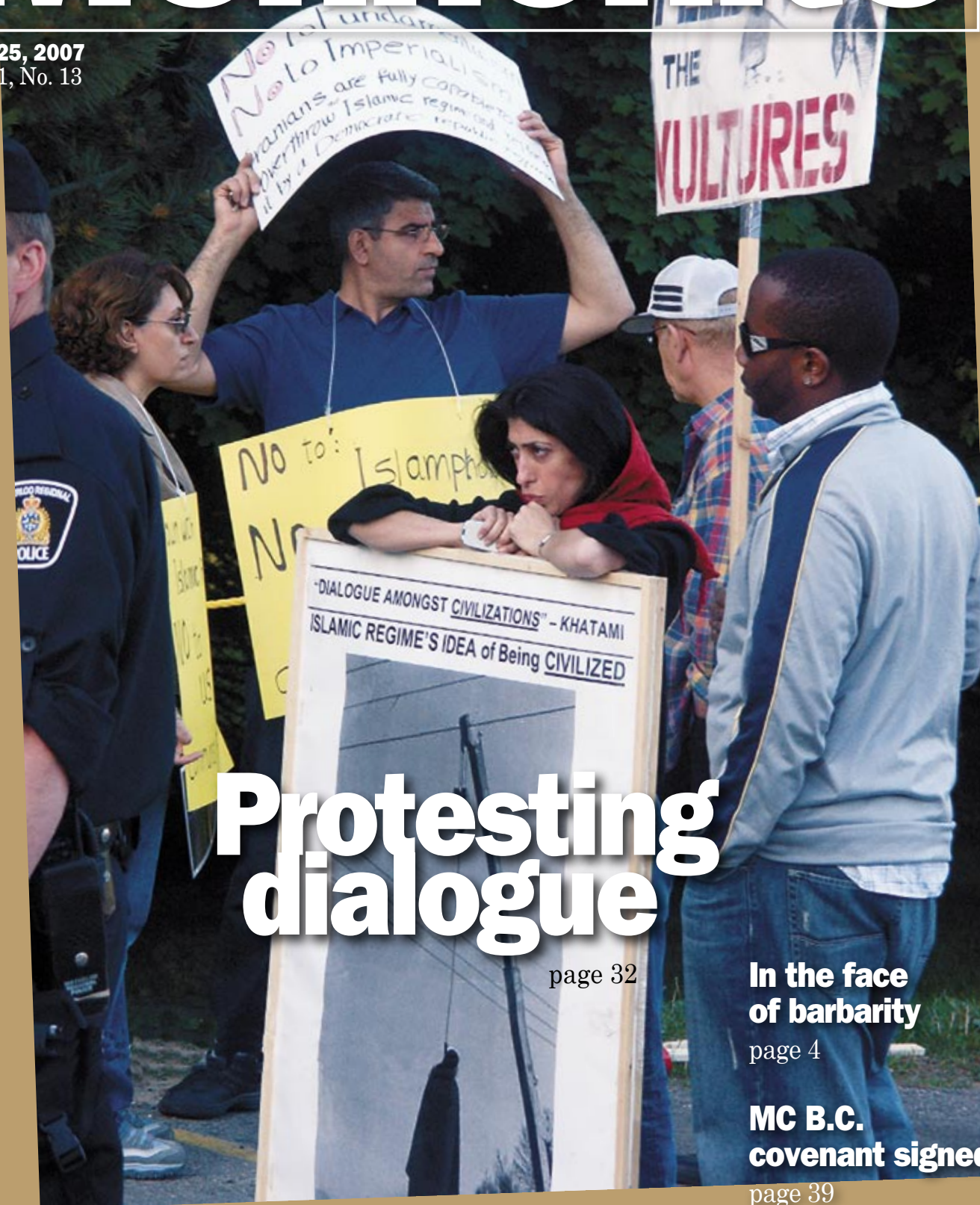


# CANADIAN Mennonite

June 25, 2007  
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## Protesting dialogue

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## Holy agreements

**T**he re-covenanting process has become an important tool for our area churches over the last decade. In this issue, we have a special report on the covenant just signed by most MC British Columbia churches in a mass worship service on Pentecost Sunday (see pages 39-40).

In MC Saskatchewan, delegates decided in 2002 that the church needed to hold a re-covenanting service for its churches. At the end of a three-year process of gathering input from congregations and considering draft versions, the MC Saskatchewan covenant was signed by most churches there in February 2005.

MC Alberta went through an extensive discernment and consultation process about what its core vision, purpose and mission should be when it developed a new constitution in 2001, which its delegates overwhelmingly passed in 2002. While not named a covenant, the constitution has similar language to the Saskatchewan and B.C. covenants on what the theological purpose of the area church is and what shared expectations individual congregations agree to as members.

What makes a covenant different from area church restructuring, which is also a typically lengthy process involving consultation, goal-setting and big-picture thinking about what God is calling us to do?

In a church context, a covenant is a holy agreement between God and us. Many examples are found in the Old and New Testaments. While most agreements are contracts between two people, a covenant is fundamentally first about God and then about what our relationship with each other should be in light of this. The Bible as a whole follows this pattern, as does the most famous individual covenant, the Ten Commandments.

This structure is also found in the B.C. and Saskatchewan covenants, which both begin with our common centre of Jesus Christ, our resulting identity as the body of Christ, and the ministries to the world that Christ has called us to do. They then both contain a series of commitments that the congregations signing make to each other.

Why re-covenant? According to MC B.C. moderator Gerd Bartel, it's a way to refocus intensively on church relationships that we often take for granted because they are only explicitly stated by congregations when they first join the denomination; for many churches, this was decades ago.

Bartel also feels that the re-covenanting process provided a way to find a common theological centre and, through that, a new unity as a body and a new focus. "One aspect I strongly feel is that congregationalism has led to more uniqueness between congregations, and more diversity, and that means you keep on expanding the elastic band that connects us. How long can that band stretch without breaking?" he ponders.

"This diversity has made us dysfunctional and has taken away our ability to focus on the vision God has given us. Do you keep on in a state of dysfunction, in basically spending your energy facing each other and discussing and dialoguing...instead of together focusing forward? It's time, folks, to stop and decide where we are going to get to.... It's time for forgiveness, reconciliation, coming together, and to move forward."

Living by our covenants is a challenge for all of us in the church. In early 2005, Ken Bechtel said of the MC Saskatchewan covenant: "We state our best intentions, relying on God's resources, forgiveness for failures and strength for new beginnings." That continues to be true today.

—**Tim Miller Dyck**

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**Cover: The first night of the Mennonite-Muslim dialogue at Conrad Grebel University in Waterloo, Ont., had to be cancelled after Iranian expatriate protesters shouted down clerics from the Imam Khomeini Education and Research Institute in Qom, Iran, forcing police to whisk the clerics out a fire exit. See stories beginning on page 32. —Conrad Grebel photo by Jennifer Konkle**

## Forgiveness in the face of barbarity: The story of John and Grace

**J**ohn Ochola was abducted by the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) from the village of Kabong in northern Uganda during the first week of June 2003. The rebels attacked his village in the early morning hours, surrounding his compound and leaving him no way of escape.

His captors soon began accusing him of being part of the Ugandan military. He told them emphatically that he had never attended military training or joined the Uganda People's Defense Force (UPDF); that he had always been in his home village attending school and farming.

The rebels tormented John for a while before asking him, "What kind of sleeve do you want—a short sleeve or a long sleeve?" He learned later that they were talking about his arm; if he had chosen a short sleeve, they would have cut his arms off at the shoulder. Because he didn't know what they were talking about, he did not respond.

They then informed him that they were going to "teach" him for his "sin" of being part of the UPDF. With that they began hacking off his nose, lip and ears with a knife. The pain was excruciating. Then the LRA rebels placed his left hand on a block and started to chop off his fingers and thumb. When they had finished with the left hand, John could see that their intention was to do the same to his right, so he implored them—all the while spitting blood—to have mercy so that he would have at least one hand.

After they had completed their butchery, his captors left him to die. But despite a loss of blood he pushed through the bush until he reached a main road. There, he met some kind



**John Ochola six months after being abducted and maimed by the Lord's Resistance Army.**

**The rebels tormented John for a while before asking him, "What kind of sleeve do you want—a short sleeve or a long sleeve?"**

people who gave him a lift to the government hospital in Kitgum, where he was treated for the next four weeks and where his wife, Grace Aramo, and his mother, Grace Akot, finally found him.

After the rebels had abducted him, they burned his homestead, including the granary that contained the

harvest of groundnuts that he and Grace had recently brought home. All of their livestock—goats, ducks, turkeys and chickens—were taken and the other crops that were almost ripe were destroyed.

At the time of his abduction, John and Grace had been together for a year; Grace was seven months pregnant with their first child. As is the Acholi custom, they began their marriage by living together and had not yet begun the next process in their tradition—paying the dowry and negotiating for all of the gifts that would have to be given to the bride's family. The groundnuts they had gathered and goats they had raised were designated for this purpose, but their efforts were now thwarted.

In traditional Acholi culture, when the dowry has not been paid the girl is often recalled by her parents in order to motivate or "provoke" the man's family to start working harder towards paying the dowry.

Normally, the family would

have given months or even years for the dowry to be paid, but Grace's family perceived that John would never be able to pay, so they thought it wise to recall their daughter. So in September 2003, Grace's brother came to Kitgum and carried her back to her family.

Grace did not resist being taken because she knew that this was the tradition, that her family had the right to recall her and that she had to obey. However, this was not something that was easy for her because she was committed to her relationship with John and to raising their child together.

In a testimony to her feelings—and in order to encourage John in the difficult struggle that he was going through—she wrote him the follow-

Waterloo, Ont.

## Ontario Mennonite organizing Bending Spears film

**O**n-again/off-again peace talks in the 20-year civil war in Uganda between government forces and the rebel Lord's Resistance Army are now on again. Despite the great many stories of pain and suffering, there are examples of people who have decided to forgive—against all odds.

Dave Klassen, a former long-time Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) staff worker in Uganda and a member of Waterloo North Mennonite Church, Ont., is organizing a one-hour documentary film to tell these stories. He is working with Rick Gamble, a documentary TV news producer formerly of Kitchener's CTV affiliate station CKCO-TV, and Andrew Heubner, a videographer from CKCO-TV.

Photographs by Dave Klassen



**John Ochola, his wife Aromo Grace and their child.**

The film will focus on the lives of five Ugandans who have chosen forgiveness, rather than hate and anger. John Ochola had his fingers and parts of his face cut off by members of the LRA (see *"Forgiveness in the face of barbarity,"* page 4); his wife, Aromo Grace, has chosen to love and stay with him, rather than reject him. Bishop Macleord Baker Ochola, an Anglican clergyman, continues to work tirelessly for peace alongside his Roman Catholic and Muslim counterparts, even though the rebels blew up his wife with a landmine, and raped and killed his daughter. Father Carlos Rodriguez, a Roman Catholic priest and journalist, presses for peace, shoulder-to-shoulder with Bishop Ochola and other renowned religious leaders, while grappling with the guilt of not having done enough to protect the women and children kidnapped from his parish and

community. Viewers will also meet Gladys Oyat, a passionate and dedicated headmistress of a Kitgum girl's school, where a significant number of the 900 students are former "wives" or sex slaves of rebel commanders.

The film is named after an Acholi people's tradition, where the healing of a broken relationship begins with a community ceremony involving the bending of two spears and the sharing of a bitter herb potion.

"Compelling stories of forgiveness, and a willingness to move beyond the pain, are being played out in the lives of many Acholi," says Klassen. "We believe passionately that these stories must be told—not just to counter our western culture's damaging and demeaning image of Africa, but to inspire all who hear to search their own souls for a personal application of this

poignant and powerful principle."

The film's organizers hope to begin filming on location in Uganda this summer. For more information, or to contribute to the costs of the effort, please contact Klassen at [dave.klassen77@gmail.com](mailto:dave.klassen77@gmail.com).

—Tim Miller Dyck

ing letter within weeks of being taken away:

*"Don't think my absence from you means that I've abandoned you. I would have loved to stay with you right up to now. Nothing should separate us now.*

*"What has happened cannot separate our initial plan. What if the incident had happened to me? Would you have abandoned me? It could have happened to anybody. That should not be an issue of worries.*

*"Now I'm sending you my photo-*

*graphs and that should keep reminding you that I've not abandoned you. But at the same time, other people are discouraging me from continuing with you....*

*"But these negative opinions of other people will not have room in my mind. Even my brother, Olal Kenneth, is encouraging me not to worry. Things can happen to people all over the world like that. He is greeting you and at the same time praying for us.*

*"Apoyo [thank you] and grace."  
Aromo Grace*

When John received this letter, he was greatly encouraged and it gave him much hope. His problem, however, was that he knew a miracle would have to happen if he was ever to even begin the dowry payment.

A month after Grace was taken from him, John was visited by a team of Canadians from Canadian Foodgrains Bank led by Mennonite Central Committee. They heard his story and were moved with compassion. When he was asked how he

**Continued on page 6**



**Forgiveness** *From page 5*

felt now about those who carried out these violent acts against him, John said that he could see nothing useful in thoughts of revenge—so he had forgiven them.

The team put money together and gave it to the church leadership in order to assist John with the payment of the dowry. Several also gave him cash on the spot, which he used to purchase some bare necessities for his family as well as to begin a small business selling cooking oil by the side of the road.

On Dec. 6, 2003, negotiations took place between the two families, including two representatives from the church. During the discussions Grace sat close to John. After certain formalities were dispensed with, the chair of Grace's family asked her, "Do you know this young man by the name John Ochola?" She smiled nicely and said, "Yes, I do know him."

"If what you say is true," he asked, "is it acceptable that you stay with this young man until death separates you?" She smiled and said, "Yes, of course."

**'My advice to you is this: that you stay well, that you love your husband, and that you stay with him forever. We don't want to hear anything about you coming back to us.'**

The chair went on to ask, "Are you going to shame us amidst any problem that you may come across as you live together?" She replied, "This is not a problem to me."

"You have now agreed," the chair charged her. "My advice to you is this: that you stay well, that you love your husband, and that you stay with him forever. We don't want to hear anything about you coming back to us."

John sat there quietly and smiled throughout.

After these preliminaries the negotiations turned to economics. Fines were levied because the baby was born out of wedlock, a dowry price was set, and gifts for members of Grace's family were identified (goats, sets of clothing for both parents,

a blanket for her grandmother and several other things).

John and Grace were allowed to stay together in Kitgum for several weeks before Grace was told to return to her family for final words of encouragement and advice before she became the official wife of John Ochola.

The meeting ended with a feast put on by John's family and relatives. There was much joy and celebration in what John called a "miracle" that he never thought would take place. The contribution by the Canadians was a "rescue" beyond his wildest imagination.

—**Dave Klassen**, as told by **Rev. William Oketta**

**Grace supports John during his stay in Kitgum Hospital in June 2003.**



**Regions of northern Uganda where the LRA has been active are highlighted in yellow.**

### LRA backgrounder

The Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), formed in 1987, is a rebel guerrilla army operating mainly in northern Uganda and parts of Sudan.

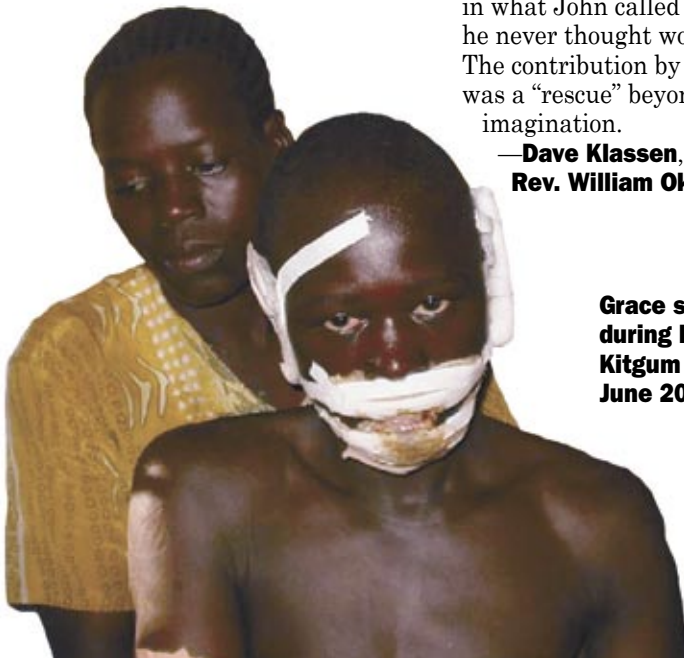
The group is engaged in an armed rebellion against the Ugandan government in what is now one of Africa's longest-running conflicts. It is led by Joseph Kony, who proclaims himself a spirit medium, and apparently wishes to establish a state based on the Ten Commandments and Acholi tradition.

The LRA is accused of widespread human rights violations, including mutilation, torture, rape, the abduction of civilians, the use of child soldiers and a number of massacres.

### War violence reportedly experienced by abductees

- Witnessed a killing: 78%
- Tied or locked up: 68%
- Received a severe beating: 63%
- Forced to steal or destroy property: 58%
- Forced to abuse dead bodies: 23%
- Forced to attack a stranger: 22%
- Forced to kill a stranger: 20%
- Forced to kill an opposing soldier in battle: 15%
- Forced to attack a family member or friend: 14%
- Forced to kill a family member or friend: 8%

—Sources: UgandaCAN and sway-uganda.org (Survey of War Affected Youth: Research Brief 1)



## Stewardship stories for the generous life (Part IV): No gifts for Emily this year

“Imagine how much money could be raised,” mused 10-year-old Emily Martin, “if every Grade 5 kid in every Mennonite Conference of Eastern Canada church brought money for a project instead of a gift to every friend’s birthday party.”

She didn’t know all the numbers to do the math, but her dark eyes sparkled as she pondered how this idea might explode. Each year she has a great birthday party with a few friends from school and church. She chooses a theme, plans activities, serves snacks and birthday cake, and opens gifts—new things that need space in a room already overflowing with old things.

Her 10th birthday was different. “I didn’t need more stuff,” said Emily.

The “alternative” gift idea had grabbed hold of Emily as she helped pack relief kits for Afghanistan at her church. Why not ask her birthday guests to bring money for relief for Afghanistan, or for another project that received less publicity, instead of bringing gifts for her?

Emily and her mother, Wanda Wagler-Martin, visited Arli Klassen, Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Ontario executive director. Klassen explained about the “Rag Pickers” of Tiljala Shed project in India, where children sift through garbage looking for things to recycle. The lucky ones have parents to work with them. They live in shacks or on the street. With no address, schools do not accept them. The “rag-picker” project helps finance informal schooling and less than \$100 covers all school costs for one child for a year, including nutritious snacks, medical check-ups and uniforms.

Helping street kids in India get to school was a perfect birthday project, Emily decided; she had seen similar poverty when her family visited Cuba. So invitations to her birthday party

included information on the “Rag Pickers” of Tiljala Shed project. She suggested guests bring a donation of \$10 or more for that project. Gifts for her were optional, but should cost no more than \$5.

Her fifth grade friends thought the idea was great. A few brought small gifts for Emily and everyone brought money. The seven girls raised \$120. One friend picked up the idea and later invited friends to bring money for an MCC AIDS project for her birthday party.

Emily’s mother was not surprised her daughter chose gifts for others rather than for herself. “It’s Emily’s way,” she said. “She’s thoughtful of others and feels deeply about people’s needs.”

“I like the specialness of a party, the energy that goes into planning and having her friends in,” Wagler-Martin added, “but I’m not comfortable with [receiving] things that aren’t neces-

sary. There is no sense of long-term gratitude.”

She reflected on the search for contentment in today’s society and the culture that compels people to think we need to buy the best and lots of everything. It is fine to purchase quality products, she believes, but contentment is not found in consuming.

Such counter-cultural thinking has already taken root in Emily, who said adamantly that she does not like malls and that popular brand names have no appeal. When she and her mother shop, they read labels and try to avoid buying products that come from sweatshops. A great find was a basketball with a “no child labour” tag.

Choosing how to spend money, along with the discipline of giving, must be taught to children, according to Wagler-Martin. She sees Sunday school as a ready-made avenue for such teaching. The home is another

avenue. In the Martin household, children receive an allowance and are encouraged to split the money three ways: giving, saving and spending, with the clear message that giving is important.

Although “stewardship” language is not common at the dinner table, Emily understands the concept. Her definition includes “helping others, giving time, love and being a neighbour.”

These thoughts have Emily’s mind already buzzing with ideas for her next birthday party and she has made one decision. This year her invitations will say, “Please, no gifts for Emily.”

—**Fern Burkhardt**

*Originally published by the MC Eastern Canada Stewardship Commission in 2004-05.*

**Such counter-cultural thinking has already taken root in Emily, who said adamantly that she does not like malls and that popular brand names have no appeal.**

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## Documentary challenges Jesus' bodily resurrection

*The Lost Tomb of Jesus.* Directed, produced and written by Simcha Jacobovici; co-produced by James Cameron and Felix Golubev.

If you passed quickly over the recent “discovery” of Jesus’ ossuary—essentially a small box used to store the bones of the deceased—along with those purportedly of his mother Mary, his wife “Mary Magdalene” and their son Judah in a family tomb in Jerusalem, you’re probably not alone.

The claim comes in *The Lost Tomb of Jesus* (now available on DVD, and in print as *The Jesus Family Tomb: The Discovery, the Investigation, and the Evidence That Could Change History* (published by HarperCollins), but for all the publicity the announcement is not particularly new. It seems that Jesus as husband and father is a necessary ingredient in any revision of Christian origins and the recent “discovery” is actually the reinterpretation of an archaeological excavation carried out already in 1980. Not surprisingly, the documentary has been roundly condemned as fanciful and irresponsible. And it is clearly more “info-tainment” than scholarly investigation. To walk beside Jacobovici as he doggedly pursues his thesis is certainly entertaining.

But I’m not sure that such dismissal addresses either the significance of the “find” or the popular interest in Christian conspiracy theories that *The Lost Tomb of Jesus* seems to represent.

The documentary’s claims are based on the recovery of 10 bone boxes from a first century family tomb in Jerusalem. Of the 10, six bear the names of their occupants—Jesus son of Joseph, Mary, Mariamene Mara, Judah son of Jesus, Matthew and

Jose. This cluster of names is thought so close to the recollection of the gospels that the documentary decides the tomb must be the family tomb of Jesus of Nazareth.

To secure the fit, “Mariamene Mara” is identified as Mary Magdalene, Matthew is located in Joseph’s bloodline as Jesus’ great-grandfather (Luke 3:23-38) and Jose is identified as one of Jesus’ brothers (Mark 6:3). Judah, “son of Jesus,” is nowhere in the gospels, but in one of its more reckless moments the documentary identifies him as the disciple “whom Jesus loved” (John 19:26-27).

Individually, these names are among the most common in first century Palestine, but it is their combination that supposedly confirms the match. The documentary goes still further. DNA analysis of bone fragments in the boxes belonging to Jesus and Mariamene Mara suggest that

their occupants were not related and thus were buried together as husband and wife. The theory is almost always speculative, but here it borders on misrepresentation.

Despite its obvious sensationalism, *The Lost Tomb of Jesus*—and in particular the quick response it has occasioned—offers a fascinating glimpse into the interaction of faith and historical inquiry. It calls for a closer articulation of the place of the bodily

resurrection in the biblical tradition, and challenges the church to consider again its response to the recent surge of revisionist “history” of Christianity popularized by Dan Brown’s *Da Vinci Code*. If it does little else, *The Lost Tomb of Jesus* can make for worthwhile discussion, despite itself.

—Rene Baergen

*This review originally appeared in a slightly altered form in First Forum, the newsletter of First Mennonite Church, Kitchener, Ont.*

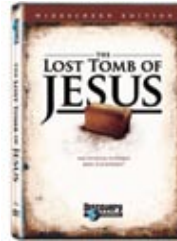


Photo by Dave Rogalsky

**The Deacons of Jazz—including Al Dick, Linden Gossen, Randy Brown and Paul Fehderau, pictured—performed their third annual fundraising concert for Mennonite Central Committee’s Generations at Risk project at Breslau (Ont.) Mennonite Church on June 1, raising \$5,200 for the cause. Not pictured are Darren Pries-Klassen and Harold Dick.**



# Transforming worship with the children's story



**H**ow does your congregation feel about the children's story? Is it something special, just for children, something that helps younger children understand the substance of the worship theme? Or does it, as some critics of children's stories suggest, put the children on display for adult gratification and even "operate implicitly to marginalize or exclude children by segregating them from the worshipping community as a whole and trivializing their ways of knowing through moralisms"?

There is quite a debate about this among current Christian educators and leaders in children's ministry, so if you feel ambivalent about this part of your worship service, you are in good company.

Research found in *Children's Spirituality: Christian Perspectives, Research and Applications* (Cascade Books, 2004) suggests that "one of the most important positive impacts of this congregational practice of gathering children together in worship [for the children's story] is its visual power. Children, generally smaller than the sanctuary furniture and the adults with whom they sit, can easily be rendered invisible in most Christian worship spaces."

In *Children Belong in Worship: A Guide to the Children's Sermon* (CBP Press, 1986), W. Alan Smith says, "An inclusive children's story needs to be part of a thoroughgoing attempt to so structure worship that children are included in all its ritual, meaning and power." And current research into the spirituality of children is providing more evidence of the deep and authentic ways that young children experience God and respond to God's good news when they can engage with faith at their level.

The children's story is a part of our worship services where we can focus on children as the integral part of the worshipping family of God that they are. In it, we can invite children to open their hearts and wills to the loving heart and will of God. As we do so, the clear communication strategies that help us connect with children will also help many adults to worship more fully.

Since the summer of 2004, Mennonite Church Canada has guided the writing of children's stories on the theme of the Lectionary Gospel Text for Ordinary Time. The magazine *Leader: Equipping the Missional Congregation* (Mennonite Publishing Network) provides children's features for Sundays in the church's high seasons of Advent and Lent/Easter/Pentecost. Both resources can provide a great place to start planning your children's time and are available at [mennonitechurch.ca/tiny/126](http://mennonitechurch.ca/tiny/126).

Continued on page 10

**Children's story** *From page 9*

Some people adapt these stories to their specific setting, while others are happy to use them as they appear. Even if you are not following the Lectionary, browsing through the titles of older stories often provides a suitable point of departure.

But perhaps you need a different focus or theme. While there are wonderful books of children's sermons and stories that can be used, a good story that comes from within the storyteller can provide a powerful ministry for the young and not-so-young. Here are some things to keep in mind if you choose to develop your own children's story.

**Preparing the story**

Remember that you are entrusted with the task of helping young children to worship and honour Jesus, who took children on his lap, blessed them and challenged his disciples to become like them. Therefore:

- Prepare yourself spiritually. Pray for yourself and the children who will receive your story.
- Trust God to work through you.
- Gear your story to a four- to eight-year-old audience. They are the ones who will not understand most of the other words of worship. Adults benefit from listening in, but this is a bonus rather than the focus. Children of this age are highly visual and tactile, and long to be reminded of God's unconditional love for, and acceptance of, them.
- Keep your story short. Try to tell it in about 300 words.
- Use basic vocabulary that links to their experiences.
- Connect the theme of the Bible passages to the current context of children in a concrete way.
- Stick to one main point and image. (A concrete object or symbol can be helpful.)
- Share the good news of the passage without moralizing.
- Plan some reflective questions that help children worship and internalize the biblical message.

**Presenting the story**

Honour the children as spiritual beings. As the storyteller, you need to be

conscious of the sacred function you are serving. Therefore:

- Trust God to work through you.
- Take time to settle. Ask the children if they are comfortable and ready to listen to this message from God to them. You may find it helpful to remind them that Jesus invited the children onto his lap, that he appreciated and blessed children, and that Jesus still wants to bless them during this special worship time. A short prayer to open the story can be helpful for this.
- Make eye contact with each child. Let your eyes speak alongside of your voice and gestures.
- Follow a predictable pattern of gathering, listening, telling and departing. This enhances the worship experience for children, whether it is a special season or throughout the year.
- Tell the story from your heart. Enter into the story with all your presence and attention. This is easier to do if you have practised. If you are using props, practise in front of a mirror.
- Let the story do its own teaching and resist explaining its lesson. If you present the story well, the children will hear and reflect on God's voice rather than yours.
- Present reflective questions that help children worship and internalize the biblical message. Provide a pause of 10 seconds or so after each question, so that children can ponder it in their hearts.
- If children distract others, remind them gently that this is a special time for focusing on God—not on them. Re-focus on the story as quickly as possible. (Children under four years of age should have a caregiver come forward with them to help them remain settled.)
- Finish with a brief prayer of thanksgiving for this time with God and the children.

**Other children's time options**

Be creative and provide variety for the children's time. Rather than always telling a story, consider reading and reflecting on a good picture book; doing an interview with someone in church; sketching; or using music, drama or movement. Or invite artists, writers, musicians or dancers to tell a story that links with their gifts.

Honour the different ways that we find and make meaning, or that we connect with God's intentions for our world.

For additional resources, visit the MC Canada Resource Centre [mennonitechurch.ca/tiny/127](http://mennonitechurch.ca/tiny/127).

—**Elsie Hannah Ruth Rempel**

*The author is director of Christian education and nurture for Mennonite Church Canada's Christian Formation Council.*

**'An inclusive children's story needs to be part of a thoroughgoing attempt to so structure worship that children are included in all its ritual, meaning and power.'**



# FOCUS

## Kids' Books & Resources



Spend a day with children around the world

### Child's View DVD

Experience the everyday sights and sounds of children living in Bangladesh, Bolivia, Burkina Faso, Iraq, Cambodia, India, Serbia, Mozambique, South Africa. Great for teaching cultural awareness.



Purchase at [mccstore.org](http://mccstore.org)  
 Borrow at [mcc.org/catalog](http://mcc.org/catalog)  
 Canada 888-622-6337

## Ancient headlines

Okay, families! Gather 'round. Here's a brain-teasing activity for you to do together when you pull out *Canadian Mennonite* on your family trip this summer. (Kids, make sure to give your parents a chance to answer!)

Have you ever wondered if they had newspapers in Bible times? I don't think they did, but if they had, you might have seen some of these headlines when you unrolled the *Middle East Daily Herald* scroll. See if you can figure out which famous Bible story each headline describes. If you need a clue, look at the Bible verses below. See answers on page 15.

### Clues

1. Matthew 9
2. Genesis 44 and 45
3. I Kings 17
4. I Samuel 20
5. Exodus 2
6. Genesis 37
7. Matthew 19

—Barrette Plett

**1**  
**Girl pronounced dead, miraculously discovered to be 'just sleeping'**

**2**  
**Young man accused of stealing priceless treasure: 'I didn't even know I had the cup!'**

**3**  
**Local boy and mother receive 'bottomless' oil and flour offer from famous prophet**

**4**  
**Bull's eye! Boy uses archery skills to save best friend's life**

**5**  
**Pharaoh's daughter spots 'something weird' in river; baby boy 'doing fine'**

**6**  
**Oh Brother! Tricked by his older siblings, boy spends cold night in hole—without his jacket**

**7**  
**Local children invited to a 'meet and greet' with famous preacher**

Answers on page 15

**Children's Bibles and books**

*47 Beavers on the Big, Blue Sea.* Phil Vischer; Jared Chapman, illustrator. Tommy Nelson, 2006.

This children's picture book comes with a CD so children can listen to the story and songs.

*Baby Bible.* Kristina Stephenson; Sarah Toulmin, illustrator. Good Books, 2006.

Twenty Bible stories are told at a very simple level.

*Cook-a-doodle-hooooo!* Brita Granström; Mick Manning, illustrator. Good Books, 2007.

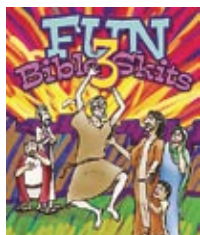
This 28-page children's picture book for ages three to seven tells a funny story about an owl in the henhouse.

*Children's Illustrated Bible.* Eve MacMaster. Herald Press, 2007.

MacMaster retells the Bible stories in clear, simple language, accompanied by colourful artwork. The stories were originally published as a 10-volume paperback series.

*Cups Held Out.* Judith L. Roth; Brooke Rothshank, illustrator. Herald Press, 2006.

This children's picture book raises the question of how to respond to the poor of the world.



*Fun Bible Skits 3: Ready-To-Go Scripts and Activities for Kids,* Faith & Life Resources, 2007.

This is the third in a series of short skits from Old and New Testament stories.

# LISTING OF children's books & resources

*Goat and Donkey in the Great Outdoors and Goat and Donkey in Strawberry Glasses.* Simon Puttock and Russell Julian. Good Books, 2007, 28 pages.

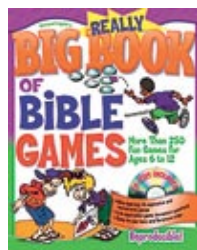
These picture-book stories of the easily confused Goat and gently wise Donkey are designed for children aged four to seven.

*God With Us Today: Devotions for Families.* June Galle Krehbiel. Faith & Life Resources, 2006.

The 100 devotions are designed for children's family worship.

*Simply in Season Children's Cookbook.* Mark Beach and Julie Kauffman. Herald Press, 2006.

This colourful recipe book has lots of full-colour illustrations and simple recipes designed for children.



*The Really Big Book of Bible Games.* Gospel Light, 2006.

This 304-page book has many Bible-based activities for children aged six to 12 and comes with a CD-ROM.

**Bible reading resources**

"My Bible Reading Chart" from Faith and Life Press includes 100 favourite Bible verses for young children, to get them started reading the Bible.

"Dig Into the Bible" from Faith and Life Press is geared for ages nine to 12. It provides child-friendly ideas and challenges to get this age group reading the Bible.

"Read the Book: A Reading Record for the Whole Bible" from Faith and Life Press. It offers ideas and helps for teenagers.



**DVDs**

*Child's View.* MCC, 2007.

Designed for Kindergarten to Grade 6, this documentary shows children's lives in nine countries, including Bangladesh, Iraq, Bolivia and Burkina Faso.

*Long Journey and A Friend in High Places.* Friends and Heroes Ltd., Tyndale House Publishers.

These 25-minute animated children's stories are based on biblical characters and are designed for children aged six to 10. Each DVD comes with four curriculum lessons.

—Compiled by **Barb Draper**

**Word Search**

F	A	L	L	R	B	W	H	E
C	M	F	O	O	L	I	S	H
R	A	I	N	C	E	N	A	O
A	N	A	R	K	W	D	N	U
S	T	R	E	A	M	S	D	S
H	D	O	W	N	W	I	S	E

**Find the following words from Matthew 7:24-27**

- |         |         |
|---------|---------|
| Wise    | Man     |
| House   | Rock    |
| Rain    | Down    |
| Streams | Winds   |
| Blew    | Foolish |
| Sand    | Fall    |
| Crash   |         |

**Solution (unused letters):** \_\_\_\_\_

—**Barb Draper**



I left China the week the rail line to Tibet opened up. If I was a good journalist, I'd have been on that train to be part of making the roof of the world that much more accessible. But I'm not a good journalist and I was leaving the country behind after two years. Besides, I'd been to Tibet already.

But this train was all over the news. How it was pressurized and had oxygen tanks for people, the queues for tickets, and the benefit this would be for Tibet and its people. They wouldn't be marginalized by their inaccessibility any more. They wouldn't have to be backwards and poor—because they would be connected to the pulsing heart that is the Chinese economy.

When I went to Lhasa, Tibet's capital, I had to fly there. Even with that pre-railway layer of inaccessibility, it's not like Lhasa was so different from any other backwater Chinese city—apart from the easily walkable area around Jokhang Square. The Jokhang temple is the centre of Tibetan Buddhism. Worshippers prostrated themselves with kneepads and mats to protect themselves from cold stone. Pilgrims walked around the temple, spinning prayer wheels and buying religious implements.

Walk a couple of blocks, however, and you can shop in the same chain stores that are everywhere in China. This could be a good thing. Many Chinese people seem to see it that way. Tibetans now have more access to the trappings of middle class life. They can wear parkas instead of wool smocks. Or buy an electric heater and

## A train to nowhere?



Photo courtesy of J Unrau

not have to burn yak dung in the winter. Heck, western tourists can even buy Oreos!

Before the train connected them, all these goods were dangerously and expensively trucked in. Now the Tibetan consumers aren't being neglected by the successful world just because they're on top of a mountain!

And that's sort of sad. I'm not saying I wish people were forced to starve or freeze to death. It's really easy to romanticize a fading culture, and I'm not saying that if people would go back to mud-brick houses, everything would be better. What's a shame is that a neglected mountain kingdom must become the same as downtown Beijing to be seen as developing.

The closer you get to the centre—which in China means the big coastal

cities—the more religion becomes a novelty. The cities are where China's middle and upper classes are growing. Young people are getting richer than their parents would ever have dreamed possible. What they feel they owe it to is "looking forward." It's the same kind of development that will put a McDonald's in Lhasa before too long.

The Chinese college students I taught were very concerned with success. They were mostly farm kids who wanted to move up to the middle class life. For these kids, the English word used when talking about faith was "superstition." "You can't be superstitious and successful. Only stupid people are superstitious, and I don't want to be stupid," is how their line of thinking goes. They pointed to countless examples of ignorant peasants who were superstitious, and look what that got them—knee deep in human excrement, picking vegetables. It's a difficult visual to argue with.

That's not to say there isn't a veneration of the past and tradition, but when it comes to religious things,

### the young prophets

they're preserved for tourists, not necessarily for worshippers. Like the five blocks around the Jokhang temple. It feels

like they're part of a living museum for the developed middle classes to gawk at. "And this is what belief used to be," they'd say. "Look at the crazy things those people did."

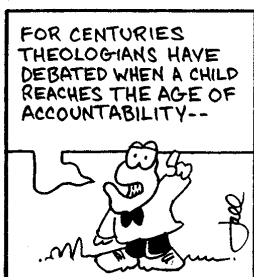
There are places that are different, but they're way out on the periphery, far from where most people want to end up. But one Friday, in a city far from the eyes of the emperor, my friend and I stood huddled behind a shoe-seller's cart while people overflowed into the street from an ancient mosque—all facing west and praying.

But with a train connection to Beijing, how long will they survive?

—J Unrau

*Young Prophet J Unrau spent two years as a teacher with Mennonite Partners in China. Now he lives in Winnipeg and writes.*

### Pontius' Puddle



## Letters

**Shilling' for Israel charge denied**

I am writing in response to Vern Ratzlaff's letter, "Tourists need to visit real Palestinian villages," May 14, page 11, which was itself a response to the April 2 article, "Nazareth Village ready for its close-up," page 16.

Ratzlaff challenges Nazareth Village's apparent encouragement for tourism to Israel, to see our "first-century Jewish village under Roman occupation," to see life as it was in Jesus' time. He suggests that visitors should, instead, go to Palestinian villages today to see the effects of the brutal Israeli occupation forces. His cultural/archaeological knowledge is not too well honed, as the differences are substantial.

Yes, Jesus was born into a society under brutal occupation and this information is given in rather graphic visual detail in the Roman period room

**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.**

at the beginning of every Nazareth Village tour.

Nazareth itself, while in Israel proper, is the largest Arab city in Galilee. In the midst of it, 500 metres from Mary's cave house, stands our authentic reproduction of a Jewish town 2,000 years ago, where visitors spend three hours walking the land among animals and people dressed in ancient costumes. Understanding the biblical text in context is an important goal for us in welcoming our many visitors—Jews, Muslims and Christians.

If all this is shilling for Israeli tourism, I encourage Ratzlaff to follow another person's advice about Nazareth:

"Come and see" (John 1:46).

—**Glenn Edward Witmer,**  
**Jerusalem, Israel**

*The writer is a board member of First-Century Nazareth Village.*

**Naming donors can divide wealthy, poor**

I recently read two good news stories about significant financial support for two fine Mennonite Christian camp building projects—Stillwood Camp and Conference Centre at Cultus Lake, B.C., and Camp Valaqua in Alberta. There was a subtle, yet not so subtle, difference in the reporting.

DARREN PRIES-KLASSEN



**God, money and me**

If you have ever assisted your church in planning an annual budget, you know how difficult it can be, especially when planning revenue amounts is reduced to guessing. Encouraging people to consider annual pledges not only helps with planning the budget, it fosters better ministry in the church.

Consider this scenario. It is Sunday morning with only a few weeks left before budget year-end. In the bulletin you read an announcement that says a major shortfall in giving is projected unless people open their wallets widely and soon! To ensure the severity of the situation is not lost on anyone, a member of the finance committee makes a pulpit announcement that morning of the impending "tale of woe."

Sound familiar? Sundays like this make everyone squirm and for all the wrong reasons. It makes giving to the ministry of the church something that happens out of guilt, fear and probably a lack of planning.

Now consider this scenario. Several months before year-end you receive an invitation in your mailbox asking you to participate in the financial ministry of the church. "Just as God has shared blessings with you, you have the opportunity to share with the ministry of the church." You are asked to prayerfully consider what you and your family would give to the church dur-

**To pledge or not to pledge**

ing the following year. The invitation goes on to highlight the various programs of your church and denominational body. It mentions missions programs your church is involved with and highlights ministry opportunities that could happen provided adequate funding is received.

Over the next few weeks the bulletin and pulpit announcements do not sound like doom and gloom for the church, but rather talk about mission and possibilities. The link between the mission of the church and the budget is clearly articulated. You are told of an upcoming Sunday when people will have opportunity to offer their completed pledge forms in a special offering of celebration. Your pledge information will be held in confidence and will be used only by those individuals given the task of drafting the church budget.

Ministry costs money. Good ministry costs more! If our churches are left to guess at annual revenue amounts for the coming year, planning for the future will always prove difficult and the ministry of our churches will never reach its full potential.

*Darren Pries-Klassen is a stewardship consultant at the St. Catharines, Ont., office of the Mennonite Foundation of Canada (MFC). For stewardship education, and estate and charitable gift planning, contact your nearest MFC office or visit mennofoundation.ca.*

**Ministry costs money.**  
**Good ministry costs more!**



The Stillwood story (*the Mennonite Brethren Herald*, April 2007, page 6) named the donor of \$2.5 million to the gymnasium complex. The Camp Valaqua story in *Canadian Mennonite* (March 19, page 28) told the story of another fundraiser to which an unnamed donor gave \$50,000, with the balance of \$5,000 being given by other unnamed donors.

As I thought about the named Stillwood donor of \$2.5 million, I felt sorry for him when I recalled Matthew 6:1: “Take care! Don’t do your good deeds publicly to be admired, for then you will lose your reward from your Father in heaven.” How tragic for this person to be deprived of his later reward. Verses 2 to 4 provide for more instructions and warnings from Jesus

on this topic.

Having ruminated over these lessons of Jesus, some other thoughts came to mind. When these stories of great generosity are broadcast, some readers of less means might argue, “Well, now I am off the hook; let the rich guys donate.” This mentality could give the person of less means an excuse to just withdraw his “mite.”

I have a hunch that fundraisers think “generous” stories will motivate others to do the same. It may motivate people of wealth, but think also of the downside—a loss of community. Focusing on the wealthier donors in the Christian community easily leads to disruption of community and builds barriers.

Just this morning, I read this insight from Blaise Pascal’s *The Mind*

on *Fire*, “Noble deeds are most admirable when they are kept secret. For the finest thing about them is the attempt to keep them secret.” Is Pascal simply quoting Jesus, do you think?

—George Epp, Chilliwack, B.C.

**Headline Quiz Answers (Page 11)**

1. Jesus heals the dead girl.
2. Joseph meets his brothers who sold him into slavery.
3. The widow of Zarephath and her son share with Elijah.
4. Jonathan saves David.
5. Pharaoh’s daughter finds baby Moses in the Nile.
6. Joseph and his brothers’ jealousy about his coat of many colours.
7. Jesus invites the children to come to him.

MELISSA MILLER



Family ties

I was bullied as a kid. For me, this took the form of hitting, punching, humiliating words and tormenting threats to hurt my beloved cat.

According to Canadian researcher Deborah Pepler, one in 12 children is regularly harassed, one in five is bullied on occasion, and more than one in seven students admit to bullying. Some of you have been on the bullying end of a relationship. Maybe, like myself, you can see times when you were the target of bullying as well as times when you were the one who bullied or participated in the cruelty as a bystander. Sometimes adults gloss over abusive behaviour in children as “playing” or “normal” sibling rivalry. I find it helpful and healing to name it as bullying.

I carry at least two legacies from these experiences. First, I am fiercely sensitive and protective towards children who are being bullied.

Second, I am intrigued by the dynamics of bullying. Why does it happen? What motivates people to be cruel towards each other? These questions have led me to consider bullying in the church.

Drawing on material from school and workplace bullying, and church bullying information from Great Britain and New Zealand, I led a workshop on the topic last January. Sixty people showed up to talk about their experiences of bullying in the church. Some of our questions included: How does it happen that Christians—followers of Jesus who taught and modelled respect, compassion and self-giving love—encounter bullying in the church? How does it happen that Christians act like bullies? Or become tongue-tied bystanders seemingly powerless to confront such bullying?

Barbara Coloroso—writing about child and teen bullying in *The Bully, the Bullied and the Bystander*—zeroes

## Breaking the bully cycle

**With God’s grace, I have come a long way from the pale, nervous child who was bullied.**

in on the hurtful nature of bullying. It happens in situations of power imbalance, she says. Bullies want to hurt the person whom they’re bullying. And the bullying tends to be repeated. One hopes that children could be safe and free from torment in schools. Families and churches, too, ought to be places where people are free from bullying, where each one’s voice is welcomed, and where each person listens to others—to respect and draw out their perspective even when it differs from their own.

When bullying is addressed in schools, things improve! Life gets better for the child being targeted, and bullies learn more effective ways to use their social power. The entire community becomes a kinder, more just and moral place.

The same thing can happen in our families and churches if we extrapolate from these school initiatives. Helpful strategies include naming bullying behaviours, creating codes of conduct and holding each other accountable to them, and cultivating respectful, assertive ways to disagree. Those who are bullying benefit from invitations—or expectations—to use their power to build up the body of Christ, rather than to control or destroy others.

With God’s grace, I have come a long way from the pale, nervous child who was bullied. My experience as a target of bullying drew me to a place of empathy. I consciously decided not to bully those younger or weaker than me, and I acted to break the cycle of violence. I marvel at the love I now share with those who bullied me as a child, a miracle of forgiveness and reconciliation.

*Melissa Miller (familyties@mts.net) is a pastor, counsellor and author from Winnipeg. She is currently serving as interim pastor of Arnaud Mennonite Church.*

## Winnipeg church opposes military co-op program

Re: "Mennonite pastors oppose military co-op program," March 5, page 25. The combined board of Spiritual Concerns and Deacons of Sargent Avenue Church has discussed the article and is very concerned about the issues that the article raises.

It is very disturbing to see the military embark on such an aggressive recruiting program in Essex County, Ont. Not only will the military shape the students' thinking—the military propaganda machine is very powerful—it will also put students under moral obligation towards the military for the professional training they will receive. When we add to this the financial gain for students choosing to enroll, this program is alarming.

We are thankful for those who presented an opposing voice to the school board's direction. Does this concern only the churches in Essex County? How should the larger Mennonite Church react to this issue?

The military profile is rising all around us. We, as a board, are very

appreciative that *Canadian Mennonite* has published excerpts of MC Canada's letter to the prime minister concerning the re-direction of the taxes that go to the military.

We hope these concerns will find discussion time in our churches and at the Abbotsford Assembly in July.

—**Marla Langelotz, Edwin Epp, Winnipeg**

## Wealth can become more important than faith

Will Braun's article, "A complicated wealth," May 14, page 10, made some interesting points about giving.

My wife is a member of a Mennonite church, which I attend with her. I did not come from a Mennonite background, but have admired Mennonites' simple living and community. But as Braun pointed out, there seems to be a turning away from these values. The story of the widow is one example. This widow gave everything and trusted in God to provide. The rich people gave what was extra. The building of wealth in and of itself is not "bad," but I find more and more the wealth

becomes more important than faith.

—**Leo Bahr, Tavistock, Ont.**

## CCP judge needs grammar lesson

I have enjoyed your publication since its inception and am not given to writing letters to the editor as a general rule. However, I could not help smiling at the irony appearing in the May 28 editorial, "An award-winning publication" on page 2: "The best writing never forgets who it is writing to."

Here, the esteemed judge, in 10 words, makes a grammatical error and breaks a cardinal rule of good English. I refer, of course, to the use of "who" instead of "whom," and the ending of a sentence with a preposition.

—**Gilbert Epp, Abbotsford, B.C.**

(The Canadian Press Stylebook, XI Edition, concurs with the grammatical error, but disagrees with the writer about what was once a "cardinal rule of good English," stating, "If a preposition falls naturally at the end of the sentence, leave it there." Ed.)

## Aren't all people God's people?

In the "Finding new life in the Spirit" article in the May 14 Faith&Life section, Dave Rogalsky writes, "Even those who are already God's people sometimes need experience and prodding to hear God in new ways."

I always thought that, since God created heaven and Earth, all humans are God's people, regardless. But according to the above, this is not the case.

Is it not blasphemous for a mortal to claim this knowledge—to know who is, or who is not, God's people—since to determine this question would require omniscient knowledge?

—**Richard Thiessen, Winnipeg**

## Correction

Aaron Friesen was a member of the Eigenheim (Sask.) Mennonite Church team that travelled to Colombia earlier this year. He was incorrectly identified in the "From Eigenheim to Ibagué: Sister congregations embrace" article that appeared on page 20 of the April 30 issue. *Canadian Mennonite* regrets the error.

# TRAVEL WITH TOURMAGINATION TO EXPLORE THE WORLD

## 2007 TOURS

LANDS of the BIBLE (September 26 - October 8)  
SCENIC RHINE RIVER CRUISE (October 13-21)  
BEHIND THE VEIL - EXPERIENCING EGYPT  
(November 12-24 - with MEDA)

## 2008 TOURS

AN ANTARCTIC EXPERIENCE (January 2-14)  
VIETNAM (January 18 - February 4)  
AUSTRALIA and NEW ZEALAND (February 1-21)  
LEARNING ABOUT MENNONITES in PUERTO RICO  
and a SOUTHERN CARIBBEAN CRUISE  
(February 27 - March 8)  
SPRINGTIME CRUISE from AMSTERDAM to PARIS  
(March 22 - April 2)  
EXPERIENCE SOUTH AMERICA (March 28 - April 11)  
VISIT "TRANSYLVANIA EMERGING" - ROMANIA  
and HUNGARY (April 21 - May 2 - with MEDA)

MOSCOW and SIBERIA (May 24 - June 4)  
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Winnipeg

## Outtatown: Eight months in *kairos* time

**W**as Outtatown *chronos* time or *kairos* time? That's what speaker Colin Chisholm asked 97 students at this year's Outtatown graduation celebration at Canadian Mennonite University (CMU).

Chisholm, Outtatown's Guatemala field manager, noted that the Greek word *chronos* is the passing of time, while *kairos* is time that is laden with a "sense of meaning and purpose."

The Outtatown experience wasn't just about passing time, but about "purposeful time," he said, adding that "you had awesome adventures and opportunities to serve. You built homes, helped orphans and seniors, saw the faces of people in these countries. It wasn't time that just happened. It was *kairos* time."

But he added that as exciting and important as the time with Outtatown was for each student, "you can't live in that time. Don't get trapped here. Don't get stuck in the last eight months. Come back to the memories and

remember the lessons, but then take them back to your home churches."

Following Chisholm's address, Outtatown site leader Heidi Peters of Abbotsford, B.C., spoke about how Outtatown had allowed students to experience "the randomness of life but the constancy of God." Student Danny Fast of St. Catharines, Ont., echoed that idea, noting that during his time in Guatemala he had seen many injustices, but that "in a world that is unjust...God is constant, our rock of ages."

Outtatown director Paul Kroeker told the grads that "20 years from now you'll look back at this time as the most amazing year of your life....

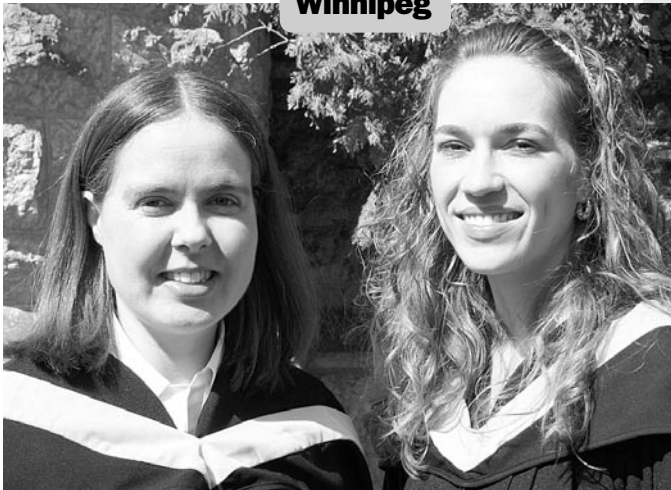
The foundations you built here will allow you to move on to even greater things in your life. Keep your relationship with Christ strong, and you will be renewed and move on."

—**John Longhurst**



**Chisholm**

CMU  
Winnipeg



CMU photo by John Longhurst

**Among the 53 graduates at Canadian Mennonite University (CMU) commencement ceremonies last month were Lora Braun of Morden, Man., and Lisa Solnick of Winnipeg, who earned CMU's first-ever degrees in music therapy. CMU is the only university on the Prairies to offer music therapy. Keynote speaker Henry Janzen, a research scientist with the Environmental Health Program of Agriculture Canada, told the grads to "be planters of hope," adding that the world doesn't just need scientists to save the planet, but also "poets and philosophers." He went on to say that the present state of the Earth is a reflection of the human condition. "The look of the land is the look of our souls," stated Janzen, who specializes in helping to make farmland more sustainable in the face of global warming and climate change. "Scars in the land are from the wounds in our hearts. Science and politics will not rescue us.... We need not just a greening of the land, but a greening of the human spirit."**

### School notes

#### 139 grads honoured

**Abbotsford, B.C.**—On April 1, Columbia Bible College graduated 50 students from the one-year faith formation program, 16 from the early childhood education program, 34 with various diplomas and 39 who earned their bachelor of arts degree. The ceremony took place at Central Heights Mennonite Brethren Church in Abbotsford, and was followed by a graduation banquet at Columbia Place.  
—CBC release

**CBC  
Abbotsford**

#### Penner new CBC president

**Abbotsford, B.C.**—In April, Ron Penner was named the new president of Columbia Bible College. Penner brings a number of qualities to the post: graduate education in social work, ministry and higher education; over 20 years in post-secondary school administration; and a background in church and conference ministries; as well as his current knowledge of the Columbia and B.C. contexts. He has served as academic and administrative vice-president for 10 years and was interim president for the past year.  
—CMC release

Elkhart, Ind.

## Graduates called to belong to Christ

The 39 graduates of Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS) were asked to hear God's call as an ongoing call, bigger than what they might do for a paycheck.

April Yamasaki, pastor of Emmanuel Mennonite Church, Abbotsford, B.C., addressed the graduates at the May 19 commencement. Sharing the experience of her own unexpected call to congregational ministry, Yamasaki told graduates, "God's call is more than a noun, an event to look back on. God's call is a verb, a movement, a direction. What sustains me is not that God called me 14 years ago, but that God is continuing to call me even today."

Then, sharing examples of people she has encountered in her ministry, Yamasaki emphasized that "whatever your paid employment might be, your calling is wider than that. It is to belong to Jesus Christ."

The 2007 graduates of AMBS came from four countries, including eight from Canada. Two grads are from Kenya and one from Indonesia, as well as 28 from the U.S. AMBS conferred 19 master of divinity degrees, three master of arts degrees in peace studies, eight master of arts degrees in theological studies, seven master of arts in Christian formation degrees, and two certificates in theological studies.

The Canadian grads are:

- **Michael van Eerden**, a member of Hillside Christian Reformed Church, Abbotsford, B.C.: Master of arts in theological studies degree with a concentration in church history. He will move to Seattle, Wash., and pursue work there.

- **Ryan Siemens**, a member of Lethbridge Mennonite Church, Alta.: Master of arts degree. He will begin as pastor of Grace Mennonite Church, Prince Albert, Sask., in August.

- **Rachel Siemens**, a member of First Mennonite Church, Winnipeg: Master of arts degree. She will pursue a pastoral ministry assignment.

- **Alissa Bender**, a member of Steinmann Mennonite Church, Baden, Ont.: Master of divinity degree. She will be a pastoral intern at Emmanuel



Photo by Steve Echols

**Eight Canadians graduated from Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary in May. From left to right: Michael van Eerden, Ryan Siemens, Rachel Siemens, Alissa Bender, Juanita Laverty, David Sararus, Kendall Jongejan Harder and Charleen Jongejan Harder.**

Mennonite Church, Abbotsford, B.C., then pursue a pastoral ministry assignment.

- **Juanita Laverty**, a member of Pioneer Park Christian Fellowship, Kitchener, Ont.: Master of divinity degree. She will begin as pastor of Hanover Mennonite Church, Ont.

- **David Sararus**, husband of Juanita Laverty and a member of Pioneer Park Christian Fellowship, Kitchener, Ont.: Master of arts in Christian

formation degree. He will work part-time and support his family at home.

- **Kendall Jongejan Harder**, a member of Toronto United Mennonite Church: Master of arts degree. He will pursue a pastoral ministry assignment together with Charleen, his wife.

- **Charleen Jongejan Harder**, a member of Toronto United Mennonite Church: Master of arts degree.

—AMBS release by

**Mary E. Klassen**

**AMBS  
Elkhart**

Elkhart, Ind.

## International alumni honoured for service

**A**hmed Haile and Yorifumi Yaguchi have been named the 2007 recipients of the Alumni Ministry and Service Award for Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS).

Haile currently is a peace studies instructor at Daystar University in Nairobi, Kenya. Shortly after completing a master of arts in peace studies degree at AMBS in 1989, Haile was called back to his homeland of Somalia to serve in a delegation drafting a peace proposal to settle conflict between warring factions. The home where they were meeting was shelled and he was so badly wounded that one leg needed to be immediately amputated. He survived that and a life-threatening infection, returning in 1992



Yaguchi



Haile

to the U.S., where his wife and two children were living.

Yaguchi, a 1965 graduate of Goshen Biblical Seminary, was a professor of English poetry and Bible literature at Hokusei Gakuen University in Sapporo for 33 years and edited *Poetry Nippon*, a Japanese magazine of English poems. A commitment to peace and memories of World War II are at the heart of much of Yaguchi's work.

Haile will receive his award at the San José gathering of MC USA in July. Yaguchi will receive his award in November when AMBS president Nelson Kraybill travels to Japan.

—AMBS release by **Mary E. Klassen**



Conrad Grebel photos by Jennifer Konkle



At its 27th annual convocation in April, Conrad Grebel University College recognized the achievements of nearly 100 University of Waterloo undergraduates who participated in Grebel life and in its peace and conflict studies (PACS) and music programs. "Together we have had quite the journey," said Hiba Khaled, undergraduate valedictorian. "I've heard it said that a journey is best measured in friends rather than miles. I am pleased that the friendships that we have developed here at Grebel will forever reflect the incredible trip we have shared."

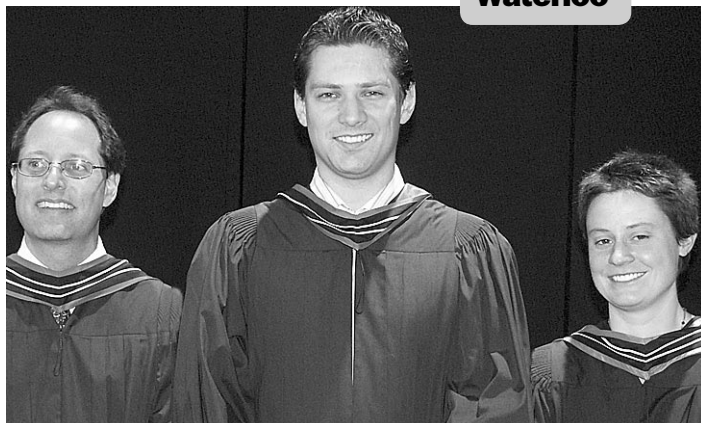
**Grebel  
Waterloo**
Harrisonburg, Va.

## Three Canadians graduate from EMU

The 2007 graduating class at Eastern Mennonite University included three Mennonite Church Eastern Canada members:

- **Denise A. Reesor**, Stouffville, Ont., received a bachelor of arts degree in biology with a minor in French, cum laude. She is a member of Community Mennonite Fellowship in Drayton, Ont.
- **Felicia D. Wideman**, Claremont, Ont., received a bachelor of science degree in social work with a minor in psychology. She is a member of Wideman Mennonite Church, Markham, Ont.
- **Susannah J. Wideman**, Claremont, Ont., received a bachelor of science degree in art. Like her sister, she is also a member of Wideman Mennonite Church.

The Canadians joined 400 other graduates who received their degrees from EMU president Loren Swartzendruber during the 89th annual commencement ceremonies.  
—EMU release

**EMU  
Harrisonburg**


At its annual convocation this spring, Conrad Grebel University College conferred degrees on four master of theological studies (MTS) graduates, bringing the total number of MTS degrees conferred over the years to 57. Pictured from left to right: William Schwarz—ministry option; Gregory Papazian—biblical-theological option; and Stacey Thurman—biblical-theological option. Not pictured is Troy Watson—biblical-theological option. Schwarz likened his experience at Grebel to the city of Joppa in the Bible, as mentioned in the story of Jonah. "Joppa was a place of decision where individuals had to make important choices; a place where one's theology was confronted, tested, perhaps shaken; and a place where people were stretched beyond their comfort zones," he said.



# From mountain bridges

**The Westgate Mennonite Collegiate tour group poses for a photograph at a rock bridge in the Wadi Rum in southern Jordan during their trip to the Middle East this spring.**

# to human barriers

## Westgate teacher, students changed by Middle East trip

**F**or two-and-a-half weeks this spring I was blessed with the opportunity to travel with 10 Westgate Mennonite Collegiate students to the Middle East.

Our journey began and ended in the friendly city of Damascus. After an olive-filled breakfast that first morning, we explored the streets of the old city that snake past shops and homes. Even the so-called Straight Street (from Acts 9) is full of bends and twists. Stops included the Chapel of Ananias—who was instrumental in the conversion of Saul to Paul—and the Umayyad mosque in the heart of Damascus. In the huge open air mosque, our students spent hours soaking up the wonderful communal environment, trying out Arabic phrases and making friends.

From Syria, we headed into the Bekaa Valley in Lebanon. Our bus had to wind around craters in the road and past empty shells of buildings, bleak reminders of last summer's violence. Our destination was the Schneller Schule, an orphanage in Khirbat Qanafar. Our students plunged into the school, once again making many friends as they made the campus their home.

After our Lebanese experience, we zipped through Syria and made our way to southern Jordan where, in the shadow of Indiana Jones, we trekked and explored the unbelievable ruins of Petra. After seeing these marvels of human construction, we spent two days breathing in the beauty of nature in the Wadi Rum, a desert area with incredible rock formations rising out of the flat desert floor. Hiking over rock bridges and along mountain passes was outdone only by our night in a

Bedouin camp. As we sat listening to the oud as the sun went down behind the rose-coloured mountains, I know I was not alone in thinking that there can't be many better places to be in the world.

After Jordan we went across the border to the holy city of Jerusalem. From the vantage point of our rooftop convent where we stayed, Jerusalem lay before us in all its splendour, with its Dome of the Rock, the Church of the Holy Sepulcher and the Mount of Olives. We were able to visit all of these sites and wonder at the nature of religion in this the central city of monotheism.

On the day before Good Friday, we paused to take a glimpse at the ugly political reality in Israel/Palestine. To do this, we headed to Bethlehem. Our first view of this ugliness was the concrete barrier that crossed our path—a barrier snaking through the countryside, gobbling up land, restricting movement and separating Israelis



**Chloe Bishop interacts with students at Schneller Schule in the Bekaa Valley of Lebanon.**

and Palestinians. As we met with Palestinian groups in Bethlehem, we heard stories and laments of the wall and of the occupation.

While we are now back home in Winnipeg, we have been changed by our journey—because we have seen a magical world filled with natural beauty, hospitality and vibrant culture, but also a world filled with oppression. We have truly seen so much.

—James Friesen

*The author has taught Christian studies and language arts at Westgate Collegiate, Winnipeg, for 12 years.*



**The boys relax with Cokes after their Turkish bath.**



Conklin, N.Y.

## New York flooding gets MDS relief

A crew of a dozen Canadians served in the last official full week of Mennonite Disaster Service (MDS) work for the season in Conklin.

Nick Tiessen of Bethany Mennonite Church, Virgil, Ont., organized the group, whose members all came from the Niagara-on-the-Lake area. Other participating churches included Niagara United Mennonite Church and Scott St. Mennonite Brethren Church.

MDS has been working in the Conklin area since November, following flooding of the Susquehanna River last July. As many as a thousand homes were reported to have been destroyed in this area of New York State, and a further 3,500 homes were damaged, including about 500 in Conklin. MDS has worked extensively on more than 20 homes, and plans on doing new builds in the future. To date, more than 600 people have volunteered with MDS in the area.

**Art Andres touches up the paint in a house in Conklin, N.Y., while on a service assignment with Mennonite Disaster Service. He was part of a 12-member team from the Niagara-on-the-Lake area of Ontario.**

Robert Baer, a retired local, said, "If it hadn't been for MDS, we'd be dead in the water."

Bethany pastor Randy Klaassen, who is on sabbatical, noted after the week was over, "What a wonderful experience. I told Nick I was ready to go again, after my muscles heal."

—MDS release by **Scott Sundberg**



Photo by Randy Klaassen

Waterloo, Ont.

## Calling people to the holy work of healing

Health care is holy work and part of the mandate of the church, declared Pam Driedger in her address to about 50 people at Parkwood Mennonite Home in Waterloo on May 28. Driedger, the executive-director of Mennonite Health Services of Manitoba, gave the first presentation of an education series sponsored by Parkwood, Fairview and Tri-County Mennonite Homes.

Today, most Canadians assume that health care is the responsibility of society at large, but Driedger argued that the church needs to call people to work in health care because it is "our" work. God needs people of faith to be in health care, to walk with people in suffering, and to bring the healing touch because "we are God's body on the Earth," she said.

Driedger used many anecdotes to

explain how health care is holy work. Because Christians believe that life is rooted in relationship and in community, church care homes can help individuals find meaning and strength in life. She told the story of an elderly woman with advanced dementia who cried when someone put a baby in her arms, even though she hadn't spoken in a long time. Even when people are very weak, they need to feel part of a community, she said, adding that those who are ill or frail need to be able to share their stories, so that they are not isolated.

Although the secular world sees illness as something "that gets in the way of life," Driedger declared that, "from a faith perspective, illness and suffering are part of the path." She told the story of a chaplain who wondered why he bothered to serve communion to people suffering from dementia and came to realize that some of them could connect to the ritual, so that the ritual itself became the memory.

"The church prays with people, even when we're not sure how it works," said Driedger, emphasizing that God is able to work in situations that seem hopeless.

In modern Canadian society, fewer people seem to be entering the health care field. "Why is it that

more people were willing to work in health care when the pay was worse and the hours were worse?" asked Driedger. The church needs to recognize the value of bringing healing and walking with people in suffering, she declared, and to continue calling people to the holy work of health care.

—**Barb Draper**



**Driedger**



Winkler, Man.

## Mennonites at forefront of Global Day of Prayer event

As the first Pentecost dawned, “they were all together in one place,” records Acts 2:1. On Pentecost this year, many hundreds of millions of Christians gathered together again—but in many different places around the world—for the sixth annual Global Day of Prayer.

Begun in 2001, Global Day of Prayer consisted of a crowd of 45,000 Christians gathered for prayer in a stadium in Cape Town, South Africa. The following year, eight stadiums were filled with Christians praying. By 2006, more than 250 million people from nearly 160 countries were recognizing Global Day of Prayer.

Shirley Hildebrand of Cornerstone Vineyard Church in Winkler is part of the national organizing committee and was involved in planning the service hosted by Winkler Mennonite Brethren Church. One aim of the Global Day of Prayer is to bring people in the community together in unity. Hildebrand spoke of her delight in seeing this experience in the planning

stages. “We came together and we were all on the same page,” she said. “Whatever we talked about—whether it was communion, worship, prayer—there was a coming together.”

“The worldwide [Global Day of Prayer] allows for a fair bit of inde-

people representing different aspects of community life...as well as the mayor.”

Alvin Thiessen, a local businessman from Winkler Bergthaler Mennonite Church, represented the marketplace. His prayer was one of repentance for “how the marketplace and the

church have not always worked together; how the marketplace has used many of our talents and resources for our own gain, rather than for the good of the church; and how in the early marketplace of Winkler we did not respect the Jewish community in terms of their being Jewish and the role they played in our community.”

The worldwide Global Day of Prayer website states that May 28 to Aug. 25 are 90 days of blessing: “As in the first Pentecost, transformed Christians transformed their communities, becoming the answer to their own prayers. [Global Day of Prayer] anticipates the forming or furthering of local alliances among pastors, congregations, mission agencies and business leaders, to bring practical, transformational blessings to their cities and communities.”

A follow-up event is reportedly being planned by the local organizing committee.

—Evelyn Rempel Petkau



**His Song, the worship team from Plum Coulee (Man.) Bergthaler Mennonite Church, led worship at the Global Day of Prayer event at Winkler Mennonite Brethren Church on Pentecost Sunday, May 27.**

pendence in planning the services, but it does require three components,” explained Hildebrand. “They require unity and that you work together with other churches. Repentance and a world prayer are the other requirements.”

The Winkler service included communion and many prayers. Curt Hildebrand of Plum Coulee Bergthaler Mennonite Church led the service. “I heard many positive things,” he said. “People were very pleased at the unity they witnessed and the quality of prayers offered. We had personal quiet time, group prayers, prayers from

### News brief

#### 60th meat canning season wraps up

The Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) mobile meat canner completed its 60th year of operation in April. The 2006-07 meat canning season yielded 562,329 cans of meat for hungry people around the world. Volunteer David Martens of Winkler, Man., joined three American counterparts, travelling to 13 U.S. states and two Canadian provinces, working with volunteers to help can some 446,000 kilograms of meat. In April, two containers of canned turkey were shipped to Burundi, to provide much-needed protein for farmers and their families in exchange for work in a reforestation project. In March, a container of canned meat was sent to North Korea to feed hospital patients recovering from tuberculosis.  
—MCC release



**Steven Janzen, second from right, was ordained as pastor of Elmira (Ont.) Mennonite Church on Feb. 18. Also pictured, from left to right, are Janzen's family (daughter Anya, wife Mary and daughter Naomi), and church council chair Gloria Martin. As part of the service, Janzen was presented with a Bible and an anointing vessel, and his wife and daughters were presented with flowers.**

Photo courtesy of Betty Dyck

Stouffville, Ont.

## Willowgrove adds 'peace' to its curriculum

**W**illowgrove, a charitable organization affiliated with the Mennonite Church, is becoming more intentional about incorporating content promoting peace and conflict resolution skills into its varied programs. The organization serves more than 12,000 children and youths each year through its day camp, primary school and other programs. Most of those served are from the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) and not from a church background.

**'My child can't stop talking about "peace." What's it all about?'**

Jessica Reesor, a student in peace and conflict studies at Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo, Ont., has been hired for a special project to develop a peace curriculum

that can be integrated throughout all of Willowgrove's programs. The organization hopes to be a leader in anti-bullying programs and in teaching children and youths how to use conflict resolution skills as an alternative to violence.

This effort builds on the success of

the peace sessions that Reesor led at Glenbrook Day Camp last summer. Each camper participated twice a week in activities—taught from a Christian perspective—that placed an equal emphasis on peace at interpersonal, local and global levels. Social justice issues, such as poverty, refugees and world hunger, were also addressed. The sessions included hands-on demonstrations, art, visuals, drama and music.

Ron de Roo, Willowgrove's executive director, reports that some parents called his office saying, "My child can't stop talking about 'peace.' What's it all about?"

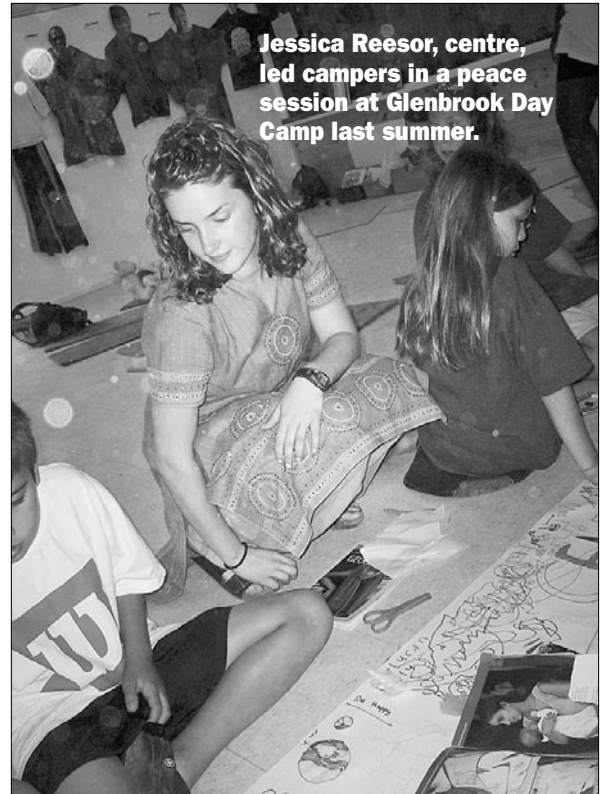
The intention is to have resource people work with students and campers to deal with issues of conflict as they arise, and model new ways of coping with conflict. Developing an organizational culture of peace also means having staff and counsellors who are committed to integrating those principles into their own relationships as well.

This initiative comes at a time when there is growing concern in the GTA about violence in schools and the

community, particularly as Toronto grieves the first shooting death of a high school student on school property last month.

Willowgrove received financial support for the peace curriculum project from Rouge Valley Mennonite Church in Markham, Ont., and the Wilfred Schlegel Memorial Fund held in trust by Mennonite Foundation of Canada.

—**Joanna Reesor-McDowell**



**Jessica Reesor, centre, led campers in a peace session at Glenbrook Day Camp last summer.**

Photo by Joanna Reesor-McDowell

### News brief

#### Hong Kong declares Bible is not indecent

Despite more than 2,000 people in Hong Kong complaining that the Bible is indecent, the local media watchdog has refused to submit the holy book to a tribunal for classification. Hong Kong's media regulator rejected calls to bring the Bible before the Obscene Articles Tribunal, to reclassify it as an indecent publication, after complaints that it contains sexual and violent content and has references to rape and incest. "The Bible is a religious text which is part of civilization. It has been passed from generation to generation," Hong Kong's Television and Licensing Authority said in a statement.

—ENI release



**Ninety enthusiastic choristers under the direction of George Wiebe and Jake Klassen performed a selection of classical and contemporary pieces at this year's German Sangerfest, held for the first time in both Winnipeg and Steinbach. The two performances, held in late April, were based on the theme of Exultate Deo or "praising God." As well as the songs of the mass choir, the programs were enhanced by appropriate Scripture readings and a men's quartet, a women's sextet, and several solo numbers by Elmer Kehler. Offerings totalled \$3,600, with the balance after expenses going to Mennonite Central Committee Canada.**

Photo courtesy of Wilfried Klassen and Victor Kliever



## People&Events

**Elkhart, Ind.**—Rebecca Slough, currently associate professor of worship and the arts at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS), will begin serving as academic dean on July 1. Slough joined the AMBS faculty in 1998,

teaching in the areas of church music, worship and the arts, in addition to serving as director of field education and director of Christian formation for

portions of her tenure at the seminary. During the spring semester of 2006, she served as acting dean while the current dean, Loren Johns, was on sabbatical. From 1989-92, Slough was managing editor of *Hymnal: A Worship Book*. She collaborated with Shirley Sprunger King in developing *Nurturing Spirit Through Song: The Life of Mary K. Oyer* (Cascadia 2007) and with AMBS colleagues Marlene Kropf and June Alliman Yoder in *Preparing Sunday Dinner: A Collaborative Approach to Worship and Preaching* (Herald Press 2006).

—AMBS release  
by **Mary E. Klassen**

**Jerusalem**—The Canadian government is establishing an “Israel Allies Caucus” meant to “mobilize support for the State of Israel and promote Judeo-Christian values amid a groundswell of Christian support for Israel around the world,” according to an article in the Feb. 4, 2007, issue of the *Jerusalem Post*. The launching of the Canadian parliamentary lobby, which is based on the formation of the Knesset’s “Christian Allies Caucus” three years ago, comes six months after a similar lobby was established in the U.S. Congress. The establishment



**Slough**

of the new pro-Israel lobby was officially announced in Ottawa earlier this year in the presence of prime minister Stephen Harper, Canadian and Israeli parliamentarians, and members of the Canadian-Israel Friendship League. The event comes at a time of burgeoning relations between Israel and the largely supportive Evangelical Christian community especially in the U.S. —Reprinted from the April 2007 *MennonLetter* from *Jerusalem*

## Transitions

### Births/Adoptions

**Dow—Katie Ann** (b. May 9, 2007), to Todd and Julie Dow, Niagara United Mennonite, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ont.

**Nighswander—Benjamin Paul Rempel** (b. May 8, 2007), to Stephen and Heidi Nighswander-Rempel, Hope Mennonite, Winnipeg, in Brisbane, Australia.

**Ratcliffe—Samuel Robert** (b. May 26, 2007), to Mike Ratcliffe and Meg Bauman, Waterloo North Mennonite, Ont.

**Reimer—Rowan James** (b. May 16, 2007), to Brian Reimer and Jennifer Dyck, Zion Mennonite, Swift Current, Sask.

**O’Ray—Grady Jake** (b. April 18, 2007), to Allan and Stephanie O’Ray, Grace Mennonite, Winkler, Man.

**Siler—Addison Maree** (b. March 11, 2007), to Charlie and Tanya Siler, Plum Coulee Bergthaler Mennonite, Man.

### Marriages

**Bartel/Pollard**—Lynn Bartel (North Star Mennonite, Drake, Sask.) and Chris Pollard, in Saskatoon, April 28, 2007.

**Enns/Friesen**—Misty Enns (Carman Mennonite, Man.) and Michael Friesen, at Rosenort (Man.) Evangelical Mennonite, June 9, 2007.

**Goerzen/Jewell**—Erin Goerzen (Tofield Mennonite, Alta.) and John Jewell, at the Goerzen family farm, June 2, 2007.

**Harding/Klassen**—Ryan Harding and Michelle Klassen, Coaldale Mennonite, Alta., May 26, 2007.

**Krahn/Neufeld**—Mark Krahn and Angela Neufeld, Grace Mennonite, Winkler, Man., May 26, 2007.

### Deaths

**Born—Anna** (nee Janzen), 94 (b. April 12, 1913; d. April 18, 2007), Black Creek United Mennonite, B.C.

**Braun—Peter**, 79 (d. May 12, 2007), Carman Mennonite, Man.

**Fehr—Cliff**, 41 (d. May 23, 2007), Winkler Bergthaler Mennonite, Man.

**Hildebrand—Katherina (Tina)**, 103 (d. May 10, 2007), Winkler Bergthaler Mennonite, Man.

**Janzen—Peter**, 82 (d. May 10, 2007), Sargent Avenue Mennonite, Winnipeg.

**Janzen—Willie**, 69 (d. May 16, 2007), Leamington United Mennonite, Ont.

**Klassen—Alfred**, 80 (b. Nov. 18, 1926; d. April 19, 2007), First Mennonite, Winnipeg.

**Klassen—Daniel Jacob**, 72 (d. May 24, 2007), Coaldale Mennonite, Alta.

**Martens—Betty**, 91 (d. June 4, 2007), Leamington United Mennonite, Ont.

**Neufeldt—Edna** (nee Funk), 89 (d. May 23, 2007), First Mennonite, Saskatoon.

**Pankratz—Jacob**, 95 (b. Sept. 19, 1911; d. May 26, 2007), North Star Mennonite, Drake, Sask.

**Penner—Bernie J.**, 58 (d. April 15, 2007), Plum Coulee Bergthaler Mennonite, Man.

**Penner—Katherine**, 81 (d. May 24, 2007), Winkler Bergthaler Mennonite, Man.

**Unrau—John**, 87 (d. May 8, 2007), First Mennonite, Winnipeg.

**Wiebe—John**, 92 (d. May 28, 2007), First Mennonite, Saskatoon.

### Baptisms

**Cassel Mennonite, Tavistock, Ont.**—Natalie Brenneman, Chris Gerber, Kathy Gerber, Nick Gerber,

May 27, 2007.

**East Zorra Mennonite, Tavistock, Ont.**—Dan Brenneman, Catrina Bowman, Sharon Laforme, Bradin Mogk, Dean Wake, Colleen Wake, Alaina Witmer, Jesse Yantzi, Josh Zehr, May 27, 2007.

**Erb Street Mennonite, Waterloo, Ont.**—Amarah Epp-Stobbe, Ted Sherck, May 27, 2007.

**Hawkesville Mennonite, Ont.**—Jeremie Raimbault, Justin Raimbault, Simon Raimbault, Guy Dickerson, Emma Bartel, May 27, 2007.

**Leamington United Mennonite, Ont.**—Alyssa Epp, Jake Neufeld, Angelica Dyck, May 27, 2007.

**Lowe Farm Bergthaler Mennonite, Man.**—Steve Peters, May 27, 2007.

**Mount Royal Mennonite, Saskatoon**—Aaron Bueckert, George Barreras, Hiscay Rivera, Jessica Dyck, Heber Martinez, Ana Molina, Ashley Wiebe, Taren Wiebe, June 3, 2007.

**Niagara United Mennonite, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ont.**—Christina Cox, Anneliese Jaeger-Friesen, Shirley Madsen, Kaitlyn Pauls, Eric van Riesen, May 27, 2007.

**North Star Mennonite, Drake, Sask.**—Lee Warkentin, May 20.

**Plum Coulee Bergthaler Mennonite, Man.**—Heather Banman, Stacy Wiebe, Stacy Giesbrecht, Charla Bergen, Dwain Bergen, Josh Kehler, Collyn Reimer, Travis Giesbrecht, May 27, 2007.

**Zion Mennonite, Swift Current, Sask.**—Emily Dueck, Peter Dueck, Zach Dueck, Derek Thiessen, Theo Wiebe, May 27, 2007.

**Zoar Mennonite, Langham, Sask.**—Laura Epp, Jesse Wiebe, June 3, 2007.

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





Photo courtesy of Murray Lumley

Three Canadians—Murray Lumley and Kirsten Romaine Jones of Toronto and Jane MacKay Wright of Providence Bay, Ont.—were part of a Christian Peacemaker Teams delegation that took part in a “Stop Depleted Uranium” conference at East Tennessee State University last month. According to presenters, U.S. forces have been using weapons containing radioactive depleted uranium particles in the war on terror in Afghanistan and Iraq, putting both indigenous citizens and American military personnel at the risk of birth defects and inherited genetic abnormalities. Says Lumley of such weapons, they are “the gift of death that keeps on giving.”

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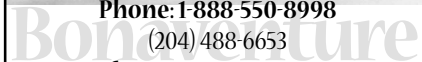
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## Mennonite Church Canada

### Prayer and praise

Please pray, or give thanks, for:

- International Mennonite Pastors Coming Together (IMPACT), held from May 25 to June 7 in Alberta, which was a roaring success. Four pastors from Brazil and South Korea were hosted by four Alberta pastors and their congregations. Together they shared stories of challenges and promise in the global church. The event focused on the Holy Spirit's moving in the church. Participants shared global perspectives of the Spirit's work in the church. The pastors grew in their understanding of what it means to be a church around the world.

- Five young adults who will be leaving this summer to serve for one-year terms with the Connexus English language school, a ministry of the Korea Anabaptist Center in South Korea. Mark Wiehler, Vanessa Claassen, Heather Peters, Joel Kroeker and Marvin Marcial are all Canadian Mennonite University graduates serving with Mennonite Church Canada Witness.

- The Legesse family, who are Mennonite Church Canada Witness workers preparing to go to Ethiopia. Dianne, Fanosie and their two children, Zach and Lydia, will travel to Ethiopia in early August. They will serve as a bridge between the Mennonite Church in Ethiopia and Canada while Fanosie teaches at Meserete Kristos College. Please pray for the Legesse family as they prepare for departure, for their safe travel, and for their new life and ministry in Ethiopia.

- An encouraging number of seminarians who graduated this past spring and are now finding placements with

Mennonite congregations.

- The current planning of a Pastor Trends Survey that is to be sent out this fall for the purpose of gaining insight into pastoral wellness and retention in MC Canada congregations. The survey will help to shape and inform practices around forming and placing pastors.

—Hinke Loewen-Rudgers

## Mennonite Church Eastern Canada

### Young adult starts prayer network

MC Eastern Canada's Woolwich Grey Cluster of congregations has started a young adult prayer network.

Crystal Clement, a member of Zion Mennonite Fellowship, had a vision to see young adults grow together through prayer. She was at the MC Eastern Canada annual church gathering in April when executive minister David Martin challenged everyone to pray for three minutes, three times a week, for their own congregation and its leaders, the community of congregations in MC Eastern Canada, and for the staff and ministry councils. She decided to take the challenge further by encouraging young adults to start praying for each other. God's timing was perfect, as she could introduce the idea while leading devotions at the cluster young adult sports night the following evening.

The prayer network has been going on since the end of April, and there have been positive effects in people's lives. Friendships have begun to grow, and people have commented that it was a great way to get to know what is going on at other churches.

Each person is given a new prayer partner every two weeks. During the two weeks, the partners have a chance to learn about each other and

ask for prayers for themselves, their churches and their communities.

Pastor Stefan Cherry of Floradale Mennonite, an organizer of the young adult sports nights that spawned the prayer group, notes, "I find it very helpful to be prayed for and to be praying for other young adults on a regular basis."

Clement would love to see others get involved in this vision. Interested people can join this group or start their own network within their cluster or congregation. Feel free to contact her at [crystalclement@sympatico.ca](mailto:crystalclement@sympatico.ca).

## Mennonite Church Manitoba

### Matheson Island hosts Indiana crew

On June 4, Darren and Kim Ringer brought their three children and four young people to Matheson Island to re-acquaint themselves and offer their support. The group came from First Mennonite Church in Berne, Ind., the home congregation of Neill and Edith von Gunten, co-directors of the MC Canada Witness Native Ministry.

The Ringers were introduced to the community in 2003 and '04, when they worked with the camp program. This time, they came prepared to paint, repair and do general maintenance for 10 days.

"We have already painted and done some renovation in the mission house," said Kim. "Now we are fixing the roof and doing odd jobs."

One crew member, Andrew Lehman, plans to stay for the entire summer. As a young person, he gave up full-time construction work in Berne to spend his summer at Matheson Island. Although he anticipates it being hard seeing his fellow crew members

leave, he is looking forward to putting his skills to use wherever he can. "I want to get to know the people and to show God's love," he said.

## Mennonite Church Saskatchewan

### Camping season off to good start

All three MC Saskatchewan camps are up and running for the summer season.

Camp Elim, located 30 minutes south of Swift Current, sits on the shores of a large lake, where its camping program emphasizes water sports and a nature centre. Andrew Richert will be co-directing the program with Theo Wiebe this summer. Richert recently graduated from Canadian Mennonite University with a degree in camping ministries.

"I see this as more than just a summer job," said Richert, who has worked as a counselor at Elim in the past.

The Youth Farm Bible Camp close to Rosthern has already received 320 camping applications for the summer.

"We're expecting over 400," said camp director Mark Wurtz. The camp, which is able to run five weeks of programming for special need adults on top of regular programming for the many children who attend, recently bought a 15-passenger van to ferry campers around to different activities.

Camp Shekinah, located close to Waldheim, is also seeing a change in staff for the new season. Matt and Laura Pauls are the new camp directors. A new emphasis on the environment will be shaping the camp theme this year: "God is calling."

"It's time to start addressing the issues," said Laura.

Although the camp has one low-flush toilet, work is being done in the area of composting toilets. Power through



solar and wind sources will hopefully come at a later date, explained Laura, who noted the camp gets a lot of wind in the spring.

A new emphasis will also be added to bring campers into the kitchen. "It's about getting kids aware of where food comes from," she said.

#### Mennonite Church Alberta

### 'One finger alone cannot milk a cow'

The Bassa people of Liberia have a proverb that says, "One cannot eat a delicious meal for another." With these words of encouragement, 80 people lined up behind tables at Holyrood Mennonite Church in Edmonton laden with mouth-watering food at "A Taste of Africa" fundraising supper promoting literacy in Burkina Faso.

The May 12 event, spon-

sored by Mennonite Church Canada, featured authentic African food and music by members of Holyrood's African community, many of whom come from Liberia. The guest speakers were Lillian Nicolson, a Witness worker in Burkina Faso for six years, and her new husband, Norm, who will join her when they return in January.

Several African proverbs—including "An egg should not wrestle with a rock," and "When you see a turtle on top of a fence post, you know he had some help"—were read and listeners were encouraged to see if they could deduce their meaning.

After the meal Lillian led the participants in a crash course on linguistics. Upon their return, her new challenge will be to translate the Bible into Siemou.

The event raised about \$3,000 for the team of Witness workers in Burkina Faso. It

was a reminder that churches and missionaries need each other. This was well summed up in the words of a proverb of the Fulani people of Burkina Faso: "One finger alone cannot milk a cow."

—Werner De Jong

#### Mennonite Church British Columbia

### New Mennonite women's group forms

Ten women gathered at the Village Tea and Coffee House restaurant in Fort Langley on June 2 to launch a new initiative—a B.C. Mennonite women's group. They plan to continue to "gather to share of themselves in a community of eager listeners." This group was formed in March and has its roots in former members of the Mennonite Central Committee Women's Concerns Committee, which no longer

exists. Tentative plans are for the group to meet on the first Saturday of every other month.

### Olivet hosting Bible prophecy conference

Olivet Church of Abbotsford will host a Bible prophecy conference on July 6 to 8 with David Hocking of Tustin, Calif., as the keynote speaker. Hocking has a radio ministry called "Hope for Today." He will be speaking on the authority of Scripture and Christianity's Jewish roots, current issues of leadership, authority, eldership, and homosexuality. All are welcome.

*Unless otherwise credited, the articles in TheChurches pages were written by: 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.*

ROBERT J. SUDERMAN



From our leaders

**O**n May 27, we celebrated Pentecost, the Christian festival of the Holy Spirit.

In many congregations, appropriately, Pentecost is accompanied by baptisms, acceptance into church membership and sharing of the Lord's Supper. Pentecost is a celebration of peoplehood. It is the celebration of a community that tries to be accountable to God's Spirit that is among us.

Three images of the story of Pentecost, echoes of the experiences of God's people in the Old Testament, are instructive and important for us:

- **The strong wind** reminds us of the wind that separated the sea during the time of the Exodus. The wind—or Spirit—of God creates a people of the wind—or Spirit. In both cases this is a strong wind of liberation, a wind that promises that the bonds that are oppressing us will not pronounce the last words. Wherever the Spirit of God is present, there freedom in God must be lived. This is encouraging and hopeful.

- **The fire of God**—in the pillar of fire in the Old Testament and in the tongues of flame described in the Book of Acts—is the ongoing presence of the Holy Spirit in the life of God's people. We need not be afraid that God is somehow absent. We need not doubt. We need

## Celebrating peoplehood

**In both the Old and New Testaments, the primary work of God's Spirit is generating and re-generating peoplehood.**

only discern how God is present and then align our spirit and our activity with this fire that is within and among us. This is good news.

- **The miracle of tongues and of hearing** reminds us of the experience at the tower of Babel.

When we can no longer hear each other, as they couldn't at Babel, then the peoplehood of God disintegrates.

When we can hear each other, as they could at Pentecost, then peoplehood can flourish. The presence of God's Spirit allows us to listen and to hear each other. Such hearing in the Spirit regenerates the community to its purpose in God.

In both the Old and New Testaments, the primary work of God's Spirit is generating and re-generating peoplehood. All the many other gifts of the Spirit of God are subject to, and are designed to serve, this foundational work. When God's Spirit is present among us, then we can liberate each other to be faithful, we can encourage each other not to be afraid, and we can trust each other to speak, to listen and to hear. These are the amazing fruits of God's Spirit among us. Let us celebrate and be grateful to God.

*Robert J. Suderman is the general secretary of Mennonite Church Canada.*

## Calendar

### British Columbia

**July 4:** Canadian Women in Mission tea and annual meeting, at Emmanuel Mennonite Church, Abbotsford; 1:15 p.m.

**July 7:** Camp Squeah alumni gathering. Register at squeah.com or by calling 1-800-380-2267.

**July 13-15:** First Mennonite Church, Kelowna, 60th anniversary celebrations. For more information, call Ann Wiebe at 250-763-4638 or e-mail hawiebe@shaw.ca.

**July 14-21:** "Connecting People and Place," an MCC camping tour on Vancouver Island. For more information, contact Darryl Klassen at ab-neighbours@mccbc.com or Jon Nofziger at peace@mccbc.com.

### Alberta

**July 8:** Cowgirl Stampede Roundup—Doris Daley and friends in concert at Trinity Mennonite, Calgary; 4 p.m.

**Sept. 15-16:** Holyrood Mennonite Church 50th anniversary celebration. Details to follow.

### Saskatchewan

**July 29:** Shekinah Retreat Centre Adventure Challenge.

**Sept. 7-9:** SMYO junior high retreat at Shekinah Retreat Centre.

**Sept. 25:** Youth Farm Bible Camp annual fall supper, Rosthern.

**Oct. 12-13:** Saskatchewan Women in Mission fall retreat at Shekinah Retreat Centre.

**Oct. 13:** Youth Farm Bible Camp ride-a-thon, Rosthern.

**Oct. 26-28:** Quilting and scrapbooking retreat at Shekinah Retreat Centre.

**Oct. 27:** MC Saskatchewan Equipping Day.

### Manitoba

**July 3-10:** International Rural Church Association/Canadian Rural Church Network "How can we find hope in the rural landscape" conference, in Brandon.

**Aug. 18-19:** Fort Garry Mennonite Fellowship 40th anniversary celebration. For more details, contact Anne Peters at abann@shaw.ca.

**Aug. 25-26:** Altona Bergthaler Mennonite Church 125th anniversary celebrations.

**Aug. 26:** Camp Moose Lake 50th anniversary celebrations.

**Sept. 8:** Morris MCC Relief Sale, Stampede Grounds. Huge farmers market.

**Sept. 21-22:** Brandon MCC Relief Sale.

**Sept. 28-30:** Camp Moose Lake work days.

**Oct. 12-13:** Women in Mission retreat at Camp Assiniboia.

**Oct. 26-28:** Scrapbooking retreat at Camp Moose Lake.

**Oct. 27:** Work day and camps celebration banquet at Camp Koinonia.

**Nov. 2-4:** Quilting retreats at Camp Koinonia and Camp Moose Lake.

**Nov. 3,4:** Camps celebration banquets at Winkler Bergthaler Mennonite Church (3); Douglas Mennonite Church, Winnipeg (4).

**Nov. 9-11:** Quilting retreat at Camp Moose Lake.

**Nov. 9-11:** Scrapbooking retreat at Camp Koinonia.

**Nov. 10-11:** Home Street Mennonite Church, Winnipeg, 50th anniversary homecoming and celebration.

**Nov. 25:** Faith and Life Advent concert at Bethel Mennonite Church.

**Feb. 22-23:** MC Manitoba annual delegate sessions at Steinbach Mennonite Church.

**June 11-14:** 16th annual Believers Church Conference at CMU. Theme: "Congregationalism, denominationalism and the body of Christ."

### Ontario

**June 29-July 1:** Hidden Acres Camp family camping weekend. Sunday resource person: David Driedger. For more information or to book a spot, e-mail info@hiddenacres.ca.

**June 30:** Aylmer Auction for Relief at the curling club.

**June 30:** Joseph and Barbara Schneider reunion and 200th anniversary at First Mennonite Church, Kitchener, and the Schneider Haus Museum. Visit timetocome-home.ca or call 519-893-3075 for more information.

**Nov. 1-4:** MEDA's annual "Business as a calling" convention: "Trust in a world of change," in Toronto. For more information, visit businessasacalling.org or call toll-free 1-800-665-7026.

**Nov. 10:** In celebration of 51 years of a Mennonite presence in Quebec, La Societe Mennonite Historique du Quebec and Mennonite Central Committee Quebec are holding an evening of pioneer stories and a Mennonite-Quebecois dinner to be hosted at La Maison de l'Amitie.

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**EMPLOYMENT / MINISTRY OPPORTUNITY**

Mennonite Church Alberta has identified a need for, and wishes to sponsor, a Young Adults Christian Community in Calgary, Alta that will address the spiritual and relationship needs of:

- 18 to 30-year-olds who have had some exposure to a church in the past but who no longer are active in an organized Christian community.
- Young people who have recently moved to Calgary to either further their education or to take on employment in the rapidly growing city.

**Required is a leader** who will form a Calgary Young Adult Christian Community by:

- Identifying and contacting the young adults that meet the above criteria.
- Designing and establishing programs together with these young adults that will help in developing their Christian values and lifestyles.
- Teaching the young adults to be active Christ-followers.
- Developing the talents and abilities of these people to further the work of Christ's kingdom.

In essence, develop and grow an organization that is relevant specifically to young adults.

Mennonite Church Alberta has formed an Advisory Group that will provide:

- Funding.
- A meeting space.
- A senior pastor to assist and mentor the leader as requested.
- Other resources as required.

Those interested in taking on such a leadership position are invited to send a resume along with their vision(s) of the nature of such an endeavor and a brief start-up plan to e-mail address walterwiebe@cyacc.com. Please reference "CYACC Position" in the Subject heading of your e-mail.

Anyone who knows of an individual who may suit this position and should be contacted by the Advisory Group is also encouraged to make contact at the same e-mail address, using the reference "I know who would be good at this" in the subject heading.

Others who wish to be kept abreast of the formation and activities of this Young Adults Christian Community in Calgary, can do so by visiting cyacc.com.

United Mennonite Church of Black Creek, B.C., is seeking a **pastor** to provide leadership for a growing rural church.

Respond to Glenn Beaton, Search Committee Chair  
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Waterloo, Ont.

## Protest to Mennonite-Muslim dialogue covered widely

Coverage of last month's dialogue between North American Mennonite and Iranian Muslim academics was widespread, especially in Canada (where the gathering took place at Conrad Grebel University College). Conrad Grebel co-sponsored the event with Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Ontario.

Even before the event took place, CBC Radio aired a debate between MCC Ontario executive director Arli Klassen and Payam Akhavan, a professor of international law at Montreal's McGill University. Akhavan accused the Mennonites of being "naïve" in their meeting with representatives from the Imam Khomeini Education and Research Institute in Qom, Iran, and that they were, in fact, "being used" by their Islamic visitors.

In the May 21 *Macleans*, columnist Jonathan Gatehouse quoted Shahrzad Mojab, director of the Women and Gender Studies Institute at the University of Toronto, who charged the visiting Iranian clerics with being "affiliated with the hardline ruling groups in Iran." Gatehouse wrote that "members of the expatriate [Iranian] community [in Canada] liken the institute's graduates to Nazi Germany's Hitler Youth."

Gatehouse concluded his column with a quote from

MCC Ontario program director Rick Cober Bauman. Inter-religious dialogue, said Cober Bauman, "comes very much out of Mennonite Christian beliefs. We're people who believe that loving the 'enemy' is a very real command. Peace is built by people talking." To which Gatehouse added, "So, it seems, is conflict."

The front page of the May 29 *Record*, the local Kitchener-Waterloo daily, led with the headline, "Protest



Protest photos by Jennifer Konkle

**Once inside the Conrad Grebel University College Great Hall, protesters displayed posters condemning the Mennonite-Muslim dialogue.**

shuts down clerics' visit." According to *Record* reporter Mirko Petricevic, about 50 protesters "shouted down" the initial meeting on May 28 in the Conrad Grebel Great Hall, claiming that the Iranian clerics were "murderers" and "terrorists."

Against the advice of the police, which included a tactical squad on the Conrad Grebel library roof, the Mennonite organizers from Conrad Grebel and MCC decided to let the protesters into the meeting and extend the question and answer period so

they could ask their pointed questions of those Islamic clerics they believe have the ear of controversial Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.

The protesters—some of whom had reportedly been driven from Iran amid the brutality of the 1979 Islamic Revolution that saw the ouster of Shah Reza Pahlavi and the rise to power of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini and his regime of conservative Shiite clerics—displayed graphic pictures

they purported to be of Iranian victims of hangings, floggings and firing squads. Their shouts of "Down with the Islamic Republic," that began with the first of the Iranian speakers, eventually resulted in the meeting being cancelled.

Conrad Grebel academic dean Jim Pankratz said he believed that the protesters had agreed to their terms of engagement, but as the shouting increased and protesters began to push to the front of the Great Hall, he admitted to feeling betrayed.

When the protesters would not be quiet, police whisked the visiting Iranian clerics from the building through a fire exit, to the cheers of those doing the protesting. Other police officers cleared the building and parking lot without any violent incidents.

The website *canadiancristianity.com* reported that "opposition to the conference had coalesced around a letter to conference organizers by a group of academics mainly based at York University in Toronto and around an Iranian newspaper in Toronto."

In an interview with the Christian

**'We're people who believe that loving the "enemy" is a very real command. Peace is built by people talking.'**

website, Klassen said of the protesters, “They felt that if we knew about the human rights abuses in Iran, then we would automatically cancel the conference. They were shocked to discover that we know about the abuses, and we were intending to carry on with the dialogue.”

Klassen went on to say that she was disappointed that “people who came to Canada for freedom didn’t allow it here.” She noted, however, that she didn’t want to be judgmental because the protesters had “stories of suffering in Iran, powerful stories that shouldn’t be silenced.”

But in a letter to the editor of *The Record*, one protester suggested that the conference did just that—silence them. Mahdi Tourage, a visiting professor of Islam at Colgate University, Hamilton, N.Y., claimed that the protesters were refused the opportunity to ask questions of the presenters, adding, “As an academic teaching Islam, I requested a few months ago to be allowed to present a contesting paper, and that was also denied.”

Klassen and Pankratz disputed Tourage’s claims in a letter of their own to *The Record* on June 8. And, according to them, “Tourage and others insisted this conference should not happen, circulated inaccurate information about who would be participating and tried to prevent the Iranian scholars from receiving visas.”

—**Ross W. Muir and Dave Rogalsky**, with files from *Mennonite Weekly Review*



Dialogue photos by Dave Rogalsky

**Once the protest ended, peaceful dialogue began. Conrad Grebel University College professor James Reimer, left, makes a point about “spiritual poverty” to Mohammad Ali Shomali of the Imam Khomeini Education and Research Institute, Qom, Iran, during the Mennonite Christian and Shi’ah Muslim Dialogue III.**

## Building bridges of understanding

**S**eventeen years after Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) workers helped the residents of northern Iran rebuild their infrastructure after a devastating earthquake killed 30,000 people in the region, Mennonites are still building in this Middle Eastern country—but now they are building bridges of understanding.

Over the years, the Imam Khomeini Education and Research Institute in Qom has sent students to the Toronto Mennonite Theological Centre for study, and there have been three scholarly dialogues between Muslim clerics and Mennonite academics, the latest of which took place at Conrad Grebel University College in Waterloo last month.

The most recent dialogue focused on Christian and Muslim spirituality. After an angry protest closed a public meeting on May 28 (see “Protest to Mennonite-Muslim dialogue widely

covered,” previous page), the academic dialogues—scholar to scholar, with a limited number of Christian and Muslim observers—went off without a hitch.

Mennonite scholar Lydia Harder noted that the trust levels built up over the first two dialogues—on the challenge of modernity, and revelation and authority—seemed to have allowed the Christians and Muslims the freedom to debate and even disagree on issues this time.

Shi’ah and Mennonite scholars presented papers on seven aspects of spirituality. Papers ranged from “The Trinitarian basis of [Christian] spirituality” and “The spiritual development of Imam Khomeini and the Islamic Revolution.”

These two papers raised much discussion among both scholars and observers. Over and over again, the Muslim scholars challenged the Christian insistence that God is both one and three. And Christians challenged the Shi’ah belief that Jesus and Mohammad (whom Muslims view as prophets) and the Twelve Imams (historical spiritual leaders) are all infallible in their teaching and can intercede for humans with God.

This belief in the infallible nature of

**Continued on page 34**



**In an effort to quell any possible violent confrontation between Iranian expatriate protesters and those attending the opening night of a Mennonite-Muslim dialogue at Conrad Grebel University College, police tactical units were on site, including officers stationed on the library roof.**



**Bridges** From page 33

the historical imams led to the Islamic Revolution in 1979 and the establishment of a blended democratic/theocratic republic. The supreme leader in an Islamic state, according to Shi'ah teachings, must be chosen by God based on the leader's piety, simplicity, justice and humility. A leader can be removed by God if any of these attributes is compromised. A council of Islamic scholars both identifies the one chosen by God and declares when God's call is withdrawn.

It was in the discussion of "spiritual poverty" that the most convergence of ideas took place. Both Mohammad Ali Shomali and independent American scholar Thomas Finger noted the need for Christians to sense their complete dependence on God and then to submit themselves completely to God's will and care.

The common theme of submission can be summed up in the terms *islam* (to submit), and *gelassenheit* (to place oneself in God's care and will). For both Mennonites—who draw on medieval Catholic spirituality—and Shi'ah Muslims, humility, piety, simplicity

and radical equality are markers of people who are practising spiritual poverty.

Both agreed that, while spiritual poverty does not equal economic poverty, economic wealth is a great temptation to leave God and focus on the material world. A strong focus on mysticism in Islam and a growing renewal of the same in Christianity is leading both religions to a similar focus in this area.

As the dialogue ended, ideas for future discussions flew around both scholars and participants, with such topics as the Trinity, and spirituality and politics being high on the agenda.

—**Dave Rogalsky**



**Rick Fast of Mennonite Central Committee Canada, left, enjoys a moment on the patio of Conrad Grebel University College during the Mennonite Christian and Shi'ah Muslim Dialogue III last month with participants Maria Meyer and Afsaneh Beigi, and Laurie Pierce, a former exchange student in Qom, Iran.**

## Reflecting on conflict and peace

**M**ennonite Central Committee Ontario executive director Arli Klassen reflects on last month's Mennonite-Muslim dialogue and the resulting protest by a small group of Iranian-Canadians:

"There are multiple perspectives on all conflicts, and conflicts move in multiple directions.

"We did not expect this level of resistance from Iranian-Canadians, although we were aware of tensions with—and among—expatriate Iranians.

"We continue in our belief that dialogue is always better than ignoring or stifling conflict, and so we worked at

engaging the protesters in conversation, before, during and after the event itself. Our challenge was that, by providing a listening ear to the protesters, our Iranian clerical guests felt unsafe; and yet by dialoguing with our Iranian clerical guests, the Iranian-Canadians felt that their concerns were not being heard.

"As always, in any complex conflict, peacemakers need to find ways to make space for conversation with multiple parties, and yet keep all those lines of conversation open.

"Our challenge into the future will be to find ways to continue the conversation with multiple dialogue parties about Iran, and to see if we can get to a place where we can help the different groups find ways to hear each other."

—**Arli Klassen**



**Aboulhassan Haghani Khaveh of the Imam Khomeini Education and Research Institute, Qom, Iran, pours a cup of blessing for Ed Martin, director of Mennonite Central Committee's Central and South Asia programs, during a ceremony recognizing Martin for his many years of guiding the Mennonite-Muslim exchange and dialogue.**



Winnipeg

# Church should lead on aboriginal justice issues

**P**hil Fontaine, Chief of the Assembly of First Nations in Canada, invited all Canadians and corporations to a day of peaceful action on June 29, as a response to years of government inaction.

The Assembly continues to insist that Canada's leaders respond to various crises in First Nations communities. Many do not have infrastructure for safe drinking water, sewage disposal, adequate housing, employment and education. Poverty is rampant. Patience among First Nations people continues to deteriorate.

News reports about aboriginal protesters resorting to summer rail—and possibly road—blockades, and other actions in support of justice for their communities across Canada, are generating fears of interruptions to services most Canadians take for granted. Such protests, if they were to take place, could delay and inconvenience Mennonites who choose to drive to this summer's Mennonite Church Canada assembly in Abbotsford, B.C.

Fontaine told CTV's *Canada AM* on May 16, "I still believe diplomacy is the most effective way of bringing about change and that is how we will continue to press our case.... But I also should point out I understand the deep frustration felt by many of our leaders and I share their concerns, I share their frustration, and I want to assure them we will continue to work with them, we will continue to work together to build the kind of future our people, especially our young people, deserve."

Many non-aboriginals are not aware of just how deep the justice issues cut, says Neill von Gunten, Mennonite Church Canada Witness Native Ministry co-director. "Most Canadians rely on government and news media to learn what is going on around us," he says. "Too often these sources confirm our stereotypes. Nor do we hear the full story on the news. Stories are powerful ways of learning to know

**Many members of MC Canada congregations live near aboriginal communities. Some even worship on—or otherwise occupy—original treaty lands.**



Map courtesy of the Six Nations of the Grand River

**The Grand River Territory, granted to the Six Nations of the Grand River by the Haldimand Proclamation in October 1784, is marked by the heavy line. The small shaded area (lower middle) representing about 5 percent of the total area, is what the Six Nations people occupy today.**

each other and bring a human face to a situation."

Many members of MC Canada congregations live near aboriginal communities. Some even worship on—or otherwise occupy—original treaty lands. There are 23 MC Eastern Canada congregations that worship within the disputed Grand River Territory in southwestern Ontario (*see*

*map above*), and there are even more congregations within a 30-mile radius of that territory.

"What does it mean to be a Mennonite-Anabaptist Peace Church in the midst of conflict in our own country and communities?" von Gunten wonders. "Just talking about the need for peace has not worked. We

need to become pro-active and take advantage of the opportunities around us for meeting and getting to know one another.

Our Mennonite peace stance not only defines who we are within the larger Christian world, but it also prompts us to take Jesus' message seriously and be peacemakers within our own communities and beyond."

Von Gunten cites the Stoney Knoll experience as an example of what can help. Last August near Laird, Sask., local residents gathered with the Young Chippewyan band in an act of reconciliation and acknowledgement of tensions that began over a century ago (see "Mennonites, Lutherans pledge solidarity with First Nation in land claim dispute," Oct. 30, 2006, page 9).

He firmly believes that individuals and the church can make a difference. "We are God's representatives—hands, feet and spokespersons—to the world around us," he says.

—MC Canada release by **Dan Dyck**

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Akron, Pa.

## Governance issues, ethnic diversity top MCC annual meeting

Orie O. Miller, the longtime Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) leader of decades past, might not have known where to start at the June 8-9 binational annual meeting.

Among the issues discussed by the current board were devising a new framework for governance, ensuring greater ethnic and racial diversity in its leadership, and an increase in spending on its international programs.

Although MCC has been looking for new ways to redesign its leadership structure and philosophy for some time, the sudden departure last October of executive director Robb Davis forced the organization to study even more closely how it conducts its work.

MCC leaders agreed that the relief agency's theological grounding and its role as a ministry of the Anabaptist churches must remain central.

"How's the ecclesiology of MCC different from the Kiwanis Club?" asked MCC Canada executive director Don Peters, echoing a concern that MCC has lost some of its church-based identity in recent years.

Acting binational interim director Bert C. Lobe, of St. Jacobs, Ont., agreed this is a concern. "What is the theology of this time for MCC? Lobe asked. "We ask this question first before we ask what the vision is for governance."

Lobe presented short- and long-term frameworks, affirmed June 9 by the board, for re-envisioning MCC's governance structure. This plan, the early stages of which already have been carried out, includes meetings with denominational and conference leaders about their expectations for MCC, ensuring that all provinces and regions have representation on the agency's executive board, and holding a series of summits to clarify MCC's immediate and long-term priorities.

Other priorities would be to examine how MCC relates to such groups as Mennonite World Conference and the

Brethren in Christ Church, as well as how the agency perceives its role on the global stage.

At present, MCC is made up of 12 separate provincial or regional organizations, all working under the umbrella of the binational organization. This structure, with its centralized leadership in the binational organization in Akron, led some board members and other meeting delegates to express concern.

Asrat Gebre cautioned that MCC not become more of a bureaucracy by creating new or unfamiliar structures during this process. "We are a bureaucracy, and bureaucratic interests sometimes get in the way of effective delivery," he said.



**Mennonite Central Committee interim executive director Bert C. Lobe, left, shares the podium with U.S. executive director Rolando Santiago during the organization's binational board meeting in Akron, Pa., earlier this month.**

"We are mindful about bureaucracy and have spent many hours talking about that," responded MCC U.S. executive director Rolando Santiago. "We need to be open for surprises, but at the same time we need to prepare our workers for what MCC is, for what our values are."

"We are a bureaucracy, but with a difference, with a quality of 'more-ness,'" Lobe commented. "We need to articulate that better. What we're looking for is...to learn some lessons from that past. After we get the vision, we will know how to structure

ourselves."

Lobe said the search continues for a successor to Davis. He hopes the search will help expedite MCC's self-examination of its own future. A search committee has chosen a field of about six candidates and will begin interviews in August. In the meantime, other candidates could also be considered, he said.

Board treasurer Vidya Narimalla is excited about MCC's governance dialogue, but asked why the perception exists that non-Anabaptists cannot survive in MCC's power structure. "There's definitely a perception that outsiders don't make it inside the system, can't make it inside the system," he said.

Gebre, an African American, also expressed concern that more people of colour are not represented in MCC's leadership. "It's a white, male-dominated organization," Gebre charged, asking, "So how do you change that?"

Lobe said he was convinced that people of non-Mennonite background could succeed at MCC, as long as they share the agency's "high view of the church.... That's an important question, because it's an identity question," he said. "There is an honest attempt to be more inclusive."

In other business:

- The board approved a 2007-08 budget projecting \$42.5 million in income against \$46.7 million in expenses, with the deficit being made up from reserves accrued for relief work after the December 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami.
  - It was reported that MCC had 527 workers placed in more than 50 countries last year, with a \$26.4 million core budget, about 17 percent more than the year before.
  - Ten Thousand Villages announced \$23.5 million in sales during the last fiscal year, an increase of 17 percent from the previous year.
- Robert Rhodes**, for Meetinghouse, an association of Mennonite and Brethren in Christ publications



Winnipeg

## 'Flood of the century' commemorated 10 years later

**O**n April 25—a decade after the evacuation of communities along the Red River Valley in southern Manitoba—Mennonite Disaster Service (MDS) and other disaster response organizations commemorated the “flood of the century.” About 100 people gathered at Howden Community Centre, a hall rebuilt by volunteers and with donations following the 1997 flood.

Canadian Red Cross, the Salvation Army, St. John Ambulance and MDS organized the event, which included displays and sharing by municipal and provincial officials, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), a volunteer representative, and a local resident representing home-owners who were flooded and received assistance.

At the flood's peak in Canada on May 4, 1997, the Red River covered more than 2,560 square kilometres. Nicknamed the “Red Sea,” this temporary lake forced about 28,000 Manitobans to abandon their homes and caused \$450 million in damage. The flood caused much heartache and grief for many Manitobans; but while many animals perished, not one human life was lost!

The flood recovery effort launched

Gord Friesen's volunteer career after he retired from Boeing in 1997. Representing MDS, he spoke on behalf of volunteers from across Canada who assisted with the flood recovery. Volunteers working with the NGOs alone numbered more than 12,000, contributing more than 250,000 hours of relief work.

Over the next three years, 2,675 MDS volunteers helped clean up 802 houses and yards; as well, 99 homes were repaired and 14 newly built houses were completed. Along with the volunteer help, this was made possible by \$1.8 million donated to MDS by a wide range of supporters, and by partnerships developed with other NGOs and government agencies.

Those who received assistance were most appreciative. Lea Dorge, 75, of Ste. Agathe, was adjusting to her husband's debilitating stroke when the river flooded their house in 1997.



Photo by Bruce Hildebrand

**Lea and Leon Dorge lived on the bank of the Red River for 50 years when the “flood of the century” forced them to evacuate in 1997. Mennonite Disaster Service used their resettlement payment and built the Dorges a wheelchair-accessible home, to accommodate Leon's wheelchair (made necessary by a stroke he suffered shortly before the flood). Lea says, “I love my house more and more every day.”**

“They took a burden and made my life possible,” she said. MDS used the resettlement money they received and built a custom home to accommodate her husband's wheelchair. “They did miracles with that [resettlement] money,” she said.

—MDS release by **Bruce Hildebrand**



MDS photo by Anđi Dubé

**Mennonite Disaster Service (MDS) volunteers from across Kansas and as far away as Valparaiso, Ind., are continuing to participate with recovery efforts in Greensburg, Kan., following the May 4 tornado that completely destroyed 95 percent of the town's infrastructure. “Clean up is going well,” says Jerry Klassen of British Columbia, an MDS field consultant who served as the organization's Gulf States coordinator following hurricanes Katrina and Rita in 2005. “A huge part of the city has already been hauled away. Anything above ground is pretty much cleared. We're working on removing foundations now. Some discussions are already happening about beginning the rebuilding process.” Klassen estimates that so far more than 1,000 MDS volunteers have participated in recovery efforts in Greensburg.**



Langley, B.C.

## Witnessing for peace along Canada-U.S. border

Concerned about the increasing militarization of American border watchers, 18 members of Ploughshares Fraser Valley—including a number of Mennonites—recently gathered at five sites along the Canada-U.S. border to call attention to the presence of self-appointed “vigilantes” called Minutemen.

Since 2005, the Minuteman Civil Defense Corps has actively advocated such measures as building high fences along the borders of the United States. Sporting signs like “Stop the Invasion,” and claiming to protect the U.S. from illegal aliens, terrorists and smugglers, volunteers with the Washington State Minuteman group have regularly posted themselves along the Canadian border.



Photo by David Ediger

**Rachel Krause of Vancouver holds a sign conveying a message of peace to the U.S.-based Minutemen, whose stated aim is to stop illegal aliens and other “undesirables” from entering the U.S. from Canada or Mexico.**

While citizens on the U.S. side have protested this group from the beginning, Canadians have been slower to organize a visible response to its presence. This silent protest at five sites along the Washington-British Columbia border was intended to call Canadians’ attention to the Minutemen presence.

“Our intent was to remind

Canadians that the Minutemen continue to patrol the border, that they reserve the right to carry arms, that they have successfully advocated for a federally funded border fence along the U.S.-Mexico border,” said Kirk Shields-Priddy of Ploughshares Fraser Valley and a member of Langley Mennonite Fellowship. “The fact that the Washington State Minutemen have admitted to carrying concealed weapons as they conduct these patrols—but are not accountable to any legal agency—is cause for concern on both sides of the boundary.”

There is concern that, while Minutemen along the Mexico border patrol a sparsely populated area, the border separating Washington from B.C. is a populated area that includes farms and residential communities, and the presence of weapons could pose a danger to the public.

The Ploughshares group was hoping that intense media coverage would get out its message regarding public safety and the possible future militarization of the U.S. border, as opposed to a fear-based message about terrorists and illegal immigrants entering the United States across the Canadian border.

Ploughshares members want to continue sending the message to provincial and federal government officials, that the world’s longest peaceful border should remain free of vigilantism and militarization.

—Amy Dueckman



More Than a Roof Mennonite Housing photo

**When the British Columbia government decided to create nearly 2,300 supportive housing units, it entrusted the running of its first new project to a Christian organization: More Than a Roof Mennonite Housing Society. Officiating at the sod-turning for Kindred Place were, from left to right: Vancouver Coastal Health housing director Linda Thomas, More Than a Roof Mennonite Housing Society vice-chair Peter Dueck, Vancouver mayor Sam Sullivan, provincial minister of Employment and Income Assistance Claude Richmond, and Abbotsford MP Ed Fast.**

# Churches covenant together in special service



Mennonite  
Church  
British  
Columbia

ABBOTSFORD, B.C.

By Amy Dueckman

**T**here was something definitely worth celebrating for more than a thousand B.C. Mennonites who gathered together to sing, pray and worship on Pentecost Sunday. And by the time the two-hour service had ended, those present knew the Holy Spirit was alive and actively working in their midst.

The event was a covenant celebration service at Mennonite Educational Institute, climaxing with the signing of a covenant affirming membership and shared ministry in Mennonite Church British Columbia. Some 1,400 people attended from 30 of MC B.C.'s 34 churches, coming from across the province. Most of the participating churches closed their own doors for the day, encouraging their members to attend the joint service.

The service was the culmination of a two-year project of revisioning and restructuring of MC B.C. Over the last few years the conference has dealt with divisive issues, and the executive felt there was a need to rally again around a vision of what the area church family stands for together. This gathering was designed to foster a sense of belonging to something good and worthwhile.

## Strengthening links

"The church today continues to struggle with unity and it was, and is, our responsibility to work at unity and reconciliation within the church body," said conference moderator Gerd Bartel. "We at MC B.C. believe that strengthening the links within and between the MC B.C. churches will help to maintain and build the unity of the body with our brothers and sisters across Canada as well."

Representatives from many different churches led in worship music, Scripture reading, prayer and preaching. Lorin Bergen, pastor of Living Hope Christian Fellowship in Surrey, gave the message entitled "Glory Days," based on Philippians 3:7-16. "This weekend of celebration is an opportunity for us to be renewed, refreshed, re-energized and recommitted," he said. Often people either revel in the past, saying those days were the glory days, or they dwell on past hurts and don't let Christ heal them, he said. Rather,

CONTINUED ON PAGE 40

## MC B.C. Covenant

*A "covenant relationship" for local congregations within a renewed MC B.C. entails a common commitment to:*

- I.** Essential doctrine and practice reflecting a biblical, Christian worldview and ethic as stated in our confession of faith and accepted statements.
- II.** Meaningful worship and fellowship among congregations that would be Christ-centred, relationally oriented and celebrative in nature.
- III.** Shared ministries that cannot be effectively accomplished as individual congregations or that are better done together. The focus will be on mission, leadership training and education.
- IV.** A community-based, timely, decision-oriented process of education, debate and discernment that strives toward the goal of oneness in Christ. This discernment will take place at the local congregation level, within the larger context of our mutual discernment and accountability.
- V.** Mutual accountability in a spirit of humility and love. This recognizes the need for ongoing dialogue between and among congregations, and MC B.C.
- VI.** Peace, justice and service in support of Mennonite Central Committee, Mennonite Disaster Service and similar church-related service programs.

*The full text of the covenant can be found at [mcbc.ca](http://mcbc.ca) and follow the "Covenant Relationship" link.*



*John Klassen, chair of Langley Mennonite Fellowship, signs the covenant while Langley pastor Henry Krause shakes hands with MC B.C. conference pastor Henry Kliewer. Each church had two signers, usually a pastor and church chair.*

**MC B.C.  
special section**

PHOTOS BY GERRY SPOTACK



CONTINUED FROM PAGE 39

the church should look forward to the future, believing that the best days are still to come. "Today is a day of new beginnings," Bergen said. "Here is our moment, right here, right now."

In a children's story introducing the theme of covenant, Reece Friesen of Eben-Ezer Mennonite Church held the attention of all ages with an entertaining interpretation of the story of the Old Testament covenant between Jonathan and David.

In what many later agreed was the high point of the service, two representatives from each of the 30 churches came forward to sign the covenant, affirming their congregation's relationship with MC B.C. and symbolically committing themselves and their congregations to continuing to follow Christ together.

"The idea of written covenant was to provide some sort of definition to what the conference was, is and will be. The ideas contained in it are not new, but they are a public restatement," explained Linda Matties, secretary of the MC B.C. executive.

#### **Spirit-empowered fellowship**

Abe Neufeld of Cedar Valley Mennonite Church in Mission called the signing a "significant, sobering, joyous event," and added, "The signing of the covenant by the diversity

of MC B.C. churches, leaders and representatives demonstrated the culmination of coming together in God's Spirit."

Many also commented on the prayer of blessing following the signing given by long-time B.C. Mennonite pastor Jake Tilitzky, which included the words, "We pray that the covenant we have made be a reflection of your many-splendoured covenant, not only by the letter of the document, but in the spirit."

At the conclusion of the service, Henry Kliewer and his wife Nellie were called forward to be formally recognized and thanked for their many years of service in Mennonite Church B.C. Kliewer will be completing his term as conference minister this summer.

Following the service, everyone gathered under tents outside for the feeding of the multitude—a catered meal of chicken, salads and cake. Despite the cool weather, people enthusiastically fellowshiped around tables as they enjoyed lunch.

Conference leaders were inundated with affirmative messages of all kinds in the days following the service. Comments included praise for the tremendous organization and planning, the spirit of cooperation, the balance in the worship service and the overall theme of unity. Some were asking, "Can we do this again sometime?"

As Kliewer summed up, "Many volunteers worked hard to make this celebration happen. However, none of us could bring about the life-giving spirit; that was God's doing. As in the early church, the release of the Holy Spirit in our joint worship was marvellous to behold."



*The fellowship meal after the covenant-signing service was enjoyed by all, including brothers Cedric and Christian Bukiriro.*

## **MC B.C. special section**



*All of the covenant signers posed for a group shot after the ceremony.*