God as well as one another.

“All of us have to let go of something and receive something,” said Connie Epp of Winnipeg.

—From *MB Herald* article by **Dora Dueck**

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Calgary

After 50 years, congregation still looking to Jesus

A spirit of joy and enthusiasm characterized the 50th anniversary celebrations at Foothills Mennonite Church on the weekend of June 3 and 4.

The theme of the gathering was based on *Psalm 31:3-5*: “You are indeed my rock and my fortress; for your name’s sake lead me and guide me...O Lord, faithful God.” This passage was chosen because it focused on looking back and giving thanks, and also on looking toward the future.

A group of more than 350 people attended a banquet celebration on June 3 at Menno Simons Christian School. Charter members and former pastors were acknowledged and there were moments of singing and reflection, and plenty of laughter.

The June 4 worship service was memorable. A special musical arrangement of “Psalm 150,” including choir, orchestra and interpretive dancers

was composed for this occasion by Foothills member Andrew Sawatzky. Menno Epp, Foothill’s longest serving pastor, delivered the morning message, while all former pastors in attendance led the communion service.

To close the worship service, a commemorative plaque was unveiled on the front lawn by the first pastor of Foothills, Peter Unger, and the first person baptized at Foothills, Val Peters.

An outdoor lunch after the service kept people visiting and reconnecting long after the formal celebrations ended.

While the weekend was a celebration and reflection on years past, it was also a moment to pause and look ahead. In pastor Doug Klassen’s written reflection, he reminded the congregation of the letter to the Hebrews: “To keep going and continue to be inspired, first by Jesus Christ, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, and then also by the cloud of witnesses that God has called to serve this congregation.”

Although the main celebration took place on the weekend, numerous smaller events and projects had taken place in previous months leading up to this event—a St. Patrick’s Day festivities and a musical celebration of the congregation’s Top 10 favourite songs (“Great is Thy Faithfulness” topped the chart) combined with a fundraiser for Mennonite Central Committee.

As well, a history book was prepared and a cookbook was printed, both of which are available for sale from the church. To order these books, e-mail the church office at foothillsmennonite@nucleus.com.

—Rose Retzlaff Klassen



Photos by Doug Unrau

Unveiling the plaque to commemorate Foothills Mennonite Church’s 50th anniversary are Val Peters, the first person to be baptized at Foothills, left, and Peter Unger, the church’s first pastor.

School note

Goshen College donations up

Goshen, Ind.—In a year when James E. Brenneman was named president-elect and strong interim leadership both sharpened daily operations and prepared the way for a new administration, giving to Goshen College remained generous for the fiscal year ending on June 30. According to executive director of development Roger Nafziger, overall giving to Goshen was up \$455,642 (all figures in US dollars) from last year, with a total of \$6.9 million contributed. An increase in overall contributions from alumni was particularly significant, with gifts adding up to \$436,088 over last year’s total. The college has met its annual operating budget every year for decades and also has worked to build an endowment—now approaching \$100 million. Interest from the endowment currently funds 9.7 percent of the college’s annual operating budget.
—Goshen College release



Photos by John Woelk

Joel Kroeker, youth pastor at Zion Mennonite Church in Swift Current, Sask., lost his bushy beard on June 4 at Camp Elim’s soup and pie fundraiser. The goal was to raise \$1,500 for a new trampoline for the Saskatchewan camp if Kroeker would have his beard shaved, which was surpassed. Then barber Lance Baumann got another \$310 for the beard of Zach Dueck, a counsellor at Camp Elim, with these funds going to provide financial assistance to campers whose families would not otherwise have been able to afford to send them to camp.

Morinville, Alta.

VSers hold 50th annual reunion

Eighty Volunteer Service (VS) workers gathered in Morinville last month to recall two decades of service to isolated, primarily aboriginal communities in northern Alberta from 1955 to 1973.

The 80 Canadians and Americans served the communities of Calling Lake, Sandy Lake, Chipwyan Lake, Eaglesham, Anzac, Imperial Mills, Marlboro, Robb and Fairview as Kindergarten and public school teachers, agriculturists, child care workers, youth recreation leaders and camp directors, and provided leadership for a variety of economic development opportunities.

The shared cross-cultural experience—becoming acquainted with gas lamps, gas irons, carrying water for drinking and laundry from a lake or river, spring mud, mosquitoes, and frost along the baseboards in -40 degree winter days—forged a strong bond evidenced by the large attendance at the 50th Voluntary Service anniversary reunion.

Forty of the 91 original VSers now live in 16 different Alberta and B.C. communities and are active in the various local churches

After a Sunday morning worship service and communal meal, the afternoon wrapped up with a prayer and acknowledgement of God's creative and redemptive power with the singing of "How Great Thou Art".

The next day, 28 VSers—most of whom served in Calling Lake—travelled to the Calling Lake Seniors Building, where some 35 local Calling



Alina Balzer, left, and her daughter, Lynn MacDonald were just two of the many visitors to this year's Mennonite Central Committee Relief Sale in Saskatoon in early June who took in the quilt display. A "broken star" quilt by Katie Dueck, which was the sale's feature quilt, was auctioned off for \$3,825. The sale grossed \$128,000.



Auctioneer Doug Fisher, left, chatted with Helen Mireau during a break at the Relief Sale.

Lake residents met and served lunch to the group.

Mike Cardinal, one of the early youth group members and now an Alberta cabinet minister, ac-

knowledged the contributions of the Voluntary Service program and its impact on his youth at the gathering.

J.W. Chalmers, official trustee of Northland School Division, which now provides education services in northern Alberta, said of recruiting teachers for the Alberta hinterland, "This project offers neither fame nor wealth nor power. On the contrary, it promises frustration, cold, other hardships and isolation. It also promises an opportunity for service."

A challenge the VSers were up to meeting 50 years ago.

—**Millie Glick**

Mae (Zehr) Holst, left, of St. Agatha (Ont.) Mennonite Church, has been the pen pal of Emma (Yoder) Beechy of Holmes County, Ohio, for the past 60 years. The two reunited when members of the St. Agatha congregation took a bus trip to Ohio in May, where Holst got to meet Beechy's Old Order Amish church family for the first time. The two began writing each other in 1946 after Holst read a story in her Words of Cheer Sunday school paper calling for readers to become pen pals.



Photo by Doug Snyder

Crosshill, Ont.

Crosshill church says hello to new building

Taking his sermon title from an old Beatles' song, pastor Jamie Gerber spoke on the theme "You say goodbye and I say hello" on June 18, as the congregation at Crosshill Mennonite Church prepared to leave one building for another new one. His sermon reminded worshippers that the same Holy Sprit is their guide and focus no matter where they meet to worship.

After the service, the children were given streamers and small items of importance to carry to the new church less than a half-kilometre down the road. Children and adults alike left the church singing "We Shall Go Out With Joy," with the pastor and elders leading the procession to the new place of worship.

The congregation continued its time of praise and thanksgiving in the new facility, followed by pizza.

The following Saturday close to 200 people attended an appreciation dinner for all the trades people—many of whom were members of Crosshill Church, businesses and professionals—who contributed to the building of the new facility, and for the members of Crosshill who contributed their skills and many, many hours in this labour of love.

Crosshill Mennonite Church was started as a mission outreach in the community by Maple View Mennonite Church in 1949, becoming an independent congregation in 1970. Pastors who have served since 1970 that were in attendance for this service included Steve Gerber, Ray Erb, and Jim and Helen Reusser. Ervin Erb also served as pastor for many years.

Upcoming celebration events in the new church include:

- Sept. 23, 8:00 p.m.—Penny Merchants Concert; and,
- Sept. 24, 2:30 p.m.—Dedication service followed by an open house.

—**Fran Klassen**



Photo by Jeff McCrae

Led by their pastor and elders, members of Crosshill Mennonite Church marched from their old building to their new facility on June 18.

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Harrisonburg, Va.

Spiritual direction course deepens pastor's ministry

Jan Steckley just finished spending her third summer studying spiritual direction at Eastern Mennonite Seminary's Summer Institute for Spiritual Formation in Harrisonburg, Va. She found out about the institute through a colleague.

"Something about how she described the institute drew me," said Steckley. "I decided it would take me into a place that I had been going anyway."

For Steckley, that place was one of contemplative prayer, spiritual formation and soul care—both for herself and for her congregation at Hillcrest Mennonite Church in New Hamburg, Ont.

Steckley is completing her final year at the institute, a three-year program that trains spiritual directors and others interested in the ministry of spiritual formation. The program runs for two weeks in June each summer.

Students from across North America participate in the classes, worship, retreat and community that form a part of the annual two-week course of study.

"I've learned a lot about my own journey with God," Steckley said. "You can't work with the concepts without appropriating it for yourself."

The courses focus on prayer, giving and receiving spiritual guidance, and



Jan Steckley of Hillcrest Mennonite Church, New Hamburg, Ont., led evening prayers during her time at Eastern Mennonite Seminary's Summer Institute for Spiritual Formation in Harrisonburg, Va.

spiritual formation within and beyond congregational ministry.

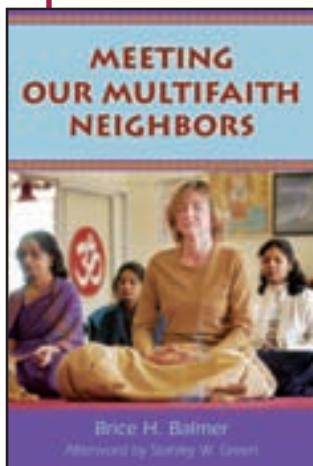
"There is a deep sense of community that emerges because we share deeply about our journeys personally and in ministry," Steckley commented.

The spiritual formation institute offers three levels of courses in formation and spiritual direction. Spiritual directors help others pay attention to their spiritual journey and the call of God in their lives. Others attend to the spiritual formative nature of ministry within the church, or in mission.

Steckley found that the concepts informed all of her work as a minister. "These classes change how I think about my work," she said. "I tend to see everything that I do within the framework of soul care, which means attending to how we're being formed as a people of God and looking for the movement of the Spirit."

"I've learned how to pay attention to the movement of God in the lives of others, and in the life of a community," Steckley said. "How to recognize it, how to discern what it means, how to create a space for others to see that and understand it, and how to move with it. I've learned how to be with others in ways that attend to what God is doing."

—**Laura Lehman Amstutz**



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Thompson, Man.

Northern congregation was launchpad for service

The July 2 service at Thompson United Mennonite Church proved the truthfulness of the writings of Ecclesiastes, "For everything there is a season... a time to scatter... and a time to gather...." For the more than 60 people whose life journey had taken them through Thompson United Mennonite Church (TUMC) at one time or another who came back on July 2, it was a time to gather for one last time to celebrate God's faithfulness in a closing service.

The church is about as old as the city itself. In 1956, when the Inco nickel mine officially opened, Mennonites began coming to this remote northern community to work. They represented an assortment of Mennonite conference backgrounds, but in true frontier fashion they found each other and, by 1959, were gathering together for worship and fellowship.

The former General Conference (GC) of Mennonites in Manitoba's Mennonite Pioneer Mission supported this group and, in 1961, John Wiebe, a mission worker, built a house with provisions for a chapel. Two years later they built the present church building.

Bea Schantz, a church member since 1982, said, "This celebration was like a family reunion. When you are isolated from family and relatives, the church becomes your family. We developed a tradition of doing things together as a group."

One of the projects was sponsoring a Laotian refugee family in the late 1970s. The Laotian family has kept in touch with the church and was amongst those who returned for the closing celebration.

"A mandate of our church has always been that we don't run a lot of programs... but that our mission is through our jobs and lifestyle," said Schantz. "Over the years we have always worked very hard to do things with the community in mind."

The church has played a significant role in the lives of many of its former members. Don Friesen came to Thompson to work for Inco. "It

was where I returned to the faith, thanks to the congregation's hospitable spirit and the debating skills of Reg Toews," he said. It was where I decided to study theology, thanks to the mentorship of Ernie Sawatzky, our minister. And... it was also where I met my lovely wife, Dorothy Deckert." Friesen has been pastor of the Ottawa Mennonite Church for more than 25 years.

The church has been the launchpad for others. George and Agnes Epp and John and Betty Peters left the Thompson church to serve with Mennonite Central Committee overseas, while Larry Petkau and Lynn Courtemanche went to teach in China.

While the city's population has remained relatively stable, Schantz noted that, "at TUMC we are down to four families and it's no longer feasible



Thompson (Man.) United Mennonite Church remembered God's faithfulness in its closing service.

Photo courtesy of Don and Dorothy Friesen

to maintain a congregation. We don't see as many Mennonites coming to Thompson."

The church has been without a pastor for close to 10 years. "Finding pastors to come to Thompson has been a difficult fit at times," Schantz said.

The weekend activities included a fellowship meal and Sunday morning worship service involving former pastors John Harder and Alan Rudy Froese, and layperson George Epp. A choir led by Marilyn Redekop was formed for the occasion.

—**Evelyn Rempel Petkau**

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People&Events

Iowa City, Iowa—The lush corn fields of Iowa provided the backdrop for the annual Mennonite Medical Association and Mennonite Nurses Association Conference held June 22 to 25. The theme for the conference was “Taking Christ...into the fields.” Participants spent three days networking with fellow professionals and gleaned insights into how healthcare providers in a variety of settings take their Anabaptist values into the workplace or “the fields.” Dr. Roger Gingrich of the University of Iowa shared how, in his role as an oncologist, viewing his patients as holistic beings is one of the values of Anabaptist faith that he takes into his field of healthcare. Dr. Carol Farran, a nurse researcher at Rush University in Chicago, updated the attendees on current research related to Alzheimer’s disease and the importance of the family caregiver’s role. Mennonite Disaster Service and



Goshen College photo by Jodi H. Beyeler

After completing his first full week of work as the new president of Goshen College in Indiana, James E. Brenneman decided it was time to throw a party. On July 13, his office overflowed with guests as he held an “office warming” for all campus faculty, staff and students, by inviting them to celebrate this new beginning for him and the college. Brenneman, left, shows Sylvia Miller, former administrative assistant to the international education office, her husband Don Miller, and Mary Ann Bean, administrative assistant to the vice-president for institutional advancement, his desk and new book shelves.

Mennonite Central Committee made presentations on how they have taken Christ “into the fields.” Other sessions and workshops included palliative care in Lutheran hospitals

across Tanzania, physician and nurses utilizing an integrated care model, and an update on the healthcare access initiative of MC USA. —Joint MMA/MNA release

Fresno, Calif.—MB Biblical Seminary, with campuses in Fresno; Langley, B.C.; and Winnipeg, has added four new staff members. Cam Priebe, a native of Hepburn, Sask., and a 2006 graduate of MB Biblical Seminary’s Fresno campus, became the new director for Ministry Quest on July 10. He replaces Rick Bartlett, who, as of June 1, took on the assignment of director of constituency relations for the MB Biblical Seminary system in addition to his current roles as student dean and part-time faculty member at the Fresno campus. Mark Isaac, a former graduate of MB Biblical Seminary, has been appointed to serve as development officer for the West Coast and Central California; he will begin his assignment Oct. 1. Steve Priebe, also a graduate of MB Biblical Seminary, has been appointed to represent the seminary system in the mid-western United States, as of Aug. 15.

—MB Biblical Seminary release

Elkhart, Ind.—J. Nelson Kraybill has been reappointed to a fourth term as president of Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary by the AMBS board of directors; the appointment was affirmed by the Christian Formation Council of Mennonite Church Canada and the Mennonite Education Agency (MEA) board. The reappointment to a new four-year term, which begins July 1, 2007, was recommended by a committee that conducted an extensive review of students, faculty, denominational leaders, alumni, peer leaders and educational agencies of the church.

The review affirmed Kraybill for his strong relational skills and his strong

and clear leadership, since being named president in 1997. Kraybill’s accomplishments since his last review in 2002 were his leadership through a major fundraising campaign, making possible the launch of construction of a new library and campus centre, and his leadership in positioning AMBS to continue to be a vibrant institution well into the 21st century.

—AMBS release

by **Mary E. Klassen**

Strasbourg, France—Better understanding and closer relations between Mennonite and Lutheran churches was the focus of the second meeting of the Lutheran-Mennonite International Study Commission last month at the Institute for Ecumenical Research. Last year, the commission heard and discussed papers on the historical meaning, purpose and effect of certain condemnations of Anabaptists in Lutheran confessions of faith that contributed directly to the persecution, torture and killing of Anabaptists during the 16th century Reformation. At this



Continued on page 34



Photo by Dan Dyck

The Edmonton 2006 Assembly was the last time Mennonite Church Canada chief financial officer Lloyd Plett delivered financial reporting to delegates. The job he was hired to do in 2003 has come to the end of its planned term. The semi-retired Plett is humble about any role he played in regaining financial stability for MC Canada early on in his assignment, noting that when he arrived, changes were already being implemented to improve financial systems. To help ensure the continuation of the good work that has begun, Plett has been guiding and mentoring Randy Wiebe, MC Canada’s current director of finance, who will take on more responsibility after Plett’s departure. In a farewell speech, Robert J. Suderman, general secretary of MC Canada, said, “It became evident very quickly that Lloyd had a heart for the organization.” He also highlighted Plett’s “competence,” “relational sensitivity,” and observed that “Lloyd is not soft. He can be quite hard-nosed.”

Dialogue *From page 33*

year's meeting, the commission focused on the condemnations in their theological context, paying particular attention to baptism in Article 9 of the Augsburg Confession and civic affairs in Article 16. These articles are seen to contain serious theological differences between the two traditions. The commission's task is to consider what it means for Lutherans to continue to have these condemnations within their confessional writing, and together to find ways of removing obstacles to good relations between the two faith groups. When completed, this work will be presented to the Lutheran World Federation and the Mennonite World Conference for possible action. The study commission is sponsored by the Lutheran World Federation and the Mennonite World Conference.

—MWC release by **Ferne Burkhardt**



Hellen Biseko Bradburn of Tanzania, left, and Rainer Burkart, co-chair of the Lutheran-Mennonite International Study Commission, are pictured at the commission's recent meetings in France.

Transitions

Births/Adoptions

Bauman—to Jackie and Randy, Floradale Mennonite, Ont., a son, Tyson Jonathan, July 12.

Bender—to Wendy Janzen and Darrell (Chip), St. Jacobs Mennonite, Ont., a son, Levi Cole Janzen, July 15.

Isert Bender—to Hendrike and Matthew, Nith Valley Mennonite, New Hamburg, Ont., a son, Felix Peter, July 13.

Carroll—to Nancy and Scott, Sherbrooke Mennonite, Vancouver, a son, Brady Scott, in Calgary, July 20.

Dueck—to Heide and Jason, Springfield Heights Mennonite, Winnipeg, a son, Daniel Mattias, June 22.

Enns—to Alwine and Wilmer, Springfield Heights Mennonite, Winnipeg, a daughter, Breanna Mariela, April 7.

Enns—to Wanda and Carlos, Springfield Heights Mennonite, Winnipeg, a daughter, Alexandra Laresse, May 20.

Froese—to Rolande and Abe, Springfield Heights Mennonite, Winnipeg, a son, Samuel Alexis, July 14.

Gingerich—to Heather and Brent, Wilmot Mennonite, New Hamburg, Ont., a daughter, Robyn, Lily, June 12.

Hamm—to Ketreana and Chris, First Mennonite, Edmonton, a son, Joshua James, July 23.

Kasdorf—to Ngaire and Jim, Douglas Mennonite, Winnipeg, a daughter, Elise Freya, July 13.

Martens—to Monica and Dale, Steinbach Mennonite, Man., a son, Kalem David, July 18.

Martin—to Heidi and Doug, Avon Mennonite, Stratford, Ont., a daughter, Kathryn Elizabeth, April 18.

Sawatzky—to Maria and Francisco, Avon Mennonite, Stratford, Ont., a son, Armando Francisco, May 21.

Sloss—to Christine and Andrew, Toronto United Mennonite, a son, Adriel David, May 15.

Wilms—to Rachel and Paul of Orangeville, Ont., Waterloo-Kitchener United Mennonite, Ont., a daughter, Alice Susanna, July 24.

Witzel—to Amy and Jeff, Tavistock Mennonite, Ont., a daughter, Beau Margaret, June 5.

Marriages

Cherry-Tranchemontagne—Stefan (Floradale Mennonite, Ont.) and Pascale, in Cornwall, Ont., July 1.

Cornies-Heide—Ken and Shauna, Toronto United Mennonite, in Brampton, Ont., July 1.

Cressman-Wagler—Jesse (Nith Valley Mennonite, New Hamburg, Ont.) and Stephanie (Wilmot Mennonite, New Hamburg), July 29.

Epp-Klassen—Harold and Lorna, Winkler Berghaler Mennonite, Man., July 1.

Derksen-Guzman—Patrick and Grace (Winkler Berghaler Mennonite, Man.), in Winkler, July 15.

Honderich-Cressman—Andrew (Wilmot Mennonite, New Hamburg, Ont.) and Amy (Shantz Mennonite, Baden, Ont.), at the Honderich farm, July 22.

Pardys-Hallikas—John-Eric and Lindsey, Brussels Mennonite, Ont., in Ft. Frances, Ont., July 15.

Peter Doss-Schroeder—Rakesh and Sharon, Avon Mennonite, Stratford, Ont., July 15.

Thiessen-Warkentin—Thomas and Ashley, Steinbach Mennonite, Man., July 29.

Toupin-Friesen—Gary and Debbie, Faith Mennonite, Leamington, Ont., June 24.

Deaths

Baechler—Ray, 79 (b. Sept. 10, 1926), Steinmann Mennonite, Baden, Ont., July 20.

Bender—Daniel J., 78 (b. Sept. 20, 1927), Wellesley Mennonite, Ont., July 5.

Blatz—Katherine, 85 (b. Feb. 4, 1921), Bethel Mennonite, Winnipeg, July 9.

Doerksen—Louise, 80, Springfield Heights Mennonite, Winnipeg, April 6.

Heide—Jacob J., 87 (b. Oct. 31, 1918), Bethel Mennonite, Winnipeg, March 22.

Hiebert—Maria, 81, Springfield Heights Mennonite, Winnipeg, Feb. 24.

Hoepfner—David, 80 (b. July 24, 1925), Bethel Mennonite, Winnipeg, June 5.

Janzen—Hans (John), 50, Springfield Heights Mennonite, Winnipeg, May 15.

Kauenhowen—Barbara, 79, Springfield Heights Mennonite, Winnipeg, Feb. 20.

Klassen—Anna, 85 (b. Aug. 30, 1920), Steinbach Mennonite, Man., July 11.

Kroeker—Elizabeth (Betty), of Winnipeg, 87, Winkler Berghaler Mennonite, Man., July 2.

Letkeman—Jake D., 92 (b. Sept. 17, 1913), Steinbach Mennonite, Man., Aug. 1.

Loewen—George, 73, First Mennonite, Edmonton, June 10.

Ollies—Clive, 48 (b. Feb. 11, 1958), Riverdale Mennonite, Millbank, Ont., Aug. 1.

Peters—Rev. William J., 100, Winkler Berghaler Mennonite, Man., July 25.

Potwarka—Joe, 56, Hawkesville Mennonite, Ont., June 23.

Rempel—Susana, 75, Winkler Berghaler Mennonite, Man., July 19.

Suderman—Dave, 75 (b. Nov. 19, 1930), Bethel Mennonite, Winnipeg, May 2.

Thiessen—Mary, 72 (b. Oct. 6, 1933), Bethel Mennonite, Winnipeg, July 3.

Baptisms

Avon Mennonite, Stratford, Ont.—Breezey (Brittany) Allen, Josiah Allen, Laura Stafford, June 25.

Carman Mennonite, Man.—Rachel Neustaedter, Tamara Petkau, July 23.

First Mennonite, Edmonton—Rachel Duncan, Kimberley Vos, June 4.

Springfield Heights Mennonite, Winnipeg—Ryan Doerksen, Jeremy Dyck, Sandro Kehler, Amy Penner, Melissa Penner, June 4.

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

Mennonite Church Canada

Prayer requests

In the midst of summer relaxation, remember to pray for those who suffer or are experiencing political unrest in our world, including:

- Mike and Ginny Hostetler, Witness partners at Nazareth Village, Israel, currently on home leave in Ontario, report that their friends in Nazareth and the Galilee region are being affected by the hostilities in the Middle East. They write, "The most urgent thing you can do is to pray for the people in the entire Middle East region, as many are suffering because of the actions of those who are fighting." Pray also for Witness worker Glenn Witmer and his bridge-building and teaching ministry in Jerusalem.

- The people of the Democratic Republic of Congo have experienced social and political unrest, war and destruction since their independence from Belgium in 1960. In July, they took part in the first free presidential and parliamentary elections since independence. Pray that God will witness to peace, love and restoration through the Mennonite church planted in Bukavu and its emerging congregations.

- Pastor Andres Olivares, president of the Evangelical Missionary Church of Cuba, has invited Mennonite Church Canada, as a ministry partner, to pray for the leader of their country, Fidel Castro Ruz, during his time of hospitalization, medical treatment and recovery. As MC Canada seeks to become a global church, Olivares spoke of I Timothy 2:1-4 to pray "for everyone, for kings and all who are in high positions, so that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and dignity."

—Hinke Loewen-Rudgers

Mennonite Church Eastern Canada

Regional ministers begin their duties

Three half-time regional ministers officially join the MC Eastern Canada staff on Aug. 22. Their role will be to work alongside the Staff Leadership Team to realize the mission of "Extending the peace of Jesus Christ, making disciples, growing congregations and forming leaders." This is a much-anticipated new beginning, a major part of the MC Eastern Canada's restructuring.

This new structure has three geographic regions with a minister assigned to each: Maurice Martin—Western Region, Gord Alton—North Central Region, and Marvin Friesen—Eastern Region. As these are half-time appointments, the ministers are also carrying other employment or service loads.

The regional ministers work to provide resources for congregations and pastors for effective ministry and to connect congregations at a local level. These ministers will be "the face of the regional conference" for congregations and pastors.

"I hope to be a supporting pastoral presence to [pastors, both in helping their churches fulfill the God's mission, but also in helping each of them personally grow in their Christian spirituality," Alton says of his new role.

Friesen says, "I sense a genuine desire for open dialogue—to hear each other's stories, to work collaboratively on living out our mission."

"I like to reflect with the present generation, including my own children, as to where they believe the church is going," Martin says. "We have much to learn from inter-generational dialogue."

The Staff Leadership Team will be meeting in the

next weeks with the regional ministers to discern how congregations might be serviced more effectively for ministry. More information will be sent directly to congregations at a later date.

Current staff ask for the prayers of congregations for the three ministers, for God's leading as the details of this new ministry structure are put in place, and as new working relationships with congregations are formed.

Mennonite Church Manitoba

Service retreat offers change of pace

Service, refreshment and fellowship will be the themes at the first service retreat at Camp Moose Lake from Sept. 19 to 20. This retreat will provide retired people and others with an opportunity to grow in faith through service, fellowship and worship. It will also provide an opportunity to participate in the ministry of Camp Moose Lake.

Several projects will be undertaken under the supervision of co-managers Will and Alvie Martens. There will be something to do for every skill level.

The retreat will also include times for spiritual refreshment, recreation and fellowship. Gary Martens, pastor of Steinbach (Man.) Mennonite Church, will be the resource person.

A special treat at will be a concert by a country/gospel music group. Lodging will be provided at the camp. For more information, call the camp office at 204-895-2267.

—MC Manitoba Education Ministries release by **Bob Wiebe**

Mennonite Church Saskatchewan

Lao Mennonites meet for first time

On Aug. 5 to 6, the 18 families that make up the Lao Mennonite fellowship at Grace Mennonite Church in Regina hosted Laotian Mennonites from across Canada at the Lao Mennonite Conference.

"This is the first Laotian Mennonite conference we've had," said Pastor Samvong Chantharyvond.

The conference, representing congregations in Kitchener and St. Catharines, Ont.; Winnipeg; Calgary; British Columbia and Regina welcomed 35 participants at this first gathering. The theme for the weekend was "The family's happiness." And the hope for attendees was to make this an annual event.

"Maybe next year we will go to Calgary or the States," said Chantharyvond.

The Laotian group that meets at Grace Mennonite is growing. Last year, the church hired a part-time lay minister. Regina has a Laotian population of about 250 people.

In the meantime, however, Magdalena Widjaja, pastor of Chinese Ministries, also at Grace Mennonite Church in Regina, has resigned from her position due in part to the declining membership of the Mandarin-speaking Chinese fellowship.

The church will be having a congregational meeting in October to decide the future of the small fellowship, which has dwindled down to three families. "Right now, the families are attending a Mandarin-speaking church," explained Karen Martens-Zimmerly, co-pastor of Grace Mennonite.

Continued on page 36

From page 35

Mennonite Church Alberta

Congregations prepare for new pastors

The vote was overwhelmingly positive to call Terry Lesser as pastor of Springridge Mennonite Church in Pincher Creek. The decision was reached at a congregational meeting on Aug. 7, after Lesser, accompanied by his wife Melissa, had completed the candidacy process.

Congregational chair Abe Janzen is pleased with the results. "We feel this is good for us and them."

Harold Preston-Schilk of Lethbridge is with the congregation on a part-time interim basis and will complete his assignment when the Lessers move to Pincher Creek in late August or early September. The Lessers are working at Camp Valaqua for the summer, where Terry is the nature leader and Melissa is assisting with first aid and office work.

The camping season ends on Aug. 25.

Calgary Chinese Mennonite Church has invited Hugo and Doreen Neufeld to serve as part-time interim ministers beginning in September. The initial term will be six months, after which a review will occur. Albert Trang, congregational chair, noted that the Neufelds will begin on Sept. 1, with an installation service to follow on Sept. 10.

Plans for an autumn pastors retreat are in progress. "We are still working on plans for the pastor's retreat. It will likely be the last week in October, at Camp Valaqua", said conference minister Jim Shantz. "The main item on the agenda will be reconnecting, and perhaps also talking about missions."

Mennonite Church British Columbia

Pastoral change at Japanese church

Kim Jong Sun has been called as pastor of North

Surrey Japanese Church as of October. Sun and his wife Aeri are Korean, but speak fluent Japanese and have served in Tokyo for 10 years.

Currently, Takahiko Yokiyushi pastors both North Surrey and Surrey Japanese Mennonite Fellowship. When the time comes, Yoshiyuki plans to concentrate more fully on pastoring the Surrey congregation, and serving at North Surrey as co-pastor.

Chinese pastor authors books

Joseph Huen, pastor of Richmond Peace Chinese Mennonite Church, is the author of two Chinese books on the spiritual world of Narnia, and the controversial Gospel of Judas. Besides serving in the church, Huen has devoted himself to the writing and publication of a number of books, which it is hoped will benefit many Chinese Christians and churches the world over.

Food bank anniversary at Sherbrooke

For 10 years, members of Sherbrooke Mennonite Church, in cooperation with Mennonite Central Committee (MCC), have been giving a helping hand to new immigrants to Vancouver through its church-operated food bank. Now the church will mark the milestone and recognize volunteers with a dessert and celebration program, Sept. 30 at 7 p.m.

The food bank program helps refugee claimants by distributing food and food vouchers every Thursday morning. Clients are referred to the church through the MCC refugee office in Vancouver.

Unless otherwise credited, the articles in TheChurches pages were written by: Leona Dueck Penner (MC Canada), Dave Rogalsky (Eastern Canada), Evelyn Rempel Petkau (Manitoba), Karin Fehderau (Saskatchewan), Donita Wiebe-Neufeld (Alberta), and Amy Dueckman (British Columbia). See page 2 for contact information.

EDGAR RIVERA



From our leaders

Do you like the slogan, "Just do it"? It was used extensively by Nike. I think it is very powerful. If you want to be a tennis player, cyclist, basketball player or a marathon runner, or whatever is in your blood... well, just do it. Get in the game. Play!

But what in the world has this to do with church development? Simply put, if your interest is in church growth, let's just do it!

What should we do, then?

As Roman 12:2 says: "Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind."

First, I think we have to start renewing our minds. Missions, evangelism and church growth are not departments of the church or the conference. They are the very essence of church, something our churches ought to do and live for.

Second, church growth is not something that will happen by accident. It is directional, purposely achieved.

Let me illustrate this. Some time ago we only had those big blue or brown books that we called hymnals. But later—because of technology's advances, and for convenience—we started using overhead projectors and transparencies. Lately, we have multi-media projectors, laptop computers and

Church growth: Just do it

Church growth is not something that will happen by accident.

PowerPoint presentations.

For more than a year, I have been totally immersed in church growth trends. From my research, I have envisioned a three-fold plan:

- **Phase 1: Church growth team.** Assuming our churches want to grow, each of the conference's congregations will form a church growth team of up to four people. The mandate of each team is to capture its church vision through prayer, regular meetings and discernment.

- **Phase 2: Church within a church.** When it has been determined the kinds of community a church is serving—poor families, single mothers, young families, rich families, farmers, urban people—a second service or ministries for that specific group can be added.

- **Phase 3: Plant a church.** Once this "church arm" is big enough, a new church is ready to be planted.

In Act 2:43, Luke said of the early—quickly growing—church, "Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles."

We need to think about why they were all filled with awe? Was it because the apostles "just did it"?

Edgar Rivera is MC B.C. director of evangelism and church development.

Calendar

British Columbia

Sept. 15-16: Central Fraser Valley MCC Relief Sale, Auction and Festival, Tradex Exhibition Centre, Abbotsford. Friday from 5 to 9 p.m.; Saturday from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Sept. 17: MCC B.C. Festival of Praise with an African music group; 2:30 p.m. at South Abbotsford MB Church. Speaker: Dan Wiens from the Canadian Foodgrains Bank.

Sept. 28-30: MDS dessert and information evenings—Kelowna (28), Vanderhoof (29), Fort. St. John (30). For more information, call Leonard Klassen at 604-855-2542.

Sept. 30: Mennonite Fall Fair, Prince George Civic Centre.

Sept. 30, Oct. 1: Thanksgiving vespers with Abendmusik Choir, 8 p.m. Emmanuel Free Reformed Church, Abbotsford (30); Knox United Church, Vancouver (1). Donations to Menno Simons Centre.

Oct. 12-15: MDS dessert and information evenings—Surrey/Delta (12), Mission (13), Chilliwack (15). For more information, call Leonard Klassen at 604-855-2542.

Oct. 20-22: B.C. Women in Mission retreat at Camp Squeah.

Oct. 26: Retired pastors retreat in the CBC boardroom; 10 a.m.

Alberta

Sept. 9: MCC fundraising golf tournament at Nanton Golf Club. Tee off at 1:30 p.m. For registration and pledge forms, call 403-275-6935.

Sept. 10: Installation service for Hugo and Doreen Neufeld, interim pastors at Calgary Chinese Mennonite Church.

Sept. 17: Trinity Mennonite new building dedication celebration, 10:30 a.m. Call 403-256-7157 for directions.

Oct. 26: MCC Alberta hosts Tony Campolo at Dalhousie

Community Church, Calgary. For tickets, call 403-275-6935.

Saskatchewan

Sept. 8-10: Saskatchewan Mennonite Youth Organization junior high retreat at Camp Shekinah, with Carol Duerksen.

Oct. 13-14: Saskatchewan Women in Mission fall retreat at Camp Shekinah.

Oct. 15: Wildwood Mennonite Church 30th anniversary celebration. Breakfast, worship and afternoon events planned.

Oct. 20: MDS dessert and information evening at Nutana Park Mennonite Church, Saskatoon.

Oct. 28: MC Saskatchewan Equipping Conference.

Manitoba

Sept. 9: Morris MCC Relief Sale.

Sept. 9: “Head for the Hills” bicycle fundraiser for Eden Health Care Services mental health recovery program. Call 1-866-895-2919 for more information.

Sept. 10: Covenant Mennonite Church, Winkler, 25th anniversary celebration. For further information, call 204-325-4374 or e-mail covenant@mts.net.

Sept. 10: MCC alumni barbecue at CMU.

Sept. 15-16: Brandon MCC Relief Sale at the Keystone Centre.

Sept. 16: “The Congo election.” A presentation by CMU staff and students who helped monitor the Congo election; 7 p.m., in the Great Hall.

Sept. 17: Westgate alumni and friends golf tournament at Bridges Golf Course, Starbuck.

Sept. 19: MDS extension office open house at 1325 Markham Rd., Winnipeg, at 11 a.m.

Sept. 21: Mennonite Heritage Centre Gallery, Winnipeg, multimedia awareness-building/fundraising event, 7 p.m., at the gallery. Curator Ray Dirks will outline the vision of

the gallery. Speaker: Margaret Fast. Music by Steve Bell. Call 204-888-6781 for an invitation. Attendance by invitation only.

Sept. 22: Official opening of “In God’s Image,” a collection of art by artists from around the world; 9 p.m. at CMU.

Sept. 22-23: CMU homecoming weekend. Visit cmu.ca for more information.

Sept. 24: Hog roast and comedy concert for alumni and friends of MCI, at MCI in Greta, 5 p.m. For reservations, call 204-327-5891.

Sept. 24: Camp Koinonia 40th anniversary, 11 a.m. Theme: “Bringing the Koinonia family together to celebrate God’s work in this place where heaven and earth meet.”

Sept. 29-30: “The Good Life on God’s Good Earth: A Creation Care Conference,” sponsored by CMU, Providence College and A Rocha, at CMU. Visit cmu.ca for more information.

Sept. 30: Equipping the Congregation conference at Fort Garry Mennonite Fellowship, Winnipeg. Theme: “Roots and fruits of passionate faith.” Speakers: Elsie Rempel and Arlyn Friesen Epp.

Oct. 9: Morden Mennonite Church 75th anniversary celebration.

Oct. 13-14: Manitoba Women in Mission annual 24-hour retreat, “Rooted in the Centre,” at Camp Assiniboia.

Oct. 17-18: J.J. Thiessen Lectures at CMU, with Joel J. Shuman, King’s College, Wilkes-Barre, Pa.

Oct. 20-21: “War and the Conscientious Objector” history conference, University of Winnipeg.

Ontario

Aug. 27: Retirement open house for Anita Janzen, Hanover Mennonite Church, 1:30 to 3:30 p.m.

Sept. 8-10: Building Community Retreat at Hidden Acres Camp for people with disabilities, their family, friends

and caregivers. Speaker: Pastor Marti Hyhko. Theme: “Ways to healing.” For more information, call Mariette at 519-569-8723 or e-mail carey@intrnear.com (Subject “retreat”).

Sept. 10: George Albrecht family reunion at Khaki Club, Nafziger Road, Wellesley. Potluck meal at 1 p.m. For more information, call Ken Albrecht at 519-662-2927.

Sept. 15-16: “Growing congregations: Advantages of Anabaptist evangelism” seminar at Living Water Fellowship Church, New Hamburg. Pastors dialogue on church growth issues (15: noon to 2 p.m.); church growth/planting seminar open to all (16: 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m.). To register for either event, call Craig Frere at 519-662-3300.

Sept. 16: MCC Relief Sale at Black Creek Pioneer Village, Toronto; 9:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Quilt auction at noon.

Sept. 23-24: Floradale Mennonite Church is hosting a homecoming and open house to celebrate its new building and to remember its 150 years of history.

Sept. 29: Welcome Inn Community Centre’s Celebration Dinner & Silent Auction at Carmen’s Banquet Hall, 1520 Stone Church Rd. E. in Hamilton. Refreshments at 6:00 p.m., dinner at 7:00 p.m. Includes Don Couchie on guitar, musical group Five On The Floor and as speaker, former Ontario Premiere Bob Rae. Tickets are \$100/person (\$70 tax receipt included). For information or tickets, visit www.welcomennn.ca or call 905-525-5824.

Sept. 29-30: Rockway Mennonite Collegiate alumni homecoming, Kitchener.

Oct. 1: Mississauga Mennonite Fellowship 25th anniversary. Worship and communion at 10 a.m., followed by a potluck lunch, an afternoon program (including storytelling and visiting), and a vespers service at 5 p.m. To confirm your attendance, call 905-812-0452.

Continued on page 38

Calendar From page 37

Oct. 7-8: Bloomingdale Mennonite Church bicentennial celebration weekend.

Oct. 12: Celebrate Canadian church relationships with African congregations through food, music and a presentation by Hippo Tshimanga, MC Canada Witness African mission facilitator, 7 p.m., at St. Jacobs Mennonite Church.

Oct. 12-14: Ten Thousand Villages fair trade craft sale at Hamilton Mennonite Church; 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. (12-13), 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. (14). Tea room open for lunch each day. For more information, call 905-528-3607.

U.S.A.

Oct. 20-22: Young Adult Fellowship retreat focussing on young adult gifts in the church; Camp Ray Bird, South Bend, Ind. For more information, or to register, e-mail scotth@mennoniteusa.org.

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

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- Subscription changes are not considered Transitions notices (these go to transitions@canadianmennonite.org).
- Changes will be made immediately but may take four to six weeks to take effect because of printing schedules.

Contact information:

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

Employment opportunities



Receptionist

Mennonite Foundation of Canada (MFC) is accepting applications for a receptionist for our Winnipeg office.

This full-time position is responsible for front desk and telephone reception, processing incoming and outgoing mail, word processing, and various other clerical duties. Experience in a Windows-based computerized office environment, with proficiency in MS WORD, is desired. Applicants should enjoy interacting with the public and possess strong interpersonal and telephone skills.

All MFC staff are required to be members of a church in one of our participating Conferences.

MFC offers a competitive salary and benefits package. Please submit applications by August 31, 2006 to:

Rick Braun-Janzen, Assistant Manager
 12-1325 Markham Rd, Winnipeg, MB R3T 4J6
 1-800-772-3257 fax: 204-488-1986
 e-mail: rbjanz@mennofoundation.ca
 www.mennofoundation.ca

For rent

Student housing in **Montreal**, located within walking distance of McGill and an easy commute to Concordia. Experience community living and social action in a Christian & Peace church context. www.residencema.ca; experience@maisondelamitie.ca; 514-843-4356.

New 1,300 sq ft, energy efficient, allergy resistant 3 bdrm home in North Fort Gary - Winnipeg. This well designed two story house is located in an older neighbourhood about 15 minutes by bike or car from any of the three universities. Ready for occupancy in September or October. For sale or rent enquiries call Cal, 204-794-6572.

3 bdrm basement suite available for Christian females or a couple near the University of Manitoba, Winnipeg. Laundry and utilities included. Available Sept. on for one year lease. Please call 204-261-6808.

Sleepy Hollow Cottage. All season, 3-bedroom cottage/home in a peaceful wooded valley in the heart of the Niagara region. Excellent as a small retreat centre or for family holiday. Walk to the Bruce Trail. Minutes from other Niagara attractions. For further information and rental costs, phone 705-476-2319, e-mail: shcottage@sympatico.ca

Ideal Winnipeg living close to all amenities: Fully furnished one-bedroom apartments are available to rent on the Canadian Mennonite University campus. Call Tim Rempel for info/rates at 204-487-3300.

Wanted

Mother/primary teacher would like two other children to join my toddler in my home daycare program. Lots of music, drama, story-reading, crafts, healthy snacks, etc. five mornings a week. Excellent care and references. Columbia and Westmount area in Waterloo, 886-6504 or j.sauder@sympatico.ca

Employment opportunities



Goshen College Department of Sociology/Anthropology and Social Work seeks applicants for a tenure-track position in Sociology, an internationally focused major. Ph.D. in sociology required by Fall 2007.

Goshen College, an affirmative action employer, is committed to Christian beliefs and values as interpreted by the Mennonite Church. Women and minority persons are encouraged to apply.

To apply, visit the specific position announcement on the Goshen College web page: www.goshen.edu/employment. Closing date for applications is Oct. 20, 2007.

Work Opportunities

MCC Supportive Care Services is looking for **Residential Support Workers** to support adults who have an acquired brain injury or adults who have developmental disabilities living in community residential settings in **Kelowna, Penticton** and in **Courtenay** and **Campbell River**, British Columbia. Casual positions are available with the possibility of part-time and full-time hours. Only applicants willing to work a variety of shifts including days, evenings, nights and weekends need apply. Benefits available after probation for full-time, permanent staff. Must love people and enjoy serving others! **For more information on specific positions, please visit our website.**

Send resume asap to:

HR Department, MCC Supportive Care Services

Fx: 604.850.2634

Email: hr@mccscs.com

Or Apply Online today at

www.mccscs.com/jobs



MCC SCS is a Christian organization that supports those who have disabilities and seniors in the community. MCC SCS hires on the basis of merit and is committed to employment equity. We encourage all qualified persons to apply, however, only those selected for an interview will be contacted.

Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary seeks a one-quarter time **admissions counselor** to work in Canada, promoting AMBS programs and services, maintaining relationships with church leaders in Canada and recruiting students to AMBS.



**Associated
Mennonite
Biblical
Seminary**

To apply, send a letter of application, resume and three references to Regina Shands Stoltzfus, Director of Admissions, Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary, 3003 Benham Avenue, Elkhart, IN, 46517; e-mail rsstoltzfus@ambs.edu; or phone 574.296.6227. See a job description on the AMBS web site, http://www.ambs.ca/php/welcome/wel_job_adm_counselor_Canada.php.

Leamington United Mennonite Church
invites applications for a full-time

Lead Pastor

Our church is located in Essex County in southwestern Ontario, about a half hour from the University of Windsor and three hours from each of Conrad Grebel College and the Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary. Essex County contains five MCEC churches and about 20 other Mennonite Churches. Our church has an average Sunday morning attendance of 350 people.

The successful candidate will lead a pastoral team, which includes an associate pastor, a youth pastor, and a part-time music minister. The planned starting date is Jan. 2007 but this may be changed through negotiations.

Interested individuals are asked to contact the MCEC office at 519-650-3806 or at 4489-4497 King St. E., Kitchener, ON, N2P 2G2.



Bookkeeper/Executive Assistant

MCEC invites applications for this full-timed salaried position (37½ hours) with attractive benefits, beginning mid-September (negotiable). The applicant will be committed to realizing MCEC's mission of *extending the peace of Jesus Christ: making disciples, growing congregations, forming leaders*.

This person will provide bookkeeping and administrative support to the Executive Minister and the Operations Minister in the context of the Administration Team and the larger ministry staff of MCEC.

The ideal candidate will:

- Be experienced or have training in bookkeeping procedures; experience in AccPac or Adagio computer programs would be an asset;
- Be proficient in word processing (Word or WordPerfect), spreadsheets (Excel) and internet communications (Microsoft Outlook);
- Be able to hold confidentiality, have an eye for detail, be well-organized and able to set priorities;
- Have a good knowledge of the MCEC constituency.

Applications (with resume and references), inquiries or nominations by **September 5, 2006** to:

David T. Martin, Executive Minister
Mennonite Church Eastern Canada
4489 King St. E.
Kitchener, ON N2P 2G2
Phone: 519.650.3806 / 800.206.9356
Email: dmartin@mcec.ca
Job description: www.mcec.ca

golf ng for good

Winners of the 11th annual House of Friendship golf tournament at the Grand Valley Golf and Country Club near Kitchener, Ont., were, from left to right, Marty Metzger, Oscar Weber, Marty Martin and Phares Bauman, with a score of 62. The tournament—the first held in the pouring rain—raised approximately \$22,000 for the Christian non-profit human service agency that serves 32,500 low-income women, men, youth and children in Waterloo Region annually through 17 programs, including addiction, community, family and residential services.



House of Friendship photo



Photo submitted by Hugo Tressen

The fourth annual Leamington (Ont.) Mennonite Home charity golf event attracted 125 golfers on June 24 and raised \$22,000 this year (with the help of major corporate sponsors), with the proceeds going to purchase a large commercial washer for the long-term care home. Participants included this junior foursome of Matthew Newland, Spencer Neufeld, Kevin Epp and Kevin Sawatzky.