

CANADIAN MENNONITE

Sept. 3, 2007
Volume 11 Number 17

Loving the
living language
of Scripture

inside

A new look **2**
Delighting in God's word **4**
Book of hope **23**

EDITORIAL

Ten years of “a good thing”

TIM MILLER DYCK
EDITOR / PUBLISHER

Ten years ago this month, the first issue of a “new publication for Canadian Mennonites designed to unite, inform and inspire” was sent to households across the country.

The publication you are now reading, *Canadian Mennonite*, is the successor to the 26 years the *Mennonite Reporter* was published and the 18 years of *The Canadian Mennonite* which preceded it. That’s more than 50 years of Mennonite publishing, a ministry connecting us together and providing a way for all of us to witness to and about God’s work in our world.

Canadian Mennonite was a courageous and visionary move in 1997. It would be a magazine for everyone in the church, something in which we could all share and contribute. Helmut Harder, then general secretary of the Conference of Mennonites in Canada, wrote four reasons why the proposed new magazine “is a good thing for the [church].”

1. Identity: The CMC church family needs to explore and give shape to its identity. We are in a stage of history where individuals and groups want to “do their own thing.” This is positive if it strengthens believers. It is negative if it causes us to break fellowship with the church. When the network on congregational and conference relationships grows thin, commitment to the interpretation of the Gospel as under-

stood within Mennonite history also grows thin. A new church paper can provide a forum in which we engage in identity-formation in a Christ-centred context.

2. Information: The CMC family needs to be informed about its members. The mass media do a good job of bombarding us with news that focuses on political and social events and on crises and catastrophes. More than that, we need information about what is happening in and through the church. What is God doing in the world? What is God doing through the Mennonite church? A church paper provides us with vital information about the church to which we have made a commitment in baptism and in faithful membership. A church paper can foster a sense of fellowship among us and connect us with Christians around the world.

3. Faith: A church paper comes with a message of faith and hope. It tells how one part of the body of Christ, the church, is active in mission and service. It offers thoughts on scripture and on contemporary Christian life. It nurtures the mind and the soul. A good church paper inspires devotional meditation and deepens our insight into God’s truth. A church paper can bind us together in faith and life.

4. Discussion: A church paper provides opportunities for us to speak to one another, with everyone listening in. Letters to the editor allow us to carry on conver-

sation on issues. Articles on a variety of topics permit us to share ideas for all to read and ponder. The church paper often lands on the coffee table where it serves as a discussion starter. A good church paper becomes a catalyst for vital conversation in which we give and receive counsel.

These reasons are as true now as they were ten years ago. *Canadian Mennonite* has carried out those responsibilities and we, together with you all, will continue to do so into the future.

At the same time, after ten years, it’s time for a new look and new structure. The redesign launched with this issue is the result of months of work to create something effective, flexible and beautiful. After four rounds of reviews, it’s also time to unveil it and ask what the most important reactions are—yours.

We’re excited to bring you full-colour throughout the magazine, larger type in a number of places and more flexibility, clarity and browse-ability in the magazine’s structure.

Our new grouping of articles into three sections (God at work in the church, God at work in us, and God at work in the world) helps us see how our ministry as Christians is to join with what God has already and continues to do for us. Our strength and our salvation comes first and only from God.

You’ll also find each issue now comes with discussion questions for use in group study and the start of a new regular treat of Mennonite storytelling by Jack Dueck. Please note as well some new e-mail addresses in the masthead.

Welcome to a refreshed *Canadian Mennonite*! Please let us know what you think.



ABOUT THE COVER:

As Mennonites, we gather together regularly to share in the treasure that is God’s word to us. See pages 4-7 for “Bible 101: Loving the living language of Scripture.”

PHOTO: SEAN WARREN, ISTOCK

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Mission statement: *Canadian Mennonite (CM)* is a bi-weekly Anabaptist/Mennonite-oriented periodical which seeks to promote covenantal relationships within the church (Hebrews 10:23-25). It provides channels for sharing accurate and fair information, faith profiles, inspirational/educational materials, news and analyses of issues facing the church. In fulfilling its mission, the primary constituency of *CM* is the people and churches of Mennonite Church Canada and its five related area churches. *CM* also welcomes readers from the broader inter-Mennonite and inter-church scene. Editorial freedom is expressed through seeking and speaking the truth in love and by providing a balance of perspectives in news and commentary. *CM* will be a vehicle through which mutual accountability can be exercised within the community of believers; the paper also encourages its readers to have open hearts and minds in the process of discerning God's will.

Let us hold fast to the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who has promised is faithful. And let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day approaching (Hebrews 10:23-25, NRSV).

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contents



Bible 101 4

Where does the Bible come from? How can we learn more from it and make it come alive for us today? **MARK DILLER HARDER** helps us delight in God's word to us.

God is a programmer 12

Video game programming student **JOSH KLASSEN** shares a fresh new look at God, plus poetry from **CAROL PENNER**.

Youth ministry growing 13

Alberta is now the youngest province in Canada. Alberta Correspondent **DONITA WIEBE-NEUFELD** reports on the church's response.

Recalling B.C. Women in Mission 16

Stories from 68 years of service.

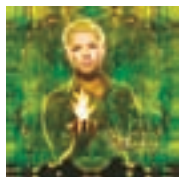


An Irish adventure in hospitality 18

Mennonite storyteller **JACK DUECK** starts a new series telling true stories of faith in life.

Hope and the Dragon 23

MATTHEW EPP, a 14-year-old from Fiske, Saskatchewan, doesn't back down from cancer.



Reviews 24

D.S. MARTIN on Joel Kroeker's newest album, **BARB DRAPER** and **MARGARET LOEWEN REIMER** on Mennonite writing, **ANGELIKA DAWSON** on the last Harry Potter book and **VIC THIESSEN** on the

Simpsons movie and Christianity. Doh!

Regular features:

For discussion **7** Readers write **8**
Milestones **11** Calendar **29** Classifieds **30**

Ten years of "a good thing" 2

TIM MILLER DYCK

Second step to a good hug 8

MELISSA MILLER

Generous to a fault 9

GARY SAWATZKY

Come and see 10

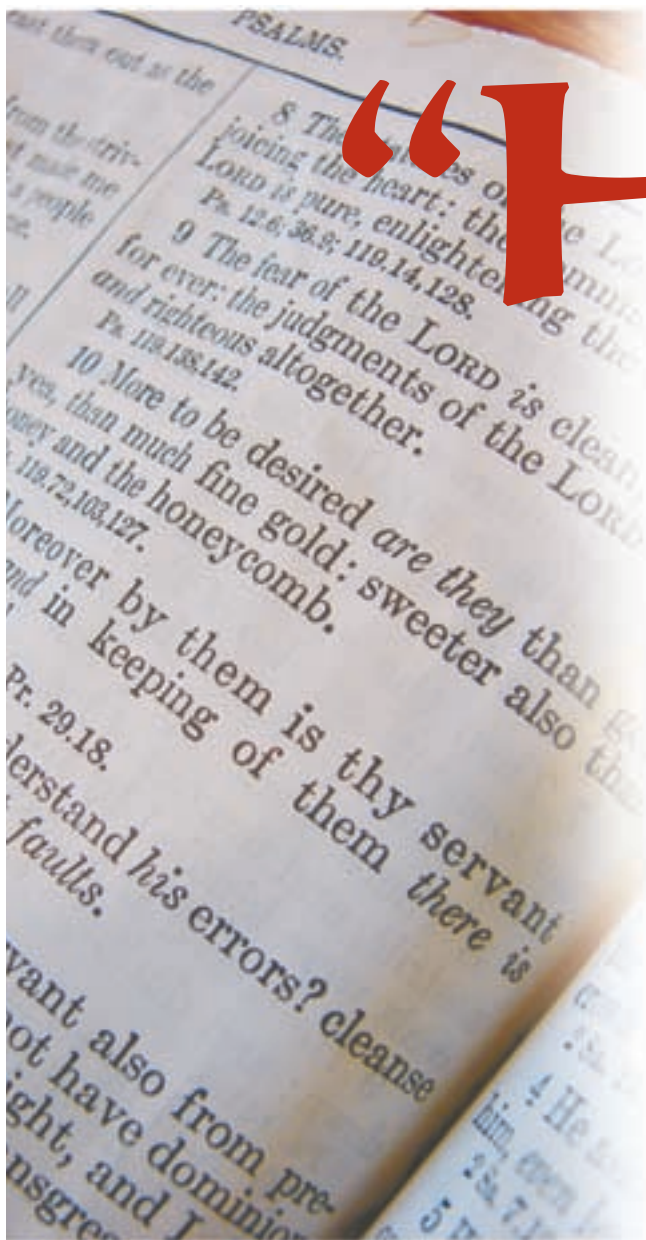
SUE C. STEINER

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All subscribers can get the complete contents of *Canadian Mennonite* delivered free by e-mail or view selected articles online. For either option, visit our web site at canadianmennonite.org. The September 17 issue will be posted by September 13.

Bible 101: Loving the living language

BY MARK DILLER HARDER



“H

ow sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth. Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.”

“I delight in the way of your decrees. I will meditate on your precepts, fix my eyes on your ways. I will not forget your word.”

“Truly I love your commandments more than gold, more than fine gold. Truly I direct my steps by all your precepts. Your decrees are wonderful; therefore my soul keeps them.”

How appropriate that the Psalmist, in so many ways, values and cherishes the language of our faith. But is this how we regularly talk about the Bible—about its language or its message? I find the language of this psalm (Psalm 119) so refreshing and inspiring. There is a true love of the text.

My prayer is that we may all delight in reading and learning from Scripture, this book that is the central vessel for holding and explaining our faith. In an effort to engender that delight, I want to explore four questions with you.

1. Where does the Bible come from?

When you hold the Bible in your hand, it's easy to think of it as a single composition that plopped down from Heaven, maybe even in English. But the Bible has one of the longest development timelines of any book—almost 2,000 years. There is the Old Testament—the Hebrew Scriptures dealing with the history of the people of Israel; and the New Testament—stories about Jesus and the birth of the Christian church.

Both testaments started out as oral history before they began to be written in different stages by many different authors. There was no one bringing some of our modern historical/critical methods and questions to bear on what happened. There were no newspaper

of Scripture

reporters or cell phone cameras to capture the action. We get descriptions and history and stories and poetry that answered what people in that culture and time were interested in—how they were experiencing the presence of God in their lives and how to make sense of that.

The Old Testament was written mostly in Hebrew, with some Aramaic; the New Testament was written in Greek. Through the centuries, scribes carefully copied and recopied the original manuscripts, none of which exist today. Some of the earliest fragments we have—from discoveries like the Dead Sea Scrolls—are on papyrus and parchment from the second to fourth centuries.

Sometimes scholars and scribes had to piece together text from various sources to create the complete Hebrew and Greek testaments our Bibles contain today. It was not until the Reformation, and the invention of the printing press, that more widespread translations of the Bible came into being—Martin Luther's German New Testament in 1522 and William Tyndale's English New Testament four years later.

Even now, there are always newer translations, like the New Revised Standard Version in use in many Mennonite churches, that try to go back to the early documents and capture the best in that complicated process of translating while dealing with modern language that is ever-changing. There are also more loose translations, or paraphrases, like the Good News Bible or The Message, that try to put the stories and words into a

more contemporary language while still maintaining the essence of each passage.

Two related issues need to be wrestled with here in terms of the writing of the Bible. One is with the process of how the books of the Bible were chosen and declared to be the Word of God. This is sometimes called canonization—choosing what's in and what's out. The other deals with what it means for the Bible to be written by human writers over this long history and yet be fully inspired by God.

When you hold the Bible in your hand, it's easy to think of it as a single composition that plopped down from Heaven, maybe even in English.

By the time of Jesus, the books of the Old Testament were already well established and accepted. In 90 A.D., there was a Jewish conference in Jamnia that officially declared the Hebrew Scripture, with its 39 books, closed.

It is interesting to note that one early influential church leader wanted Christians to throw out the entire Old Testament; Marcion said it was a different story and different God than the Jesus of the New Testament. That view, thankfully, was rejected. As the New Testament itself proclaims, Jesus is in continuity with, and comes out of, the Jewish history and story.

For the New Testament it was a long process to discern what would be considered Scripture (the 27 books we have now). Chronologically, the earliest documents are the letters of Paul, starting

around 50 A.D., and then the four gospels.

Probably written somewhere between 60 and 90 A.D., they start with Mark, then Mathew and Luke, and lastly John. One of the gifts of the four gospels is the diversity within them, the different perspectives and stories they have preserved. Then there is Acts, the other letters—known as epistles—and the Book of Revelation.

There were many other religious documents that emerged in the first and second centuries—some of which in-

cluded very odd and fanciful descriptions of Jesus' ministry and childhood. The Gnostic writings, including the "Gospel of Thomas" and the newly discovered "Gospel of Judas," gave a very different theology of Jesus, denying his humanness and making faith a secret other-worldly spiritual state only available to an elect few.

Over the first few centuries the church began trying to sort out which books were the Word of God. It debated and discerned which books were receiving a broad recognition and acceptance. It was not until near the end of the fourth century—through a series of councils—that the final Canon was accepted.

It is easy to think of that process—of creating the Canon and rejecting some writings—as a kind of controlled nar-

rowing of the Bible. However, many of those who would have promoted some of what became known as heretical books would have eliminated much of the Bible we now have. The Bible we have today has both been tested and discerned by that early church, and gives us such a rich source of God's Word in our world.

In regards to the inspiration of Scripture, the Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective states: "We believe that God was at work through the centuries in the process by which the books of the Old and New Testaments were inspired and written. Through the Holy Spirit, God moved human witnesses to write."

In other words, human beings brought

*In a sense, we both read the Bible—
bringing our life to it; but the Bible also reads us,
bringing its powerful challenge into our lives.*

their experiences of God, and their own personalities and understandings, to the writing of Scripture. And yet we claim that these humans were inspired by God and were guided by the Holy Spirit as they wrote. It is like the mystery of Jesus being both fully human and fully divine. Our Scriptures are both fully shaped by human intention and fully inspired by God.

2. What kind of book is the Bible?

It is a book filled with many different kinds of writing that cannot simply be read in the same way. There are lots of narrative passages that simply tell the stories of Creation, the calling of a people, the Exodus, the Promised Land, the judges and kings, the exile into Assyria and Babylon, the return to Jerusalem,

and, of course, the stories of Jesus and the early church.

But there are also passages of laws and commandments, or places with wonderful poetry and praise, like the Psalms. And then there are prophetic passages, wisdom literature, places of pure worship, letters—written to real New Testament congregations with their problems and issues, apocalyptic literature—like the Book of Daniel or Revelation—that look to the future, as well as sermons, parables, sayings, exhortations and songs.

In other words, there is this rich range of literature about people's experience of God and faith. This gives me delight. I can try to understand what part of the Bible a passage is coming from, and how it might

speak to me today. Depending on what I need, a different literary style or a message from a particular place in the Bible will speak to my situation.

3. How can we study and engage the Bible?

II Timothy 3 says, "All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, so that everyone who belongs to God may be proficient, equipped for every good work."

Just like there are many different styles and forms of writing in the Bible, there are many ways to study and engage with Scripture. One of the key insights of the early Anabaptists was that the Bible is not only to be interpreted by the pas-

tors or the teachers, but by everyone in the community, the "priesthood of all believers." The Confession of Faith says it this way: "Insights and understandings which we bring to the interpretation of the Scripture are to be tested in the faith community."

One approach to Scripture is to do some serious study of it. Have a commentary or Bible dictionary in your home to help you understand the context, history and original meaning of the languages.

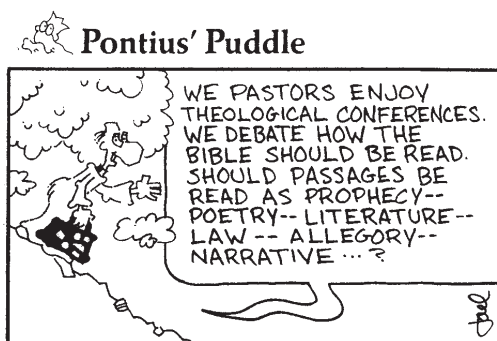
But that is not the only way. Scripture is experienced in worship or by hearing a story dramatized or sung. Congregations need to keep working at presenting Scripture well in worship. Scripture can be read in group settings and Bible studies, with discussion or guiding questions.

Some people memorize Scripture, which comes back to them at significant points in life. Others meditate or pray the Scriptures, spending time in contemplation and allowing the words to speak very directly to their situation.

One of the most interesting ways I experienced the Bible was at a young adult retreat, where each person was given a short story about Jesus from the gospels. We read the story and then tried to imagine what character we were in the story—a person being healed, a family member, a member of the crowd or one of the disciples. Then each of us was put into the town square—as those characters—and we went around talking to each other about what had just happened: "Did you just see what Jesus did?" "I was healed." "I experienced forgiveness." "I saw Jesus show compassion on that out-cast of society."

Whatever way we approach Scripture, one of the challenges is to bridge that gap of the millennia since the books of the Bible were written. We live in a different culture and world, so we sometimes need to do some research to understand those biblical worlds.

The Bible does not talk about all the issues and concerns we face in the 2007. It is a voice from outside of our normal understandings that can challenge, change and transform us. It can offer a counter-cultural message to what we see and hear in our culture and media. It can



Nine short sermons on the Bible

The matter is quite simple. The Bible is very easy to understand. But we Christians are a bunch of scheming swindlers. We pretend to be unable to understand it because we know very well that the minute we understand we are obliged to act accordingly. Take any words in the New Testament and forget everything except pledging yourself to act accordingly. My God, you will say, if I do that my whole life will be ruined.... Dreadful it is to fall into the hands of the living God. Yes, it is even dreadful to be alone with the New Testament.

Theologian Soren Kierkegaard

Let's immerse ourselves in the whole story of Scripture. The Bible has no chapter and verse to tell us how to respond to international terrorism. But we will find reliable guidance as we become familiar with the God of the Bible. We Mennonites have our favourite peace texts we turn to. But our convictions on peace are based on the whole of Scripture.

Pastor Phil Kniss, Park View Mennonite Church, Harrisonburg, Va.

The narratives of Scripture were not meant to describe our world... but to change the world, including the one in which we now live.

Theologian Stanley Hauerwas, Duke Divinity School, Durham, N.C.

Learning Hebrew and Greek saved the Bible for me. The text that I thought I knew became strange. The text that I perceived as tame became wonderfully unpredictable.

Professor Mary J. Schertz, AMBS, Elkhart, Ind.

The Bible has become a springboard for personal piety and meditation, not a book to be read. [S]tudents very likely know that David killed Goliath, but they don't know why he did it or that Goliath was a Philistine or who the Philistines were.

New Testament professor Gary M. Burge, Wheaton College, Ill.

Do we need so many versions? Probably yes, for our world is split into many subcultures, each with its own linguistic and reading habits and shifting wavelengths of comprehension.... The American cultural kaleidoscope that has made niche marketing necessary in retail trade has also made necessary "niche rendering" in the world of Bible translation.

Theologian J.I. Packer, Regent College, Vancouver

The Bible is not about Joseph and his brothers, telling us we should act like Joseph did, and then God will reward us. The Bible is not about Saul and David's fighting one another, meaning that you and I must respect the government even when [Saul] visits witches. The Bible is not about the little Jewish girl in the house of Naaman or about Zaccheus up a tree. But the Bible is telling us how God provided for his people through Joseph's faithfulness, how God cursed his people through the vanity of Saul and David. The Bible is telling us what God did for heathen Syrians through Naaman's servants and Elisha, and is pointing up to Christ's compassion for an apostate son of Abraham—Zaccheus.

Emeritus professor Calvin Seerveld, Institute for Christian Studies, Toronto

The highest proof of Scripture derives in general from the fact that God in person speaks it.

Theologian John Calvin

Scripture is not the subject matter of the sermon. The [Bible] is the lens by which gospel preachers see God's presence in the world and understand the meaning of that presence, which they then offer to the congregation.

Professor June Alliman Yoder, AMBS, Elkhart, Ind.

—Compiled by Ross W. Muir

give us an alternative understanding of reality.

In a sense, we both read the Bible—bringing our life to it; but the Bible also reads us, bringing its powerful challenge into our lives.

4. How can we make the Bible come alive for us today?

Two things are vital for this to happen. First, we need to read it, know it and become familiar with its language, stories and message. If we keep the Bible on the shelf—never reading or engaging it—we limit the influence it can have on our lives. It is when we keep the Bible in front of us, that, in the words of the Psalmist, we delight in it—like fine gold, like sweet honey.

A second aspect is to see the Bible as the story of God, and to try to put our story into God's story. As the Confession of Faith puts it: "We believe that God

continues to speak through the living and written Word."

My prayer is that as we continue studying and learning and engaging with the Bible, that it bears fruit in our relationship with Jesus Christ and in how we

live our lives.

Mark Diller Harder is co-pastor at St. Jacobs (Ont.) Mennonite Church. This reflection is adapted from his sermon "Bible 101" that was preached at St. Jacobs as an introduction to a summer series called "Unearthing Treasure: The Living Language of the Bible."

For Discussion

1. Read Psalm 19:7-11 and 119:97-112. List the characteristics of God's word and its effects on those who read and keep it.
2. Read the same passage (for example, 2 Cor. 5:11-17) in a more literal translation like the *New Revised Standard Version* or *New International Version*, a version using simpler English like the *Contemporary English Version* and a loose, interpretive translation like *The Message*.
What are pros and cons of using one type of translation over another? Think about different users, different settings and different types of readers or listeners.
3. Early Mennonites believed, as our Confession of Faith says, that it is not one expert or even any one person that can say what the Bible means. Scripture is its own authority and we each examine all things in the light of Scripture itself. We then need to test our understandings with our faith community.

Share some examples where others helped you understand the Bible in a new way.

FAMILY TIES

Second step to a good hug

MELISSA MILLER

For all of my adult life, home—that particular place of kin and familiarity where I spent my childhood—has involved a long drive or even a plane ride. In earlier times, when my dad was alive and my mom was younger, there was a joyous ritual I could count on, as predictable as the sun brightening the new day. When our car rolled into the driveway, my parents would hear the sound and immediately scamper through the door to greet us, arms extended and with huge smiles on their faces. These were great hugs, full of generous love and warm affirmation. Today, eight years after Dad's death, I get a similar response from my mother, even if she has to push the cat off her lap and rise slowly from her easy chair.

Hugs with family members often move effortlessly through the different stages. People know what's going to happen. They have given their assent long ago by participating in hugs repeatedly with these loved ones. This column addresses Step 2 of a good hug: the hugger's task of waiting for the other's response.



The first step—opening one's arms—signals a desire to be closer, to receive something from the other. In the second step, the hugger pauses, however briefly, to obtain permission from the huggee. This step of waiting is one of the most nuanced, and most overlooked, steps to a good hug, but it is essential in setting the stage for mutuality. Huggers do not

impose the hug, or force the other person to respond according to their dictates. It's not a good hug if the person

who is the object of the hugger's request can't choose to say no as well as yes.

Sometimes we blow it. We don't allow that window of waiting which gives the huggee the space they need to signal their yes or no. We know we've missed our cue when we find ourselves hugging a stiff board instead of a responsive and engaged human being! The other person's discomfort should be a message for us to back off and maybe even apologize.

There are some occasions where we might hug without that space of per-

mission-seeking. For example, with a distressed child, the hug might be exactly what is needed to bring calm and comfort. Children themselves often barrel eagerly into a hug, and adults are wise to respond in kind. If a person is overwhelmed, a touch can help bring strength and focus.

My son has a particularly effective move when I'm overly anxious and on the edge of "losing it." "Mom," he says, looking me steadily in the eyes and firmly grasping my shoulders with his hands. "It's going to be okay." The first time it happened, when he was a young teenager, I was so startled by the role reversal—I'm the adult here after all—that I was jolted out of my distress. On the few occasions it's happened since, his touch helps to ground me. He didn't ask for permission for this kind of touch, although he'd back

We know we've missed our cue when we find ourselves hugging a stiff board instead of a responsive and engaged human being!

off quickly if I sent the signal that his touch wasn't wanted.

Good hugs involve permission. We let other people know we want a hug, and then we wait for their response. When they say yes to the hug, we move to Step 3—embracing.

Melissa Miller (familyties@mts.net) lives in Winnipeg, where she ponders family relationships as a pastor at Springstein Mennonite Church; she is also a counsellor and an author.

/// Readers write

We welcome your comments and publish most letters sent by subscribers intended for publication. Respecting our theology of the priesthood of all believers and of the importance of the faith community discernment process, this section is a largely open forum for the sharing of views. Letters are the opinion of the writer only—publication does not mean endorsement by the magazine or the church. Letters should be brief and address issues rather than individuals.

Please send letters to be considered for publication to letters@canadianmennonite.org or by postal mail or fax, marked "Attn: Letter to the Editor" (our address is on page 3). Letters should include the author's contact information and mailing address. Letters are edited for length, style and adherence to editorial guidelines.

✉ Bible still able to speak to us in our time and place

PHIL WAGLER'S "THE Bible as fiction" column (June 11, page 13), got me thinking. He asks, "[W]hen was the last time [Scripture] brought you correction and rebuke, rather than you bringing it criticism?" That is a question of challenge.

I am a student of English literature, and I also enjoy lay preaching once a year. I find the study of literature highly compatible with the study of Scripture. When Wagler states, "We seem to have lots of time to study a whole host of other things," and then asks, "[S]o what

GOD, MONEY AND ME

Generous to a fault

GARY SAWATZKY

Gifts are curious things. When Christmas, birthdays and weddings arrive, gifts are expected and easy to accept. Unexpected gifts are more complicated. Questions such as, "Why is this gift being given?" plague us. We tend to forget that it is the way of the Holy Spirit to bless us when we least expect it or when we have tremendous need.

"A couple stood to the left of the cash counter, the young man frantically searching through his wallet. The minutes passed, other customers came and went, but he kept thumbing through his wallet. He glanced over at his anxious wife, who shook her head as she flipped her cell phone closed.

"Is something wrong?" a curious bystander asked.

The young man explained that his credit cards were full, he had no cash and that his wife was unable to reach her parents on the phone. In short, he had no way to pay for the gas he had already pumped. Although he did not voice the question aloud, the question hung in the air, "What am I going to do?"



The next customer stepped up to the counter and handed his card to the cashier, saying as he did so, "Put his bill with mine."

Or, as one student writes, "I was searching for a place to live and having a difficult time finding an affordable apartment. A friend and I had talked about living together, but the rent on her place was too high for my budget, so I

had turned it down. A few days later, my friend approached me again. Her parents had offered to cover part of the rent

so that we could live together. I did not expect to be the recipient of such generosity, and I was overwhelmed. All of a sudden, I had a place to live, manageable rent and a great roommate."

In these stories, the individuals were in situations of need. We can imagine their surprise, relief and perhaps even shock at the unexpected generosity offered.

We all face situations in which we are the receiver. Accepting the gift of another's generosity can be difficult to do

joyfully. Sometimes it involves accepting our circumstances or limitations and acknowledging that the giver has a capacity that we ourselves may not have. But when we realize the giver is an agent of God in helping to meet our need of the moment, we find true joy in the gift.

For every giver, there must be a receiver. We ought to be like Paul, who was earnestly grateful for the generosity he received from the church at Corinth. At the same time, we should seek to emulate the Corinthian church by being generous to a fault.

There is tremendous joy in being able to benefit others and there is tremendous

The next customer stepped up to the counter and handed his card to the cashier, saying as he did so, 'Put his bill with mine.'

joy in being blessed by a gift. We ought to receive generosity from others with grace, thankfulness and humility. In addition, we must be joyfully and willingly generous with all that we have been entrusted.

Gary Sawatzky is a stewardship consultant at the Calgary office of Mennonite Foundation of Canada (MFC). For stewardship education, estate and charitable gift planning, contact your nearest MFC office or visit mennofoundation.ca.

has happened to Christians immersing themselves in Scripture?"

I find myself responding with, could we not use these "other things" as a springboard for an exploration of the Holy Scripture?

As I look at the Sermon on the Mount with eyes that have also read and appreciated a lot of current Christian literature, as well as post-structuralist theory, I see a text that is still very much alive. I see a text that has been written, paraphrased, translated, interpreted and exegeted countless times, yet is still able to speak to us in our time and place.

Matthew 6 "rebukes" me for wanting to be recognized for my talents rather than being content to be a person of integrity, reminds me of my dependence on God for even my most basic needs, stresses the importance of relationship and community, and exhorts

me to "look at the birds of the air" and to "see how the lilies...grow," in order to let go of material concerns and seek after righteousness. If I take this passage to heart, I feel "corrected" and, consequently, desire to strive after what is really important in life.

Not all biblical passages are clear to me. Nonetheless, increasingly I see a strength and power and timelessness within Scripture. Perhaps if we are allowed to look at Scripture as a text that is open to interpretation, precisely because of its ability to transcend time and place, and as a text that is able to speak to us exactly where we find ourselves, we will be more willing to explore it and find meaning and salvation within its holy pages.

MARY ANN LOEWEN, STEINBACH, MAN.

FROM OUR LEADERS

Come and see

SUE C. STEINER

I spent the summer immersed in the Gospel of John, writing Bible insight essays for adults working with the Gather 'Round children's curriculum.

As always, the call of Jesus' first disciples drew me in too. With them, I was privy to strange conversations, marvelous signs, a journey to the cross and a final picnic on the beach. My summer was not just about presenting this story in a helpful way for children's writers and teachers. It soon became clear that the writer was addressing me—and the community of 21st century disciples we call Mennonite Church Canada.

"What are you looking for?" is the first question Jesus asks in John's gospel. And it's the provocative question that sets many of us on the journey of faith. When we wonder what it's all about, Jesus responds, "Come and see."

Jesus' "come and see" took his first disciples on an amazing journey through Galilee, to Jerusalem, to the cross and beyond. While Jesus addressed individual disciples from time to time, he also

formed them into a band of disciples. Later, he sent the Spirit to guide the fledgling church along the way of all truth and to keep showing disciples things they couldn't take in earlier (see John 16:12-15).

We'd better get ready, for the same invitation to discipleship takes us to places surprising and wonderful—and to



places we'd rather not go. Because we dwell with Jesus as individuals and congregations,

following him into our various communities and beyond. And we invite others to come and see, even as we go deeper ourselves. And the same Spirit wants to lead us along the way of all truth, in keeping with the life, teachings, death and resurrection of Jesus.

As we enter into the renewed energy of congregational life this fall, may we accept the invitation as congregations, as area churches and as MC Canada, to "come and see." May we notice with surprise and

gratitude God's Spirit at work where we weren't paying attention. May we learn to respond to the gentle rustle of God's Spirit as sensitively as a grove of aspen trees catches the slightest puff of a breeze.

This fall in our churches across Canada, may we come to a more complete understanding of who Jesus is. May we willingly enter fully into the joy and the pain of following Jesus. May we grasp where Canadian society is attuned to God's purposes, and where we must be distinct from our increasingly militarized society in order for our witness to have integrity. May our courage increase as we engage our world with the reconciling gospel of

We'd better get ready, for the same invitation to discipleship takes us to places surprising and wonderful—and to places we'd rather not go.

Jesus. May we listen to each other carefully and respectfully, knowing that God's Spirit is likely to prompt us from just those places we find least acceptable.

What might God's Spirit long to show us as a community of churches that we haven't been able to take in earlier? Come and see!

Sue C. Steiner, Waterloo, Ont., chairs the Christian Formation Council of Mennonite Church Canada.

✉ All Canadians are 'treaty people'

AS COORDINATOR OF the MCC Saskatchewan Aboriginal Neighbours program, I have worked closely with the Office of the Treaty Commissioner in Saskatchewan for the past few years. Through our dialogue I have gained a new understanding of the treaties, both the written and oral understandings of them and how they have shaped and continue to shape our lives.

Through the commissioner's office, I learned that we are all treaty people. When treaties were signed, there were three parties present: aboriginals, and non-aboriginals and the Creator God, who all gave their blessing to this sacred covenant.

The treaties offer direction and guidance about a mutually agreed process of how to live together in peace, harmony and mutual respect. This covenant

binds the lives of the original signatories and their descendants together for as long as the sun shines, the grass grows and the rivers flow. Our lives and futures are bound together, but it requires trusting in God to guide us, building relationships with each other and love.

LEONARD DOELL, SASKATOON

✉ Soldier's tales convince students not to enlist

IN ESTHER EPP-TIESSEN'S article on Canada's involvement in the war in Afghanistan, "Confirmed kills' include Canada's peaceful identity," June 11, page 12, she talks about the euphemisms that are used to diminish the horror of military combat.

It reminded me of the young soldier who visited

the Grade 11 English classes I teach. A 21-year-old alumnus of our high school was home on leave from military duty in Afghanistan and some of my students suggested we invite him to our class. The euphemism he used to describe the killing of enemies by Canadian forces in Afghanistan was, "We neutralize them with extreme prejudice."

My students weren't fooled.

"You mean you kill them?" they asked. "Have you killed people?"

Our young guest then proceeded to tell us how his job was to ride atop a tank and, as cars approached on public roads, to assess whether the driver might be a suicide bomber. He usually had less than 20 seconds to decide to let them pass or "neutralize them with extreme prejudice."

He told my students one of his first jobs in Afghanistan had been to take garbage bags and pick up the body parts of dead suicide bombers. The young man spoke with candour about the dust storms, sleep deprivation and side effects of malaria drugs on soldiers.

He told them he had not seen an Afghan female face since arriving at the Canadian base near Kandahar. All the women there wore burkas.

He talked about the thriving opium trade; the rampant sexual abuse of children; the garbage everywhere; and seeing people urinate, wash clothes, dispose of garbage and take a bath in the same stream that served as their source of drinking water.

He told us he had seen dead Afghan citizens skinned and hung from towers because they angered the Taliban by acting as informants for Canadian troops.

Our guest said there was absolutely nothing glamorous about the war. "It's hell and I don't want to go back," he told my students.

Epp-Tiessen says she hopes future generations of Canadian young people will no longer engage in military combat, but find better ways to build security in the world. The 50 students who listened to a soldier speak honestly about the war in Afghanistan all assured me they will not be signing up for military duty. Hearing a soldier who had chosen military service tell his story certainly convinced them there must be more constructive ways to serve their country.

MARYLOU DRIEDGER, STEINBACH, MAN.

/// Milestones

Births/Adoptions

Bergen—Dane Russell (b. July 25, 2007), to John and Laurhys Bergen, Schoenfelder Mennonite, St. Francois Xavier, Man.

Buhler—Keeley Fawn (b. March 27, 2007), to Scott and Candice Buhler, Osler Mennonite, Sask.

Dueck—Ariana Echo (b. July 25, 2007), to Jennifer and Stephen Dueck, Grace Mennonite, Winkler, Man.

Helmel—Jessica (b. June 5, 2007), to Anita and Uwe Uehle Helmel, Niagara United Mennonite, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ont.

Hiebert—Benjamin Peter (b. July 16, 2007), to Dana and Jared Hiebert, Grace Mennonite, Winkler, Man.

Janzen—Micah Peter (b. July 23, 2007), to Ben and Stephanie Janzen, Waterloo North Mennonite, Ont.

Orosz—Madelyn Eva Jean (b. July 23, 2007), to Myles and Jackie Orosz, Foothills Mennonite, Calgary.

Ruedig—Kayd Campbell (b. July 7, 2007), to Scott Ruedig and Tammy Gibney, North Star Mennonite, Drake, Sask.

Marriages

Banman/Jerome—Cristi Banman (Grace Mennonite, Winkler, Man.) and Osmond Jerome, at Scarborough Baptist Church, Ont., July 7, 2007.

Bates/Ewert—Cheryl Bates and Jay Ewert, Nutana Park Mennonite, Saskatoon, April 26, 2007.

Bender/Betik—Emilee Bender (Breslau Mennonite) and Nick Betik, at Breslau Mennonite, Ont., July 13, 2007.

Bergen/Colitti—Stephen Bergen (Niagara United Mennonite) and Angeline Colitti, at Niagara United Mennonite, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ont., June 9, 2007.

Bergen/Hamm—Holly Bergen and Cody Hamm, Grace Mennonite, Winkler, Man., July 7, 2007.

Browning/Wiens—Mark Browning and Petra Wiens (Niagara United Mennonite), in Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ont., June 16, 2007.

Driedger/Wall—Katie Driedger and Justin Wall, Nutana Park Mennonite, Saskatoon, July 7, 2007.

Falk/Kuhl—Karla Falk and Warren Kuhl, Grace Mennonite, Winkler, Man., July 20, 2007.

Friesen/Styer—Louise Friesen and Stan Styer, Nutana Park Mennonite, Saskatoon, July 2, 2007.

Janzen/Wiens—Ed Janzen (Niagara United Mennonite) and Janice Wiens (St. Catharines United Mennonite), at St. Catharines United Mennonite, Ont., June 1, 2007.

Jarzyna/Siemens—Christine Jarzyna and Nathan Siemens (Niagara United Mennonite), at Niagara United Mennonite, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ont., May 26, 2007.

Leis/Stewart—Jerome Leis and Erin Stewart, Nutana Park Mennonite, Saskatoon, April 21, 2007.

Unger/Van Otterloo—Rebecca Unger (Glenlea Mennonite) and Matthew Van Otterloo, at Glenlea Mennonite, Man., June 17, 2007.

Deaths

Dernesch—Alfred Joseph, 78 (b. Oct. 23, 1928; d. July 30, 2007), Erb Street Mennonite, Waterloo, Ont.

Konrad—Abram B, 94 (d. July 26, 2007), North Leamington United Mennonite, Ont.

Voth—Mary, 91 (d. July 7, 2007), Schoenfelder Mennonite, St. Francois Xavier, Man.

Wiens—Tina, 89 (d. July 10, 2007), Glenlea Mennonite, Man.

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

YOUNG PROPHETS

God is a programmer and life is his RPG

JOSH KLASSEN

It is my belief that all humans perceive God in a way that is natural or logical for their state of mind. A painter says that God is a painter and life is his masterpiece. I'm a computer programmer; to me God is a programmer and life is his role-playing game (RPG).

An RPG is a game that usually has no clear ending. Players have the choice to do whatever they want whenever they want. It's this open-ended story that allows a great comparison between life and an RPG.

God is a programmer. I believe this to be the case because it explains what our world is in the simplest of terms. When I program a game, I see everything. When I show gamers a world, I've seen the whole world. I know every inch and what every area has in it. When I create a program to allow a character to move around this world, I know every section he can reach, every place he can walk, and every way, shape and form of walking he can do.

I believe that God did the same thing with the creation of the universe. He told it how big it could be (an ever-increasing number), what shape it took (spherical planets), and what each little part looks like. When he made all plants and animals he told them how far they can move, what directions they could move (360 degrees), and how big each of their steps

could be.

Similarly, I believe that God programs our lives like I program the lives of my characters. He, therefore, knows every move we can make, every place we can go, every step we can take. He's seen the whole universe, he knows what every area has in it and what every inch looks like.

Life is an RPG. All RPGs are contained inside a world; this world might be big or small, but they all have some area in which they are placed. Similarly, our world is contained. We all exist inside this one universe, on this one planet—a contained environment.

Life, God and an RPG. Now all these things are fine, but how does this change anything? I believe that life is one big RPG that is written by God and that is so complex we can't even comprehend it.

Why does this matter? How will this change your way of thinking? If God programmed life and has seen the whole universe, then he knows every step you can take. He doesn't choose that step for you, but he knows every possible step that could be taken because he programmed what steps could be taken and in which directions.

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CAROL PENNER, SUMMER 2006

make your fate unique—but God set your limits, no matter how vast they are. God knows how far you can go and every possible distance you could go.

The author is currently attending the International Academy of Design and Technology in Toronto, in the videogame programming department. He is a graduate of Rockway Mennonite

Collegiate, Kitchener, Ont., and attends Breslau (Ont.) Mennonite.



Youth ministry booming in Alberta

BY DONITA WIEBE-NEUFELD,
ALBERTA CORRESPONDENT
Edmonton

While Alberta's economy booms, there is also a boom of sorts occurring in Mennonite Church Alberta congregations. It is a hiring boom focusing on youth ministries. Out of a total of 16 member churches, seven have either recently hired, or are looking for, staff to focus on youths, young adults and families. Two others are discussing possibilities, and MC Alberta itself is looking to fill two positions to work with young people.

Joe Goslin, recently hired as full-time associate pastor at Rosemary Mennonite, recognizes that a concern with youths is happening within both society and the church. "I see it with the oil field especially; they are looking to recruit and train young people," he says, adding, "I think it's very important that we do outreach with youths...especially in Alberta right now. Many people accept Jesus when they are children or in their teens"

Alberta, because of explosive economic growth, is attracting workers. Young adults are moving in from other parts of the country, swelling the ranks of the under-30 age group. On July 18, the Edmonton Journal reported that "Alberta showed a median age of 36 years, the lowest of all the provinces, according to 2006 census data released Tuesday by Statistics Canada." In other provinces, the median age is 39.5 years.

The influx of youths into Alberta, and the lack of a corresponding trend in churches, raises questions of how the church is relevant in the lives of young adults. Marvin Baergen, MC Canada missions facilitator in Alberta, acknowledges the need.

"Certainly there is a growing awareness that we are losing our young adult population from the church," Baergen acknowledges. "Is this normal and they will come

back, or is it a serious problem? I think it is more serious now than when I was young. We are into a new age now and need to be doing some things differently."

He also noted that overall "we are becoming an aging population. Although immigration is keeping us younger...a lot of the work force is aging and there is a real battle going on to get and keep our youths. The church is going through this too."

Even though Alberta has the youngest population of all the provinces, its fastest growing age group is still the 55- to 64-year-olds, according to the Journal article.

At the annual MC Canada sessions in Abbotsford, assembly delegates spent considerable time discussing concerns regarding young adult church participation. Alberta conference minister Jim Shantz listened carefully, noting that young adults at assembly were asking important key questions: What is the church?, and "Why the future church, why not now?"



Shantz

According to Shantz, "We need to work at church being more of an intergenerational body. I wonder what hiring youth pastors says about that...whether we need to think beyond youths to a broader, more comprehensive ministry?"

As director at Camp Valaqua, Jon Olfert is on the forefront of working with youths in Alberta. He recalls a discussion from the 2007 Alberta delegate sessions in Lethbridge. "The conference realizes that there must be some investment made in youths," he says. "I heard a comment from conference that with our churches shrinking, how can we only afford a quarter-time [provincial] youth pastor?"

It appears, with the current flurry of hiring activity, that Alberta churches are responding to the climate of growth in the province, and placing value on ministry to and with young people.

Olfert is enthusiastic about what he sees, commenting, "I'm in an exciting place. These youths I work with have grown so much. We have top notch youth here!"



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From splinters to splendour

Former construction labourer now works for Christ as church intern

BY PHILIP HOUMPHAN
MC CANADA RELEASE
Borabu, Thailand

Sweat dripping down his brow, Uthane Inchai bent his aching back to grab a long piece of wood from the endless pile. His arm flinched back to find several splinters sticking into his hand.

As he began picking the splinters from his calloused palm, he asked himself, "Why am I working at this stupid construction yard? I mean, what am I doing in life, and where will this get me?"

His foreman's shouts brought him back to reality, so he sucked up the pain, grabbed the plank and started walking.

Inchai's life was not uncommon for a young Thai man in 2000—working in Singapore, separated from his new wife and baby daughter for the chance to earn enough to support his family. He was working just to work and felt lost, alone and without a future.

Fast-forward seven years. Inchai again works, fierce sun beating down on his back, on the site of a local building project. This is not Singapore, though; it is Borabu. And this a church he is helping to build, the first of its kind in the area.

Now dedicated to serving God and his church, he believes that God—not a Singapore job—will provide for his family and all of his needs.

Inchai and his wife, Jiep, are completing a 10-month internship with Living Water Church in Borabu, close to his home village of Kootmek. The church building should be completed in October, according to Mennonite Church Canada Witness worker Pat Houmphan. When finished, it will include a community centre, something not found in the Borabu area.

For the couple, service to the church and community are about gratitude towards a God who provides not only a living but life.

Inchai first went to church in Singapore on the promise of learning to play the guitar. But he learned more than just chords, strumming patterns and riffs—he learned about the reality of sin and Jesus Christ. Each Sunday taught him more, and to rid himself of life's heavy burdens, he eventually accepted Jesus into his life.

After more than three years working in Singapore, years where he worked tirelessly and missed the chance to watch his daughter grow up, Inchai returned to Kootmek in 2003. Although excited to reunite with his family once more, he was unsure what was about to happen to his faith. Kootmek had no other Christians and, like most villages in Thailand, Buddhism dominated.

Inchai was convinced that his relationship with Jesus was over. But God had different plans. Not long after his return home, he became deathly ill and cried out to God for healing. He promised that, if he was healed, he would dedicate his life to serving God.

Four days into his illness, he went in for medical treatment and was stunned by the doctor's words. Inchai was diagnosed with leptospirosis, a disease transmitted by rat urine so deadly that those infected rarely live more than three or four days without treatment.

After he recovered, Inchai knew that he had a promise to keep. He sought out Houmphan and his wife, Rad, in nearby Borabu and shared his story and desire to serve God with them. The Houmphans and the church saw Inchai's desire and in 2004 decided to send him and his family to Prayao Bible College, where they studied to become church leaders.

Inchai's life is now full. The work that he does—whether preaching in the shade or building in the Thailand heat—now supports more than his family. It supports his community and his God. ☸



Uthane Inchai plays drums as part of his pastoral ministry at the church in Borabu, Thailand, while his daughter looks on.

PHOTO BY PAT HOUMPHAN

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Ministers to young adults learn of new strategy

BY DAVE ROGALSKY
EASTERN CANADA CORRESPONDENT
Waterloo, Ont.

Believing that, “as the primary agent of God’s work in the world...God has gifted the church with more than enough [people to fulfill our] common vision and ministry,” Mennonite Church Eastern Canada executive minister David Martin told a gathering of church leaders earlier this summer that the conference is available to connect congregations to wider resources, rather than necessarily being the resource.

The purpose of the June consultation was to connect congregations in the work of youth and young adult ministry now that there are no longer conference youth or young adult ministers employed by MC Eastern Canada.



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MC Eastern Canada youth and young adult leaders discuss ways they can help each other with their ministry to this declining demographic.

As part of the day, congregational ministries minister Jeff Steckley tested a “strategy for youth and young adult ministry” with the group. In the four-year program of learning and experience, youths would be mentored in an attempt to “cultivate a new generation of leaders to engage the church in extending the peace of Jesus Christ.” While it was seen as perhaps aiming too high in the amount of work expected from youths, one respondent noted that “it says youths matter.”

The day finished with Canadian Mennonite University professor Abe Bergen pointing out that youths are a declining portion of the population overall, including in congregations. He felt that MC Eastern Canada was being “foresighted” in working with youths and young adults, instead of for them.

Darryl Bergen, associate pastor at St. Catharines United Mennonite Church, attended the youth and young adult consultation and found it encouraging after only three weeks on the job with his new church. “What was most encouraging,” he said, “was that this forum gave us the opportunity to see the challenges and the victories achieved by God within our churches ministering to youths and young adults. The group identified a current growing need to address young adult ministry as separate from youth ministry—even commenting on the lack of representation of young adult ministers. The concern discussed in the forum, for this group, is the same we have encountered in our current ministry. This ‘gap’ age is important and their specific needs require our attention.” ☺

Three join staff at Eben-Ezer

BY AMY DUECKMAN
B.C. CORRESPONDENT
Abbotsford, B.C.

Eben-Ezer Mennonite Church is excited to have three new staff joining the pastoral team. Focusing on the new Vision Statement adopted at their annual meeting in January, the staff will be working in their area of gifting.

Ron Braun will begin a one-year term as interim associate pastor. His primary responsibilities will be in the areas of care group development and coordinating the second worship service. Braun has just completed seven years as pastor of Yarrow United Mennonite Church. He is a graduate of Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary in Fresno, Calif., and has been a care worker with *Communitas* (formerly Mennonite Central Committee [MCC] Supportive Care Services).

Kristina Toews will begin as a part-time youth worker. Her ministry will involve discipleship, relationship-building, coaching youths and team development. Toews is one of Eben-Ezer’s own and has just completed a one-year term as a Serve and Learn Together (SALT) worker with MCC in Bolivia. She studied for a year at Columbia Bible College and another at the University College of Fraser Valley, and she is now given the opportunity to explore her gifting in ministry as she continues her studies.

Also beginning half-time work in the new position as pastor for the elderly will be Laura Loewen. Her main ministry will involve shepherding and developing a visitation ministry. Loewen just completed seven years as executive director of MCC B.C. and has also pastored at Mennonite Fellowship of Montreal. She has a master of divinity degree from Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, Ind.

Giving leadership to the new staff is Artur Bergen, who will continue as senior pastor of Eben-Ezer. ☺

Saying goodbye

B.C. women's group recalls 68 years of service

BY AMY DUECKMAN
B.C. CORRESPONDENT
Abbotsford, B.C.

When the B.C. Mennonite Women in Mission organization formally dissolved on July 31, 68 years of pioneering history ended. But the legacy that began with a joining of sewing circles in 1939 did not die with it.

It all began when women from six churches met at the B.C. Mennonite provincial conference and expressed a desire for their individual sewing circles (*Vereine*) to come together. On Feb. 28, 1939, 125 women gathered for a service at the Mennonite church in Yarrow. For their motto they chose the verse, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my strength is made perfect in weakness" (II Corinthians 2:19).

Eventually women in other provinces followed suit and together formed Canadian Mennonite Women in Mission in 1952.

In the B.C. group's first two decades, church membership increased as many more Mennonites moved into the Fraser Valley and Vancouver. Women increasingly saw their role as one of support: material (sewing bandages, clothes and blankets for relief work), financial (raising money for various domestic and overseas mission



In this undated photo, Tina Lehn pours coffee at the Maedchenheim in Vancouver, a home-away-from-home for Mennonite young women working in the city.

projects), and spiritual (meeting for prayer and mutual encouragement).

During the Second World War, the B.C. women contributed thousands of items of food and relief for war-torn Europe. At home they were able to support a number of projects, including the Maedchenheim in Vancouver, a home-away-from-home for Mennonite young women working in the city; Bethel Bible Institute (today Columbia Bible College) in Abbotsford; and various projects at Camp Squeah in Hope. They were also able to offer financial help to female students attending Mennonite Bible colleges and seminary, and to overseas workers.

Shirley (Hildebrand) Hsu, former missionary to Taiwan, was one such worker from B.C. who received Women in Mission support. "I still feel a deep sense of gratitude to these women, even though I returned to Canada 28 years ago," she says.

Mary Derksen of Abbotsford, who served as a missionary to Japan for many years, added, "I often tell women that they were the ones who kept us going on the mission field, especially when things were tough."

Annual fall retreats and spring inspirational days have been a high point for many

women. For those who may not have been a part of traditional church women's groups, these intergenerational inter-church events were a way to connect with something larger.

It is perhaps inevitable that the changing lives of today's women have led to the decline of the traditional women's groups in B.C. With many women today employed outside the home and in leadership roles in their own congregations, participation in traditional sewing circles does not have the attraction it once did.

In later years it has been increasingly difficult to find people to assume leadership roles. At a business meeting on Feb. 10, representatives from nine churches reluctantly voted to disband the organization as of July 31, with their last official act as hosts of the Canadian Mennonite Women in Mission meeting at the national church assembly in Abbotsford.

For Veronica Thiessen, president of the B.C. Women in Mission group since 2002, the end of the organization was difficult to take. "When the final vote was taken to dissolve I was in a daze for about two weeks," she admits. "It felt like a member of the family had passed away." Thiessen mourns the loss not only of the organization as a whole, recognizing too that projects the group once supported financially will also suffer.

If there is any comfort in the organization's demise, it is that the work of women will continue in various forms in B.C. churches. Individual women's groups continue with projects such as blanket-making. The annual fall retreat will continue; plans are already being made for that event Oct. 26 to 28. Women of individual churches will now plan the spring inspirational days, with Eben-Ezer Mennonite taking charge of the next one in 2008. ❧



Mission support was always a major focus of the B.C. Mennonite Women in Mission organization. At the Abbotsford 2007 assembly, current and former missionaries spoke of how much that support meant. Pictured from left to right, back row: Rie Neufeld, MC Canada Witness missionary to Japan; Mary Derksen of Abbotsford, long-time missionary to Japan; and Mari Yoshiyuki of Surrey Japanese Mennonite Fellowship; and front row: Martha Janzen of Abbotsford and Anna Dyck of Drake, Sask.

GOD AT WORK IN *Us*

A personal pilgrimage

Grandson visits monument erected to his grandfather and 156 other political martyrs

BY TED FRANSEN

Morden, Man.

He was the grandfather I never knew, kept alive only through my Oma's stories. More than six decades after he was executed for his political beliefs by Soviet communist leader Josef Stalin, I was the first family member to stand at the place marking his death.

This summer I stood on the Russian soil once called home by my grandparents and mother, and mourned my grandfather. My pilgrimage took me to Kiev and Zaporozhye, Ukraine, as well as Orel, Moscow and St. Petersburg, Russia.

My grandfather, Jacob A. Rempel, was killed on Sept. 11, 1941, but for decades no one knew his fate. His wife kept hoping that someday her husband would join her and their children in Canada. The family had barely escaped the terror of the Soviet Union as post-World War II refugees, hoping and praying that their father, a political prisoner, would be able to rejoin them. His life story has been retold in *Hope Is Our Deliverance* (Rempel & Enns, 2005; see review on page 24).

Throughout my early childhood in the 1960s I heard whispered adult voices talking about the International Red Cross, a possible sighting in Siberia, and so on. My older brother explained it to me as my Oma's desperate hope that our grandfather was still alive. Could he possibly still be alive?

Hardly a week would go by where my mother wouldn't say something about her father. He had been a great father and community leader. He had risen from being a stable boy to a university professor, from dreamer to martyr. My mother showed me the letters that her father had written from the Siberian Gulag, and from his prison cell

in Orel, Russia.

Shortly after my wife and I got married, her grandmother related her own personal account of being attacked and raped by marauding bandits during the Russian Revolution. In despair, my wife's grandmother dragged herself to the edge of a deep well and contemplated suicide. It was only the intervention of her pastor—my grandfather—who happened to come across her whimpering body that prevented her from making that choice. The encounter at the well between our respective grandparents certainly had some incredible long-term effects.

These deeply personal and significant connections to the memories of my grandfather were forever seared into my consciousness.

With the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 came new openness and access to official records. We were finally able to learn the fate of my grandfather. He had been one of 157 political prisoners held in Orel, Russia—400 kilometres south of Moscow. On Sept. 11, 1941 they were loaded onto trucks and taken to the Medwedewskij Woods, 10 km east of the city, and shot. According to official Russian records, my grandfather was prisoner No. 123. The bodies were left in the woods in a shallow mass grave.

About two years ago I discovered that a monument had been erected at the spot in the Medwedewskij Woods by family members of some of the 157.

On July 18, I stepped off the train in Orel and was greeted by Tatjana, my guide and interpreter. She welcomed my family and me to Orel and asked the driver to head out of town to the monument.

I approached the monument with reverence. The flowers that had been purchased at the public market were gently placed at the base of the monument. I

Sister and brother Christine and Ted Fransen embrace at the memorial of their grandfather, Jacob A. Rempel, who was martyred in 1941 in Orel, Russia, along with 156 other political prisoners.

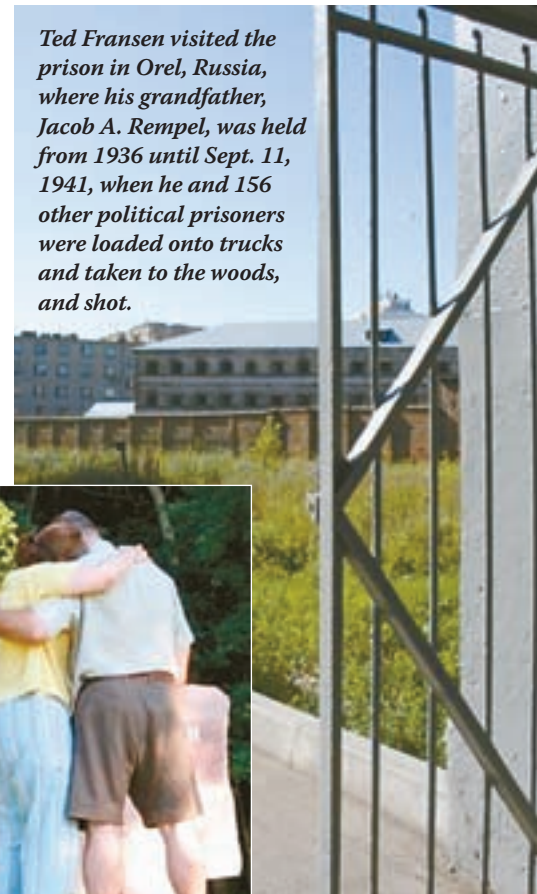


read Psalm 13 and Psalm 23 out loud and asked my family to join me in saying The Lord's Prayer. The whole scene was almost surreal. We wandered into the woods and tried to imagine the groans and anguished cries from the victims on this Sept 11 tragedy. I could almost imagine my grandfather lying there and forgiving the soldiers who had taken his life, and then whispering the name of his beloved wife—my Oma.

We then drove in silence and headed for the austere stone building—vintage 19th century—that had been my grandfather's prison from 1936 to 1941. In his letters he had written about looking out of his cell into the woods. I imagined his eyes peering out to the world between the bars.

This was a once-in-life experience for me. More than 60 years have passed since my grandfather perished as a martyr. Throughout those years I never gave up hope that someday my own personal pilgrimage would reconnect these sacred memories with the present. Standing at the monument in Orel was unbelievable. Being the first descendent of my martyred grandfather made it an incredible journey. ☸

Ted Fransen visited the prison in Orel, Russia, where his grandfather, Jacob A. Rempel, was held from 1936 until Sept. 11, 1941, when he and 156 other political prisoners were loaded onto trucks and taken to the woods, and shot.



STORIES OF FAITH IN LIFE

An Irish adventure in hospitality

BY JACK DUECK

We arrive at Shannon Airport in advance of 26 Goshen College students for a six-week western Ireland literature and history tour. Before leaving Indiana, professor John Fisher and I had immersed our students in things Irish, from stew, readers' theatre, and poetry, to scenery and history.

Our first order of business was to arrange lodging for our group, including an extended stop at the annual Listowel poetry festival. Being students, housing would need to be in hostels, campsites or something impro-

'Mary. Americans aren't all like that.' The next group seemed better. But after booking it for three days, they went into Listowel and found a pub-hotel they liked better and never returned nor did they inform me."



"We understand and are sorry," John tells her.

We turn to leave when Irish hospitality intervenes. "But won't you come in for a cup of tea?" Mary asks.

Seating us at the picture window overlooking the hill-framed Irish meadow, Mary and her young daughter serve us

and we sing from our tradition. With son Patrick at the guitar, we soon sing all our songs together.

Looking over some family photos on the old piano we note one teenage boy not among us. And then Mary can tell her story and be heard. Her eldest had been killed in a motorcycle accident—a parked flatbed truck, without lights, and a son splattered into it. The family priest urged Mary, unable to stagger through her grief, to take on tourists again. "It's your gift, Mary, and people will help heal you." Then came the incompatible Americans.

Next day we detour to the rural cemetery and gather around Shawn's grave. Later, discovering this gesture, Mary smiling, weeping, hugging us, exclaims, "Now, you wouldn't have done that!"

More stories, more feasting and now all together, filling the small farmhouse,

When returning after a late night of poetry reading, while no McCartney was in sight, a freshly steeped kettle of tea and "addictive" Irish soda bread stands ready.

vised. Nearing Listowel, we note a bed and breakfast sign at a small farmyard.

Mary McCartney answers the door. Hearing of our interest in lodging for the festival, she asks, "Where are you from then?"

"America," we answer.

"O, I'm sorry, I couldn't take North Americans...again."

A brief silence ensues, but before leaving, Eleanor, my wife, says, "We understand something unfortunate must have occurred. Would you tell us about it?"

Hesitantly, she explains: "A few years ago I booked a group from America. They were so rowdy all night, drinking, rude and inconsiderate. I couldn't welcome Americans again. But my husband said,

tea and scones on their fine china.

"How many then might there be in your group?" Mary enquires.

"Twenty-six," we tell her.

"Holy mother of God, I can take only up to eight."

"That would be just fine," John replies.

"The women folk can sleep in their sleeping bags on the floors; the men would favour the experience of sleeping in the hay mow."

We decide to stay. Mary cooks up breakfasts and evening meals. When returning after a late night of poetry reading, while no McCartney was in sight, a freshly steeped kettle of tea and "addictive" Irish soda bread stands ready.

Some evenings, gathering around Irish stew and soda bread, they sing their songs

singing "Praise God From Whom All Blessings Flow," turning the dwelling into a vibrant mead hall. From the words "Won't you?" flow song and peace and storytelling and healing and feasting and human solidarity and living Irish poetry.

In the words of Irish poet William Butler Yeats, "peace comes dropping slow."

At parting, bicycles line the drive while McCartneys and students mill about in embraces, tears and laughter.

Mary sees us off with the entreaty, "God bless you and keep you."

Cycling through the postcard country one student remarks, "This must be the only country where the people and the scenery are better than shown in the tourist brochures." ❧

STEWARDSHIP STORIES FOR THE
GENEROUS LIFE (PART V)

Christian values shape wedding plans

AS TOLD TO FERNE BURKHARDT

When Sherri and James Martin-Carman decided to get married, they also decided to have their wedding reflect who they are and the deeply rooted values that guide their life. Planning started with a focus on God, community and stewardship.

They observe with disappointment that even Christian weddings have become more elaborate and expensive. The first decision is often booking the right hall a year or two in advance of the wedding and filling all the engagement time with frenzied planning: wardrobe, reception, dinner, dance, music, flowers, decorations, gift registry, guest list, invitations, photographer, parties, honeymoon. Finally, almost as an afterthought, a quick visit with the pastor takes care of the ceremony itself.

Before the big day, the bills begin to roll in. Huge bills. One friend had no money left to buy basic furniture. "That's not a good way to start a marriage," says Sherri. "It's far too stressful."

She and James opted for an upside-down approach. They first discussed their lifetime together, which they felt deserved more attention than the few hours of celebration on the wedding day. They did set a date—about six months in advance—and made sure the church and the ministers they wanted were available.

Then they decided on a theme and planned a worship service. The service included congregational hymns which had special meaning for them, introductions by a family member, Scripture readings with brief reflections by three pastor friends, prayers, a children's story, a foot-washing ceremony for the bride and groom, and the

hymn, "Will You Let Me Be Your Servant." Then came the marriage vows, the ring exchange, candle-lighting, a congregational response and benediction.

The theme for the wedding was quilts, symbolic of "Bits and pieces of two lives [coming] together to form a new whole," said a poem by a friend. The poem and quilt motifs graced the cover of the bulletin that was run off on the church copier.

Quilts symbolize community, which is important to James and Sherri, so they involved lots of people. They invited the entire congregation, where Sherri was a pastor, to the service and to an evening of fun, after a dinner for family and special friends. They had set up a unique comforter to be knotted by people of all ages with time to fill. The top was made of fabric patches from family and friends. The comforter, a memento of the community that blessed their marriage, decorates their livingroom.

Meanwhile, church youths supervised small children in a play area. Each child received a "book" of titled blank pages to draw pictures of the day's activities. They



could exchange one picture for a photo of the bridal couple. The children's signed pictures now make up a "book" in the Martin-Carman home alongside the wedding photo album.

Community extended into dinner. Church women baked pies for dessert. Youths, along with parents, did all the serving and clean-up. This plan did not save

money because the couple donated \$400 to the youth group, but it built relationships and, hopefully, the youths noticed a different wedding model. James and Sherri also made a donation to Rockway Mennonite Collegiate instead of buying gifts for all the people who helped, since many of them had connections to the school.

The couple did cut costs in other ways, honouring their stewardship value. Everything happened at the church, so there was no extra cost for a reception hall. Guests provided entertainment: eclectic music

They first discussed their lifetime together, which they felt deserved more attention than the few hours of celebration on the wedding day.

groups, including Sherri's dad's old-timer quartet and a harmonica band, hilarious speeches and an open mike. Sherri chose a simple gown off the rack instead of a fussy, sequined ensemble with train and veil, and James did not wear a tuxedo.

A professional photographer friend took pictures. There was no limousine, no make-up artist or professional hairstylist, no florist, no monogrammed gifts, no D.J. or dance, and no alcohol. There was no gift registry, no bachelor party—nor debts to pay off!

Sherri's advice to people contemplating marriage is to start the planning with the pastor rather than professional wedding salespeople. "As people of faith, should culture guide us?" she asks. She believes Christians should aim for moderation and that shorter engagements would bring a sharper focus on what is really important

in marriage.

"Our wedding was the best we've been to," says a beaming James. "We chose people over glitz," adds Sherri, "and it went way beyond what I imagined."

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

GOD AT WORK IN THE WORLD

MCC gives aid to flood survivors in Bangladesh, Nepal

BY TIM SHENK, MCC
South Asia

Tens of thousands of people in two South Asian countries who have been affected by widespread flooding this summer are receiving assistance from Mennonite Central Committee (MCC).

In Bangladesh, MCC is providing a 10-day supply of food, including lentils, rice and oil, to about 60,000 people. Nine Bangladeshi partner organizations are distributing the food in three flooded districts—Sirajganj, Bogra and Nilphamari.

The food, valued at \$105,000, is MCC's initial emergency response to the floods. Staff members in Bangladesh continue to assess the situation and plan for longer-term projects.

In Nepal, MCC is providing about \$22,000 to the Nepal Christian Relief Services to assist about 1,650 people who have fled the flooding in the country's southern plains region. The project will provide food, clothing, blankets, soap, mosquito nets and other necessities.

In India, MCC is assessing needs and consulting with partner agencies.

Flooding is a seasonal problem in the river delta shared by Bangladesh, eastern India and southern Nepal. This year's floods are affecting millions of people in the region, destroying homes, spreading waterborne diseases and claiming hundreds of lives.

"Bangladesh is no stranger to floods," wrote Jerry Shank, an MCC representative in Bangladesh, in a recent e-mail. "Yet, when another one arrives, the cost in human suffering is great and can quickly become life threatening for the millions living on the edge." ❧



The streets of Sirajganj, a town in northwestern Bangladesh, were inundated by several feet of water from the nearby Jamuna river. Flooding is affecting millions of people in South Asia.

Red River Mutual opens \$1.9 million expansion

BY ELMER HEINRICHS
Altona, Man.

Red River Valley Mutual Insurance Company, which has roots going back to 1875—when Mennonites first arrived in Manitoba from Russia, officially opened a two-storey addition to its head office on June 26 with a ribbon-cutting and an open house.

While the company has now grown much beyond the original Mennonites mutual aid system, Red River board chair Hans Werner said the firm remembers its roots and today supports Mennonite Central Committee and Mennonite Economic Development Associates, among other organizations.

Chief executive officer Harv Heinrichs said that Red River likes to think of itself as one of Altona's best-kept secrets—a head office with more than 150 brokers in towns and cities across Manitoba and Saskatchewan. He pointed out that, with 86 companies writing property insurance in Manitoba in 2006, the historic company



Red River Mutual Insurance executive members Bill Siemens, left, Hans Werner, Harv Heinrichs and Ray Loewen cut the ribbon for the company's grand opening of its new head office addition.

ranked No. 3 in premium revenues.

Altona Bergthaler Mennonite Church pastor Rick Neufeld offered a prayer and dedication.

More than 500 people took in Red River's opening, barbecue lunch and office tours. ❧

Alternatives to war

Mennonites must do more to strengthen military resistance in schools, churches

BY EVELYN REMPEL PETKAU
MANITOBA CORRESPONDENT

Southern Manitoba

Esther Epp-Tiessen, Peace Ministries coordinator for Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Canada, knows of three Winnipeg high schools that offer reserve training in their school programming, for which students can get paid.

Last year, a piece of motorized military artillery was parked at Garden Valley Collegiate in Winkler, Man., causing teacher Dave Stobbe to bring his guitar and sing peace songs in its shadow. Then, earlier this year the Mennonite history teacher at Garden Valley left to serve a six-month term as a reservist with the Canadian army in Afghanistan.

This increase in a military presence in Manitoba and active armed forces recruitment is raising more than eyebrows in the Mennonite community.

Kelvin Dyck, pastor at Covenant Mennonite Church in Winkler and Garden Valley School Division chair, says, "The school board believes strongly that the school is not an appropriate place to recruit for the army or promote the military."

Some, however, believe Mennonites aren't doing enough to counter the military activity.

"I don't think we know in our churches what the Anabaptist Mennonite peace position means. I don't think we are passing on this legacy," said a concerned participant at a dialogue on "Faith, Security and Afghanistan: An Anabaptist Perspective," held this spring at Carman Mennonite Church.

A small group of Mennonites from the federal riding of Portage-Lisgar planned the event, at which Epp-Tiessen spoke. Citing Psalm 37, Epp-Tiessen told the 40 in attendance "'not to fret or worry but trust in the Lord and do good.' The secret is found in

the practice of justice, generosity, caring for the needy, feeding the hungry, befriending the enemy, seeking the righteousness of the kingdom."

"Faith in Christ involves discipleship, which includes the rejection of violence and war," she continued. "Our ancestors' witness to peace is a legacy that is still relevant, but many today would take issue with this.... Who will be a witness that the way to peace is through peace?"

Stobbe, who is retiring from teaching this year, wants to take his concern on the road. "We need to hear the stories of our heroes," he said. "We need to see alternatives to going to war and into careers that destroy rather than build up. We need well-argued rationales that are accessible for adults. My age group doesn't know how to justify the peace position. We've done very well working on social justice issues, but we don't know our way through the peace/war issue very well." ❧

'Capacity-building' project leads to hospital

BY GEORGE RICHERT, MCC

Northern Iraq

A hospital is being constructed in northern Iraq, water storage tanks have been purchased and conflicts over land ownerships are being settled.

The initiatives are all part of a grassroots "capacity-building" project Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) is currently funding with eight different organizations from all parts of Iraq. The objective is for

the organizations to develop priorities in their area and strive to implement them.

On the map of Iraq, draw a straight line between the cities of Mosul (the ancient city of Nineveh) and Kirkuk. With some variations, this is known as the "green line." Northeast of this line is the Kurdish autonomous region and southwest of the line is the area in which Iraqi insurgents roam relatively freely. In a number of areas along the green line, the border is not clearly demarcated.

During the time of Saddam Hussein, the freedom of communities was severely limited and, over time, people lost the motivation to initiate community activities. When Hussein was overthrown, many communities were at a loss to know how to proceed.

Hussein also sent many Kurds to the south and brought Arabs to the north in an attempt at "Arabization" of the northern region. Today, some Arabs are leaving the north, some are staying, and some Kurds are returning, leaving communities wondering how to settle land ownership issues.

REACH (Rehabilitation, Education And Community Health) an MCC partner, encouraged the formation of community-based organizations (CBOs) and taught them how to advocate for themselves.

In the particular area of Makhmur, there are 172 CBOs. Finding it impossible to work this many groups, REACH assisted them in organizing themselves into three separate networks, with each one establishing its own priorities for development.

One network, with its office in the village of Debaga, determined that a hospital was needed. With REACH's assistance, a proposal was presented to the International Committee of the Red Cross, and a hospital is now in the construction phase. ❧



George and Pearl Richert of Swift Current, Sask., right, Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) interim representatives in Palestine, Jordan, Iraq and Iran, are pictured with MCC staff and the executive of a network that is building a hospital in northern Iraq. George was president of Menno Simons College in Winnipeg from 1992-00, and dean of the faculty of education and faculty of social work at the University of Regina from 1973-92.

Bold question on war

'Sandwich board' prompts conversations with people of all ages

BY DEBORAH FROESE

MC CANADA

Winnipeg

"If Canada went to war, what would you do?" This is the question Mennonite Heritage Centre archivist Conrad Stoesz wore on a sandwich board around his neck as part of an Alternative Service display at the recent Red River Regional Heritage Fair. The sandwich board pictures a conscientious objector (CO) holding his head in his hands with the question emblazoned in bright orange type.

/// Briefly noted

Mennonite community festival a success

The usually quiet grounds of the United Mennonite Educational Institute (UMEI) were anything but on June 2, as the Leamington (Ont.) Mennonite Community Festival (formerly known as the Leamington Mennonite Community Sale) began with its traditional pancake breakfast. This year marked the 37th such event, and featured many of the tried and true booths as well as new events aimed at bringing in a more varied audience. This year's festival included the traditional farmers market, including Mennonite foods and crafts, a quilt auction and raffle, as well as new additions like a classic car show, golf challenge and an art contest with the theme, "A window to our heritage." The festival netted more than \$36,000, the proceeds of which will be distributed to include the UMEI, Mennonite Central Committee, Leamington Mennonite Home, VOICE (an agency for hearing impaired children), Leamington District Memorial Hospital, and Shalom Counselling.

— BY BARRY BERGEN



Conrad Stoesz wears his Alternative Service sandwich board in front of an exhibit at the Red River Regional Heritage Fair. "I get a lot more attention if I wear the sandwich board than if I do not."

computer set up to access the award-winning Alternative Service website that has been designed for students and teachers. The Manitoba school history curriculum includes a unit on World War II in elementary and high school, creating an opportunity for Stoesz to present a little-known aspect of Canada's war history.

Stoesz views the CO experience as a part of Canadian history, not just Mennonite history, and he believes it should be taught along with other war history. He hopes the CO

experience will influence the way children and youths consider current situations, like schoolyard bullying, and encourage them to imagine possibilities beyond warfare. Adults respond to the display too. Stoesz has heard stories of relatives who hid from the military in the woods of southeastern Manitoba, while others responded to the display with tears in their eyes, thanking Stoesz for recognizing the contributions of COs.

Not all reaction to the display has been positive. Stoesz has received a few hostile e-mail comments, but most people who oppose the idea choose to ignore the display or not engage him in conversation. Some of those who disagree with alternative service have told him they either served in the military themselves or have children doing so. //

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ARTBEAT

Hope and the Dragon

Teen pens book of hope for others facing frightening battles with cancer

BY KARIN FEHDERAU
SASKATCHEWAN CORRESPONDENT
Fiske, Sask.

He's only 14, but already he's written a book, met former prime minister Paul Martin and travelled to Disney World to represent the Children's Miracle Network Telethon.

Matthew Epp, who beat back a rare form of cancer three times, lives just outside of Fiske with his two younger siblings. Modest, with an engaging smile, the young author from this small town has done more in his life than most teens his age. He's also endured more pain and looked death in the face more often than most, yet his quiet, simple faith carries him one day at a time. By the time he was two, Matthew was in treatment for Wilm's Tumour, a cancer of the kidney.

At 11, while attending camp, he wrote a story about his experience. Using an encouraging idea from his mother, Matthew wrote a medieval tale using a dragon to represent the frightening cancer. Impressed, the camp director sent a copy to his mother. She, in turn, e-mailed it out to various family members.

Matthew's grandmother decided to submit it for a contest that Aspirations Publishing in Toronto was holding. The story won first place at the company's first annual writing contest in 2006. This past May, *Hope and the Dragon* was published and Matthew went on tour.

The tour included Toronto, Regina and Saskatoon, and Matthew did book signings and media interviews for two weeks straight, including an appearance on Canada AM.

"It was tiring," he admits.

Since there are very few books dealing



with the subject of children and cancer, the story, which has been released in paperback and hardcover, has widespread appeal, as evidenced by comments found on

the publisher's website (aspirationspublishing.com). Posted there are thoughts from Stephen Harper ("Your message of hope, faith and courage is an inspiration to those battling their own dragons"), broadcaster Pamela Wallin and other well-known individuals who have read the book and felt an emotional connection to this young man with his confident smile.

Asked if he's thought about what he wants to do in the future, Matthew is ready with several ideas. "I want to be a chef and start my own restaurant," he says. "I'm starting to enjoy cooking now." Teaching high school, especially in other countries, also holds a certain appeal. And he hasn't ruled out studying to be a doctor either. ✎

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Musicians practise 'Christian authenticity'

BY DAVE ROGALSKY
EASTERN CANADA CORRESPONDENT
Waterloo/Breslau, Ont.

Anyone visiting Conrad Grebel University College on Aug. 17 would have wondered at seeing Mozart and other classical musicians wandering the halls with a group of 12- to 16-year-olds toting instruments and sheaves of music. What they were witnessing, though, was Ontario Mennonite Music Camp in full swing for its 24th year. Combining music training, worship, faith and fun, the camp works to train young musicians for the church and beyond, and to live as Christians in the world.

All the counsellors work double duty, caring for the group of musical campers and being the resource people for everything from strings and piano to voice. This year, Becky Reesor was the "spiritual" counsellor, planning small group times and Bible studies, and helping the other leaders and campers plan worship times.

Camp director Jason White says the camp's Christian and Mennonite roots are very important. This year's theme, "Christian authenticity," was about getting away from rules that lead to judging others as good or bad, and, instead, focusing faith

on the campers' relationships with God and their neighbours. "We live in forgiveness as Christians," he says. "We make decisions based on our relationship with God."

An Anglican and a professional musician, White believes that the camp's focus on devotional life, worship, spirituality, and a focus on peace and community, as well as "Mennonite camp fire songs" (like No. 606) make the camp something special and unique. Staff and campers alike work hard to make the camp a community, discouraging cliques and encouraging conflict resolution and mutuality.

The camp closed on Aug. 24 with a performance of the musical *Giddyup Giddalong Gideon* at Breslau Mennonite Church. ✎



Brandon Leis as classical composer Franz Schubert leads Shanika Lewis-Waddell in the voice class at Ontario Mennonite Music Camp at Conrad Grebel University College.

MUSIC REVIEW

Hinting at life's deep answers

Closer To The Flame by Joel Kroeker. True North Records, 2007.

REVIEWED BY D.S. MARTIN

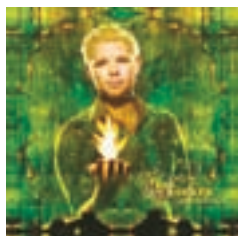
Like a Jackson Browne for a new generation, Joel Kroeker centres his songs on carefully crafted lyrics. Like Browne, he also performs within the singer-songwriter vein that plays along the edges of folk, rock and pop.

His newest album—Closer to the Flame—opens with the snare-driven rhythm of “Against Myself,” which is an abstract call to self-motivation even though it admits that “self” is clearly the problem.

Perhaps Jackson Browne isn't the best comparison, because Kroeker, a former Winnipegger now living in Vancouver, sees Canadian music—particularly the musical tradition he's perpetuating—as something Canadians have marked out as our own. He writes of singing Joni Mitchell in Hawaii, Ian Tyson in New Zealand, and of the connection he feels to artists such as Gordon Lightfoot, Leonard Cohen and Neil Young. Although he acknowledges a huge musical diversity in Canada, he sees a commonality in “the Canuck bards who are known for their writing mastery [who] all share a high winsome sound.”

The chorale-styled “Hymn Number One” reflects Kroeker's Mennonite heritage. “Writing that certainly took me back to my roots,” he says on his website (joelkroeker.com). “The echoes of those confessional hymns are still with me. Some times the choir would sing with such force and resonance that the church bench would actually vibrate right into my bones.”

In “Hymn Number One,” he sings, “For so many years I wandered blind / I followed every path I could find / But every road like a river winds / As the light is growing dim / And the night time moon is sliver



thin / All we have is wild within / Steady River, bring me home.” Although claiming the song takes him back to his Mennonite roots, he only seems to be crying out to the river for guidance—or to the shadow roads in “Sacred Heart”—for he never mentions to whom he, or we, need to return. “Hymn” does conclude with a hint of hope, though: “But here in the shadows / We wrestle angels / Till we believe.”

There are several images that keep resurfacing throughout Closer To The Flame—sun, moon, stars, flames, dark skies, rivers, stones, angels, home and hearts—that they start playing upon each other. It's as if this is the iconography of Kroeker's life. Less a storyteller than a weaver of sentiments, his songs become a place for his listeners to sink into with the details of their own lives.

I believe there is a very important place for art such as Kroeker's, that hints of deep answers to be found within our Christian faith but doesn't push such answers. Some listeners outside the Christian faith will listen to the gospel music of Randy Travis or the kingdom pronouncements of Bono simply because they respect these artists; others, however, need a gentle prodding from voices that sound, to their ears, like their own.

Perhaps we'll understand better if, instead of viewing artistically valuable music as a ministry, we see it as having its own mission.

D.S. Martin regularly critiques music for ChristianWeek. This review was originally published in a slightly altered form in the July 20 issue of ChristianWeek and is reprinted with permission.

BOOK REVIEW

Son, niece pen life of family's plight in Soviet Russia

Hope is Our Deliverance. Amalie Enns and Alexander Rempel. Privately published, 2006 (available through the Bookshop at Pandora Press), 321 pages.

REVIEWED BY BARB DRAPER
CANADIAN MENNONITE

Jakob Aron Rempel was raised in an impoverished family in southern Russia in the late 19th century. Early in life he learned to persevere in spite of hardships, and through sheer determination managed to achieve his teaching credentials. He studied in Switzerland and in the years before World War I served as a teacher and professor in what is now Ukraine.

By the 1920s, Rempel was a well-respected church leader who represented the Mennonite churches in discussions with the Soviet government. As the situation in the Soviet Union worsened through the 1920s, Rempel worked at maintaining religious life among Mennonite people, preaching and teaching in many churches. Sometimes he travelled great distances. The work became increasingly difficult as Soviet oppression increased and many pastors emigrated.

By the time Rempel decided that emigration was necessary, it had become impossible. Assessed with exorbitant taxes, and without reprieve from the Soviet courts, Rempel finally fled from his home. His belongings were auctioned and his family left homeless.

In November 1929, Rempel was arrested. For the next two years, he suffered in prison camps, forced to do hard labour. Miraculously, he escaped during a transfer to another camp, but he could not endanger his family by joining them, although while he was a fugitive, his son Alexander lived with him.

Eventually Rempel was again captured



and his family never saw him again. The family continued to struggle for survival through years of poverty and German occupation in Ukraine. As World War II drew to a close, they made their way to Germany and then to Canada.

Alexander Rempel promised his father that his story would not be forgotten. He translated letters from Russian into German and made notes about his father's life. Unfortunately, Alexander died before

the project was finished, so it was left to his niece, Amalie Enns, to translate his work into English and complete the story.

This is a powerful story of great suffering by a Mennonite leader who worked tirelessly for the church. Enns provides context for the story of her grandfather with a brief outline of the history of Stalinist Russia. She has also translated and included many letters written by Jakob Rempel while in exile. ❧

BOOK REVIEW

A rich tradition

Half in the Sun: Anthology of Mennonite Writing. Elsie K. Neufeld, ed. Vancouver: Ronsdale Press, 2006.

REVIEWED BY MARGARET LOEWEN REIMER

What a treat to read this collection of Mennonite writing coming out of British Columbia. Who would have guessed that there is such a variety of literature in that province from writers with a Mennonite heritage? Thanks to Elsie Neufeld and her numerous co-editors for bringing together the work of these writers in one volume.

Many of these authors were featured in the Fall 2005 issue of *Rhubarb*, a magazine

of new Mennonite art and writing published in Winnipeg. In his introduction in *Rhubarb*, Andreas Schroeder characterized the B.C. group as “writers who had grown to appreciate their Mennonite heritage without being hobbled by it. Some were church-goers, some weren't.”

That is an apt summary of this remarkable anthology as well. The title comes from a poem by Leonard Neufeldt: “You, standing half in the evening sun / and half

in the shade wondering who deserves / this tree's manifest of messiness” (page 207). The title suggests a sense of being both inside and outside of the tradition, of being aware of both light and shadow in the “messy worlds” portrayed in these selections.

The anthology includes works by 25 contributors in three categories: fiction, poetry and non-fiction. Contributors range from much-published writers and journalists to teachers of writing and part-time poets. The thematic range is wide: from fond memories of Mennonite childhood to unnerving portraits of contemporary life, from anguish over lost children and lost faith to quirky moments of affirmation in a crazy world.

Some themes may be familiar, but the variations are fresh. In Louise Bergen Price's story, a Mennonite mother in Siberia is tragically misled by her self-sacrificial love. In Harry Tournemille's story, the “miracle of birth” is the moment of religious disillusionment.

The poems offer many delights and unexpected turns. There are many references to gardens and the natural world—but surprisingly few mountains—most explicit in poems such as “Tundra” by Melanie Siebert, “night rain” by Leanne Boschman, and “November snow” by Elsie Neufeld.

In general, these writers are a serious lot, although storyteller Oscar Martens may have you laughing out loud. His nefarious hero uses old issues of the *Mennonite Reporter* for his fraudulent schemes.

One disappointment for me was the lack of a substantial introduction to set the context and offer some analysis of this collection. While the name of Sharon Butala might lend a certain prestige, I cannot see the logic of giving the important introductory task to a Prairie author, especially one who would seem to have little in common with this particular circle of writers.

This anthology, though, is a wonderful addition to the rich body of Mennonite literature in Canada. I hope it will stimulate conversations among writers and church-goers across the land.

Margaret Loewen Reimer, a former editor at Canadian Mennonite, is currently working on a new edition of One Quilt, Many Pieces: A Reference Guide to Mennonite Groups in Canada.



Ann L. Schultz conducts the massed Inter-Mennonite Children's Choir at the “Joyful Celebration” 40th anniversary concert this spring. Founded in 1967, the choir was the vision of Lois Snider, who submitted a written proposal on behalf of the Conrad Grebel College's Woman's Association in 1965. Helen Martens, the first music professor at Conrad Grebel, was appointed director, and the choir became a reality in October of 1967. The original intention was to start a choir school with the rehearsals on Saturday. The first concert was held at Rockway Mennonite Collegiate in the spring of 1968 to a standing room only crowd. On May 6, the choir gave another spring concert and included an alumni choir conducted by Schultz, a past accompanist, and accompanied by past conductor Jane Schultz-Janzen. They sang “A Prayer of St. Patrick” composed for the day by former chorister Jeff Enns, and “Lord Thou Hast Been our Dwelling Place” by Schultz-Janzen.

BOOK REVIEW

Vanquishing Voldemort

Why Harry Potter had to be a wizard

Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows.
J.K. Rowling. Raincoast Publishing, 2007.

REVIEWED BY ANGELIKA DAWSON

Spoiler warning! For those of you who have not yet read the final installment in the Harry Potter series, this article contains spoilers so you might want to wait!

Over the last several years I've had hundreds of conversations with Christian parents about whether or not our children should be reading J.K. Rowling's Harry Potter books. Harry's status as a wizard is usually the issue. But I've come to the conclusion that the fact that Harry is a wizard is exactly what makes the books so good and, I believe, appropriate for Christian parents to read to their children.

The fact that Harry is a wizard means that he can't place the blame for everything bad in his world on magic. Since Harry



The Dawson family was out in full Potter regalia for the recent launch of the latest and last Harry Potter book; from left, John as Professor Lupin, Aaron as Sir Cadogen, and Angelika as Moaning Myrtle.

is also capable of magic, he has to make choices about what to do with his powers. When Harry finds out that he actually has something in common with the evil Lord Voldemort, he fears he too will be capable of evil—a potential we all have to face. Professor Dumbledore says it best: “It’s not our abilities that determine our character, Harry, it’s the choices we make.”

And while Rowling didn't set out to write an allegory in the style of C.S. Lewis, her books have obvious Christian—even Anabaptist—themes within them, particularly the final installment: *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*.

The protagonists aren't exactly pacifists; the Order of the Phoenix is created to fight against Voldemort and his Death Eaters.



[Rowling's] books have obvious Christian—even Anabaptist—themes within them.

Even Harry and his friends create Dumbledore's Army, but they do so in order to learn defensive magic. Still, Harry faces the temptation to use the “unforgivable curses” as he wrestles with his hatred of his enemies.

In the journey to this final book, Harry's goal has been to defeat Voldemort, but it isn't until now that he realizes that Voldemort can only be defeated by Harry's own death. Harry accepts this and faces his enemy alone, unarmed, willing to die to save his friends.

And so he dies. At least, the evil in him does; but Voldemort can't kill the good within Harry. When Harry comes back, Voldemort's power is vanquished. The evil Lord is finished. Sounds familiar doesn't it?

As a parent, the books have become a way for me to talk about these life-and-death themes with my son. We read them aloud to each other as a family, which is a gift in itself, and our interaction and discussions have been wonderful opportunities to discuss our faith.

Each parent needs to determine whether their own children should read these books, but they shouldn't be dismissed simply be-

cause they are books about wizards. Keep this in mind: Fiction is truth-telling in another form—using the fantastic to bring out the truth about our own lives and world. Rowling does that in a wonderful way. If your children are mature enough to handle the content, then the books provide a great opportunity for you to talk about things you might not talk about otherwise.

Angelika Dawson was formerly the B.C. correspondent for Canadian Mennonite. She was recently published in Half in the Sun: an Anthology of Mennonite Writing and is at work on her first novel.

☞ Briefly noted

Talking with kids about homelessness

A book launch for *The Cardboard Shack Beneath The Bridge: Helping Children Understand Homelessness* brought 400 people to the head office of World Vision Canada in Mississauga earlier this year. This new picture book from Castle Quay Books, written and illustrated by Tim Huff, is designed for parents and teachers to talk with children about homelessness. The author has years of experience working with homeless youths in the Greater Toronto area. Some the proceeds of the book will go directly to Youth Unlimited, The Daily Bread Food Bank, The Ladybug Foundation and Frontlines.

—Castle Quay Books Canada release

Correction

The Canadian Authors Association Award given to Sarah Klassen on July 7 was \$1,000. Incorrect information appeared in the article “Klassen releases new book, honoured by authors group,” on page 16 of the July 30 issue. *Canadian Mennonite* regrets the error.

FILM REVIEW

Does *The Simpsons* Movie demean Christianity? Doh!

The Simpsons Movie. Directed by David Silverman.
Written by Matt Groening, James L. Brooks, et al.
20th Century Fox, 2007. PG.

REVIEWED BY VIC THIESSEN

“This book doesn’t have any answers!” exclaims Homer Simpson in frustration as he pages through the Bible early in this summer’s hit film, *The Simpsons Movie*. The reason for Homer’s search for answers is Grampa, who is “speaking in tongues” while writhing in the aisle of the Springfield church.

Poking fun at Christianity has been a prominent feature of *The Simpsons* TV show for 18 years, so this irreverent scene does not come as a shock. But is it an example of a generally negative attitude toward Christianity—or is it merely critiquing what the writers (including creator Matt Groening, who has Mennonite roots) see as excesses of the Christian faith?

For nearly two decades now, Christians have held differing opinions on this question. Some have found *The Simpsons* offensive, saying it promotes questionable morals and consistently demeans Christianity, specifically by suggesting that Christians are fools who are out of touch with reality. Others maintain *The Simpsons* has largely portrayed the Christian faith and Christian values in a favourable light, critiquing primarily religious hypocrisy.

In the end, viewers will need to decide for themselves whether they find *The Simpsons Movie* offensive, but I, for one, was surprised by how gentle, inoffensive and spiritually affirming the film was.

Christianity does not actually play a major role in the film, with only a few references—including a jibe about “intelligent design”—outside of the early scene in the church. But there are numerous scenes that affirm Christianity and an ethical life.

The film concerns an environmental

disaster in the town of Springfield, caused by Homer, and the overreaction of the Environmental Protection Agency, eventually leading to the planned annihilation of the town and its residents. Homer faces a lynch mob and escapes to Alaska, where he meets someone who will force him to confront his selfish ways.

He eventually learns that other people are as important as he is, which, for Homer, is a huge revelation. Along the way, Homer is confronted by his wife Marge, who asks him how he could ignore the warnings of their daughter Lisa, and stupidly cause the disaster in the first place. In my favourite line of the film, Homer responds: “I don’t think about things!”

There is a clear moral lesson here: If people don’t start thinking more about issues like global warming and poverty, a global disaster is all too likely.

Meanwhile, son Bart discovers that perhaps the evangelical Christian neighbour Ned Flanders—depicted as a genuinely kind and caring person—would make a better father than Homer. And, of course, Lisa Simpson, the social conscience of the family, is trying her best to raise awareness on environmental issues.

Groening has been quoted as saying that Lisa is his favourite character: a stubborn idealist crusading for love and justice. She is, in fact, usually depicted as a Christian activist, not unlike many Mennonites I know and admire.

The Simpsons Movie is a very funny and intelligent film. Yes, there are jibes against Christianity, but there are also positive depictions of the Christian faith. Even the writhing Grampa is later described by Marge as having had a genuine religious experience—and she is angry with Homer for belittling it.

And the film is much more interested in bashing the U.S. government, rich white men and big corporations than it is in bashing religion. While this film may not appeal to everyone I thought it was an inspired piece of filmmaking with at least one important message: We dare not be complacent like Homer.

Vic Thiessen is the director of the London (England) Mennonite Centre.

▄ Briefly noted

Extinction of Indian females feared

Christian women activists in India have expressed anger at what they say is an alarming crisis due to female feticide in their country, after two dumps of illegally aborted female fetuses were found in the world’s second most populous nation last month. “This is a dangerous situation and, if it continues, there will be the extinction of female children,” lamented T. Sabitha Swaraj, president of the All India Council of Christian Women, which is part of the National Council of Churches in India.


—ENI release

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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.

Sept. 29, 30: Thanksgiving Vespers with Abendmusik Choir, at Emmanuel Free Reformed Church, Abbotsford (29) and Knox United Church, Vancouver (30); 8 p.m. both evenings. Donations to Menno Simons Centre.

Oct. 13: Mennonite Historical Society of B.C. annual banquet. Speaker: John B. Toews. Theme: "In defence of mothers and sisters. The Mennonite Selbstschutz in Ukraine, 1918." At Emmanuel Mennonite Church. For tickets, call 604-853-6177.

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.

Oct. 26-28: Women's retreat at Camp Squeah. Theme: "Jesus our redeemer and friend." Speaker: Laurel Hildebrandt. For more information, call Jackie Rempel at 604-952-0041.

Nov. 3: Twentieth anniversary of Peace Chinese Mennonite Church, Richmond.

Nov. 8-11: MCC Arts and Peace Festival at CBC, Abbotsford.

Nov. 17: MCC annual general meeting at Yarrow Mennonite Brethren Church.

Dec. 1, 2: Advent Vespers with Abendmusik Choir, at Emmanuel Free Reformed Church, Abbotsford (1) and Knox United Church, Vancouver (2); 8 p.m. both evenings. Donations to Menno Simons Centre.

Alberta

Sept. 15: Golf for MCC at Tofield Golf Course; noon tee-off. Supper to follow at Tofield Mennonite Church. To register, call Suzanne at 780-672-0752.

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.

Oct. 16-18: Pastors retreat at Sanctum Retreat Centre. Call conference minister Jim Shantz at 780-485-2518 for more information.

Nov. 2-3: MCC annual celebration at Crestwood Mennonite Brethren Church, Medicine Hat.

Nov. 10: World AIDS Day event highlighting local and international AIDS work in the context of First Nations and indigenous people. Featuring Ovide Mercredi and Tom Jackson.

Nov. 23: Annette Stanwick, author of *Forgiveness: The Mystery and the Miracle*, will speak as part of Restorative Justice Week events, at Joie de Vivre, Calgary; at 7 p.m. Call Peter at 403-275-6935 for more details.

Saskatchewan

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-athon, Rosthern.

Oct. 13: Evening of celebration for *Der Bote* at Bethany Manor, Saskatoon; at 7 p.m. Program and refreshments.

Oct. 26: RJC fundraising banquet.

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

Oct. 27: MC Saskatchewan Equipping Day.

Nov. 30-Dec. 1: RJC dinner theatre.

Dec. 16: RJC Chorale performs at Knox United Church, Saskatoon.

Dec. 21: RJC Christmas concert.

Manitoba

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. 25: MC Manitoba fall delegate session at First Mennonite Church, Winnipeg; at 7 p.m.

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.

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

Nov. 28: Evening with the arts at Westgate, 7 p.m. Call 204-775-7111 for more information.

Dec. 10: Westgate Christmas concert, 7 p.m., at Westminster United Church.

Jan. 24,25: Westgate junior-high three one-act plays at Franco-Manitoban Centre.

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

March 6-8: Westgate senior-high drama.

May 14: Westgate work day.

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

Ontario

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

Sept. 20-23: CPT ninth annual Peacemaker Congress: Tearing Down Walls, Restoring Community, at Toronto United Mennonite Church. Keynote speakers: Jim Loney and Judy Da Silva. To register, or for more information, visit cpt.org and follow the "Peacemaker Congress IX" link.

Sept. 22: Grebel University College and the Teaching Circle seminar and workshops for theology students and those teaching adults in church on

Briefly noted

Christian organizations lobby against poverty

Kairos has joined with five other national faith-based organizations—Citizens for Public Justice, the Commission on Justice and Peace of the Canadian Council of Churches, the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada's National Roundtable on Poverty and Homelessness, Campaign Against Child Poverty, and Faith and the Common Good—in calling on federal political party leaders to include in their platforms a commitment to develop and implement a strategy to reduce poverty in Canada. In their joint letter to party leaders, the groups lament the persistence of poverty in Canada, and point to the success of poverty reduction strategies in both Ireland, where poverty has been reduced to 6.8 percent from 15 percent, and Quebec, which has achieved a 40 percent reduction in its child poverty rate since 2000. —Canadian Council of Churches release

adult learning styles; 9-3 at Toronto School of Theology; \$50 cost (grad students pay only \$10). Dr Andrew Irvine, D.Min. director at Toronto School of Theology, is speaking. Contact Lydia Neufeld at lydia.harder@utoronto.ca or (416) 691-8553 to register.

Sept. 24: Willowgrove fall golf tournament at St. Andrews Golf Club in Aurora. To register, or for more information, email John Philips at jsphilips@sympatico.ca.

Sept. 29: Official opening of the Willowgrove dining hall, Stouffville.

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. Performers include Carol Bauman, Daren Di Santo, Jennifer Enns Modolo, John Hess, Bethany

Horst, Brandon Leis, Tim Shantz, Carol Gingerich and Andrea Weber. For more information, call Lewis Brubacher at 519-884-3072.

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 businessasacalling.org or call toll-free 1-800-665-7026.

June 20-22: Zurich Mennonite Church 100th anniversary homecoming weekend celebrations.

Quebec

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

Classifieds

Employment Opportunities



Mennonite Central Committee Ontario invites applications for the position of **REFUGEE PROGRAM COORDINATOR (85%)** and **NIAGARA REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVE (15%)** St. Catharines, Ontario.

The position requires a person with a commitment to Christian faith, active church membership and non-violent peace-making.

The Refugee Program Coordinator will promote and coordinate all MCC Ontario program related to the Private Sponsorship of Refugees Program and connect with other partners assisting refugees and refugee claimants. The Niagara Regional Representative liaises with and educates constituents, congregations, and the interested public in the Niagara Region on all matters pertaining to MCC.

Qualifications include: previous experience in refugee work; Ability to work with complex policy analysis as well as working sensitively and collaboratively with sponsors, colleagues, and government on refugee issues/cases; comfortable with public speaking and being responsible for a wide variety of tasks.

This three-year salaried full-time position begins October, 2007. Application deadline: Sept. 21, 2007.

Complete job description available on MCC's website at www.mcc.org. To apply send cover letter and resume, contact Cath Woolner, 50 Kent Ave., Kitchener, ON N2G 3R1 or 800-313-6226 or cathw@mennonitecc.on.



MCC REPRESENTATIVE: MEXICO CITY.

This three to five year volunteer person provides overall leadership and vision to MCC work in Mexico. Must have a strong identification with MCC's mission, philosophy of development and manner of working. Must respect and have the willingness to work and live within the Mexican culture. Knowledge of community development theory and models preferred. Ability to create, write, monitor and evaluate plans and budgets needed. Ability to communicate in Spanish required. The large geographic focus of the MCC programs in Mexico requires significant travel and limited team time.

Candidates of a gender or ethnic group typically underrepresented in this type of MCC assignment are encouraged to apply. Contact Kathy Jackson at krj@mcc.org or call 717-859-1151 for more information or to apply. www.mcc.org/serve



COORDINATOR OF SUPPORT CIRCLES FOR VICTIMS OF ELDER ABUSE Kitchener, Ontario

The Coordinator will establish support groups for isolated seniors who are recovering from an abusive situation. The purpose of the support circle is to assist the senior in gaining control over his/her life, making and carrying out decisions, and entering into a restorative justice process if applicable.

This position requires a person with a commitment to Christian faith, active church membership and non-violent peace-making. Other qualifications include: strong interpersonal and communication skills; experience working with victims and supervising/supporting volunteers; commitment to theology of restorative justice; and experience in the health or social work fields.

This salaried, 20% time position is available beginning in September. Application deadline: Sept. 14, 2007 (as funding for this position increases, there is a commitment to moving this position closer to full time).

Complete job description available on MCC's website at www.mcc.org. To apply send cover letter and resume, contact Cath Woolner, 50 Kent Ave., Kitchener, ON N2G 3R1 or 800-313-6226 or cathw@mennonitecc.on.ca.

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

FACILITATOR OF BEREAVEMENT CARE

One Day/Week Contract Position

Concordia Hospital, in Winnipeg, is a Mennonite hospital which serves our community with compassionate, respectful, holistic care. We are seeking a spiritually mature person to expand the services of our Oncology Department by developing a grief support program:

Qualifications:

- University level degree with courses in theology and pastoral care
- Clinical Pastoral Education an asset
- Program development skills
- Collaborative team player
- In good standing with own faith group

Applications and inquiries may be directed to: Kathleen Rempel Boschman, 1095 Concordia Avenue, R2K 3S8 or krboschman@concordiahospital.mb.ca or 1-204-661 7149.

Camp Assiniboia, Headingley, has an opening beginning in spring 2008 for a **CAMP MANAGER**, a person with a combination of energy, knowledge and enthusiasm, eager to apply lessons learned in business or career, and able to form staff and volunteers into a community, with the task of building up the operational side of the camp. This person communicates effectively and has the ability to deal with a variety of relational situations. This person is committed to the Mennonite Church and dedicated to our camp mission of "inviting persons to life". Direct inquiries to Director of Camping Ministries, MC Manitoba, 200-600 Shaftesbury Blvd., Winnipeg, MB R3P 2J1; camps@mennochurch.mb.ca or 204-895-2267.

Is God calling you?

United Mennonite Church of Black Creek is looking for a **PASTOR**.

Black Creek is a rural area situated between the recreational centres of the Comox Valley and Campbell River on Vancouver Island.

For more information contact:

Glen Beaton, Search Committee Chair
c/o United Mennonite Church
2277 Enns Rd
Black Creek, BC V9J 1H7

E-mail: stonecr@telus.net Phone: 250-337-5789

Are you called to make a difference in the workplace?

The Christian Labour Association of Canada (CLAC) is a national multi-sector trade union providing labour relations representation to its members primarily in the Construction, Health Care, Transportation, Manufacturing and Retail industries. We are currently looking for mature individuals, who share our Christian social values, to work as **LABOUR RELATIONS REPRESENTATIVES** in Edmonton and Ft. McMurray, Alberta. Good communication and organizational skills and a willingness to travel extensively throughout the province are necessary conditions of employment.

Applicants may also be considered for our Surrey and Kelowna B.C. offices. For more information, please call 780-454-6181 or toll free at 1-877-863-5154 or e-mail your resume to edmonton@clac.ca Web site: www.clac.ca.



Associated
Mennonite
Biblical
Seminary

Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary seeks a half-time **ASSISTANT DIRECTOR FOR ENGAGING PASTORS**.

This person will bring together pastors and AMBS professors for dialogue in a variety of settings in the grant-funded Engaging Pastors program. The qualified candidate will have pastoral experience and will possess a seminary degree, strong communications skills, ability to organize efficiently, ability to work effectively with a wide variety of people, commitment to Anabaptist-Mennonite faith and the mission of AMBS, and knowledge of MC USA and MC Canada conferences and congregations. For more information, visit www.ambbs.edu/employment. To apply, send letter of application, resume and three references to Jewel Gingerich Longenecker, associate dean for leadership education, ChurchLeadership@ambbs.edu, 3003 Benham Avenue, Elkhart, IN 46517.



Mennonite Central Committee Ontario invites applications for the following positions:

Program Associate with **CIRCLES OF SUPPORT AND ACCOUNTABILITY (CIRCLES)** Kitchener and Toronto, Ont.

The Program Associate works with the Circles team to help meet the needs of communities for enhanced safety when working with released sex offenders. Circles are made up of staff, and volunteers who will hold offenders accountable for their actions and assist them in adjusting to life in the community. The role of the Circle is to reduce the risk of re-offence.

These positions require a person with a commitment to Christian faith, active church membership and non-violent peacemaking. Other qualifications include: strong interpersonal and pastoral skills; thorough grounding in the theology and practice of restorative justice; experience with the criminal justice system and/or church constituency relations.

These salaried, 70% time positions are available beginning in September. Application deadline: Sept. 14, 2007.

Complete job descriptions available on MCC's website at www.mcc.org. To apply send cover letter and resume, to Cath Woolner, 50 Kent Ave., Kitchener, ON N2G 3R1 or 800-313-6226 or cathw@mennonitecc.on.ca.

Announcements**Meserete Kristos College**

invites you to an unforgettable 18 day journey in the legendary land of Ethiopia and a "safari" in Kenya!

Experience Ethiopia Tour

February 27 to March 15, 2008

Visit Meserete Kristos Church (MKC), the largest in the Mennonite World Conference; learn about its remarkable story of survival and growth under persecution; see how MKC lives and serves; tour the new MK College campus and meet students and faculty; visit historical Northern Ethiopia; tour the rich agricultural area and rugged terrain; visit MKC/MCC Relief and Development Projects; safari in Masai Mara Game Reserve in Kenya.

For more information contact Darrell or Florence Jantzi, tour leaders, at 14 Nightingale Cres., Elmira, ON, N3B 1A8, 519-669-4356 or e-mail jantzi@golden.net.

College Hosts: Carl and Vera Hansen, long-term missionaries and Director of College Advancement, and Negash Kebede, President of MK College.



Artist Annie Bergen stands in front of the mural she painted on the west wall of the Sargent Avenue Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Thrift Store in the west end of Winnipeg.

BY EVELYN REMPEL PETKAU
 MANITOBA CORRESPONDENT
 Winnipeg

Looking back, looking forward

A visually striking mural covers the west wall of the Sargent Avenue Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Thrift Store in the west end of Winnipeg. In the foreground, vibrant colours depict future generations of the earliest Mennonite settlers in Manitoba. These off-spring look across the river at a black and white scene of Mennonite migrants arriving by steamship more than a century ago.

The subject matter was a collaboration of ideas from West End Biz, a non-profit business improvement organization in the west end neighbourhood, the MCC Thrift Store and artist Annie Bergen's own interests. Bergen was born in a Mennonite colony in Paraguay and migrated with her family to Winkler, Man., in 1986, when she was six.

"We try to build on the strengths, traditions and cultures of the area," said Gabrielle Hamm, communications assistant at West End Biz. "We only stipulate that the mural must reflect either a culture or heritage or a famous person or hero."

"We wanted something that would fit into the neighbourhood, not be just Mennonite," said Thrift Store president Delores Lohrenz. "In our discussions with Annie, we came up with the boat from Minneapolis to Winnipeg that carried the first wave of new Mennonite immigrants."

For Bergen, it was a perfect match. "It just so happened that I was hired by my former history prof at the time, Royden Loewen, to do research on the migration of Men-

nonites from the Prairies to Latin America and vice versa. This was the migration my grandparents were part of when entire villages moved to Latin America. My parents with their young family migrated back in later years because of greater opportunities."

At first, the mural "was just an image in my head that showed the significance of the future generations looking back at the early settlers fleeing persecution in their homeland and starting a new life in Canada."

However, the river has taken on greater significance since completing the mural, said Bergen. "It represents for me the gap between the generations. The new generations look back and try to understand. They look with awe and try to live up to the risks that were taken for the sake of future generations. Being raised here is a lot different than being raised in an isolated South American colony. It comes to a point where we begin to understand and to respect the decisions of past generations."

For Bergen, the mural is more than the story of group of people; it is a personal story. But it is also a story that will speak to the neighbourhood, a community that is predominantly first-generation Canadians and recent immigrants. ‡

PHOTO COURTESY OF ANNIE BERGEN