

CANADIAN Mennonite

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Abbotsford2007

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**Letters from
the 'big house'**

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Going...and staying

Earlier this year, “New Order voice” columnist Will Braun issued a challenge to Mennonite Church Canada and other organizations to consider ways they could reduce their greenhouse gas emissions by 50 percent, especially in the area of air travel.

But, as general secretary Robert J. Suderman reminded delegates at Abbotsford 2007, MC Canada is much bigger than the office at 600 Shaftesbury Boulevard, Winnipeg; it also includes 33,000 individual church members. While this reminder doesn’t deflect Braun’s eco-challenge from the organization to people in the pews, such a comparison is still warranted.

Since the church is to be about God’s mission in the world, which part—the organization or its members—is doing the best job globally in terms of missional effectiveness and environmental friendliness?

On the one hand, Witness workers train for their mission assignments, often spending years at Bible college or seminary, and then make a commitment to serve for a number of years—sometimes a lifetime. After flying overseas, it may be years before they return home again. Two days of being part of the airborne environmental problem versus hundreds of days being part of Christ’s spiritual solution on the ground.

Compare this to the 1.6 million North Americans, including Mennonites, who took part in foreign mission trips of two-weeks’ duration or less last year (according to a Princeton University survey). It’s not hard to see a stark contrast between the relative environmental friendliness of these trips with those who have made missions a long-term commitment.

But mission trips don’t tell the whole story. Over the last couple of generations—with increasing levels of prosperity

and the relatively low cost of air travel—Mennonites of all ages have taken to the skies.

Are half of our young people—who will inherit the Earth—willing to take Braun’s challenge and curtail their globe-trotting rites-of-passage? Instead of opting for a service assignment in Bangkok or working on a farm in Europe, how about Mennonite voluntary service in their own city or province?

The same could be asked of the older generation. When Mennonites first began migrating from one country or continent to another, it was almost always a one-way trip. Later, couples might have saved for a once-in-a-lifetime trip back to the “old country.” Now, however, such trips have been transformed into annual tours and excursions of Europe or the Holy Land—or even the “sunny south.”

University of British Columbia prof William Rees asked the following question of the recent Live Earth concerts, that involved pop stars flying around the world, some on private jets, to do their shows in far-off places: “[Will] the concerts change people’s lives enough to compensate for the additional consumption stimulated by the events?”

The same question needs to be asked by Mennonites of their short-term mission trips and their excursions to experience the world. And if the answer is yes, then we have to ask how we can reconcile our desire to embrace Marshall McLuhan’s “global village” with Al Gore’s “inconvenient truth” of global warming.

There is a solution, though. More missionary “lifers” like Dutch Mennonite Pieter Jansz—who served in Indonesia for 53 years without a visit home—need to say, “Yes, I will go, and yes, I will stay”—for the sake of the gospel (Jansz’s legacy of faithfulness is the sixth largest Mennonite Church body in the world) and for the sake of God’s creation.

—**Ross W. Muir**

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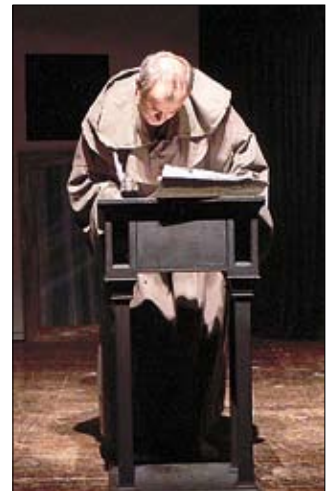
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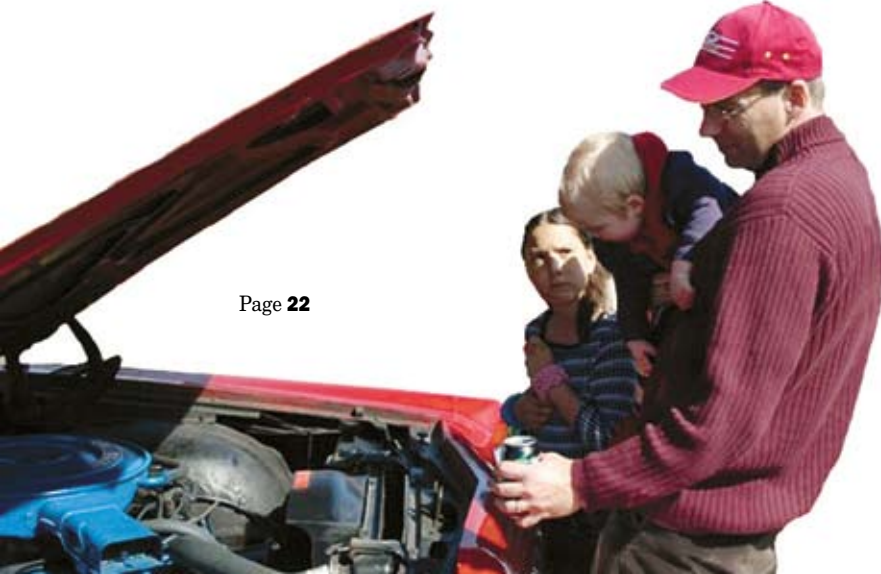


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Website preview

Get a preview of the next *Canadian Mennonite* before it comes in the mail. Selections are posted on our website at canadianmennonite.org on the Thursday before the issue date. So you can check the Aug. 20 issue by Aug. 16.

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Cover: A huge Inuit Inukshuk, lit by candles, reminded national church assembly delegates that Jesus Christ is our one foundation. See assembly coverage on pages 4-9, 40.
—Photo by Tim Miller Dyck

Delegates speak on hot issues

Concern over Canada's rapidly growing use of military force overseas and military recruiting at home, care of God's creation and climate change, and how to build up the faith and church involvement of young adults were the three hot topics for delegates at the eighth annual meeting of Mennonite Church Canada.

Delegates and other attendees met from July 3 to 6 in Abbotsford, B.C., to learn about, speak to and vote on church issues; worship together each day (see "Built on" theme sparks creativity in worship," page 7); attend a wide variety of seminars; go on service projects and tours; and just enjoy each other's company. About 385 adults were at the assembly from across the country, including 269 delegates from congregations and 29 delegates from area churches. Delegate attendance was comfortably above quorum, but slightly less than last year's assembly in Edmonton.

In addition, a national youth assembly met at the same time with even larger numbers present: 437 youths and youth sponsors had a separate track of speakers and events for them, although the adults joined the youth for some worship services. (See Aug. 20 issue for coverage of the youth assembly.)

Delegate sessions

Delegates overwhelmingly voted to approve three "affirmation statements," one each on militarism, creation care



and young adults (see "Abbotsford assembly delegate actions" sidebar, page 5). These were intended to "affirm basic directions of our church. They should not be seen as breaking new ground, but rather as putting what we already believe into a spotlight," said the delegate discernment guide. "They should be viewed as 'road signs' on our journey as a church, indicating key values to each other and to a watching world." Delegate input will go into final versions of the statements, expected later this year.

In addition, delegates passed one resolution from the floor at the Friday afternoon delegate session that called on the national church to reduce energy use at future assemblies (see "Abbotsford delegates...", page 5), along with a resolution of thanks to those who helped with the assembly.

Delegate sessions happened differently this year; delegates sat in rows of chairs instead of around tables, and were not assigned to sit with the same group when discussing issues throughout the week. Conference organizers said that the size of the room just didn't allow for tables.

One attendee, J.D. Penner from Toronto United Mennonite Church, really missed the tables. "We do our best work in relationship, around tables," he said. "Our church is built on relationships. Sitting in rows like a rock concert doesn't facilitate face-to-face relationships."

Peace statement affirmed

Delegates lined up several people deep behind microphones on Thursday morning to speak in support of the affirmation statement against militarization in Canada and to share ways to act on it. This topic generated more delegate floor comments than any other. The session closed with delegates unanimously passing the related affirmation statement.

"Our group can report that they definitely say 'yes,'" said Ed Lehming of Wideman Mennonite Church in Markham, Ont. Lehming suggested speaking to MPs one-on-one and encouraged a letter-writing campaign in favour of bill C-460 (which allows taxes to be used for non-military purposes).

"Our group was very much in favour of the statement," said Henry Patkau of Hope Mennonite Fellowship in North Battleford, Sask. "It was suggested that we make known to Stephen Harper our disappointment in a continued increase in militarization."

"For 50 years, Canada has not been in a war. Now we need to look at it again," said Earl Smith of Hagerman Mennonite Church in Markham, Ont.

Five young adults shared how they have experienced the world and the church at the Wednesday afternoon delegate sessions. Picture from left, the panelists are: Hinke Loewen-Rudgers, Peter Epp, Darren Kropf, Alissa Bender and Nicole Cober Bauman.



Photo by Tim Miller Dyck

In one case, the statement was felt to not be strong enough. “We’re friends with a military chaplain and he would even agree with this statement, which raises a question in my mind,” said Tym Elias of Home Street Mennonite Church in Winnipeg. “Although I affirm this statement and want to move forward on it, I think it is too soft.”

However, Ken Quiring, of Grace Mennonite Church in Brandon, Man., said his group was not convinced that the wider church would be “completely with” the statement. “A lot who come to these events would be, but a lot in our congregations would be more conflicted,” he said.

He added that the church is far too hesitant to be clear about where its peace position comes from. “Our calling in this comes through Jesus Christ, who brings us peace from God. This doesn’t come from some generic humanism or from a nice liberal democracy,” he said, adding, “Our congregation in Brandon, we often feel very alone living next to the now-enlarged base in Shilo. We would like to ask for resources...on knowing how to get to know the families of soldiers, rather than polarizing materials.”

There was also a caution on how Mennonites talk about peacemaking.

“We also need to be careful not to ostracize those that have made other choices, but who are still willing to engage in conversation,” said Clare Neufeld of First Mennonite in Kelowna, B.C. “We need to be peacemakers in our personal relationships. Someone observed rather astutely that some are quite militant in our peace stance,” he said.

General secretary Robert J. Suderman singled out this discussion as one he wished could have been held jointly with the youth assembly: “It would have been good to have a stronger cross-generational process in listening and discussing that issue. In some sense, I feel we may have missed a good opportunity.”

Young adults in the church

The affirmation statement on young adults in the church also received a strongly positive vote.

The largest part of the session was devoted to hearing directly from young adults. Five panellists—Hinke

Abbotsford assembly delegate actions

Militarization Affirmation Statement

Mennonite Church Canada believes that “peace is the will of God” and that we need to “witness to all people that violence is not the will of God” (*Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective*, pages 81 to 82). Given this gospel understanding, we lament and oppose that the imaginations of our church and society are increasingly captivated by confidence in military solutions to human problems. May God grant us wisdom to discern and grace to act in ways that promote God’s will for peace on Earth.

Young Adults Affirmation Statement

Mennonite Church Canada desires to be an affirming home for the growth of faith and commitment for young adults and needs the creativity and fresh perspective they bring.

Because the well-being of the present and future church depends on our capacity to incorporate young adults, we must be proactive in creating space for young adults to offer and exercise their God-given gifts in leadership and service, in the life and ministries of the church. We pray for the grace to be flexible and to act courageously to make this possible, even if it feels threatening to the institutions and practices of our present and past. We proclaim this affirmation so that the whole body of Christ might grow in wisdom and knowledge, and be empowered by the Holy Spirit toward the fulfillment of God’s dream.

Creation Care Affirmation Statement

Mennonite Church Canada believes that God longs for the well-being and health of the whole world, for all of creation is bound together and belongs to God, who has created and who preserves all things. Our concern for faithfulness and discipleship should also lead us to care for creation. Mennonite Church Canada believes that God is calling us to commit ourselves to discern the paths of faithfulness to be good stewards of the Earth.

Reduction of Energy Consumption Motion

Whereas the Earth is an expression of God’s love and Christ calls us to be stewards of God’s precious handiwork, be it resolved that Mennonite Church Canada develop guidelines to reduce the consumption of energy and other resources when planning future assemblies.

Loewen-Rudgers, Peter Epp, Darren Kropf, Alyssa Bender and Nicole Cober Bauman—responded to questions about what lights them up about church life. They shared widely on their experiences in church life (all are closely involved in church life).

“The biggest issue I see the church facing is the state of our environment. This is a spiritual matter. It speaks to who we are in the world,” Kropf said, adding later, “I fear the church has been a place that is comfortable, rather than comforts.”

After small group discussions, delegates responded at the microphones. For some, the affirmation statement felt like motherhood and apple pie.

For others, the focus on just young adults set up stereotypes or segregated young adults out from the rest of the church.

“I’ve experienced young adults that want to dig in their heels and not ex-

perience change and older generations asking deep questions,” said David Driedger from Hillcrest Mennonite Church, New Hamburg, Ont. “What we are gathered here for is spiritual formation, discipleship and, ultimately, church. It is something we are looking for at every age.”

“One person [in our group] shared she felt the same way, that she had left the church because of some frustrations and had come back later.... [Are] we setting up unhealthy ways to look at the question? It seems like we are setting up a ‘we versus them,’” said James Friesen of Charleswood Mennonite in Winnipeg.

“I appreciated the naming of an unhealthy question of ‘either the church changes for young adults or young adults change for the church,’” said panel member Bender, but she suggested that a more important ques-

Continued on page 6

Hot issues *From page 5*

tion is, “Who is the church? I hear voices saying young adults are not in the church. Well, we are here and we are hoping for a church that makes apparent why the gospel is relevant to life in this world and why this radical discipleship is real.”

Caring for creation

What does God’s command to subdue the Earth and have dominion over every living thing (in the famous language of the King James translation of Genesis 1:28) mean for the Mennonite Church today?

“We seem to be stuck [with these words],” said Scott Brubaker-Zehr of Rockway Mennonite Church, Kitchener, Ont., reporting for his group. “We have to realize more and more we are dependent on the systems of the Earth and we don’t know as much as we think we do.”

The church’s Faith and Life Committee (FLC) provided theological reflection on how it sees the church relating to the environment and then delegates responded, passing the related creation care statement and suggesting specific responses.

FLC recognized that Mennonite concerns about how to care for the air, water and soil are not new. In particular, it recognized the work of Mennonite Creation Care Network, which has been bringing attention to this issue for many years.

FLC itself presented a 20-point theological response to this issue.

In summary:

- **First, Scripture teaches that God created the heavens and the Earth, and creation still belongs to God and has value in God’s eyes.** Our “dominion” over the Earth doesn’t mean we can abuse creation. We need to follow how Jesus Christ humbled himself even when he was our Lord. Like Jesus, we are to carry out God’s intentions for creation by being stewards and caregivers of the Earth and its inhabitants.
- **Second, God’s salvation plan isn’t something that happens just in a new heaven and Earth.** Part of God’s saving activity hap-

pens here and now. Part of our call to justice, peacemaking and loving our neighbour comes out in how we care for the Earth. Our desire for oil leads us into wars. Increasing use of corn-based bio-fuels raised the price of corn and led to much hardship among the poor in Mexico. Climate change leads to more drought in Africa.

- **Third, God desires to redeem both us and creation.** Revelation 22 shows the heavenly city descending to Earth, not us leaving Earth to go to the heavenly city. “Our responsibility is to work to end the suffering of creation, even as we wait for God to redeem it,” said FLC member Betty Pries.

Clare Neufeld of First Mennonite, Kelowna, suggested Mennonites take advantage of the “knowledge and personal passions for the environment” the church’s young adults have. Helen Kruger of Zion Mennonite in Swift Current, Sask., said that the church has things to learn on this topic from Aboriginal Peoples, the Amish and

Old Order Mennonites. Delegates requested resource materials to help with theological clarity and practical applications.

“Let’s move on to applications,” said Kathleen Rempel Boschman of Douglas Mennonite Church, Winnipeg.

Jason Hildebrand of Hope Mennonite in Winnipeg suggested asking for a voluntary \$20 contribution on next year’s assembly application form as a carbon emission offset that would go towards church building energy retrofits.

Church finances in the black

Randy Wiebe, MC Canada director of finance, presented both the audited financial results for the fiscal year that ended January 2007 and the budget for the current fiscal year ending January 2008. Delegates quickly passed both.

There was strong applause when Wiebe announced the good news that related organizations Mennonite Publishing Network and Canadian Mennonite University had both repaid money they owed the church in full, allowing MC Canada to pay off its own covering loans and free itself of all outstanding bank debt. Mennonite Publishing Network was close to bankruptcy a few years ago, so this is a significant turn-around for that organization.

National church revenue came about 1 percent under budget, but spending was under budget by even more, which provided a General Fund surplus of \$184,000.

In his written report to delegates, MC Canada treasurer Clare Schlegel gave assurance that the church was on stable financial footing again, with three years of “solid financial results.” He warned that accumulated reserves were still short of the target of three months’ operating funds and spoke about the problem of gradually decreasing donation revenue.

Asked later for his reactions to the overall assembly, general secretary Robert J. Suderman said, “I believe those attending generated a highly positive tone, an appreciative attitude, and a grateful atmosphere for being the church together.”

—Tim Miller Dyck



Photo by Tim Miller Dyck

Attendees crowd out the door to learn more about “being good stewards of the Earth’s energy,” a Wednesday afternoon session led by Darren Kropf and Jane Snyder.

'Built on' theme sparks creativity

Using music, several languages and elements such as interpretive movement and hand washing, participants at Abbotsford 2007 found many ways and means to worship.

Dominating the front of the meeting room was a large Inukshuk—an Inuit stone pile in the shape of a human figure—that was the symbol of the assembly. Created by members of Peace Mennonite Church in Richmond, B.C., it reminded everyone of the overarching theme of "Built to last" based on I Corinthians 3:11: "For no one can lay any foundation other than the one that has been laid; that foundation is Jesus Christ."

Each of the six worship services throughout the week featured a different sub-theme: "Built on Christ," "Built with grace," "Built in love," "Built through community,"

"Built for purpose," and "Built to last." In the daily liturgy of participation led by Heidi Epp, the congregation learned to act out each of these phrases in sign language.

Although in separate activities for most of the week, the large numbers of youths added energy to the joint worship services, with their enthusiastic participation in all aspects of worship, especially singing led by Dan Loewen and his team. Young dancers accompanied music with interpretive movement at the Tuesday opening service.

The new hymnal supplement, *Sing the Story*, was introduced at the assembly, with several songs from the book used in worship.

Special effort was made to include all ages at the joint services. Children were welcomed through daily children's features such as a clown and

balloons one morning, and a special rendition of "Jesus Loves Me" at the Wednesday evening service that featured several youngsters playing musical instruments.

Worshippers were reminded of the global nature of the church as several different languages were used at various points in the services, including a translated message in French and songs sung in Spanish. The dramatic and rhythmic beating of Japanese *tai-ko* drums also added to the experience.

A variety of speakers developed the themes of the week in creative ways. On Tuesday night, Jorge Hoajaca, pastor of First United Spanish Mennonite Church in Vancouver, spoke of being "Built on Christ" through knowledge of Scripture. At Wednesday night's service, Siaka Traoré of Burkina Faso used the theme "Built in love" to talk of the difficulty of obeying Jesus' command to love one's neighbour with all one's heart.

Dann Pantoja told of Christian-Muslim peacemaking teams in the Philippines on Thursday, using the theme "Built through community," while on Friday, Janet Plenert, executive secretary of MC Canada Christian Witness Council, summed up all the week's themes with the message, "Built to last." She left her listeners with the challenge: "Are we willing to



Photo by Tim Miller Dyck

Music played a large role in all of the worship services at the Abbotsford 2007 assembly, including these drummers at Tuesday's opening service.

boldly move forward with God to see his kingdom come, his will being done on Earth?"

Worshippers were invited to take part in a hand washing ceremony at Friday morning's worship service, coming forward in pairs to receive a blessing as they symbolically washed

each other's hands. A concluding worship service on Friday night included communion served from stations decorated with stones symbolizing the theme of the week.

—Amy Dueckman



Photo by Amy Dueckman

Kathleen and Don Rempel Boschman of Winnipeg serve communion to Kathy Albrecht of Kitchener, Ont., during Friday's final worship service.

Business and blessing for Women in Mission

With the theme of “Freely you have received, freely give,” 124 women from across Canada joined their voices, hearts and gifts at Emmanuel Mennonite Church on July 4 for the Canadian Women in Mission (CWM) annual tea.

Guest speaker for the afternoon was Lillian Nicolson, Mennonite Church Canada Witness worker in Burkina Faso with her husband Norm. Nicolson has developed a spelling system for the written language of the Siamou-speaking people, enabling them to read their language for the first time.

Nicolson talked of her inner conflict in thinking of herself as wealthy in the context of her work in Burkina Faso, and how best to help people who have so little. She cited the example of being able to go out and buy luxuries such as a chocolate bar for herself when the people she lives among don't have that choice and struggle for their very survival.

Quoting the well-known proverb, “Give them a fish and they will eat for a day, teach them to fish and they will eat for the rest of their life,” Nicolson left the audience to consider the wisdom of North Americans simply giving handouts to the needy in developing countries, leading them to learn to depend on outside help for their daily needs. This kind of aid, she said, tends to leave those on the receiving end with a sense of entitlement and offers them no incentive to work more productively for their own living.

During the business portion of the meeting, an offering of \$3,630 was collected, half of which will go to the CWM International Ministries program that supports churches in rural China. The other half will go to the B.C. Women in Mission project of supporting the elderly and other programs at the Mennonite Family Centre in Zaporozhye, Ukraine.

Kathy Shantz introduced the Bible Study Guide for 2007-2008, “Freely You Have Received, Freely Give: Women and the Stewardship of Gifts,” written by Susan Classen, director of Cedars of Peace, a retreat centre in central Kentucky.

Erna Neufeldt of Toronto, whose term as CWM president expires in 2008, was affirmed for another three-year term, and Ruth Jantzi of Kitchener, Ont., was affirmed for another term as secretary-treasurer.

The B.C. Mennonite Women in Mission host group was acknowledged with special thanks. Canadian Women in Mission president Erna Neufeldt presented B.C. president Veronica Thiessen with a gift of a handmade cross-stitch sampler stitched by Fred Redekop, the husband of Ontario president Shirley Redekop. The B.C. group is dissolving at the end of July.

In other activities during the week, CWM also put on two seminars entitled “You Can't Take It With You” on charitable giving, and estate planning by Sherri Grosz of Mennonite Foundation of Canada.

—Amy Dueckman



Photo by Amy Dueckman

Erna Neufeldt, left, president of Canadian Women in Mission, presents Veronica Thiessen, president of B.C. Mennonite Women in Mission, with a cross-stitch sampler plaque with the phrase, “Our strength made perfect in weakness,” stitched on it. The B.C. group is dissolving at the end of July after being in operation since 1939.

It's not just about the money you earn

When Michael Jantzi moved into the field of socially responsible investing (SRI) in the 1990s, a mentor shared his greatest fear with Jantzi—that “SRI would go mainstream, but nothing will have changed.”

Jantzi, president of Jantzi Research, and Gary Hawton, president of Meritas Mutual Funds, were two of the guest speakers at a special pre-assembly event called “Put Your Money Where Your Faith Is.” During their talk they said they were concerned with the 90 percent people keep for spending or investing, rather than the 10 percent they give away.

Both Hawton and Jantzi spoke of SRI as a personal journey of faith. Although their stories were different, both were led to a place where their faith and Bay Street (Toronto's finan-

cial district) intersected.

“I got into doing what I do to change corporate Canada,” Jantzi said, noting that SRI is not a recent invention. Quakers in Victorian England first began to speak out against the inconsistency between the church's values and what was being done with their assets. In the 1970s, during the Vietnam War, the Episcopal Church stood up to corporate America. The trend continued with a variety of groups refusing to have financial relationships with companies working with the former racist regime in South Africa.

SRI has grown dramatically. In 2004, there was \$65 billion in SRI assets. In only two years, the number jumped to \$503 billion.

Both Hawton and Jantzi said that SRI is the way of the future, and that major corporations are beginning to



About 100 participants—approximately half of whom were pastors—gathered for a pre-assembly event called “Put Your Money Where Your Faith Is.” Small group discussions became animated as participants pondered such insights as, “It’s not just about the money you make, but how you make the money you spend.”

take note of the fact that investment dollars are shifting to companies that are becoming more socially responsible in their operations. Both Hawton and Jantzi believe the trend will continue.

One pastor in attendance observed,

“We live in a way that we are trying to balance our desire to do good things with our money, and

the potential we have to be driven by greed.”

Many pastors struggle with the topic of money, said John H. Neufeld, professor emeritus at Canadian Mennonite University. “In our struggle, we have avoided the topic,” he added, noting that many have not looked to the church when making financial or investment decisions.

Neufeld provided inspiration from biblical texts that speak specifically to SRI, drawing together several Old and New Testament passages. He said Canadians are in a time of exile, much like the Babylonians, yet their cultural gods have become more supple and subtle and the priorities of the church are no longer the shared priorities of society. “Covetousness is now the hallmark of our society.... We have deified dissatisfaction,” he said.

Neufeld called for a renewed emphasis on preaching and teaching in the area of stewardship, suggesting that faith communities can once again become strong agents of change in the world of finance.

—**Doug Klassen**

Wisdom in the pews: New book reveals the ‘soul of our experience’

Who are the more than 33,000 members of Mennonite Church Canada, and what are they thinking? A glimpse of the answer to that question is revealed in the new book, *God’s People Now! Face to Face with Mennonite Church Canada* by Robert J. Suderman. The book was introduced at Abbotsford 2007.

As general secretary of MC Canada, Suderman travelled across the country in 2006, visiting about 200 congregations on a “listening tour” to learn more about the denomination. His findings offer a revealing look into what people are thinking and feeling as they participate in the life of the church.

Suderman says he was moved by what he learned as he spent time conversing with people in nearly every

MC Canada congregation. The book pre-sents some of what he heard in raw and uncensored form.

“The heart of this book is the wisdom [quotes] we gleaned from the pews of our congregations,” says Suderman. “It gets us into the soul of our experience of being the church. Each one of the quotes is worth an extended conversation with friends, in Sunday school classes and in sermons.”

As did MC Canada members all over the country, members of First Mennonite Church of Kelowna, B.C., recall last year’s visit by Suderman and Janet Plenert, executive secretary of MC Canada’s Christian Witness Council, as an “encouraging” experience.

“They impressed me with their listening capacity, non-anxious presence and approach, and sensitive reflecting back what they were hearing,” says pastor Clare Neufeld.

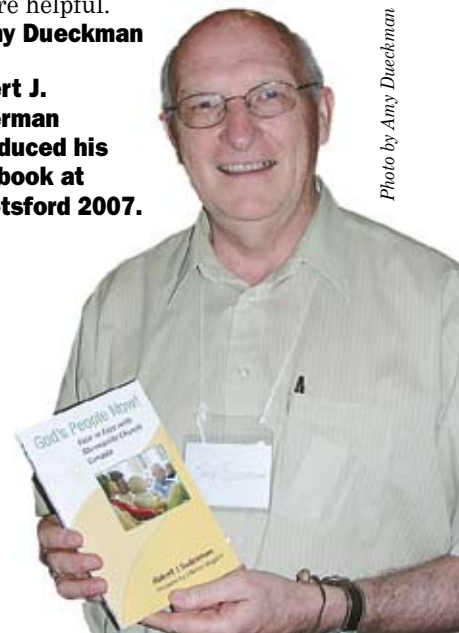
Added church education chair Ted Walter, “We...were pleased with the meeting.... It made us feel we were part of something bigger than ourselves.”

Suderman is convinced that in order to be the church, the membership must be able to both speak and listen to each other. Giving a voice to everybody, not just a few people, in his book was important to Suderman.

“My own reflections on the life of the church contained in this book are secondary, but I trust are helpful,” he says. “This is a rare opportunity and a real gift to me, and, I believe, to the church. I trust that those reflections too are helpful.”

—**Amy Dueckman**

Robert J. Suderman introduced his new book at Abbotsford 2007.



Gretna, Man.

Jesus loves you even when you can't love yourself

There is a verse in the Bible that we too often forget or look past.

It somehow gets lost between all the John 3:16s we hear in church, and during the rest of week life is too important—or too “mature”—to allow this gentle but powerful verse to come in.

“*Let the little children come to me,*” Jesus said in Mark 10:14. This means that even though children are small and unwise in the ways of world, Jesus loves them and we should teach our children to love Jesus in return.

But between the lines hides a deeper meaning that has come to be singularly significant in my spiritual life. Every time I read this verse there is the sense that Jesus—Son of God and Lord of all creation—finds a certain amount of comfort from the young, vibrant faces around him. It is as if their smiling faces, filled with innocent and untainted hope, give him strength for what he knows he must face. I am sure that their presence emphasized the importance of his mission here on Earth, and that he found a special form of encouragement from them.

My question to myself and what I now propose to you is: If Jesus Christ, maker of heaven and Earth, found strength from the joyful gathering of little children, why can't we? This question lingered in the back of my mind until it was pulled forth and answered by none other than a little youngster who saw something that nobody else did.

Around Thanksgiving last year, when creamy gravy was poured over steaming turkey and the spicy scent of pumpkin pie hung in the air, I managed to hit a depressing spiritual low. Everything felt abysmal. My grades

were not where I wanted them to be, my parents were always busy, and my friends seemed far-off and distant. I came to such a state of pessimism that, if I had passed a chemistry test with flying colors, ate a Thanksgiving feast with my mom and dad right beside me, and dined with a multitude of grinning friends, I still would have concluded that the turkey was too dry.

Each day I drooped deeper and deeper into this spiritual Grand Canyon. It came to the point where, not only was I not finding anything to smile about, I had started to give up trying to find something. Every part of life seemed as dry as that turkey.

While my parents, friends and teachers are pretty perceptive at noticing a down-in-the-dumps person, I kept my special case of spiritual depression well hidden. Fake grins and simulated laughs came from me in abundance publicly.

It was after supper—when all was said and done for the day—when the smallest of human beings made the biggest of differences. Strolling into my room quite nonchalantly, my little five-year-old brother came and sat down next to me on the bed, where I was staring at the ceiling but not really seeing anything.

My brother sat swinging his legs off the edge of the bed, sucking intently on a lollipop, his little hand resting gently on my knee. He turned his head to me, his bright green eyes meeting mine.

“You should stop being down, buddy,” he said suddenly, almost too casually, as if it was an afterthought. This caught me entirely off-guard. As

far as I knew, nobody knew there was anything wrong with me.

“You want to know why you should stop?” he asked again.

With an adult, I would have met the question with a barrage of protests and denials, expressing my well-being in irrefutable fashion. But with the young guy I merely offered a lame “Why?”

He was still for a while, studying his candy and swinging his legs. I had just started to think that maybe he had not heard me, when he started to hum a familiar tune. Then, with a quiet confidence, he started to sing softly. It was the most beautiful version of “Jesus Loves Me” I had ever heard. And in his youthful wisdom he had changed “me” to “you.” Singing through it only once, he tapped my knee with his tiny fingers, jumped off

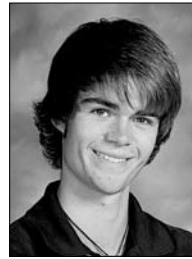
the bed and walked out of the room.

The fundamental three principles that Jesus taught—love, faith and hope—are not things found only through age or experience. Many times it is the youngest of us who teach us the value of those three things.

That night before I went to bed, I opened my Bible and found this passage: “*But when Jesus saw this [the disciples turning away the little children brought to him], he was indignant and said to them, ‘Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs’*” (Mark 10:14, NRSV).

Amen, I thought.
—**Johanu Botha**

The author, who grew up in South Africa, finished Grade 11 at Mennonite Collegiate Institute in Gretna, Man., in June.



Botha

the young prophets

Winnipeg

Letters from the 'big house'

Two years ago, Ryan Grills, an inmate at Headingley Correctional Centre in Winnipeg, contacted Douglas Mennonite Church, asking for a Christian pen pal. Since then, Carl DeGurse has exchanged dozens of letters and phone calls with the prisoner, who is now serving his sentence in Stony Mountain Penitentiary, a federal medium-security institution in Winnipeg. What follows are excerpts from some of Grills' correspondence with DeGurse, making clear the impact such a ministry has had on his life and growing faith. Ed.

March 29, 2006

I'm 30, no kids, never been married. I'm six foot one, shaved head. I have three tattoos—a bulldog, the Harley [motorcycle] logo and one from the army. I was in the army for 18 months.

Here's a typical day. I'm locked in a cell alone 22 hours a day. I used to be a troublemaker, so I'm housed in a segregation unit. There's nothing to do. No TV even. It can drive a guy crazy to be alone so much.

I pray for an hour or so in the morning, and I read the Bible. I know I'm in a deep hole and the only way out is Jesus.

June 29, 2006

Sorry I could not write back sooner, but I have no cash to buy stamped envelopes. I traded my ice cream for this one.

I like Psalm 69:33: "For the Lord hears the needy, and does not despise his own that are in bonds." It is such a boost to know God does not forget his people in prison.

You are the only person I have contact with. It's like I am alone in this world. I have you and God. Man, does that ever make me sound pitiful.

July 1, 2006

I was a good kid until I was 15 years old. I went to six schools. Then I robbed a delivery man, and I was sent to the federal pen with the big boys. I did three years, and by the time I got out I'm a tough guy. I had

hooked up with bikers in jail and I started selling drugs and guns in Winnipeg, but police had me under surveillance. I was charged with 61 criminal offences and sent to jail for nine years. I became very cold and angry.

One day I went to chapel and met the prison pastor. I gave my life to the Lord about three months later.

I eventually got out of jail. I was given \$50 and a ride to downtown Winnipeg. No friends. No identification. No place to go.

Went down the wrong road again—smoking about \$1,000 worth of drugs a day. To pay it back, I got back into crime. I now face 18 charges—from armed robbery to kidnapping.

Aug. 7, 2006

I know this time my life is changed for good. Jesus healed my broken heart and took the anger and hate away from me. I study the Word of God each day. I know there is going to be hard times, but Jesus is on my side.

You said in your last letter you need lots of contact with other Christians. So do I. I would like to surround myself with fellow believers, like the Bible says, but I can't do that. What keeps me going is John 3:16. God loves me so much that he sent his son to die for me. How cool is that!

Aug. 20, 2006

Matthew 5:23-24 means I have to try and make right by all the people who I have done wrong by. I really don't blame them if they don't forgive me.

Aug. 23, 2006

Since I got out of the segregation unit and back in the general population, things are going better. There's one other guy here who wants to be a Christian. We do Bible studies every morning, just the two of us. Sometimes he wants to sleep in instead, but I say I'll dump a bucket of water on his head if he doesn't get up. We laugh.



Photo courtesy of Ryan Grills

Ryan Grills, an inmate at Stony Mountain Penitentiary, a federal medium-security institution in Winnipeg, sought out a pen pal from Douglas Mennonite Church, and has been corresponding with Carl DeGurse for a couple of years now, learning about Christianity and receiving encouragement in his faith.

We do our Bible studies right out on a table on the open range where everyone else can see us. I don't care what everyone thinks, I'm not ashamed to be a Christian.

Sept. 22, 2006

I received the copy of the Ten Commandments. Thank you. I hung them on my cell wall. If I show other inmates I'm a Christian, and they see me reading my Bible, who knows, they may turn to the Lord.

Thanks for telling me about your church. Do you guys do a lot of praying? If so, can you guys pray for me that God will give me power to keep up my Bible studies and my faith?

I have started a praying list. You are on it. What can I pray for you?

—Ryan Grills

Saskatoon

A woman for her time

She went from teacher to mother to manager to director. But through it all, Elva Epp maintained her humility and grace—and a working faith.

Epp was recently honoured at a Mennonite Economic Development Associates (MEDA) banquet for 10 years of service and commitment to MCC's Ten Thousand Villages store. Two other Saskatoon residents—Dave Boldt and Delmar Rempel—were also held up as examples of putting their faith into action in their lives and service to the community.

Epp's story begins in Tiefengrund, Sask., where she grew up. She taught school for five years before marrying Ernie Epp. After beginning a family, she stopped teaching to focus on their needs. Various moves took them from Calgary to Rosthern, Sask., Toronto, Regina and finally to Saskatoon.

Her retail career only began when, like other women, she realized she was no longer needed in the same way by her family. By the time her youngest was 14, she felt she needed to “do something for myself,” and she went to work teaching sewing classes in Regina. Her sewing skills opened doors for her and she began doing alterations of women's clothing.

From there she heard about a daytime position in sales and decided that would be the best option. Epp moved ahead in the retail world and eventually became manager of the D'alliards Ladies Wear store in Regina, a position she held for nine years.

After her husband accepted a job in Saskatoon, Epp requested a transfer to the D'alliards store there, but was only given a job as assistant manager. While the Saskatoon store was tops in sales across Canada that year, it was a hard switch to make. Epp saw vast differences in management styles between her former and current managers, and she decided a change of pace

would be helpful.

Choosing a voluntary service term with Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) kept her in retail, but this time it was retail with a heart. As manager of what was then called a “Self-Help Crafts” store, she was run off her feet. Located in downtown Saskatoon, the building had lots of walk-by traffic and sales were high. Making daily trips to the MCC warehouse for products, Epp worked hard to keep the shelves full, but she had no time to arrange attractive displays.

Epp soon noticed an empty store across the street. Immediately, the potential for the building was obvious to her. It had large windows for displaying products and sat on a direct route between two department stores, so she began to plan the move.

God, it seemed, had other ideas.

Erna Funk was the provincial director for the MCC program at the time and she noticed Epp's passion for the work. “She had a vision of what needed to be done,” says Funk. “But

more importantly, she had a heart for all those people [artisans] eking out a living.” When Funk left her position in 1992, she urged Epp to consider the job.

“I was not looking for more responsibility,” recalls Epp. But there was a need and, as she stepped into the role, the timing could not have been more perfect. Her training in sales would help tremendously as the program underwent major changes in the next few years.

The program received a major overhaul, with the name changing in 1996 to Ten Thousand Villages as the stores' image was remade. The stores were to have consistent rules about displays across Canada and the United States. And the “gift and thrift” idea was abandoned in favour of a “gifts-only” approach. As provincial director in Saskatchewan, Epp set a goal to reach sales of \$1 million



Epp

a year. Seven years after she retired, her vision became reality.

Of her faith's role in her career, she says, “It made a difference in how I handled problems, disappointments and how I worked with others.... Without a solid prayer life and reading Scripture, I don't think I would've made it.”

Those working with her at Ten Thousand Villages saw her faith in action. “She was very sensitive to different people,” says a former volunteer. “She felt her position and that of the volunteers was very important to Third World people.”

—Karin Fehderau

Rottenburg, Germany

Sattler Peace Prize awarded to Palestinian family

The 2007 Michael Sattler Peace Prize has been awarded to the “Tent of Nations—People Building Bridges” project in Palestine.

The German Mennonite Peace Committee gave the prize in recognition of the creative and non-violent solutions the Palestinian Christian Nassar family uses in their struggle against encroaching illegal Israeli colonization.

The Nassars' right to their farmland on a hill south of Bethlehem is confirmed by British, Jordanian, Israeli and Ottoman papers, some 100 years old. Jewish settlements already occupy the surrounding hills, but despite the difficult circumstances the Nassar family continues to live a Christian witness. They combine the rightful claim to their land with the active hope the conflict in the Middle East can be peacefully overcome and justice can become possible.

With the prize, the German Mennonite Peace Committee, together with its ecumenical partners, remembers the Anabaptist Michael Sattler, who was burned alive on May 20, 1527, in Rottenburg, for his Christian witness and non-violent stance. The award was presented at a ceremony at the Kirchgasse Protestant Church on May 20, followed by a worship service at the site of Sattler's execution.

—German Mennonite Peace Committee (DMFK) release

Low German film wins Cannes festival award

Stellet Licht (Silent Light), a Low German film about the spiritual crisis of a Mennonite farmer in Mexico who falls in love with another woman, won the Jury Prize at the Cannes Film Festival in May. The lead female role was played by Miriam Toews, author of *A Complicated Kindness*, who got the opportunity after Mexican director Carlos Reygadas saw something he liked in her book-jacket photo. Reygadas' two previous films, *Japon* and *Battle in Heaven*, were nominated for various major awards despite being controversial. The director was interviewed by Canadian Mennonite film critic Vic Thiessen by e-mail in June.

Canadian Mennonite: How did you come to make a film about Mennonites?

Reygadas: Most Mexicans know about the Mennonites who live in our country. I was driving past some Mennonite fields in the Chihuahua area four years ago and thought about the mystery of the Mennonite culture and the success of their communities. I visited a church and a museum, and it occurred to me that this would be the perfect setting for my film, because I wanted to tell a true human story apart from the distractions of contemporary life in Mexico, a tale that would apply to all times and places.

CM: How did the Mennonites in Mexico respond to your request to film them?

Reygadas: The first community I visited was very conservative. They let me stay with them for a month, but it became clear that the cultural barrier would make it virtually impossible to film there. I almost gave up before I was referred to a more progressive Mennonite community, where I met Cornelius Wall, who plays the lead role in the film. Cornelius was the key that unlocked the door to a real close relationship with the Mennonite people. With his help, I was able to gain the support of the community for the making of my film. The people were particularly impressed that I wanted to film them just as they were, with their real clothing, real houses, real

actors, and using their Low German language, almost like a documentary.

CM: What was the reaction to the theme of the film—a Mennonite farmer in an adulterous relationship?

Reygadas: There was some resistance to this idea at first. But when people opened their minds a little, and recognized that it was a story of love and grace—themes which really appeal to them—they better understood what I was doing. I mean, there are a lot of stories in the Bible that are full of anguish, but then there is a point where...the path to grace comes. The Mennonites were the first to see the film and even those who were initially quite upset by the theme recognized that there was a deeper part to the question of adultery and were happy with the way the film dealt with it.

CM: Tell me a little about your experience of filming Mennonites.

Reygadas: The people were all very warm, if somewhat distant in a traditional Mennonite way. And they really acted exactly as they would in their daily lives. When we filmed a funeral, it was like a real traditional Mennonite funeral. And the people playing Cornelius' parents really were his parents, which was really beautiful. Apart from the two lead female

roles, all the actors were from the community where I was filming. The two lead female roles are played by Mennonites from Canada [Toews] and Germany because the old-fashioned patriarchal culture made it difficult to find women willing to play those roles.

CM: What are your reflections on the Mennonite culture in Mexico?

Reygadas: Mennonites have such strong family, education and community values, and their work ethic and sense of personal responsibility have produced really good living conditions for them. It's a very different way of life from the Mexicans and I think we could learn a lot from it. Of course, I think Mennonites could also learn a lot from Mexicans, especially from our Latin flow of life.

Some Mennonites in Mexico have managed to integrate both and this has produced a very interesting and wonderful community. I believe the traditional community ways of the Mennonites will keep them separate from the rest of society for a long time, but their relationship with Mexicans is very good and they are doing many projects together. Such an interaction between cultures can be very beautiful.

CM: What is your experience with Mennonites outside of Mexico?

Reygadas: I have met Mennonites from Canada and Germany. I understand that their culture and lifestyle are different from the Mennonites in Mexico, but many of the values are the same, and I hope Mennonites can keep their values while still having a healthy and open relationship with the rest of the world.

—Vic Thiessen

The interviewer is director of the London (England) Mennonite Centre. He will review Stellet Licht when it is released.



Winnipeg

Monuments in stone and film: Otto Klassen documents lives of Russian Mennonites

Well-known Mennonite filmmaker Otto Klassen of Winnipeg celebrated two milestones a week apart this spring: his 80th birthday and the premiere of his latest film, *Remembering Russia, 1914-1927: Collectivization and Mass Arrest*.

As a filmmaker, Klassen still exhibits the same dedication, hard work, skill, attention to detail, careful preparation and long-range planning that he was famous for in his younger years as a master bricklayer and mason in various Winnipeg communities. One of the best examples of his work is the white limestone obelisk standing at the entrance of the Steinbach (Man.) Museum—a monument to Mennonite victims of terror and repression.

Now, before he starts filming, Klassen, a member of Springfield Heights Mennonite Church in Winnipeg (where his film premiered on April 15), has the outline of the story and the entire film worked out in his head. Then he goes about the detailed work of researching and writing the script, compiling and “building” his visual resources, recording the soundtrack and final editing—being sensitive to pacing and mood—making sure the story gets told and keeps moving.

Where did he learn to do this? Certainly not in school! Klassen, like many others of his generation, never completed more than six or seven grades of formal schooling. But this does not mean that he was uneducated. By the time he was a teenager, in the Mennonite village of Schöneberg (Chortitza), Klassen already spoke four languages: German, Low German, Russian and Ukrainian. Later, he added Spanish and English to the mix. But like most young people of his generation, he learned most through keen observation, self-study, experience and the application of common sense.

Klassen was good in all subjects at school, but his favourites were math and history. The math stood him in good stead later in his business, but history was his real passion. He not



Photo courtesy of Ken Reddig

Otto Klassen of Winnipeg works on one of his more than 50 films that document the lives of Mennonites in Russia, Paraguay, Mexico and Manitoba.

A story for all Mennonites to remember

Remembering Russia: 1914-1927,
Mennonite Central Committee/Otto
Klassen Productions, 2006.

The documentary *Remembering Russia: 1914-1927* provided context and illustrations for the stories that preceded it when it was shown at the spring meeting of the Mennonite Historical Society of Ontario, held at Glencairn Mennonite Brethren (MB) Church on June 2. The historical society speakers, reflecting on the early history of MBs in Ontario, frequently referred to their parents' hard times in Russia—the subject of the film.

In his documentary, Otto Klassen uses many old photographs and a few film clips to describe the plight of the Russian people, including Mennonites, in the years after World War I. He provides good historical context for the Mennonite story.

When World War I began in 1914, the Mennonite communities were leaders in agriculture and education, with stately homes and large schools. That all changed as the wealthy German-speak-

ing Mennonites were mistrusted and then targeted during the war and the ensuing Russian Revolution.

Klassen explores the question of Mennonites and the use of violence. His factual description of Russian Mennonite involvement in the medical corps and how some Mennonites defended themselves during the anarchy after the Bolshevik Revolution leaves the issue of the use of force open-ended.

When it comes to the work of Mennonite Central Committee, Klassen shows his partiality. In the wake of the pillaging that depleted food stores and the severe droughts in 1921-22, thousands of Russian Mennonites were saved from the starvation experienced by so many Russian people because North American Mennonites sent them food and clothing. The documentary also expresses great appreciation for the Canadian Mennonite Board of Colonization that persuaded the Canadian government and the Canadian Pacific Railway to allow thousands of destitute Mennonites to migrate from Russia to Canada between 1923-27.

Remembering Russia is predominantly black-and-white footage, but it re-tells a compelling story that we must never forget.

—**Barb Draper**

only read about history, he personally experienced some of the most momentous historical events of the 20th century.

He lived through the terrible famine of 1932-33 in Ukraine, experienced the horrors of the Second World War in Europe, and endured the hardships of pioneer work in Paraguay. Thousands around him perished, but he survived. Like so many others of that era, Klassen felt that he had survived for a reason.

It was his responsibility to tell the story of the Mennonite people—of the suffering and hardships they endured, of their cultural and economic achievements, and, above all, of their faith. Given his skills and talents, he felt that he could best do this through the medium of film.

As a boy, Klassen saw his first films in the village school or local church in southern Ukraine. The Soviet propaganda films of the era showed smiling peasants working and singing in the fields, happy to be part of the new collective farms. Of course, the films were all lies, but the leaders knew that if

As a boy Klassen saw his first films in the village school or local church in southern Ukraine.

a story is told powerfully enough and repeated often enough, people will believe.

Later, while serving in the German army, Klassen was intrigued by the Nazi camera crews filming “documentaries” for the weekly newsreels back home. When he came to Canada, Klassen loved watch-

ing the beautiful Walt Disney nature documentaries. He started analyzing these films—with a stopwatch in hand—paying careful attention to timing, pacing and photographic techniques. He travelled to Hollywood studios to watch film crews in action. He observed closely, and said to himself, “I can do that.”

And he did! Over the past 30 years, Klassen has produced more than 50 documentary films that tell the story of his people—the Mennonite people of Russia, Paraguay, Mexico and Manitoba.

Klassen’s films are not made for commercial use on television or in theatres; they are intended to be

St. Jacobs, Ont.

Musical highlights lives of young Anabaptist reformers

Will and Ana (Fretz) Loewen realized their dream of re-telling the story of early Anabaptists when their musical, *The Shadows of Grossmünster*, debuted in May with six performances at the Church Theatre in St. Jacobs. Ever since their marriage, nearly two years ago, the couple has been working on this project.

Will, youth pastor at Tavistock (Ont.) Mennonite Church wrote the script and lyrics, while Ana, a church organist, composed the music. In re-telling this story they wanted to show that the Anabaptist reformers were young adults who struggled to follow the truth. Success for their venture was guaranteed when two weeks before the first performance, tickets to all performances were sold out.

The musical begins with the importance of the printing press and the religious situation in Europe in the 16th century, and goes on to portray the

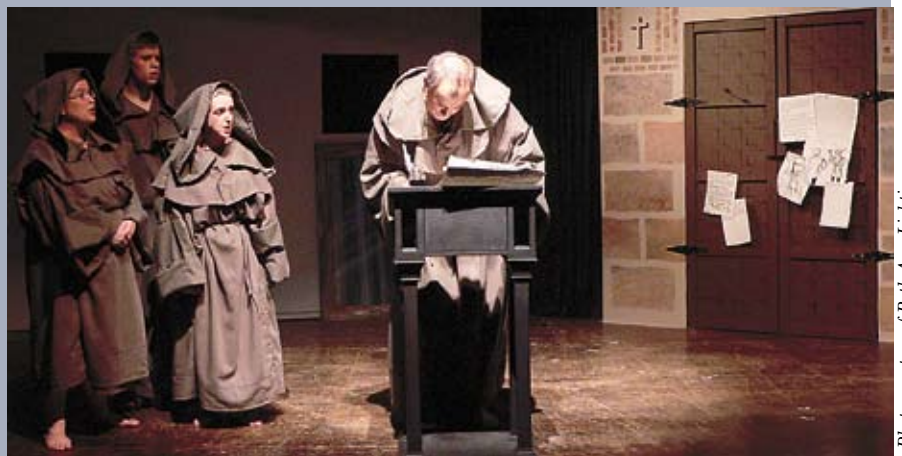
commitment of the young reformers, including Felix Manz, and their debates with Ulrich Zwingli in Zurich, Switzerland. After the young reformers re-baptize each other, they are arrested and thrown in prison. They manage to escape, but Manz is seized again and drowned in the nearby river when he refuses to recant.

The power of this dramatic work comes through the emphasis on faithfulness, especially as expressed in the songs. Although the Anabaptists are scattered, and some are martyred, the musical ends with a powerful song of hope.

The backdrop for this production was fairly simple with interchangeable windows. One side of the set depicted the front of a large church, reminding the audience that these events happened near the Grossmünster, a church in Zurich that played an important role in the Protestant Reformation. Except for the grey monks’ robes, the period costumes provided splashes of colour against the restrained backdrop.

The Loewens were fully involved in the production, Will as the narrator and Ana at the piano. Beth Ann Lichti acted as musical director and helped direct the cast of 10.

—Barb Draper



Martin Luther (played by Gary Horst) prepares to nail his 95 theses to the church door, surprising the monks (Sherri Martin-Carman, Reuben Eby and Heidi Wagler) in the musical *The Shadows of Grossmünster*.

Photo courtesy of Beth Ann Lichti

shown in churches, schools and community halls. His goal has never been to make money; in fact, he has spent thousands of dollars of his own money to finance these films. He has donated complimentary copies of his films to countless Mennonite schools and churches in Canada, South America

and Europe, so that they can educate their people—especially their young people—about their past.

Klassen’s most recent film, *Remembering Russia*, is available in VHS or DVD from Mennonite Central Committee.

—Peter Letkemann

Winnipeg

Klassen releases new book, honoured by authors group

The last few months have been busy for poet and author Sarah Klassen.

In May, she taught at the new Canadian Mennonite University writing school in Winnipeg; attended a book launch in Toronto for *Poetry as Liturgy*, an anthology of Canadian poets; and launched her most recent collection of short stories, *A Feast of Longing*, with readings in Saskatoon and Winnipeg.

Published by Coteau Books, *A Feast of Longing* is described as “an intimate, powerfully written, collection of stories featuring characters who seldom find themselves present in Canadian fiction—ordinary middle class people.”

“I wrote *A Feast of Longing* in the years after the publication of my first

book of stories, *The Peony Season*, in 2000,” Klassen says, explaining the creative process: “As I usually do, I was writing both poetry and fiction in that timespan.”

Klassen says the stories “are about

‘She reaches for these offerings and sets about arranging and rearranging the imperfect, incomplete bits and pieces of life.’

ordinary people, sometimes based on people I’ve known or read about, and always imagined and developed as I wrote. Most are Winnipeg stories, but three are set in Eastern Europe.” She credits author Sandra Birdsell for her help in bringing the stories “to a more polished and finished state.”

In the story “A Perfect Location,” one can see Klassen in the character Leila, who is described as “a writer for whom the world in all its mundane or spectacular manifestations offers up raw material, sometimes in huge chunks, sometimes in fragments so unremarkable they are easily overlooked. She reaches for these offerings and sets about arranging and rear-

ranging the imperfect, incomplete bits and pieces of life. She will add snippets of her modest knowledge, apply her imagination, hoping that facts and details can be transformed into fiction.”

Then on July 7, Klassen attended a banquet at the Canadian Authors Association (CAA) annual conference in Ottawa to receive the CAA/Jack Chalmers Award for her 2006 book of poetry, *A Curious Beatitude*. Along with the award went \$2,500 and a silver medal. CAA literary awards are given to works that “achieve literary excellence without sacrificing popular appeal.” This newest affirmation of her work came as a surprise because she was unaware that her publisher had entered her book in the competition.

Despite all this, Klassen is still a regular volunteer at the Mennonite Central Committee Thrift Store in Winnipeg.

—Betty L. Dyck



Photo by Patty Boge

Manitoba author and poet Sarah Klassen released *A Feast of Longing*, a new book of short stories, in May.

Toronto

Book situation alarming says MCC scholarship recipient

The North American educational system needs to make a greater effort to use children’s books that accurately portray East Asian people, says a Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Canada scholarship recipient who recently completed her research on multicultural books. Akane Nishimoto, recipient of the 2006 Canadian Japanese-Mennonite Scholarship, examined the collection of East Asian children’s literature in a Toronto public school library from the perspective of anti-racist methods of teaching.

Nishimoto, a student at York University in Toronto working towards a master of education degree in language, culture and teaching, selected an elementary school in one of the most culturally diverse neighbourhoods in Toronto. About 38 per cent of the student

population in this school is of East Asian descent. Yet from a collection of 1,183 picture books, only 3 per cent featured East Asian people.

“The accuracy and authenticity levels of many of the books are inadequate...and having any books that feature characters which ridicule or stereotype the physical features of



Nishimoto

a particular ethnicity is perhaps one book too many in a school library collection of today,” wrote Nishimoto in a report summarizing major findings of her research project.

“It is alarming to understand that this is the situation in one of the most culturally diverse school boards in North America which publicly displays attention to multicultural issues, and it poses sceptical concerns about the state of other school libraries throughout North America.”

—MCC Canada release

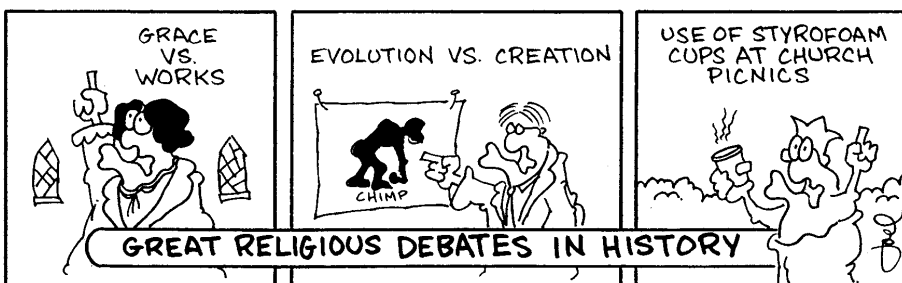
There is a fair amount of press these days about carbon offsets. Seems like a typically North American strategy: When faced with a crisis, buy something. For a set price, you can pay for a certificate that shows that somewhere in the world, somehow, someone is reducing greenhouse gas pollution on your behalf, to make up for what you produce directly and indirectly by using electricity, driving your car and purchasing consumer products. You can invest in the right-sized carbon offset and—abracadabra—claim to be carbon-neutral.

Sounds a lot like an old-fashioned indulgence, doesn't it? What would Martin Luther do with the notion of a carbon offset? Can you pay your way out of punishment for sins by purchasing the stored-up merits of others?

Lots of folks probably think of carbon offsets like indulgences. Once convinced of the reality of human impact on global warming, many people want to know what they can do—how can they gain clean hands, given the terrible impact of global warming on the global poor—without the sacrifice of altering their consumerist lifestyles. Carbon offsets look like a way to ease the guilt of driving or flying in a plane.

In reality, carbon offsets are part of a series of strategies for reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Everyone has a responsibility for reducing their emissions on their own. Energy economist Charles Komanoff reckons that without a lot of effort any North American household above the poverty line could cut its energy consumption by 25 percent in six months and save money in the process.

 Pontius' Puddle



Carbon offsets:

More than 21st century indulgences

After reducing what we can as promptly as we can, carbon offsets are a way of generating investment dollars for renewable energy, energy efficiency and reforestation projects that reduce—or soak up—greenhouse gas emissions elsewhere. We are part of a matrix, and not everyone can immediately give up their car, cancel their electrical service and live in a yurt (a circular dwelling covered in felt or animal skins). Voluntary carbon offsets are not cheap, and they are a part of accepting personal responsibility for the pollution we generate.

A better solution, in the long run, though, is to make the pollution costs of what we buy a part of the purchase price. No one could dodge responsibility for greenhouse gas emissions if we had a rational federal policy that guarantees the polluter pays.

Until the time that North Americans, through their elected representatives, decide to take collective responsibility for the global warming side-effects of our lifestyle choices, the only options available are voluntary ones, including reducing our consumption and investing in carbon offsets.

Can you pay your way out of punishment for sins by purchasing the stored-up merits of others?

Not everyone will purchase offsets, but if even a substantial minority does, we can generate a powerful signal to the markets that there is money to be made in producing the economic good of pollution reduction.

In the Evangelical Climate Initiative Campaign, we decided to offer a carbon offset in partnership with the highly regarded carbonfund.org—but only after asking participants to reduce what they can. At coolingcreation.org, interested folks learn about what they can do personally to reduce their carbon impact while waiting for federal action. Some may feel they have been granted an indulgence, but most recognize they are merely making a contribution to finding solutions.

There's a famous—perhaps apocryphal—story about a woman who complained to preacher Dwight L. Moody that she didn't care for his style of evangelism. He replied, "I agree with you. I don't like the way I do it either.

Tell me, how do you do it?" To which she admitted, "I don't do it." Moody then replied, "Then I like my way of doing it better than your way of not doing it."

I think it's the same with carbon offsets. A vocal set of nay-sayers doesn't like an imperfect, partial solution. Their objections are valid if the purchase of offsets creates a smug, self-satisfied citizenry that fails to advocate climate protection legislation. But I don't think it does. I think those who invest in offsets are more vocal and better informed about global warming and, in general, they are acting responsibly in reducing their own carbon emissions. They have just chosen to put their money where their mouth is.

—Rusty Pritchard

The author is a natural resource economist, the national director for outreach for the Evangelical Environmental Network, editor of Creation Care magazine, and adjunct faculty in environmental studies at Emory University.

Letters

MCC leader defends native speaker's message

Along with many other readers, we were dismayed to see the article entitled "Information session turns into angry harangue" in the June 11 edition of *Canadian Mennonite*, page 24. We saw this in stark contrast to previous positive coverage of aboriginal events and issues.

The article suggests that Sakoieta' Widrick never addressed the topic for the event. Perhaps he was addressing it all along and we were unable to hear. We would like to affirm Widrick

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.

and his message on land ownership. We also affirm the appropriateness of the anger he displayed to express the reality of Aboriginal Peoples, who continue to suffer great injustices.

We are aware of some of the work that has happened behind the scenes between *Canadian Mennonite*, the

host churches, and various people and groups involved since the article appeared in the June 11 issue. We understand and appreciate that *Canadian Mennonite* is working to respond in a respectful manner to the repercussions of printing this article.

We encourage *Canadian Mennonite*

MELISSA MILLER



Family ties

"Four hugs a day," cheers children's entertainer Charlotte Diamond, in a song I sang repeatedly when my son and his friends were young. Her bouncy tune promotes the joy of hugs and even gives instructions.

I feel blessed that my son and husband are generous with their hugs. It's easy for me to get my quota! My extended family also includes lots of good huggers. I am blessed as an adult to receive abundant hugs of greeting and farewell. I know I can count on these expressions of affection to let me know I am loved.

My recent experience as an interim pastor in a rural congregation was another place where I received many hugs. These expressions of affection and warmth often surprised me, and I was delighted by the exchange.

Churches have a gift to offer here, as well as families. Consider the benefits of hugging, which include reduced blood pressure and heart disease. Hugs also stimulate the release of hormones that reduce stress and promote well-being and relationship-bonding. Four hugs a day is good preventative medicine.

Theologian Miroslav Volf writes about hugs, albeit in a weightier manner, in his book, *Exclusion and Embrace*. Volf writes for Christians, encouraging us to follow Jesus' model of love of enemies, an attitude that involves a change in stance. Volf says that love of enemies means we turn from excluding those we mistrust, fear or hate, and we turn towards opening ourselves to an embrace, towards love of our enemies. Volf is writing about advanced hugging, we might say.

Drawing from Volf and Diamond, and my own experiences, I begin a four-part series on the four steps to a good hug. (These remarks are made within the context of

First step to a good hug

When we open our arms, we make ourselves vulnerable, and we signal that vulnerability to the other person.

seeking permission of the "huggee" and respecting personal boundaries. Hugs are not good if they're imposed!) This column considers Volf's first step—opening one's arms.

We signal our interest in a hug by opening our arms. Such a step communicates several things.

When we open our arms, we remove physical barricades.

For many of us, too much of the time, we carry our bodies

tensely, in a guarded and walled up manner. To open our arms is an expression of trust, a willingness to "let down our guard," and to give of ourselves and to receive from another. Such an opening offers a release from the tension of excessive protectiveness.

Our open arms indicate that we feel something is missing within ourselves. We express our desire for closeness with another in response to this inner yearning. We acknowledge that we are receptive to the gift of the other. We are created as social beings. Our identity is shaped and nourished by contact with others, physical contact as well as social contact. In fact, we need touch to survive and thrive. Our open arms communicate, "I need you."

When we open our arms, we make ourselves vulnerable, and we signal that vulnerability to the other person. It is a risky thing to say, "I need something from you." We are taking a chance because we do not know how the other will respond. As we stand with open arms, we communicate our interest in being close to the other, but we cannot force the other person's response. If we did, it wouldn't be a good hug.

Step 1 is opening our arms. And then we pause...which takes us to Step 2—waiting.

Melissa Miller (familyties@mts.net) is a pastor at Springstein Mennonite Church. She lives in Winnipeg and also reflects on family relationships as a counsellor and author.

to be a leader in orienting our broader Mennonite community on the path towards developing respectful and just relationships with our aboriginal neighbours.

—**Donald Peters, Winnipeg**

The writer is executive director of Mennonite Central Committee Canada.

Natives have no 'absolute claim' to Canada

Re: "Sakoieta' Widrick responds to article," and other letters, July 9, pages 8 to 11.

Most reflect the genuinely laudable Mennonite desire to be reconcilers in an arena of increasingly conflicted Canadian life. And even though most come to Widrick's defence, his own letter also makes clear why honest speech from all sides is more necessary than ever on the issues involved here.

Widrick has clearly embraced the notion that Canada's Aboriginal Peoples are owners of the land and that all those who have come to live here since the first Europeans set foot on this soil are intruders. But he must know that those who were here when the Europeans came also arrived here from elsewhere at one time. Moreover, as time passed, they too migrated into the territories of others and wrested it from those who with them could call themselves First Nations.

No one on this Earth has absolute claim to anything, much less the ground we walk upon. How can a 1784 treaty bind us today? We sojourn here for a time and then pass from the scene. However much natives in this country have suffered loss because of injustices brought on them by others, their cause is not helped by making absolute claims to land, as many natives now do.

Furthermore, the ideology that Widrick appears to embrace makes clear that natives must be paid huge redemptions for wrongs done to them in the past and amounts owing them for land on which others are unjustly living. To do that will merely compound the disaster happening to natives.

The only way many native people will pull themselves out of the hole in which they find themselves will be to take on the difficult task of working hard, rebuilding their families, starting enterprises and not simply waiting for payments that can support them. Even great treaty settlements won't solve their problems.

—**Harold Jantz, Winnipeg**

Militarism is highly addictive, destructive

We ban smoking in public places and strive to limit the promotion and availability of tobacco products because smoking is very addictive and destructive.

Similarly, militarism is highly addictive and destructive. There is an undeniable allure to military machinery and bravado. From the crisp uniforms to the grit of combat soldiers, there is an ancient mystique about "fighting men" (and women). We applaud their honour and sacrifice, and for good reason approve of their desire to serve their country. Military tools—tanks, jet fighters—are high tech, and we are impressed by the power they possess. Moreover, just as Hollywood once glamorized smoking, we too are being seduced into believing the glorified myth that we must fight and kill for our freedom, and that our nation's enemy is a bad guy worthy of destruction.

And, just as nicotine calms and stimulates, militarism calms us with the belief that we are safer if we are militarily powerful. And that sense of power also stimulates us into asserting our will on others—using brute force, instead of peaceful alternatives. It should be noted that history teaches us that enhanced military force rarely goes unused.

Once firmly in place, it is very difficult to dismantle because of its sway over politicians. In addition, the militarism addiction persuades us to put our faith in brute force, instead of God. Faith loses and fear prevails, as love, justice and righteousness are slaughtered on the altar of arrogant self-preservation.

Some symptoms of drifting into militarism addiction include a jet fighter fly-over at a football game, military adoration at a hockey game or accepting military recruitment in high schools (see "Mennonite pastors oppose military co-op program," March 5, page 25). I lived for many years in an addicted nation—the U.S.—and I am passionate about being a pacifist. But I'm not an idealist; we will always have a military.

However, because of its addictive and destructive nature, let us treat militarism like we treat tobacco products. Let's not promote the military culture and let's keep it out of sight and away from the public. Moreover, let us respect the people involved in the military while we strive to "kick the habit."

—**Gordon Allaby, Osler, Sask.**

The writer is pastor of Osler Mennonite Church.

MCC actively mounting militarism resistance

Re: Gerhard Neufeld's June 11 letter, "Increasing militarism negatively impacts kids," page 15).

Be assured that Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) has been well aware of, and connected with, the situation Neufeld mentions. Here in Ontario, we are responding to a call from pastors and youth leaders to act. We are currently recruiting resisters to military recruitment.

Here is what we're actively asking our churches: "Have you noticed the new active militarism in Canada? Have you heard how the armed forces are aggressively recruiting in high schools across Ontario?"

Walking Jesus' path of non-violence is our journey and we're looking for people to assist the soon-to-be hired MCC Ontario "countering militarism advocate" in walking with constituent youths, parents, pastors and mentors as we resist increased militarism.

This initiative is in cooperation with MCC Canada, and will develop resources to be used in all our provinces.

—**Tim Schmucker, Toronto**

The author is MCC Ontario's peace education coordinator.

Labelling does Christ a disservice

In response to Phil Wagler's "The real inconvenient truth" column (April 16, page 13), his skewed labelling is troubling. Those genuinely concerned about the climate do not strike me as "weather gods." Humans have, and are, changing weather. Weather is a material thing and can be affected. Clear-cutting the Brazilian rain forest has affected the weather. In some instances, desertification is caused by human heedlessness.

Second, labeling leads us to denigrate good deeds unless they're done through our pious grid. It is not careful Christian thinking to exclude good acts by labelling them "pagan" or "secular humanist." There is nothing pagan about concern for our material world or the debate about proposals. This easy labelling also breeds "self-righteousness."

Jesus never discounted anyone doing good or caring about an issue. So while the biblical virtues Wagler lists are right on, Jesus would not have needed to enhance these by denigrating the concerns of others, no matter how many popular labels were at hand. Never would Christ have labelled anyone who cared sincerely about anything—hunger, legalism, self-righteousness, Darfur, the environment—as pagan.

Labelling is a "turtle" reaction: Take a quick look "out there," and if it doesn't fit your piety, curl into your shell. Why can Christians not rejoice in all those who care and do good, including talking about climate change? For wherever there is creativity and good is done, there is the Spirit of the Christ also.

—**Jack Dueck, Waterloo, Ont.**

Reader responds to cost of ministry claim

Re: "To pledge or not to pledge" column, June 25, page 14.

Darren Pries-Klassen writes: "Ministry costs money. Good ministry costs more!"

My response: "Oh puleeze!"

—**Rudy Kehler, Hope, B.C.**

Mennonites shouldn't become a 'Bible cult'

I found Phil Wagler's "The Bible as fiction" column (June 11, page 13) puzzling and unsatisfying. Wagler needs to inform himself on the meaning of "fiction," for starters. Fiction invents a world, characters and circumstances that happen around these characters, and invents their responses. In good literature, this inventing is done in the interest of truth. Some of the great messages to humankind have been taught us best through the medium of "fiction," including Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*. I would remind Wagler that "fiction" was one of Jesus' favourite teaching techniques.

Presuming that he meant to say, "The Bible as something we no longer give due reverence to," what does he mean? Does he long to have us become a "Bible cult," a people who worship the icon as well as the master whom it purports to reveal?

If we assign too much unabashed, uncritical reverence to the body of writing we now call the Holy Bible, what's to prevent us from developing bizarre end times scenarios that distract and divert us from Christ's mission?

Christians should be knowledgeable about the Bible, as Wagler says, but they should also be thoughtful and critical readers of its contents, and be able to weigh its various and sometimes contradictory messages against their acquaintance with Christ, whom they follow.

Scriptures are a mine where nuggets can be found to enhance the faith of a believer. Let's just not forget that similar nuggets are found all around us—in the natural world, in the innocent eyes of children, in the mysterious intertwining of human hearts and, above all, in the incredible power of life-giving love, the holy, tangible "revelation" of God.

Let's not revert to worshipping the icon again. That wouldn't be the answer to the malaise that Wagler seems to see overtaking us like a runaway freight train. And let's not equate fiction with untruth. We'll have every writer from Samuel Richardson to Rudy Wiebe and Sandra Birdsell on our case!

—**George Epp, Rosthern, Sask.**

'Litany of wrongs' needs repeating often

In response to the article "Information session turns into angry harangue," June 11, page 24, a Mennonite Central Committee worker on the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota was once told, "Live with us for five years, and then maybe you can start to ask intelligent questions."

I only lived in Pine Ridge for three years. I do not claim to be "one of the converted" because I do not yet understand the questions. I have had the privilege of witnessing a very small part of the anger, as expressed by Sakoieta' Widrick and many others, but I shift so quickly to believing that I can create the answers that I need to be reminded regularly of the "litany of wrongs."

Hundreds of years of history aren't easy to change, at least according to singer Bob Marley. Perhaps the first step for me is to respectfully listen to the anger and accept that I may not be the one coming up with the solution.

—**Hardy Groening, Winnipeg**

Can Winkler survive Wal-Mart?

Having recently watched the Wal-Mart documentary, *The High Cost of Low Prices*, I couldn't help but think back to Ken Reddig's review of Hans Werner's book, *Living Between Worlds: A History of Winkler* ("Winkler succeeds in 'living between worlds,'" June 11, page 11).

While I have not read Werner's book, the idea of "living between worlds" is something many Mennonites resonate with, particularly when it comes to economic policy. Industrial expansion in Winkler may be enviable, but the shift in recent years from locally owned businesses to multinational box stores like Wal-Mart presents new, complex challenges to this close-knit community.

The documentary follows Wal-Mart's negative impact on local economies, particularly smaller towns. Winkler has successfully endured depression, drought and war, but the high cost of low prices is a formidable challenge worth watching closely.

Perhaps Werner is interested in writing a sequel.

—**Loren Braul, Kelowna, B.C.**

Denver, Col.

DOOR opens for student service

During Easter break, a group of 10 youths and five adults from Bergthal Mennonite Church in Didsbury, Alta., participated in the MC U.S.A. program, Discovering Opportunities for Outreach and Reflection (DOOR), based in Denver.

Prior to leaving for Denver, our group participated in several activities and discussions to help us get ready for our week away. I think what really helped our group was our realistic expectations for the week. We weren't out to save the world, just to learn more about the problems that plague the inner city, and to learn more about ourselves within the context of the group.

As part of this week-long experience, we were divided into several groups and spent time in different placements around the city—at food banks, pantries and soup kitchens, as well as more personal interaction with the poor. In these placements, we were able to interact with other volunteers and the people who came for those services, and serve God in many different ways. At the food bank, we sorted food and distributed it; we prepared and served meals to the homeless at soup kitchens; others played with young children as part of a school program.

After a hard day of work, our groups came back to First Mennonite Church in Denver, where we stayed throughout the week. There, we participated in group worship and reflection. These reflections included speakers from



Jimmy, a formerly homeless man who now volunteers with various street ministries in Denver, Col., jammed with Bergthal (Alta.) Mennonite Church youths Allison Goerzen, Sarah Garland and Ang Loewen.

Photo courtesy of Sarah Garland

the city, including a former homeless man named Jimmy, and Rev. Clyde Nichols, who started one of the soup kitchens some of our groups worked at.

"[They] helped us to understand the homeless better, instead of believing the stereotypes we've grown up with," said Barb Heidebrecht, one of the sponsors. "For some, it totally changed their viewpoint and thus they got more out of what happened for the rest of the week."

At a Sunday service after returning to Didsbury, Angie Loewen, a Grade

11 student, commented on how her life has changed since DOOR: "After seeing how the poor in the inner city live, I have a new appreciation for the everyday things I take for granted."

Our group grew in our friendships with each other, and in our personal relationships with God. Many of our group came away with a better understanding of homelessness and how they can be part of the solution through the breaking down of stereotypes.

—Bergthal Mennonite Youth release by **Sarah Garland**

On June 7, Parkwood Mennonite Home in Waterloo, Ont., broke ground for Phase Three of its graduated care facility, to be completed in the fall of 2008. Phase Three includes a community centre, wellness and therapy centre, and assisted and independent living suites. Pictured from left to right are: contractor Rick Kuepfer, architect David Heintz, Sandra Hammer from the Local Health Integration Network, Kitchener-Waterloo MPP Elizabeth Witmer, Parkwood administrator Deborah Dueck, Parkwood board chair Dennis Dueck and Parkwood executive director Tim Kennel.



Photo by Dave Rogalski



Photo courtesy of Sue Steiner

Miriam Frey, left, was thanked and blessed by members of the Mennonite Spiritual Directors of Eastern Canada for her pioneering work in forming and leading the group over the past seven years. All of the members present poured water into Frey's cup as a form of blessing; then Frey poured water from her full cup into a saucer, symbolizing the blessing she is to others through her work of spiritual direction and teaching. Frey currently serves as chair of the ecumenical Spiritual Directors of Ontario and as a member of the coordinating council of Spiritual Directors International, and she continues as treasurer of the Mennonite Spiritual Directors of Eastern Canada.

Ruth Boehm, pastor of Faith Mennonite Church in Leamington, Ont., and a small group from the church, organized the congregation's first "show and shine" for car buffs, held on May 6. Not a typical church event, Boehm said the car show grew from her visits with members of the congregation, many of whom she learned were automobile enthusiasts, a number of whom were on the congregation's fringe. The show and shine seemed to her a natural way to bring those on the fringes of the church together, and have some fun at the same time. In total, there were 21 automobiles, a motorcycle and a tractor at the event. Hot dogs and a classic rock concert by the church's worship band rounded out the activities.



Photo by Norit Wiebe

Church snap shots

Paul Wideman of Community Mennonite Fellowship, Drayton, Ont., shared about the generosity found at Listowel Mennonite Church during the May 31 Woolwich Grey cluster stop on MC Eastern Canada's story-gathering tour for the Generosity Project, an initiative to build healthy local congregations through the spirituality of generosity.



Photo by Dave Rogalsky

Speakers at the third annual Glimmers of Hope-for-AIDS event organized by Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Alberta included, from left, Canadian lawyer and AIDS activist Louise Binder, who noted that, while aboriginals make up 3 percent of Canada's population, they account for 10 percent of the country's AIDS patients; Marry Trumbo, coordinator of orphan care in Mugumu, Tanzania, who contracted AIDS from her second husband; Kerrel McKay, a 22-year-old school teacher from Jamaica, who cared for her father after he was infected with AIDS until his death; and Canadian Olympic speed skating medalist Cindy Klassen, who introduced a video of her recent trip to Ethiopia and Nigeria, where she visited several MCC AIDS projects.



MCC Alberta photo

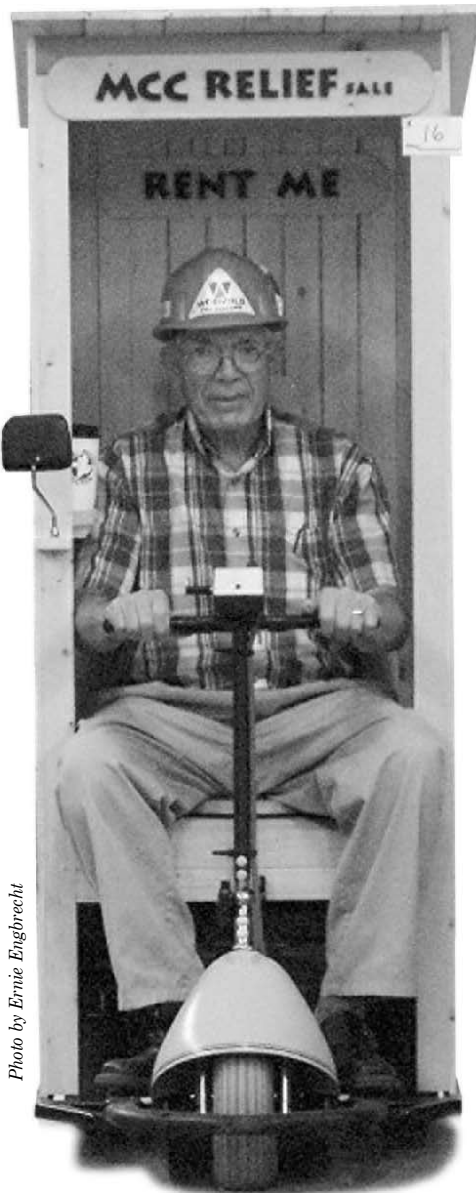


Photo by Ernie Engbrecht



Sunny South News photo by Kathy Bly

Margaret Wall and Janet Whitmore fry up rollkuchen (Russian Mennonite fritters) in the new portable kitchen during the Mennonite Central Committee Relief Sale and Auction in Coaldale, Alta., last month. The kitchen now takes up a dual purpose for MCC and Mennonite Disaster Service (MDS). A joint project between the two organizations, the kitchen will be used by MCC at the annual relief sales in Alberta and the rest of the time will be available for MDS projects across the region.

In order to enliven this year's Mennonite Central Committee Relief Sale in Coaldale, Alta., members of the Lethbridge "Menno Pause Gang," which meets every Tuesday morning at Tim Hortons in Lethbridge toyed with Fred Unruh's idea of "remodelling" a scooter that could be sold in Coaldale this year and then, like many quilts in the annual auction, resold next year at some other sale. John T. Klassen donated pine paneling, while Walter Franz offered to weld a frame to mount the outhouse on the scooter, and Henry Redekop and Bill Friesen provided transportation to the sale, where it was "modelled" by Unruh. Despite some criticism that the scooter was totally inappropriate for an MCC Relief Sale, it brought in \$3,000 from one of the members of the "Biffy Bidders" coalition. Overall, the Coaldale sale set a new record of \$195,000.

Calgary

Viewing the environment through multi-faith eyes

As the aroma of *zwiebach* (Russian Mennonite buns) and samosas wafted through Foothills Mennonite Church one June evening, about 200 people listened intently to three faith presentations on the topic of “Living Simply and its Impact on our Environment.”

Presentations were made by Foothills Mennonite pastor Doug Klassen (Christian), University of Calgary religious studies professor Eliezer Segal (Jewish) and Salman Khalid, prairie regional president of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community.

“There has been a lot of recent discussion about the environment in the realms of science, but very little discussion among religious communities, even though we feel we have something to say,” Klassen said. He described Mennonites’ historical connection to the land through farming, as well as their traditional desire to live a life of simplicity in obedience to the example of Jesus.

Klassen outlined a Christian environmental ethic consisting of good stewardship, contentment and a recognition of the inter-relationship between Christians and God’s creation. He admitted, though, that contemporary Mennonites, in the midst of a very affluent culture, have perhaps forgotten the importance of these principles.

“We have not grasped our divine assignment to revere the creative work of God and to do our part to sustain life on this planet,” Klassen said, suggesting that “it has been edged aside by our relentless pursuit of material abundance.”

Segal walked the audience through an assortment of rabbinic texts related to caring for the Earth. He also suggested that addressing contemporary environmental issues is not so much a religious responsibility as it is a civic responsibility, one that appeals to people’s common sense and their own self-interest.

Both Segal and Klassen agreed that religious communities have been hesitant to speak on matters of environmental responsibility for fear

of appearing to be motivated simply by “the latest fad.”

Khalid summarized the Quran’s teachings on wealth, luxurious living and the environment, prescribing overall principles of moderation and contentment.

While the environment is an important topic in and of itself, the underlying goal of the colloquium was to foster dialogue between devout people of different faiths. To that end, many people who attended felt it was a successful first step in bringing people together who do not usually carry on a dialogue.

Since there was the possibility that such an interfaith dialogue could

open the door to watering down the Christian faith, Klassen acknowledged that he was initially hesitant about participating in the event. “I was certainly apprehensive at first,” he said. “But I also realized...we can try to avoid it or we can show Christian hospitality and love. He said he was compelled to go ahead with the colloquium after being reminded of Peter’s admonition to “*always be ready to make your defence to anyone who demands from you and accounting for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and reverence*” (I Peter 3:15-16, NRSV).

—Rob Van Dyke

The author is associate pastor at Foothills Mennonite Church, Calgary.

Winnipeg

CMU wins national commuter challenge

When it comes to sustainable commuting, Canadian Mennonite University (CMU) is number one in Canada among post-secondary institutions.

The university attained that distinction last month during the Go for Green national commuter challenge, a program that aims to increase the awareness of the benefits of sustainable commuting and to encourage Canadians to walk, cycle, take transit, carpool or tele-work, instead of driving alone to get to work.

According to Go for Green national program coordinator Carolyn Bourque, CMU “achieved the highest percentage of participation among all participating post-secondary institutions in Canada.”

Altogether, 34 percent of CMU’s employees participated in the challenge.

For admissions counsellor Julie Rempel, who organized CMU’s involvement in the challenge, the distinction illustrates the university’s “commitment to caring for the Earth” and builds on its long history of staff who bike, walk or take the bus to get to work.

CMU also sponsors a bike co-op called Sanctoral Cycle, which provides



CMU photo by John Longhurst

Thirty-four of CMU’s staff, including Julie Rempel, took part in last month’s Go for Green national commuter challenge, earning the university the highest award in Canada among post-secondary institutions. Rempel organized CMU’s participation.

staff and students with free access to tools and workspace for fixing bikes, access to affordable shop rates, parts and accessories, and a 15 percent discount at a local bike store.

The commuter challenge takes place each June during Environment Week. It finds communities and workplaces across Canada competing for the highest percentage of participation during that period.

—CMU release by John Longhurst

Kitchener, Ont.

Strawberries meet carbon footprints at first annual 'summit'

Strawberries and whipped cream were followed by brainstorming for environmental action during the Strawberry Summit held at Rockway Mennonite Church last month.

On June 21, about two dozen Mennonites from Waterloo Region gathered in the church's backyard for a time of socializing and strategizing about how they could work together to promote faithful responses to the environmental crisis.

"There's so much gloom about the environment these days," commented Scott Brubaker-Zehr, one of the organizers. "We wanted to deal with the real issues, but we also wanted to set a tone of hopefulness and camaraderie. That's what the strawberries were all about."

Earlier in the spring, Waterloo area Mennonites celebrated Earth Day with an encouragement to attend the church closest to them by walking, biking or carpooling. The Strawberry Summit was planned as a follow-up event to encourage further environmental action.

During the summit, participants shared what their home congregations have been doing about the environment—everything from conducting an energy audit on the church building and organizing Sunday school classes on the environment, to encouraging people to make lifestyle changes to reduce their ecological footprint.

The group then considered ways

of collaborating on practical projects such as rain barrel promotions, solar installations and a congregational carbon tax fund, as well as bigger-picture initiatives such as advocating to regional and national governments for environmental policy changes.

"Our conversation ended with a lot of forward-looking energy," reflected Matthew Bailey-Dick, another organizer. "God is really agitating within our churches these days, and the environmental crisis seems to provoke a good mixture of modest and quite radical responses. Hopefully, we can really work together in a positive way."

Organizers hope to stage similar gatherings in the coming year, including a Pumpkin Summit in October, a Pickle Summit in February and another Strawberry Summit next June. —A Strawberry Summit release



Photo by Matthew Bailey-Dick

Bob Wildfong of Erb Street Mennonite Church, Waterloo, Ont. helps himself to strawberries and whipped cream at the aptly named environmental Strawberry Summit at Rockway Mennonite Church, Kitchener, Ont., last month.

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Transitions

Births/Adoptions

Adrian—Alexander

Solomon Copithorne (b. June 10, 2007), to Michelle Copithorne and Carl Adrian, Foothills Mennonite, Calgary.

Claypole—Chelsea Grace

Gibson (b. June 22, 2007), to Cory and Charlotte Claypole, Poole Mennonite, Milverton, Ont.

Corlis-Fretz—Zoe Anaïs

(b. May 24, 2007), to Tim Corlis and Sara Fretz, Stirling Avenue Mennonite, Kitchener, Ont.

DeGroot—Zavi Braun

(b. June 5, 2007), to Jennifer deGroot and Will Braun, Hope Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Flaming—Owenn Tyler

(b. June 3, 2007), to Tyler and Jody Flaming, North Leamington United Mennonite, Ont.

Friesen Waldner—Katriel

Heidi (b. June 19, 2007), to David and Lanette Friesen Waldner, Nairn Mennonite, Ailsa Craig, Ont.

Froese—Regan Hunter

(b. May 24, 2007), to Jared and Kim Froese, Winkler Bergthaler Mennonite, Man.

Hamm—David

(b. June 23, 2007), to Ernie Hamm and Alison Li, Toronto United Mennonite.

Janssen—Luke Jonah

Rudolf (b. June 26, 2007), to Corey and Tanya Janssen, First Mennonite, Calgary.

Kasdorf—Samuel Michael

(b. March 10, 2007), to Michael and Stephanie Kasdorf, Douglas Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Nickerson—Ella Mackenzie

(b. June 11, 2007), to Kristin and Nathan Nickerson, Sargent Avenue Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Pendergrass—William

Walter (b. June 2, 2007), to Darryl and Kristina Pendergrass, Mississauga Mennonite, Ont., in Tallassee, Ala.

Schroeder Kipfer—Lena

Kate (b. July 3, 2007), to Bryan and Anita Schroeder Kipfer, Carman Mennonite, Man.

Snyder—Andrew (b. July 3, 2007), to Ben and Kim Snyder, Bloomingdale Mennonite, Ont.

Stafford—Mikayla

Margaret Colleen (b. March 31, 2007), to Laura and Richard Stafford, Avon Mennonite, Stratford, Ont.

Thiessen—Dora Mae

(b. June 30, 2007), to Mike and Kelli Thiessen, Carman Mennonite, Man.

Tiessen—Lilly Brianne

(b. June 19, 2007), to Lisa Thiessen, North Leamington United Mennonite, Ont.

Unrau-Woelk—Jesse

Andrew (b. May 30, 2007), to Catherine and Andrew Unrau-Woelk, Stirling Avenue Mennonite, Kitchener, Ont.

Weber—Emma Grace

(b. May 25, 2007), to Andrew and Erin Weber, Wilmot Mennonite, Baden, Ont.

Wideman—Micah Neil

Lennox (b. June 3, 2007), to Greg Wideman and Megan Lennox, Avon Mennonite, Stratford, Ont.

Wiebe—Kent Patrick

(b. July 13, 2007), to Rod and Becky Wiebe, Emmanuel Mennonite, Abbotsford, B.C.

Marriages

Bannack/Janzen—Clark Bannack and Kendell Janzen (Tofield Mennonite, Alta.), at Tofield Mennonite, July 7, 2007.

Bechtel/Wilhelm—Kimberley Bechtel and Steve Wilhelm, Stirling Avenue Mennonite, Kitchener, Ont., June 23, 2007.

Bueckert/Dick—Jennifer Bueckert and Jonathan Dick, North Leamington United Mennonite, Ont., June 9, 2007.

Chernusky/Penner—Verna Chernusky and Jacob Penner, at Waterloo-Kitchener United Mennonite, June 23, 2007.

Dyck/Loewen—Jeanette Dyck and Paul Loewen, Douglas Mennonite, Winnipeg, April 27, 2007.

Enns/Penner—Luke Enns and Ang Penner, Douglas Mennonite, Winnipeg, June 21.

Faust/Wideman—Emily Faust and Stephen Wideman (Brussels Mennonite, Ont.), at the

Wideman home, June 23, 2007.

Hewitt/Oesch—Wendy

Hewitt and Doug Oesch, Wellesley Mennonite, Ont., June 9, 2007.

Kampen/Robinson—

Christine Kampen and David Robinson, Douglas Mennonite, Winnipeg, May 5, 2007.

Neufeld/Reive—Tom

Neufeld and Melissa Reive, North Leamington United Mennonite, Ont., May 25, 2007.

Deaths

Burgetz—Velma, 75 (b. Sept. 13, 1931; d. April 28, 2007), Stirling Avenue Mennonite, Kitchener, Ont.

Carillo—Frieda (nee Sawatsky), 66 (b. Nov. 9, 1940; d. July 9, 2007), Oak Lake (Man.) Mennonite, in Fort St. John, B.C.

Dick—Margarete, 85 (b. Feb. 12, 1922; d. July 5, 2007), Waterloo-Kitchener United Mennonite, Ont.

Janzen—Agnes (nee Wiens), 87 (d. July 4, 2007), Bethany Mennonite, Virgil, Ont.

Janzen—Helene, 93 (b. March 5, 1914; d. May 26, 2007), Waterloo-Kitchener United Mennonite.

Loewen—Luise, 94 (b. Aug. 22, 1912; d. May 4, 2007), Douglas Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Nafziger—Melvin Jantzi, 83 (b. July 11, 1923; d. July 1, 2007), Poole Mennonite, Milverton, Ont.

Rempel—John, 100 (d. June 22, 2007), Winkler Bergthaler Mennonite, Man.

Rempel—Helen, 73 (d. June 26, 2007), Winkler Bergthaler Mennonite, Man.

Sawatsky—Helen, 88 (d. June 24, 2007), Toronto United Mennonite.

Steckly—Ben, 14 (b. Oct. 31, 1992; d. July 6, 2007), son of Ed and Rose Steckly, Riverdale Mennonite, Millbank, Ont.

Thiessen—Erika, 83 (d. July 5, 2007), Toronto United Mennonite.

Baptisms

Avon Mennonite, Stratford, Ont.—Melanie Dow, Joel Mason, Sam Mason, Jamie

Paul, Elizabeth Piper, Elizabeth Thomas, Tianna Voort, June 10, 2007.

Douglas Mennonite,

Winnipeg—Maria Dueck, Josh Enns, Bryson Harms, Kristin Klassen, Jillian Martens, Amanda Pauls, Dana Sawatzky, Carla Van Doeselaar, May 27, 2007; Steven Heidebrecht, June 3, 2007.

Eden Mennonite,

Chilliwack, B.C.—Alison Adam, Trieneke Penner, June 10, 2007.

Foothills Mennonite,

Calgary—Tamara Sawatzky, Josh Friesen, May 27, 2007.

Harrow Mennonite, Ont.—Patrick Penner, June 10, 2007.

Listowel Mennonite, Ont.—Ruth Weber, Adam Cressman, Jeremy Carter, Tracy Carter, Katie Lichti, Joel Leis, Mike Ellison, June 10, 2007.

North Leamington

United Mennonite, Ont.—Kriangkrai Chaima, Prayad Champasee, Jason Ecker, Uthai Inchanti, Yuenyong Jampasri, Wasan Jansree, Phanakon Khokhum, Ruang Lodthon, Jordan Neufeld, Wiangchai Roengchaiyaphum, Jaran Seedee, Yongyut Takieng, Gary Taves, June 3, 2007.

Nutana Park Mennonite, Saskatoon—Tam Ha, June 24, 2007.

Peace Mennonite,

Richmond, B.C.—Francis Cheng, Alice Kwong, Jeffrey Ens, Peter Kroeker, Bill Lumsdon, Katrina Niebuhr, Nicholas Niebuhr, Michael Wu.

Sargent Avenue Mennonite, Winnipeg—Randy Enns,

Karen Ens, Hannah Hildebrand, May 27, 2007.

Stirling Avenue Mennonite, Kitchener, Ont.—James Hruđen, Chris Litwiller, Eric Martin, May 27, 2007.

Wilmot Mennonite, Baden, Ont.—Tessa Weber, Chevy Kastner, June 24, 2007.

Winkler Bergthaler

Mennonite, Man.—Amanda Enns, Vanessa Goertzen, June 3, 2007.

Word of Life Mennonite, Calgary—Yesenia Gonzalez, Carlos Torres, May 19, 2007.

Mennonite Church Canada

Prayer and praise requests

Please pray and offer praise for:

- Tim and Cindy Buhler, Witness workers in Macau, now on North American ministry, who ask for prayer for the ministry team that teaches in the after-school tutoring time at Macau Mennonite Church. Please pray that the love of God would impact the families involved in this ministry and community surrounding the church as they experience the healing gospel of Jesus Christ.
- Mennonite Church Canada Native Ministry, that pastors will be found for several native congregations. Pray for wisdom for these congregations as they discern the gifts with which God has blessed them.
- The family of George and Tobia Veith, Witness workers in Macau, as they grieve the death of George's father, Franz Veith, who died in Winnipeg on July 8. Please also remember Tobia and her colleague, Treasure Chow, as they carry on ministry in Macau during this time.
- Donna and Loren Entz, Witness workers in Burkina Faso, who praise God as they spend time with their daughter Aisha, who is visiting them for the summer. Please pray for the Entzes as they continue their work of preserving the language and culture of the Samogho people, and as they communicate the stories of Scripture in indigenous languages.

—Hinke Loewen-Rudgers

Mennonite Church Eastern Canada

\$10 give-away project takes flight

MC Eastern Canada's Generosity project dinners are

done. Marilyn Rudy-Froese, pastor of Stirling Avenue Mennonite Church, writes that she was encouraged to put her congregation's story into the context of other congregations in her cluster, hearing what was working well and where the challenges are.

One of the ideas circulated is called "The way of the wild goose." Congregations are encouraged to give each person a \$10 bill with a card explaining that they are to be extravagantly generous with the money. As Rudy-Froese read the information, her thoughts were stimulated by the possibilities and ways to nurture and inspire generosity. "What if we, as a church, would give money to the members of the congregation? It seemed bold and foolish. Where would the money come from?"

At church council that evening she presented the idea, telling the council that she didn't know where the money would come from, and she recognized that it was a significant sum of money.

"The vision caught on," she says. "Someone said we could use undesignated bequest money for this project. We decided that, instead of giving each adult a \$10 bill at the outdoor service, we would give each household \$10 and give each child a toonie. Then in the fall, we would use a series of Sundays to give each youth and adult a \$10 bill, dividing the congregation up alphabetically. We are thinking about having the generosity theme used in various ways in our congregational life, perhaps watching the movie *Pay it Forward*, and inviting people to share their experiences in giving away the money."

Rudy-Froese believes this to be a truly Spirit-inspired and driven vision: "I think the idea of the church giving its members money is so surprising that it can't be anything but led by the Spirit."

Mennonite Church Manitoba

Steinbach youths back to Manigotagan

Youths from Steinbach Mennonite Church have been bringing a week-long summer program to Manigotagan since 1997 and the youths show no signs of waning. During the week of Aug. 14 to 19, about a dozen young people will spend the week working and playing with children aged four to 14 in Manigotagan, a two-hour car ride north of Steinbach.

Kayla Thiessen, a Grade 12 graduate who plans to attend the University of Manitoba this fall, is joining the team for a second year. "It is a sacrifice well worth making," she said when asked about giving up summer employment.

Youth pastor Randy Hildebrand will accompany and lead the group. "Increasingly, we want to see our relationship with Manigotagan as a partnership," he said. "We are trying to do more exchanges."

The youth group from Manigotagan has come to Steinbach several times and Steinbach Mennonite has brought a Christmas program and joined the native church in worship activities several times.

Camps with Meaning releases CD

Mennonite Church Manitoba's Camps With Meaning has released a new CD called *Circle of God's People*.

The 22 homegrown songs, collected over the past 15 years, result from a difficulty in finding songs that enhance the camp's Bible teaching, writes Darryl Neustaedter Barg in the liner notes.

While a few individual staff had already written music specifically for Camps with

Meaning in the 1990s, the first intentional songwriting effort took place in 2000. Now, staff gather annually to write songs.

Once written, the songs are sent out to Camp Koinonia, Camp Moose Lake and Camp Assiniboia, to be used in worship. Some songs are never sung and some become summer staples. Most of the recordings stay true to how the songs would sound at camp, using only voices, acoustic guitars and hand drums.

—Bucky Driedger

Mennonite Church Saskatchewan

Eigenheim gearing up for fall

Eigenheim Mennonite Church expects a busy fall season.

According to pastor Allan Friesen, the congregation is planning a Missions Sunday with MC Canada Witness worker Tim Froese on Oct. 21. A week later, on Oct. 28, Friesen will be ordained.

Beginning Nov. 3, a two-week mission trip to Uruguay to visit the Mennonite Studies Center will involve three church members; Friesen, along with a teenager and a second adult, will make the trip to connect with the centre that Eigenheim supports.

Following the trip, a long-awaited church retreat is being planned for Nov. 17 and 18 at Shekinah Retreat Centre.

Mennonite Church Alberta

Valaqua hosts heritage retreat

Camp Valaqua hosted the annual heritage retreat (formerly known as the seniors retreat) in early June. Approximately 35 people attended, some bringing RVs and others using the camp's accommodations.

Continued on page 28

MC Alberta *From page 28*

Jake Wiebe, former pastor of First Mennonite Church, Calgary, spoke on a theme of “joyous Christian living.”

The highlight of the retreat was the 30-voice Corpus Christi Male Choir performance. According to organizer Dave Neufeld, the “voices filled the building. It was really great.” Neufeld noted that the camp has already been booked for next year’s retreat, which will again be held in the first week of June.

Insufficient registration numbers resulted in the last-minute cancellation of the June men’s retreat, scheduled to be held at Camp Valaqua.

Conference pastor Jim Shantz, while disappointed at the outcome, was not surprised. “There didn’t seem to be enough interest,” he said, recalling past men’s retreats

as worthwhile events.

Event organizer Marvin Baergen, missions facilitator for MC Canada, welcomes comments about the future of the men’s retreat at mbaergen@mennonitechurch.ca.

**Mennonite Church
British Columbia**

**Squeah dream team
releases findings**

After extensive brainstorming and interviews with constituents, a “dream team” commissioned to study the future of Camp Squeah has published its findings.

The Mennonite Church B.C. Camp Committee had commissioned a group consisting of committee members, some Camp Squeah staff and a number of members from various MC B.C. churches for this purpose. They also received

input from those attending the MC B.C. delegate sessions in February.

The idea was to envision a clean slate and dream big, and then see what it would take to get there, said dream team members.

While Camp Squeah continues strongly in its original mission to minister to children at summer camp in the areas of Bible lessons, crafts, swimming and other outdoor activities, it now has expanded to accommodate usage by many other school and private groups. The dream team considered both the facility and program spaces required to serve a variety of groups, while remaining true to its mission of serving as a place to celebrate God’s creation, and to build and support relationships with God and community.

Some of the areas consid-

ered for expansion or improvement include lodge sleeping accommodations, outdoor activities facilities, meeting and program spaces, and parking. The dream team noted that increased staffing needs as a result of any expansion program would have to be considered.

A detailed report can be read online at squeah.com; follow the “Squeah News” link.

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.

WILLARD METZGER



From our leaders

As chair of Witness Council, I have done a lot of travelling for Mennonite Church Canada. On one occasion, my son actually accompanied me. He was thrilled to travel alone with his dad, but I wondered if the business of the church would bore his young mind.

The assembly in Abbotsford reminded me of this trip with my son. It is always the hope of the church that the community of faith has been “Built to last,” this year’s theme. But determining the durability of faith is not always an easy task. The following questions have served as benchmarks for determining durability:

- **Is it transferable?** Anything built to last must display evidence of transference. The presence of 437 excited youths and their sponsors at Abbotsford 2007 certainly provided evidence of transference. Our faith is experiencing new birth in the visions of our youths, and delegates listened intently to the voice of young adults as they provided fresh insight and challenge.

- **Is it enduring?** Anything built to last must display the ability to endure pressure and stress. Formed by the suffering of the cross, tested with severe persecution in the 16th and 20th centuries, our faith has endured through many pressures. Faith will always be pressured by the burdens of unity and struggles of discernment. It is the task of the people of God.

- **Is it compelling?** For a faith to last, it must be compelling and captivating to others. MC Canada congregations experience worship in several different languages;

Marks of durability

**A faith worth sacrifice
is a faith that will last.**

this is evidence of a faith that still captivates passion and one that continues to compel people to join the cause.

- **Is it endearing?** The question of endearment is perhaps the most important to ask. Does our faith compel sacrifice? Is the cause of our faith worth pain? Perhaps this is the true test of anything built to last. A faith worth sacrifice is a faith that will last.

These questions have become familiar to me as I worked to strengthen support for the vision of a missional church. I have wondered how my family would view my sacrifice and, consequently, embrace their corresponding sacrifice? Is it a faith built to last? Is it a faith worth the sacrifice?

These questions churned in my heart as I watched the sunshine spill across the face of my son on that shared journey. After such a long day of meeting the church, I wondered what he was thinking, when he looked up and asked, “Dad, how long will you be working for Mennonite Church Canada?”

When I told him how long my term of office was, he replied, “I want you to work for them longer. I like Mennonite Church Canada.”

If a young boy who has had to give up his dad on many occasions can applaud his sacrifice, then the faith it represents is a faith built to last.

Willard Metzger is chair of Mennonite Church Canada Christian Witness Council.

CMU conference calls for papers

Winnipeg—The Institute for Theology and the Church at Canadian Mennonite University is hosting the 2008 Believers Church Conference from June 11 to 14, 2008. The conference theme is “Congregationalism, denominationalism and the body of Christ.”

The planning committee is inviting proposals for papers to be presented at the conference. The conference theme implies that both congregationalism and denominationalism pose temptations for Believers Churches as they seek to be the faithful body of Christ.

Papers might consider such topics as “What is an appropriate Believers Church ecclesiology?” or “How has the tendency towards individualism in our time influenced the theology and formation of Believers Churches?”

Proposals should be about 200 words in length and should be sent to Helmut Harder at hharder@cmu.ca by Sept. 1. For more information, visit cmu.ca and follow the “Conferences, Lectures and Events” link at the bottom of the home page.
—CMU release

Conference to explore Mennonite sexuality

Waterloo, Ont.—Conrad Grebel University College at the University of Waterloo is hosting a two-day conference on “Family and Sexuality in Mennonite History” on Oct. 12 and 13.

The conference will offer a sampling of new research related to such themes as marriage models and behaviours, and sexual beliefs and practices. The Oct. 12 keynote address is by Royden Loewen, chair in Mennonite Studies at the University of Winnipeg, on “Being Mennonite in the

family: A North American perspective.”

The conference, planned and hosted by the Institute of Anabaptist Mennonite Studies at Conrad Grebel, is part of an ongoing series of projects and events, initiated by the Mennonite Historical Society of Canada, that probe the Divergent Voices of Canadian Mennonites.

For information, including a full conference program, visit grebel.uwaterloo.ca/family.
—Conrad Grebel release
by **Jennifer Konkle**

Calendar

British Columbia

Sept. 14-15: Central Fraser Valley MCC Relief Sale, Auction and Festival at the Tradex Exhibition Centre, Abbotsford. For more information, visit mcc.org/bc/festivals.
Sept. 29: Mennonite Fall Fair at the Prince George Civic Centre. For more information, visit mcc.org/bc/festivals.
Oct. 19, 21, 27: M2/W2 fundraising events; dinner and door prizes at Summit Drive Baptist Church, Kamloops, 6:30 p.m. (19); Calvin Dyck and Gabrielle Youseff in concert at Peace Mennonite Church, Richmond, 6:30 p.m. (21); dinner and silent auction at Garden Park Tower, Abbotsford, 6 p.m. (27). For tickets to all events, call 1-800-298-1777.

Alberta

Sept. 15-16: Holyrood Mennonite Church 50th anniversary celebration. For more details, visit holyrood.mennonitechurch.ab.ca or call the church office at 780-466-3277. RSVP your attendance to hmcoffice@interbaun.com or call the church office.

Saskatchewan

Sept. 7-9: SMOY 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

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.

Aug. 29: Westgate alumni golf tournament at Southdale Golf Course. Call 204-775-7111 for more information.

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

Sept. 8: Eden Foundation fifth annual “Head for the hills” bicycle fundraiser. All proceeds to Eden Health Care Services mental health recovery programs. To register, visit edenhealth.mb.ca.

Sept. 21-22: Brandon MCC Relief Sale.

Sept. 23: MCI homecoming celebration. Supper and Steve Bell concert at Buhler Hall, Gretna. For tickets, call 204-327-5891.

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

Sept. 29: Westgate cyclathon. Call 204-775-7111 for more information.

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

Oct. 15-16: J.J. Thiessen Lectures at CMU, Winnipeg. Speaker: Ellen Davis of Duke Divinity School. Theme: “Live long on the land: Food

and farming in biblical perspective.”

Oct. 19: “Going Barefoot” conference for church communicators at CMU, Winnipeg. Speakers: Reginald Bibby and Gayle Goosen. Visit cmu.ca for details.

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

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

Oct. 29: Westgate annual general meeting, 7 p.m., at Westgate, Winnipeg.

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

Nov. 3: “Adding to the Toolbox” conference on equipping people for congregational ministry at CMU, Winnipeg. Workshops on youth ministry, music and worship, pastoral care and conflict resolution. Visit cmu.ca for details.

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

Nov. 6-7: John and Margaret Friesen Lectures at CMU, Winnipeg. Speaker: John D. Roth, Goshen College. Topic: “Mennonite identity in the 21st century.”

Nov. 9-10: CMU Tip-off Classic basketball tournament, Winnipeg.

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.

Ontario

Aug. 12: Annual Reesor picnic at Backus Heritage Conservation Area, Port Rowan. Worship service at 11 a.m. All Reesorites welcome.

Aug. 17: MEDA Waterloo chapter summer barbecue,

Continued on page 30

Calendar From page 29

6:30 p.m., at Strom's Sweet Corn Farm.

Sept. 7-9: Annual "Building Community" retreat for people with disabilities and others at Hidden Acres Retreat Centre. Theme: "All God's children: The global community." Speaker: Esther Kern. For more information or to register, call John at 519-585-0522 or e-mail professor_flatbread@yahoo.ca.

Sept. 14: MEDA Waterloo chapter fall tour, 7 p.m., at Martin's Family Fruit Farm, Waterloo.

Sept. 26: Greening Sacred Spaces meeting. Topic: How to teach church members to make their homes environmentally friendly; 6:30 p.m.; Room 508, 99 Regina Street, Waterloo.

Oct. 12-13: "Family and sexuality in Mennonite history," an academic and community education conference hosted by Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo. For more information, call 519-885-0220 ext. 24257.

Oct. 14: Benefit concert for the Abner Martin Music Scholarship Endowment Fund; 3 p.m. at Waterloo North Mennonite Church.

Oct. 18: MEDA Waterloo chapter breakfast meeting, 7:30 a.m., at the Stone Crock, St. Jacobs.

Nov. 1-4: MEDA's annual "Business as a calling" convention: "Trust in a world of change," in Toronto. For more information, visit businesscalling.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.

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

For rent

Two roommates to share a house, Brevoort Park, Saskatoon. Ideal location for U. of Sask. students. Available Aug. 1. Phone 306-232-5646 or e-mail helmuth@sasktel.net.

Employment opportunities

Mount Royal Mennonite Church is inviting applications for the position of **Associate Pastor**. The Mount Royal congregation was established in 1963 and is one of several Mennonite and Brethren in Christ churches in Saskatoon. The person(s) in this full-time position will be part of a pastoral team with responsibilities particularly relating to ministry to youths in a multi-generational, multicultural congregation of about 250 members. Anabaptist faith orientation and training are strongly preferred. This person will have the skills, attitude and vision to bring a leadership role to working with the Youth Ministry Team. Interested persons are invited to visit our website for a complete job description and to submit a resume to:

MRMC Associate Pastor Search Committee
610 Avenue O North
Saskatoon, SK S7L 2V3
Or Attn. Len Andres at lbandres@shaw.ca
Website: www.mount.sasktelwebsite.net
Applicants are to respond by Aug. 10, 2007.


Mennonite Church Canada invites applications for the position of **Denominational Minister/Director of Leadership Development**.

Accountable to the Executive Secretary of Christian Formation, the Denominational Minister/Director of Leadership Development is responsible for building up the ministry of MC Canada and its area churches through pastoral and other leadership development and support, and serves as minister to the denomination.

This full-time position, located in Winnipeg, Man., provides key leadership for the denomination, is part of the Executive Staff Team and requires a person of vision with strong leadership and administrative capabilities. Travel across Canada is a requirement of the position. For a complete list of key duties and qualifications please see the job description posted at www.mennonitechurch.ca/tiny/241.

All staff are expected to exhibit a personal faith commitment to Christ as Saviour and Lord, uphold the *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective*, and the vision of Mennonite Church Canada as a missional church.

Inquiries, applications and nominations for this position can be directed to Kirsten Schroeder, Director, Human Resources at kschroeder@mennonitechurch.ca; Mennonite Church Canada, 600 Shaftesbury Blvd., Winnipeg, MB R3P 0M4 (ph. 204-888-6781; toll-free 1-866-888-6785). Applications will be processed starting Oct. 1, with a preferred start date in the first quarter of 2008.



MCC URGENT OPENING: Resource Generation Network Director, Akron, Pa. Needed Sept. 17, 2007. Gives leadership to the resource generation network consisting of staff in MCC offices across Canada and the United States. Establishes standards in fundraising, goals and building network capacities. Experience in non-profit fundraising with excellent skills in communication and management required. Candidates of a gender or ethnic group typically under-represented in this type of MCC assignment are encouraged to apply. Contact Kathy Jackson at krj@mcc.org or call 717-859-1151 for job description and further information.

Full-time Pastoral Team Leader

Milverton Mennonite Fellowship is a rural congregation on the edge of Milverton, Ont., approximately 40 minutes west of Kitchener/Waterloo. We are a congregation of varying ages, with an average attendance of 120 people. Our congregation places high value on: worship, being Spirit-led, prayer, and missions (local and foreign).

We seek a pastor who has gifts in the areas of: team leadership, preaching, developing lay ministry, mission/evangelism and church growth.

Reply in confidence to:
Muriel Bechtel
Conference Minister
Mennonite Church Eastern Canada
4489 King St. E.
Kitchener, ON
N2P 2G2

Associate Pastor Position
First Mennonite Church, Edmonton, Alta.

This vibrant, multi-generational, urban congregation of approximately 200 members is seeking a half-time **Associate Pastor** with primary responsibilities for Youths and Young Adults. The successful candidate will work with the lead pastor and with other leadership people of the congregation. Some pulpit and spiritual care ministries will also be expected. A seminary degree or a related bachelor's degree that reflects our Anabaptist/Mennonite beliefs and practices is preferred. Starting date is negotiable. For a more detailed job description, please visit our website at <http://edmonton1st.mennonitechurch.ab.ca>.

Interested applicants should forward questions and resumes to:

Wesley Berg, Chair, Second Pastor Search Committee
c/o First Mennonite Church
3650 – 91 Street, Edmonton, AB T6E 6P1
780-436-3431
wberg@ualberta.ca



MCC seeks applications for the following full-time salaried position in Winnipeg, Man.: **Water and Food Production Coordinator**. The Coordinator is a member of MCC's Program Development Department within the International Program Department and is responsible to:

- Support the development and strengthening of MCC's international work related to water and food production, focusing on changes in climate that impact water and food.
- Work with MCC's international country programs to plan/design, monitor, and implement water and food production activity.
- Educate MCC constituency on this work by collaborating with the MCC Resource Generation Network, and with Regional and Provincial MCC Offices, for communication and consultation.

The job description may be viewed on the web at www.mcc.org. All MCC workers are expected to exhibit a commitment to a personal Christian faith and discipleship, active church membership, and nonviolent peacemaking. For further information contact Marsha Jones at 204-261-6381 or e-mail mjg@mennonitecc.ca.

Applications will be accepted until Aug. 17, 2007.

King Road Mennonite Brethren Church
in Abbotsford, B.C.,

is seeking a full-time **Senior Pastor** with an evident and enthusiastic passion for the Lord, willing to serve in a multicultural, multilingual church family of 500+ members. We seek a man who is a compelling communicator, committed to guiding others in caring ministries, guiding the pastoral team and church family to a deeper relationship with God.

Please see job description at www.kingroad.ca.

If interested, please send resume to
search@kingroad.ca.

DIRECTOR OF PASTORAL CARE (1.0 FTE)

Eden Mental Health Centre invites applications for the position of Director of Pastoral Care. As an integral part of the Centre's treatment team, the incumbent is responsible for assisting patients and families in meeting their spiritual and religious needs, and acts as an educational resource within specific areas of expertise.

Qualifications:

- University level degree in theology or equivalent.
- Completion of Clinical Pastoral Education training.
- Certification as a Teaching Supervisor with CAPPE an asset.
- Experience in provision of pastoral care within the health care system.
- Understanding of mental health issues.
- Strong oral and written communication skills.
- Collaborative team leader/player.
- Ordained/endorsed for ministry by own faith group.
- In continued good standing with own faith group.

Start date: September 2007

Located in Winkler, Man., a 75-minute drive from Winnipeg, Eden Mental Health Centre is a service of Manitoba Mennonite churches funded by the RHA-Central Manitoba.

Direct applications to Personnel:

Eden Mental Health Centre
1500 Pembina Avenue
Winkler, MB R6W 1T4
Telephone: 204-325-4325
Fax: 204-325-8429

E-Mail: lzacharias@edenhealth.mb.ca
Web Page Address: edenhealth.mb.ca

Closing Date: August 10, 2007, or until filled.



MCC Canada seeks applications for the position of: **Domestic Policy Analyst**, MCC Canada in Ottawa, Ont. - 0.5 FTE

The placement of this position in Ottawa indicates MCC Canada's increasing commitment to governmental work. Although this position's focus is on select Canadian domestic issues and policies, flexibility is necessary in order to meet the mandate of the Ottawa office. The role will include monitoring and responding to federal government legislation and action relating to our priorities. This is done in the context of regular communication with relevant MCC provincial and international programming, other Mennonite agencies and related coalitions. The goal of our involvement with the government is to find ways in which we and our constituency can participate in the struggle for justice within Canada.

The Domestic Policy Analyst uses a teamwork approach to collaborate with all members of the National Programs Department of MCC Canada and to interact with MCC provincial offices, other organizations connected to MCC, and coalitions, where appropriate.

The job description may be viewed on the web at www.mcc.org. All MCC workers are expected to exhibit a commitment to a personal Christian faith and discipleship, active church membership, and nonviolent peacemaking. For further information contact Marsha Jones at 204-261-6381 or e-mail mjg@mennonitecc.ca.

Applications will be considered until Aug. 17, 2007.

Waterloo, Ont./Scottsdale, Pa.

Pamphlet series tackles tough pastoral care issues

Thousands of people in Mennonite churches are suffering in silence because they don't get the help they need in facing their addictions, mental disorders, experiences of abuse and other personal issues.

That assumption—confirmed by therapists and pastors alike—has propelled Mennonite Publishing Network (MPN) to spearhead the development of a series of pastoral care pamphlets that bring together professional therapy, Christian faith and congregational care.

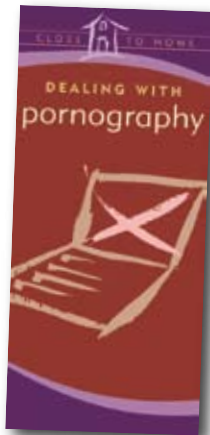
The first three of a projected series of 21 pamphlets were released in June: "Dealing with Pornography," "Dealing with Spouse Abuse," and "Dealing with Eating Disorders." Others, to be released over three years, tackle anxiety disorders, alcoholism, marital discord and other personal problems. Many topics, such as date rape and suicide, will be developed particularly with youth and young adult audiences in mind.

Entitled *Close to Home*, the series draws on the expertise of professional counsellors, seminary staff and pastoral caregivers in the Mennonite and Mennonite Brethren denominations. Funding support comes from a variety of denominational sources and foundations.

Matthew Isert-Bender, pastor of Nith Valley (Ont.) Mennonite Church, is excited to see the integrated healing that *Close to Home* promotes. As a trained counsellor, he has noticed that many church people drive a wedge between therapy and biblical faith. "Either they have experienced the church as a place that devalues the role of therapy," Isert-Bender says, "or they see the church devaluing the role that biblical faith and congregational

care have in the healing process."

Beyond bridging that gap, however, the series is intended to get conversations flowing. According to Linda Gehman Peachey of Mennonite Central Committee, the pamphlets are "a wonderful way for congregations to invite people to share their struggles and take additional steps on the journey toward wholeness."



The series took shape in November 2006 when a group of 11 therapists, seminary teachers, pastors and publishing staff met in Waterloo, Ont., and hammered out a development plan.

Byron Rempel-Burkholder, the MPN editor who has led the project from idea to reality, was inspired by the synergy in that meeting. "Both the process and the eventual product seemed to bring out the best in Anabaptist values of compassion, truth-telling and ecclesiology," he says.

Each pamphlet contains a story of healing, a brief explanation of the problem, a reflection on how faith relates to the issue and practical steps toward healing. In only 12 small pages, the pamphlet does not pretend to say all there is to say on the issue; it is explicitly designed to lead toward more in-depth responses.

The pamphlets can be displayed on literature racks in counselling offices, church foyers and even church restrooms (for anonymous pick-up), or used as discussion resources for adults.

According to psychologist Al Dueck, a professor at Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, Calif., and a member of the steering group, the pamphlets "have the potential to sensitize us to the emotional needs of individuals in our own congregations.... The church as a community can be a place of healing for the emotionally

broken."

Release schedules, order information and excerpts are posted on www.mph.org/closetohome.

—MPN release

Ottawa

'Tom Fox's People' finally arrive in Ottawa

Smiles and hugs greeted six Iraqi-Palestinian refugees as they arrived at the Ottawa airport on June 20. They were part of an Iraqi-Palestinian refugee group that Christian Peacemaker Teams (CPT) accompanied from Baghdad to the Syrian border in October 2005.

Sabri El Koury and Fatima Askari, their children Ahmed and Dina, Mohamed Younis and Lama Azayza were met at the airport by Rana Abdulla.

Abdulla, who teaches taxes and finances at Ottawa's Algonquin College and whose parents and husband once lived in a refugee camp, was contacted by CPTer Tom Fox four days before he was kidnapped in Iraq (along with Norman Kember, Harmeet Singh Sooden and James Loney) on Nov. 26, 2005. Fox was searching for people who might be willing to sponsor the refugees.

Abdulla responded to Fox's call and sponsored a group of 24. She has named the group "Tom Fox's People" in honour of Fox, who was murdered on March 9, 2006, by his Iraqi captors. The three others kidnapped with Fox were released during a military operation two weeks later.

El Koury's family will be staying in Finch, south of Ottawa, while Younis and Azayza will live in Martintown, near Cornwall, Ont.

Abdulla was expecting most of the remaining 16 refugees to arrive and settle in Canada by the end of June. —CPT release

Akron, Pa.

From high hopes to frustration: Former MCC executive director urges 'on the edge' leadership

Robb Davis' legacy as the head of Mennonite Central Committee (MCC)—an 18-month period he describes as one of unrealized, even frustrated, potential—may be encapsulated in a single photograph.

The photo shows Davis conversing with Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad in New York last fall. It was taken at a meeting MCC was asked to organize between U.S. religious leaders and Ahmadinejad, who was in New York to address the United Nations. The encounter—coming amid growing U.S. tensions with Iran over its nuclear development program—was the kind of thing Davis thought MCC should be all about.

But only weeks later, on Oct. 23, 2006, Davis abruptly resigned as MCC's executive director, leaving not only an organization trying to re-envision its future, but many unanswered questions about why an accomplished, charismatic man of service with the high ideals MCC traditionally has espoused would simply quit and walk away.

"I know it felt out of the blue, and it wasn't an easy decision," Davis said in a May 4 interview. While initially casting blame on others within MCC, he said, "I have to own up and acknowledge my own immaturity in this.... A mature leader would have stuck it out, and at a certain point I just wasn't ready to do that."

His background and his passion for forging grassroots responses to global problems—with World Vision, Catholic Relief Services and the Davis, Calif.-based Freedom from Hunger—would seem to have made him a perfect fit to lead MCC. But Davis said he was not equipped to navigate MCC's interior culture or to fully understand the relationship the agency has with its constituent churches.

"I'm very high on MCC," Davis said. "I don't see another [agency] that is

positioned to do what MCC does. What I said to staff when I was there was that if MCC didn't exist, we'd have to invent it.... I just wanted MCC to do more. I felt like the opportunities are really there."

Central to MCC, Davis said, is its role as a prophetic voice among

verse—some would say fragmented—structure of regional offices and headquarters hard to work with. "This whole reality of not only being binational, but having 12 parts...has to be constantly clarified," he said. "It can't just act like a family, but like a large, complex organization."

Davis said the church's young people need to help determine the vision of agencies like MCC. He believes there is the potential for strong leadership in coming generations. "I know that leadership exists in the church, and I know MCC has within itself that kind of leadership," he said. "I hope they'll put a premium...on finding someone who will do things on the edge, but who will be deeply Anabaptist and grounded in Scripture."

Five months after his departure, Davis returned to MCC headquarters in Akron for a formal farewell and to help clear the air with those he left behind.

MCC interim executive director Bert Lobe said that helping Davis make peace with his decision to leave was vital not

only for Davis, but to MCC's ability to move forward. "The most important thing we can do is lend each other a hand when we're falling," Lobe said in a June 9 interview, calling the meeting with Davis "very edifying." Lobe applauded Davis' ideas and aims for the agency.

Davis said of the March 7 meeting, it was important to "let the organization move on and do the work it needs to do.... MCC didn't fail here. I failed."

Since returning to California, where he had worked with Freedom from Hunger, Davis has been doing some consulting work and curriculum development.

—**Robert Rhodes**, for Meetinghouse, an association of Mennonite and Brethren in Christ publications



Robb Davis, left, former MCC executive director, talks with Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad at a Sept. 20, 2006, meeting in New York City. Behind Davis is Ed Martin, co-director of MCC's Asia program.

Anabaptist churches, which he believes have lost some of their theological bearings, especially when it comes to issues such as the U.S.-led war on terrorism.

"I don't think the church is returning to those theological roots," Davis said. "That, to me, is where MCC's greatest challenge lies—speaking prophetically [while] nurturing the questions of 'How do we live at this time?' [and] 'How do we live as global Christians in a globalized economy?'"

One of Davis' assignments at MCC was to help the agency redesign its governance and leadership model, a process that continues and which was affirmed by MCC's binational board on June 9. (See "Governance issues... top MCC annual meeting," June 25, page 36. Ed.)

Davis said he found MCC's di-

MCC file photo

Water Valley, Alta.

IMPACT again marked by visa headaches

For the second year in a row, Mennonite Church Canada's IMPACT (International Mennonite Pastors Coming Together) has been marred by the inability of an invited guest to obtain a visa from the Canadian government.

After weeks of waiting, Vicente Neto Vieira of Brazil was denied a visa at 5 p.m. on the day he was to travel to Canada. The reason offered by the Canadian embassy was "insufficient evidence" that he would return to Brazil and "lack of resources," despite the fact that he had a round-trip ticket in his hand and that MC Canada formally guaranteed his financial support and promised his return to Brazil as scheduled.

Last year, the Canadian government denied visas to two Cuban pastors for the inaugural IMPACT event.

Janet Plenert, executive secretary of MC Canada Witness, is frustrated. "This kind of action [by the Canadian government] is clearly interfering with the church's call to form a people of God and to break down cultural and socio-economic barriers," she said. "We cannot be a church for only those with sufficient economic means to satisfy our government."

MC Canada general secretary Robert J. Suderman raised the issue of visa denial at a recent meeting of the Canadian Council of Churches in Toronto. "There was a sea of nodding heads in the room," said Suderman, indicating that many other denominations are experiencing the same difficulties and share the same concern.

Holy Spirit in evidence

Those who did make it to Alberta from overseas—two South Korean and two Latin American church leaders/pastors—lent new insights, experiences and an international flavour to the event, held last month. The visitors and their hosts from MC Alberta churches sensed the work of the Holy Spirit during their time together as



MC Canada photo by Dan Dyck

IMPACT 2007 hosts and guests, standing from left to right, are: Donita Wiebe-Neufeld, co-pastor at First Mennonite Church, Edmonton; Gladys Siemens, team pastor with husband Peter at Vila Guaira Church, Curitiba, Brazil; Werner de Jong, pastor at Holyrood Mennonite Church, Edmonton; Gui-Shik Nam, pastor at Grace and Peace Mennonite Church, Seoul; Sang-Yeull Oh, pastor at Yo-Ui Church, Seoul; Elwin Garland, pastor at Bergthal Mennonite Church, Didsbury, Alta; Ruth Preston Schilk, pastor at Lethbridge Mennonite Church, Alta.; and Mariela Enriquez, deacon at Prince of Peace Mennonite Church, Santa Cruz, Bolivia. Doug Klassen, pastor at Foothills Mennonite Church, Calgary, crouching front, has his arm wrapped around the missing pastor.

they explored the theme of "the Holy Spirit in the life of the church."

Pastor Sang-Yeull Oh, who is in Canada on a six-month self-directed sabbatical exploring Anabaptist theology, and Werner de Jong, pastor at Holyrood Mennonite Church in Edmonton, agreed that "the Holy Spirit is already present everywhere. We sometimes talk about needing to liberate the Holy Spirit, but the Holy Spirit is already free. There is nothing we can do to liberate the Holy Spirit. We need to give the Holy Spirit room in our lives. The Bible talks about not grieving the Holy Spirit. We need to be free, humble, to empty ourselves of pride, to exercise our faith."

Gladys Siemens, a Paraguayan citizen ministering in Vila Guaira, a Russian-German Mennonite congregation in Curitiba, Brazil, brought a different perspective. She pointed out that "to talk about the Holy Spirit and live a life according to the Holy Spirit are two different things."

Each guest and host pastor shared stories of their personal faith.

Having grown up in a culture of militarism and after a long faith journey that began in his college years, Pastor Gui-Shik Nam has firmly parked his soul in the Mennonite spiritual camp—primarily because of its peace theology. In January, he started Grace

and Peace Mennonite Church, the first congregation in South Korea to officially call itself "Mennonite."

"We kept the name 'Mennonite' in Grace and Peace Mennonite Church, even though Mennonites are considered heretics in Korea," he said.

Mariela Enriquez, an Argentinean of Bolivian descent, serves as a deacon at Prince of Peace Mennonite Church in Santa Cruz, Bolivia. The church began new ministries after its pastor brought back a message from the Mennonite World Conference 2003 assembly in Zimbabwe on the theme of sharing gifts. "We began a Center for Studies and Sharing in our church [so that we can share] the gifts that the Lord has given us with our sister churches in rural areas," said Enriquez.

Through the sharing of faith stories, each guest and host pastor made themselves vulnerable in their own way. Many had hands laid on them and prayers said for them and their ministry.

Jim Shantz, Alberta area church minister and one of the local planners, observed that "we were just the church working together. This experience ranks in the top of the best times I have ever had with pastors. We can't ever be the same again."

—MC Canada release by **Dan Dyck**

It felt a bit like a meteor strike. On the way to pick up our international guests, Holyrood pastor Werner De Jong and I joked about the aptness of the IMPaCT acronym, wondering how to cope with the craters in our schedules that two weeks away from home and church were sure to cause. In spite of this, we were excited about the prospects for “International Mennonite Pastors Coming Together.”

What insights would Korean, Bolivian and Brazilian pastors bring to a discussion of the Holy Spirit at work in the church? What social contexts and issues do they face in their congregations? Why is it important for Mennonite Church Canada to have close relationships with our international counterparts?

I expected to spend the two weeks learning from the differences my Brazilian partner and I were sure to have. At the airport, however, plans changed abruptly when I met a kindred spirit instead of a stranger. By the time the first evening was over, it was abundantly clear that Gladys Siemens and I would not suffer from awkward silences or a lack of things to discuss. It was also apparent that laughter would underline much of our time together.

Gladys and her husband Peter are pastors in a Portuguese-speaking Mennonite church in Curitiba, Brazil. She is also involved in teaching theology, co-ordinating the newly formed Latin American Women Theologians group, and providing leadership in an outreach project among poor women in a slum area of the city.

Gladys and I discovered that we pastor similar urban congregations, both with German roots and memberships of approximately 200. We have the same questions about outreach and growth. After attending one of our deacons meetings, she exclaimed, “We even deal with the same problems!”

In her sermon at Edmonton First Mennonite, where I am co-pastor, Gladys spoke about the Brazilian church. “What worries us the most is that more and more we are becoming individualists, and the people out



Photo by Donita Wiebe-Neufeld

Experiencing IMPaCT

there can't see a church as a faith community,” she said. “More and more people come from families that are torn apart, separated. These people need to encounter, in the church, the feeling of a real family.”

Sitting there listening, I resonated with this observation of contemporary culture and how it affects our congregational lives.

One difference we did note is that her Curitiba congregation has recently discovered how to connect with its surrounding community, which has resulted in some quick growth. In the past decade, it struggled with how to bring Brazilian people into the mostly German Mennonite church. After years of earnest prayer and the deliberate development of small groups, it has seen an influx of Brazilians into the church.

Instead of conflicting, this influx of Latino culture, who “love to give hugs,” into the staid German church, completed the congregation, resulting in opportunities for mutual learning

Gladys Siemens, a Paraguayan citizen ministering in Vila Guaira, a Russian-German Mennonite congregation in Curitiba, Brazil, could only exclaim “cold, cold, cold” as she experienced snow in Banff, Alta, during IMPaCT 2007 with her counterparts from South Korea and Bolivia and the host pastors from MC Alberta. She was given the cowboy hat upon her arrival at the Calgary airport.

and vibrant growth.

As First Mennonite thinks about passing the 200-member mark, prepares to celebrate its 50th anniversary, and moves toward hiring an associate pastor, I have been thinking about our local community. How can we open our arms wider to welcome local people who do not already have a church family?

The story of the Curitiba church, which shares a similar background but is 20 years

older, encourages me. It prayed and planned for years, struggled with change, and has grown to become a vibrant community presence through its openness to the Holy Spirit. I believe it has much to teach us through its experiences with growth.

The Holy Spirit was at work during IMPaCT. Participants found encouragement, support and joy in each other through our bond in Christ. I was encouraged by my guest's account of her congregation's commitment to reaching the community; she inspired me to dream of what might be possible in Edmonton.

As good as it was, IMPaCT had to come to a close, so we could go back to our churches and families. Saying goodbye was made a bit easier by our dreaming—and scheming—of the possibility of a “family reunion” of sorts at the 2009 Mennonite World Conference assembly in Paraguay. No matter the distances and languages that separate God's people, we are kindred spirits, made brothers and sisters through the Holy Spirit.

—Donita Wiebe-Neufeld

Winnipeg

Churches urged to prepare for next pandemic

When the next flu pandemic strikes, the very first people to get drugs like Tamiflu that can prevent the illness should be clergy. That's what Dr. Joel Kettner, Manitoba's chief medical officer, told 87 participants at the Faith Community Summit on Pandemic Preparedness at Canadian Mennonite University (CMU) in Winnipeg last month.

Kettner was joking—sort of. But he was also trying to make the serious point that, during a pandemic, “we will need people to keep us calm and help us not to panic.” Clergy, he said, will be counted on to help perform that role.

The important role that faith groups will play during a future pandemic was underscored repeatedly during the event—the first-ever of its kind in Canada—which brought together healthcare experts, government officials and faith community leaders from across the country to talk about the roles their organizations will play during a major health emergency. At the same time, it underscored the need for faith groups to start planning for a pandemic now.

Summit participants received a glimpse of what a pandemic might look like from the Salvation Army's Lt. Col. Irene Stickland, vice-president and deputy CEO of Scarborough (Ont.) Grace Hospital in 2003, during that year's SARS (severe acute respiratory syndrome) outbreak. She described how hospital staff became ill, how people worried about the unknown disease in their midst, and how people struggled to cope. Altogether, more than 100 of her staff contracted SARS, and everyone lived in fear of bringing it home to their families.

Unlike SARS, which caught people by surprise, faith groups can prepare now for a pandemic, she said. In particular, Stickland suggested that faith groups need to develop communication



CMU photo by John Longhurst

Summit participants Don Muir, Ruth Anne Peters and Marg Pollon demonstrate the use of gowns and masks needed by hospital staff during a pandemic.

when sick. “But we cannot stop it.... The pandemic clock is ticking,” Bredensen stressed.

plans to get information down to the congregational level, and that congregations need to “plan ways they will help the sick in their congregations, and the elderly, people living alone.”

When a pandemic strikes, “we will have no excuse,” she said.

The inevitability of another pandemic, and the need for preparation, were twin themes that ran through the summit. During a presentation entitled “Pandemic 101,” Larry Bredensen, regional coordinator for emergency preparedness and response for the Public Health Agency of Canada, said, “We cannot count on vaccines to protect us,” noting that it takes between four to six months to “bring the appropriate vaccine on line” once the particular virus is identified.

In addition to the health effects of pandemic flu, society would be greatly disrupted by the illness, he said, noting that stores today depend on “just in time” delivery of everything from groceries to medicine. If truckers get sick in large numbers, or there are increased border delays, consumers might not be able to get food and drugs, he noted.

During a pandemic, faith groups, like other sectors of society, “have a duty to act morally, ethically and legally,” he said, adding that “we can delay [the pandemic]” by doing things like hand-washing or staying home from work, church and social events

the faith community don't want to help the sick? That was the issue addressed by Rev. Douglas Graydon of the Anglican Church of Canada. Anglicans, he said, are dealing with the issue by “developing scenarios to help us think about what we will do.” The church is also going back to its history, he said, to see how it responded to emergencies in the past. “We're re-telling our story.... As a faith community, we have been here before.”

Dr. Tracy Parnell of the University of British Columbia Department of Family Medicine noted that it is easy for governments and public health agencies to overlook the role faith communities can play during a pandemic. Parnell, who works with the B.C. government to help draft guidelines for responding to a pandemic, noted that “spiritual and emotional care” will be an important part of a pandemic response, particularly in helping people to deal with the deaths of loved ones.

The summit concluded with sharing about next steps, which included holding another pandemic summit for faith groups, developing a network for pandemic preparations for faith groups, starting a newsletter, and the creation of a website to serve as a place where resources and plans could be posted.

Such a website will be available on the CMU website (cmu.ca) later this summer.

—CMU release by **John Longhurst**

Newton, Kan.

Abduction reminder of risk for peacemakers

The brief abduction of two Christian Peacemaker Teams (CPT) activists and two Iraqis in January was kept mostly under wraps by the group in hopes of avoiding a repeat of the death of kidnapped CPTer Tom Fox in 2006.

The four—CPTers Peggy Gish of Athens, Ohio, and Will Van Wagenen of Provo, Utah, and two unidentified Iraqi Kurds—were seized in northern Iraq on Jan. 27. Gish and an Iraqi translator were released unharmed on Jan. 29. The other two were freed on Feb. 4.

CPT only released information about the abduction in its annual report, distributed to 20,000 recipients in March, and in an account Gish wrote that was released by CPT on May 31.

CPT co-director Doug Pritchard said the peace group was discouraging further media coverage of the kidnappings because of the possible impact it could have on other CPTers working in dangerous areas. “Publicizing this CPT incident will only increase the likelihood of more kidnappings and thereby further endanger our teams and their local partners who are struggling to reduce violence and promote human rights in very difficult circumstances,” Pritchard wrote in a June 1 e-mail.

In a reflection circulated by CPTnet on May 31, Gish wrote of the anger and forgiveness she experienced during the incident. “I want to be free of the burdens of resentment toward those who took us captive and threatened to harm us, yet allow room for a healthy anger toward injustice and abuse,” her e-mail stated.

“Looking back, I see that the anger I felt during the kidnapping was a gift God gave me and has been part of the forgiving process.”

CPT is supported by Mennonites, Quakers, the Church of the Brethren and other advocates of Christian peacemaking.

—Excerpted with permission from *Mennonite Weekly Review*

Brandon, Man.

Finding hope in the rural landscape

Eighty-one members of the International Rural Church Association (IRCA) from four continents gathered at the University of Brandon in early July for the organization’s fourth quadrennial conference. By the time they were finished, they had adopted a “statement of concern”—or “Cries from the heart,” as the conference was titled—they hope church bodies around the world will adopt.

Among other issues, association members:

- Affirm the importance to society of people with farming skills.
- Are concerned by the way economic colonization is engineering society for the benefit of corporations and impinging on individual choice for the sake of monetary gain.
- Seek solidarity between rural producers and urban consumers to ensure the co-operative production of food and the shortening of the supply chain between producer and consumer.

Keynote speaker John Ikerd, economics professor emeritus from the University of Missouri and a strong advocate for the future of small sustainable farms, spoke about how “under the guise of economic development, our rural communities are being colonized” by giant multinational corporations that have no commitment to the future of rural people or their resources.

Ikerd argued that the church has

a vital role in combating this tendency and re-establishing sustainable rural communities through teaching, preaching, and living a message of faith, love and hope.

Three day-long field trips engaged conference participants in local realities, including visits to a Canadian Foodgrains Bank grain growing project, a walking tour of Brandon programs working with families, and a trip to the Sioux Valley Dakota First Nation.

Conference delegates shared stories about deteriorating water supplies and discussed possibilities for intervention; talked about ways in which rural people are devalued, sometimes through language that equates “big” with “good,” and “technology” with “resolving all problems”; and agreed that shared leadership and cooperative decision-making are essential factors in building vibrant rural communities.

Mennonite Church Canada was one of several Canadian churches that helped subsidize conference costs for delegates from the poorer parts of the world. However, Eric Olfert, his wife Verna and Peter Letkeman from Brandon were the only Mennonites at the conference. “It would seem that Mennonites around the world have much to offer and much to gain by a more intentional engagement in the International Rural Church Association,” he said.

—IRCA release by **Joyce Sasse**, with files from **Eric Olfert**

Levy Madjibe, Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) West Africa co-representative, provides a sack of staple food items to six-year-old Ester Nana as part of MCC’s Global Family program in Burkina Faso, while her friends look on. The program also offers adults with HIV/AIDS the opportunity to meet monthly in a church for a time of worship, testimony, prayer and mutual support while their children have a time of singing and fun; and provides school fees and supplies, and other necessities for 50 children.



MCC photo by Virginia Lepp

Nineteen participants in Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Canada's 2007 summer service program, Summerbridge, share a common passion—they want to serve others. These participants are not travelling to another country to get involved in short-term service opportunities; they are responding to local needs in their home churches and home communities in Canada. Pictured at the MCC material resource centre in Winnipeg are, from left to right: Richard Loughheed, who is spending the next few months documenting the history of Mennonites in Quebec for the Mennonite Historical Society and Mennonite churches; Diana Gurdian, a Spanish language teacher in Medicine Hat, Alta., who is spending her summer vacation teaching Spanish classes in her home church, Primera Iglesia Evangelica Hispana; and Mollee Yang from Kitchener, Ont., who is working with children and youths during the summer.



MCC photo by Gladys Terichow

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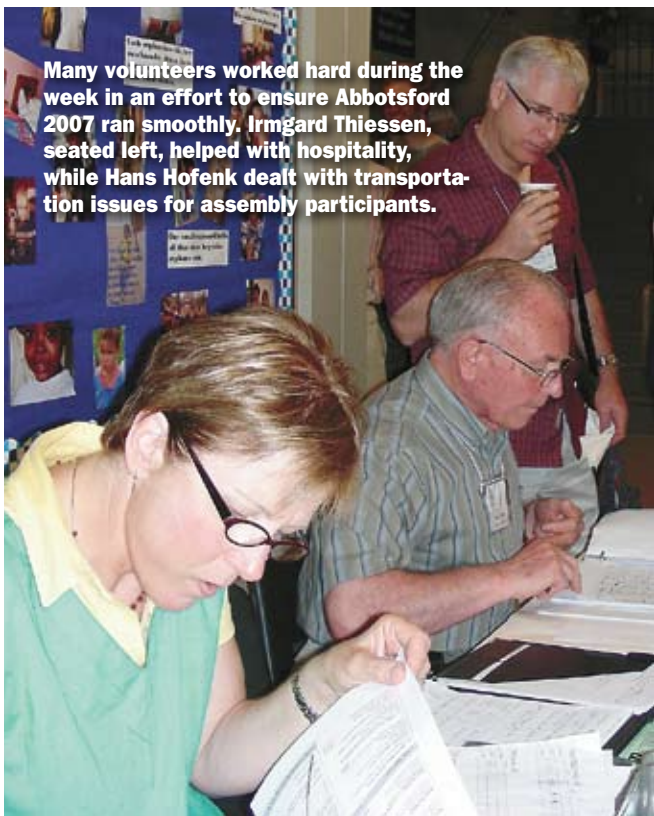
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Many volunteers worked hard during the week in an effort to ensure Abbotsford 2007 ran smoothly. Irmgard Thiessen, seated left, helped with hospitality, while Hans Hofenk dealt with transportation issues for assembly participants.

Photo by Amy Dueckman

Gary Horst, left, pastor of Wilmot Mennonite Church in New Hamburg, Ont., joined his relatives—Doug Horst of Joliette, Que., and Andrew Horst of Sault Ste. Marie, Ont.—in making the delegate sessions a week-long stopover on their 1,000-kilometre bike trip from Victoria to Calgary. Gary spent six months training for the ride over the Rockies and is making the trip as part of a larger effort to cycle across the country. “Get ’er done” is the group’s motto, according to Doug.



MC Canada photo by Dan Dyck

Denominational minister and avid gardener Sven Eriksson, right, received a symbolic hoe and leather work gloves from Dave Bergen, executive secretary of the Christian Formation Council, in honour of his contribution to the “garden” that is MC Canada. Eriksson will retire from his role as denominational minister sometime in the first quarter of 2008. Eriksson was acknowledged for growing a “culture of call,” and “helping prepare the ground for the development of pastoral leaders,” said Sue Steiner, chair of MC Canada’s Christian Formation Council, centre, adding, “Thank you for tending the soul of our church in so many ways.”



Photo by Tim Miller Dyck