



CANADIAN MENNONITE

October 13, 2008

Volume 12 Number 20

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EDITORIAL

Announcing our blog

TIM MILLER DYCK
EDITOR/PUBLISHER

As a communication ministry, we want to spread God's good news in every way possible, and an increasingly important way is online. We've been posting excerpts from each issue of *Canadian Mennonite* at our website (canadianmennonite.org) for years, but you'll now be able to read something else there you won't find in the print magazine.

We've launched a blog that you can find at canadianmennonite.org/blog. This is a new initiative at the magazine to provide a place for online posting and discussion of faith in life from a Mennonite and Canadian perspective. Starting next issue, however, you will see an informational box in each print issue listing topics being addressed in the blog to provide a regular update on what is happening there.

You'll find multiple new postings each week at the site. I think it's important that we carry out our mandate in all the formats important to our readers. Online writing is also often different in style than print writing, and a blog provides a place for immediate and frequent publishing that we can't do in print form.

To start us off, I've commissioned four perceptive writers to author our blog. Here are the voices you'll be hearing using the words they wrote to describe themselves:

• **David Driedger** is a pastor at Hillcrest Mennonite Church in New Hamburg, Ont. Before coming to Hillcrest Mennonite, he attended The Welcome

Inn Mennonite Church in Hamilton, Ont. He grew up in the Russian Mennonite tradition at Sommerfeld Mennonite Church in Altona, Man.

• **Rebecca Janzen** grew up in Ottawa, and attended Ottawa Mennonite Church.

She spent most of her childhood in Ottawa, except for two years in Cairo, Egypt. She studied history and Spanish at the University of Waterloo, Ont., and, while studying, enjoyed living at Conrad Grebel University College's Mennonite

residence. Last year, she participated in the Mennonite Central Committee Serving and Learning Together (SALT) service program and lived in Managua, Nicaragua. She is currently studying Spanish at the University of Toronto. Currently, she spends her time reading, writing essays and drinking coffee.

• **Will Loewen** has at different times been a playwright, a pastor, and a pontificator. He got the idea to write his second play when he realized it would allow him to spend more time with a certain young lady. He served for three years in youth ministry at Tavistock (Ont.) Mennonite Church. One of the things he enjoyed the most about that job, besides the overnight pizza parties and early morning donut making sessions, was the regular challenge of preaching sermons that pleased seniors, inspired parents and didn't put teenagers to sleep.

He is currently working in South Korea as a Mission Partnership worker with Mennonite Church Canada Witness and

Jesus Village Church, serving in an education and resource development role.

He and his wife (the aforementioned young lady) are eagerly anticipating the arrival of their first child literally any day.

• **Cheryl Woelk** grew up in Swift Current, Sask., and graduated with a BA in English from Canadian Mennonite University in Winnipeg. She spent six years serving with MC Canada Witness as a peace educator at the Korea Anabaptist Center in Seoul, South Korea. She is now on a "sabbatical year" adjusting to living between cultures. Her interests include eating fair trade chocolate, learning languages and running marathons.

• **Other Canadian Mennonites, such as yourself**

I mention this last item because the blog site also provides for immediate reader/author interaction through discussion comments. Your feedback and discussions on topics of our Christian faith in Canadian society are important and this is a place where they can happen in a more immediate way than is possible in our print letters section. (Going further, I'd like to add commenting to any *Canadian Mennonite* article posted online in the future.)

Blogging is also occurring in other places in the church. Just last month, we carried a news story about a new online blog being launched to connect women in Mennonite congregations in British Columbia (the link is at our blog page). A number of our churches also have blogs. I've added the ones I know about so far to our blog page; if your congregation hosts one, please drop me a note and I will add this to our online listing.

I hope this online venture is another place that helps all of us reflect on our faith and discover ways to live more faithfully to God's calling together.



ABOUT THE COVER:

Rockway Mennonite Collegiate students played themselves in a video that was shot at their school this summer by the Canadian Distance Education Institute (CDEI). The video is designed to help teachers and administrators respond appropriately in the case of a violent intrusion at their school and the resulting police and emergency team presence. See story on page 21.

PHOTO: CANADIAN DISTANCE EDUCATION INSTITUTE

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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, and 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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Elder abuse is no stranger to the Mennonite community, according to **JANE WOELK**, who writes from her experience as the coordinator of Voices for Non-Violence, an abuse prevention and response program of Mennonite Central Committee Manitoba.

A desert experience 16

After a year of studying the ancient spiritual disciplines, members of the Eden Mennonite Church youth group from Chilliwack, B.C., spent time this summer in the desert (and in Kelowna) learning to put them into practice. Plus, read personal reflections of this experience by **LISE PEARCE, LUKE WHITE** and **TED KIM** on page 17.

Abandoned pioneer cemetery receives marker 18

Two-hundred Riser/Reschly descendants gather to place a memorial stone on the site of a former burial plot of Amish Mennonite settlers in southwestern Ontario that ended up as a farmer's field.



Violence issues come to class 21

Mennonite educators frustrated over media coverage as attempts at violence-reduction initiatives lead to unwanted exposure in the press.

Focus on Travel 25

ED EPP from TourMagination makes the case that travel, done in an environmentally responsible manner both transforms people and builds community across international boundaries. Also, new YAMEN! coordinator promotes the benefits of travel for non-North American service workers and MC B.C. bikers take to the province's back roads for a day of sight-seeing and fellowship.

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PHIL WAGLER

Electronic Delivery

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 website at canadianmennonite.org. The Oct. 27 issue will be posted by Oct. 23.

ELDER ABUSE

A nasty little secret

By Jane Woelk

SPECIAL TO CANADIAN MENNONITE

Among Mennonites, reports of abuse of senior citizens seem to be more rare, possibly due to the shame factor among our close-knit communities.

“My God, I put my hope in you: I have trusted in you since I was young. I have relied on you all my life; you have protected me since the day I was born. Do not reject me now that I am old; do not abandon me now that I am feeble. You have taught me ever since I was young, and I still tell of your wonderful acts. Now that I am old and my hair is grey, do not abandon me, O God! Be with me while I proclaim your power and might to all generations to come” Psalm 71:5-6, 9, 17-18.

A pastor receives a phone call from Sarah*, a distraught 74-year-old woman, telling him that her son Bob* (names are pseudonyms) has been beating her for years—since he took her into his home to live—and she can’t take it any longer.

The pastor is taken aback by the call because Bob is on the church council and has shown no sign of being aggressive in any way. Doubt fills the pastor’s mind as to the validity of Sarah’s story because it just doesn’t fit with what he has seen in a church setting.

Sarah feels as though she is not being believed and begins to panic that the church will not step in and stop her son from hurting her again. In despair, she hangs up the phone. “Now what? Who can I turn to?” she cries out.

She calls her closest friend, and the story just pours out. Sarah has never told anyone of the abuse before. As it is a small, close-knit community, within a week everyone has heard Sarah’s story.

Sarah moves to her daughter’s home, which is in the

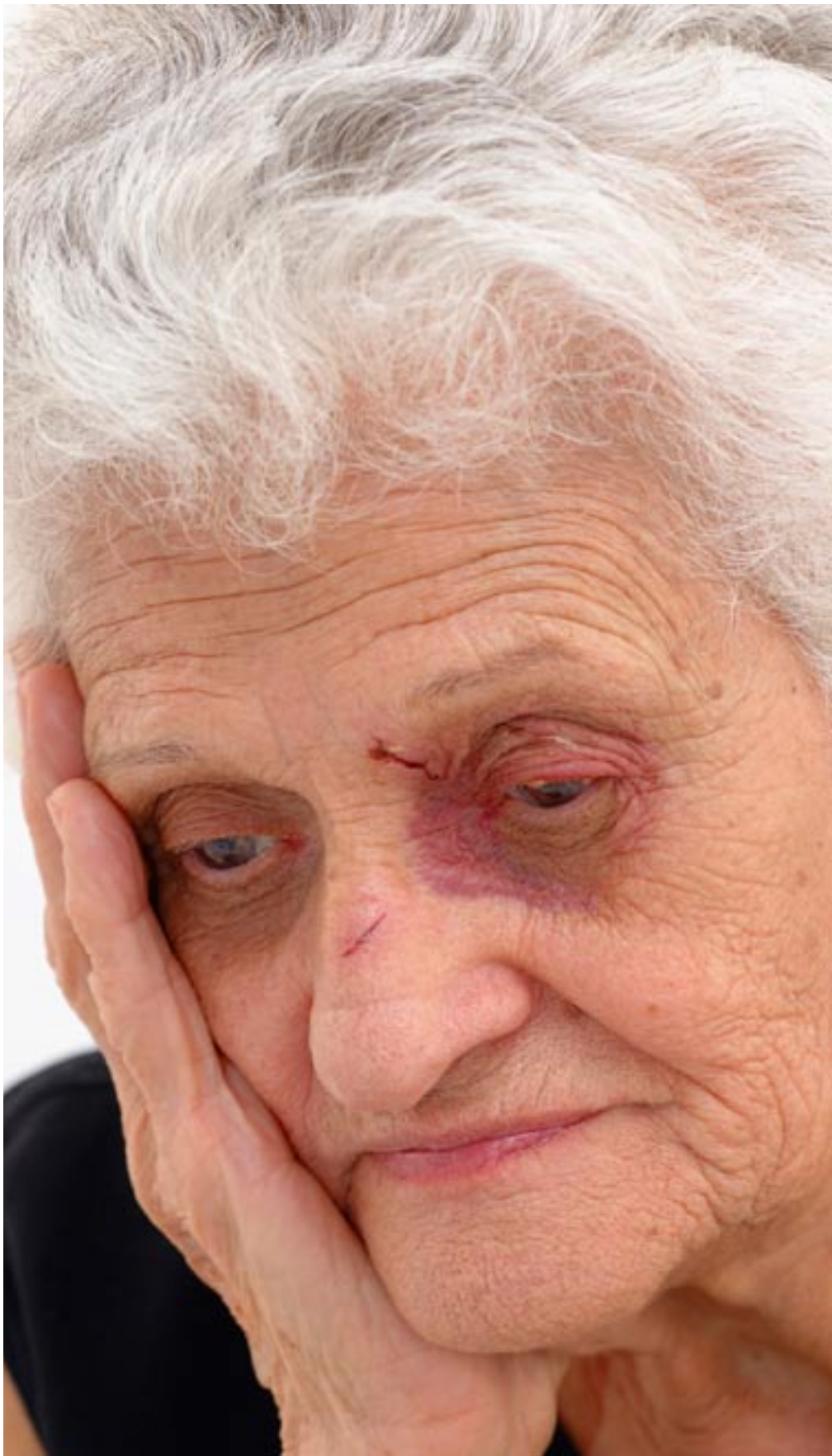
same community. But Bob, who has financial power-of-attorney over her affairs, leaves her with few financial means. Her whole world has been turned upside-down in one week.

Her feelings of despair are compounded by Bob's in-laws, who call her and remind her of Scripture that tells her to "forgive or she will not be forgiven." Despair turns to despondency and depression sets in.

Bob has not confessed to anyone that he has beaten his mother, and has, in fact, told anyone who would listen that she is the one who was abusive when he was a child. As the small community is relishing all of the salacious talk, it comes back to Sarah that she is now being called an abusive mother.

Believe it

This story is more common than we would like to believe, including in our Mennonite homes, but no one likes to think about our senior citizens being the victims of abuse. Among Mennonites, reports of abuse of senior citizens seem to be more rare, possibly due to the shame factor among our close-knit communities. But they are happening, as Isaac



Preventing abuse before it happens, dealing with it when it does

What churches can do:

- Provide workshops on elder abuse awareness.
- Involve seniors in worship to show that they are valued members of our congregations.
- Develop a telephone help list for seniors that includes the seniors abuse line for your province (see list below), local housing shelters should abuse occur and emergency housing should it become necessary.
- Regularly visit shut-ins, as an extra pair of eyes may be needed to discern whether abuse is taking place.

What seniors can do:

- Tell someone you trust that you are being abused.
- Report abuse or neglect to the police.

Online resources:

mcc.org/abuse
gov.mb.ca/justice
seniors.ca
phac-aspc.gc.ca

Canadian Senior's Abuse Hotlines:

Alberta 1-888-357-9339
British Columbia 1-800-568-0808
Manitoba 1-888-896-7183
New Brunswick..... 1-506-454-0437
Newfoundland 1-709-726-1411
Northwest Territories.. 1-800-661-0878
Nova Scotia 1-877-833-3377
Nunavut 1-867-635-8300
Ontario 1-519-371-4357
Prince Edward Island... 1-800-289-5656
Quebec..... 1-514-270-2777
Saskatchewan 1-888-823-2211
Yukon 1-800-563-0808

I. Block's 1991 book, *Assault on God's Image: Domestic Abuse*, attests.

Abuse of this age group affects all segments of society. Victims include women and men of all racial, ethnic, religious and income groups. It occurs in urban and rural areas.

Abuse of the elderly was not identified in Canada until the results of a study done in Manitoba in 1982 proved that between 3 percent and 5 percent of senior citizens had been abused physically, financially, emotionally or sexually that year. This estimate is assumed low due to another statistic showing that only 16 percent of abuse cases are actually reported.

What is elder abuse?

It is any form of harm—physical, psychological, financial and sexual abuse—and includes neglect.

Physical abuse includes assault, hair-pulling, hitting, restriction of freedom of movement, and restraint. Psychological abuse includes verbal threats of violence, insults, humiliation and name-calling. Financial abuse includes the theft of money or material goods. Neglect includes the failure to provide the neces-

Sadly, biblical passages . . . that are meant to admonish people for not forgiving financial debts may be used to force victims of violence to forgive their violators.

sities of life, such as food, medication, medical care, heat, shelter or clothing.

Those most likely to be abused are people who are:

- Over 75;
- Women;
- Frail or have cognitive disabilities;
- Living with their abusers;
- Isolated from friends and relatives; or
- Unable to, or are fearful of, reporting abuse that has taken place.

Who is abusing our senior citizens?

Abuse may come at the hands of children, caregivers or even other elderly people (spouses, siblings, or other residents of a nursing or retirement home). Most often it is a family member, though. One elderly couple with a daughter who had

a personality disorder and who was also addicted to cocaine, found that items were regularly missing from their home. Years later, the daughter admitted to taking these items, pawning them off and using the money to support her drug addiction.

At times, the primary caregiver, if not given adequate support, may not be able to handle the stress of caring for an elderly family member and may behave abusively towards that person.

Less often, abuse occurs in long-term care facilities. In most cases, abuse there is about a power tactic of one person over another. There is a zero tolerance for abuse in seniors homes and accusations of abuse are to be dealt with immediately by the administrators in these facilities.

What to watch for

If you suspect that someone you know may be a victim of abuse, keep an eye out for:

- Unexplained injuries such as bruises, burns or fractures;
- Unexplained episodes of depression, anxiety or fear; or
- Refusals to answer questions about personal care.

When older people are rarely seen outside of their home, or when visits with friends, family members or people from the church community never seem convenient, abuse may be at the root of the problem. When the general appearance of senior citizens you know indicates a loss of weight, listlessness or unusually pale skin, it may be wise to question how they are being cared for.

Another indicator of abuse—particularly financial abuse—is when bills are not being paid, or when valuables or money go missing.

Why abuse can go unnoticed

Abuse is rarely reported for various reasons, one of which is fear of an escalation of abuse if it is reported. Some elderly

people refuse medical treatment because they are concerned that a doctor may discover bruises caused by a person who has behaved abusively. If the abuser is a child of the victim, shame that a loved one could do this may prevent the older person from telling anyone about the abuse.

At times, victims feel powerless to do

Oppression is what people who have been abused for a long period of time experience.

anything about stopping the abuse, and may feel that they may not be believed should they tell someone about what has happened to them. In cases where dementia is a factor, victims may not trust their own memories of incidences of abuse.

Concerned family members or fellow church congregants need to trust their instincts concerning whether abuse has occurred and respond.

A granddaughter called Voices for Non-Violence, an abuse prevention and response program of Mennonite Central Committee Manitoba, to make inquiries about whether or not her grandfather was being abused by his wife. Her grandfather suffered from dementia and would tell her stories of his abuse, and she couldn't tell if he was telling a current story or a story from long ago. His unexplained bruises were evidence that the abuse stories were current.

What the Bible has to say

The Bible is full of passages imploring people to respond to abuse and to prevent it from occurring in the first place. Jesus declared in Luke 4:18 that his mission was to bring release to the captives, sight to the blind and freedom to those who are oppressed. Oppression is what people who have been abused for a long period of time experience.

Jesus came to break the cycle of violence and abuse. By his very actions, Jesus showed concern for children, women and the poor, and declared dreadful consequences for anyone who would hurt them (Matthew 18:1-7). Seeking justice and harmony, and journeying

towards peace and love, are found in Bible passages such as Colossians 3:12-17, Ephesians 4:1-6 and 6:4, Galatians 5:22-26 and Philippians 2:3-11.

Matthew 18:21-35 relates a story about a servant who owed a king more than he could ever pay back in a lifetime. When the servant begged for mercy, the king forgave the debt. However, this ser-

vant then was unmerciful towards another servant who owed him only a day's wages. However, he refused to be merciful to this other servant, even when mercy was requested.

Sadly, biblical passages like this—that are meant to admonish people for not forgiving financial debts—may be used to force victims of violence to forgive their violators. Too often, the church places the onus on victims to forgive, rather than working with those who have behaved abusively to confess their sin, repent for the pain they have caused, show remorse, and allow time where they can show evidence of a changed heart.

Sowing and reaping

Unfortunately, those who have behaved abusively seldom own up to their abusive actions and generational cycles of abuse

may end up being perpetuated, as the following story testifies:

An elderly man lived with his daughter and her family. As the man aged, he became more and more clumsy, breaking one dish after another. Finally, in exasperation, his daughter sent her teenaged son out to purchase a wooden bowl for his grandfather.

"But Mom, wooden bowls are for poor people and for dogs," the son said, "and it would be insulting for Grandpa to have to eat out of one!"

His mother insisted that he go to the store to purchase a wooden bowl for Grandpa anyway.

An hour later, the son came home with not one, but two, wooden bowls. She

asked him, "Why did you purchase two bowls when we only needed one?"

"They were on sale," he replied. "The other's for you, Mom, when you get old." ❧

Jane Woelk is the coordinator of Voices for Non-Violence, an abuse prevention and response program of Mennonite Central Committee Manitoba. Also contributing to this feature were Elsie Goerzen, program coordinator of End Abuse, MCC B.C., and Donna Stewart, a retired adult educator from B.C.



❧ For discussion

1. Are you aware of elder abuse that has happened in your community? Under what conditions do you think elder abuse is more likely to happen?
2. What steps would you take if you became aware of an elderly person in your congregation who complained of abuse? Are there situations where you would leave a victim in the same home as an abusing caregiver?
3. What experiences have you had in dealing with persons with dementia? How would you assess the validity of their complaints?
4. What are the options for elder care in your community? Do elderly shut-ins from your congregation receive regular visits? How might your community work at improving opportunities for older people?

VIEWPOINTS

/// 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: Readers Write" (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.

✉ Mennonite agencies charged with bias against Israel

HOW SAD THAT Donita Wiebe-Neufeld ("From throwing rocks to living stones," Sept. 15, page 4) cannot see the contradiction in her own words. How unfortunate that the group she represents has so often squandered the opportunity to work for genuine peace in the Middle East.

Wiebe-Neufeld quotes Shirley Roth, a director of Nazareth Village, "Being Mennonite has been tremendously helpful. We are seen as being neutral, someone

How many more Israelis and Palestinians could be brought together by genuinely neutral mediation?

who listens and takes them seriously." Alas, the "them" in regard to the Holy Land has always been one side in the conflict, to the complete exclusion of the other.

As Wiebe-Neufeld quite honestly and accurately writes, Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) that sponsored the learning tour to the Middle East "aligns itself with local Palestinian and Israeli groups working for peace." She goes on to point to "Zionism" as the culprit for the troubles in the region. Can MCC choose one party to the conflict, dismiss the millennia-old connection between the people of Israel and her land, and still expect to act as an honest broker between sides?

Alas, MCC is only the tip of the anti-Israel iceberg that Mennonites have floated for decades. Christian Peacemaker Teams (CPT) never fails to highlight the misdeeds of a small number of hot-heads in the settler population—that are condemned by the vast majority

of the Israeli population—but has been oblivious to the virulent anti-Semitism disseminated regularly to children and adults through Palestinian television, mosques and textbooks. Nor did CPT record the desecration of the Tomb of the Patriarchs on the first day of Ramadan, when Arabs urinated next to the Holy Ark.

Why, in general, have Mennonite teaching materials, films and statements been silent regarding rocket attacks aimed deliberately at civilians in southern communities located within Israel's original 1948 borders—far from the "occupation"—unless the Mennonite leadership believes that all of Israel is occupied?

How should Jews in Israel regard MCC representative Alain Epp Weaver's call on them to affirm their exilic obligation by turning their backs on Zionism and embracing a bi-national arrangement that will erase the Jewish State? And if many Mennonites share this theology, do they naively believe that Jews can still take them seriously?

On Sept. 25, Mennonites and Quakers hosted Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, the president of Iran, for dinner, days after he turned up his hatemongering a few notches with his tirade at the United Nations. It is not the first time that Mennonites have reached out to the person who has said again and again that Israel must be wiped off the face of the earth, and has argued that the Holocaust did not take place. At what point does failure to condemn become complicity with an architect of a new planned holocaust?

Why have Mennonites not offered to sit with leaders of the world Jewish community, or leaders of the State of Israel? Is Ahmadinejad the only one worthy of respect?

The historic Peace Churches enjoy enormous respect for their convictions. Who can forget the lessons taught to a nation in awe after the Amish school massacre? Where other churches often satisfy themselves with empty resolutions at conventions, Mennonites have directed resources to real hands-on projects that bring Israelis and Palestinians together.

How many more Israelis and Palestinians could be brought together by genuinely neutral mediation? But as long as Mennonite leaders persist in unfair, unbalanced and hostile treatment of Israel, God will have to find himself other helpers in his continued quest for peace.

**RABBI YITZCHOK ADLERSTEIN
AND LOU ADLER, LOS ANGELES, CALIF.**

Rabbi Yitzchok Adlerstein is director of interfaith affairs for the Simon Wiesenthal Center. Leo Adler is director of national affairs for the Friends of the Simon Wiesenthal Center for Holocaust Studies.

✉ Travel cuts, encouraging young pastors key to future of MC Canada

TWO ISSUES STOOD out in the July 28 issue:

1. Going green. Travel on the current scale is a post-World War II development. The current costs of energy have made us more careful in how much we use our automobile. The amount of gasoline consumed has decreased.

I would suggest that another way to change energy use is to have the meetings of Mennonite Church Canada every second year, instead of annually. As a member of the former Mennonite Church, the continental meetings were held on a biennial basis. In

the past, we attended a few such meetings south of the border. They still stand out as highlights for us. With the youth convention held in conjunction with the main event, there was an energy there that was contagious. The meetings we attended were closer at hand than the places where Mennonite Church Canada meets when it is held outside of Ontario, which is most of the time.

I will believe we are serious about being green when we condense our travel to church meetings and make them greater events when they do happen.

2. Pastors for the future. When I see potential in young people in terms of leadership, I suggest to them that they consider the pastoral ministry. At times, this

FROM OUR LEADERS

On being 'a place of refuge'

ROB TIESSEN

Twelve years ago, I stepped into the program director's position at Camp Squeah with a simple goal: Don't mess up what's already working well. Thanks to a strong supporting community of faith and a succession of selfless, servant-hearted leaders who had forged the path before me, Squeah had developed a solid reputation for its summer program and hosting annual church retreats. At that time, Camp Squeah was expanding its vision to become more relevant year-round, focusing on outdoor educational opportunities for school groups and fall and winter retreats.

The subsequent growth spurt endeavoured to include campers of all ages from a variety of denominational churches, backgrounds and circumstances. In turn, Camp Squeah grew to become more than merely an extension of our Mennonite Church British Columbia congregations' Sunday school program.

It has, in fact, become a place for outreach and evangelism; a ministry

of service and hospitality; a centre for leadership development and discipleship training, which has been vital to the health of our conference; a relevant partner agency serving not only the MC B.C. community, but the B.C. communities of Hope, Fraser Valley, Lower Mainland and beyond.

Camp ministry demands a significant investment of time, energy and physical resources. Is it worth it? What bene-



Camp ministry demands a significant investment of time, energy and physical resources. Is it worth it?

fits do participants—from children to adults—receive from the experience?

Camping has long been considered one of Christianity's most effective methods for impacting lives and strengthening the church. For decades, leaders in all denominations have realized that the spiritually focused, challenge-oriented temporary community inherent in Christian camping is unsurpassed for awakening faith, instilling character and

implanting godly values in participants, regardless of age or background.

Why is a camp weekend or week so effective? Camps and retreat centres are not home. They are not church. They are not the workplace. They are places unlike anywhere else, where people can set aside the barriers of routine and the hustle-bustle of 21st-century life to focus on God's truth and one another. In quiet settings, people experience needed relief from daily schedules, valuable time to reflect, and opportunities to form, strengthen and renew relationships.

Camp Squeah, in the local Salish dialect, alludes to a "place of refuge." We recognize that life is busy, full of significant activities and events. We also realize that there are appropriate times to withdraw from the pace of life.

In response to our mission statement's

call to be a "place of refuge . . . where campers of all ages can build relationships, grow and be nurtured," we are currently adding long-anticipated adult-friendly accommodations. (See "Ground blessing' at Camp Squeah," Sept. 29, page 13.) This will allow us to more relevantly serve our diverse and aging community.

Rob Tiessen is the current interim executive director at Camp Squeah.

has happened when I served as a judge at the Ontario youth quizzing events. It is often possible to see potential in our youths in such a setting. We do not lack potential leaders, but our youths have so many options today that the pastoral ministry is one of numerous choices. Still, I keep suggesting to young people that this is something they should consider.

We once attended a church service where the pastor was a former student of mine. He told the

congregation that I had suggested to him as a student that he become a minister. I had forgotten that I had done so. Following the service, a number of people came to me and thanked me for suggesting it to him; he had obviously found his place in life. The only drawback, though, was that it was in an Anglican church and not a Mennonite one!

KENNETH CRESSMAN,
NEW HAMBURG, ONT.

NEW ORDER VOICE

How to hear a sermon

BY AIDEN ENNS

A good sermon, like a good column in a magazine, should both challenge and uplift.

Alas, too many messages err on the side of entertainment (an obvious temptation for charismatic types). Or they offer too much irrelevant information (a temptation for the highly educated). Some sermons repeat the same message over and over, and others are just plain boring.

Let's not leave the fate of our minds in the hands of lack-lustre preachers. We, the listeners, can create our own mood, our own healthy mental environment. We can use the sermon time as an occasion to reinforce a message of hope, even if it's only in the congregation of our own thoughts. After all, the church experience is more than just another consumer-serving entertainment event.

Perhaps what I'm saying sounds negative. It's true, I have problems with most of the preaching I hear. But that's okay, isn't it? I still love the preachers. I still love the Mennonite Church. My goal is to make it a positive, group-building thing. To that end, here's what I do when I'm having difficulty listening to sermons:

1. Dissect the anecdote. For example: The preacher tells a story about giving thanks to God for small things, like

finding an open parking spot close to the front of the store. Instead of looking at "the point" of the story, I look at the assumptions behind the story. In this case, the preacher has quietly condoned car culture and reinforced the shopping mentality. By bringing this to my attention, I have questioned the normalcy of cars and suggested that consumerism is problematic. See how stimulating this can be!

2. Find Jesus. It's fun to listen to a preacher and pay attention to the social location of Jesus. Every preacher has a



Let's not leave the fate of our minds in the hands of lack-lustre preachers.

class bias, and so does God. Or, as Ron Sider says in his book, *Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger*, "God is on the side of the poor." Does the preacher put Jesus in a golf cart, picket line or soup kitchen? And is Jesus serving soup or standing in line? Is Jesus white in the preacher's eyes, or a person of colour? This line of thinking helps stimulate my social conscience.

3. See boring as inspiring. The preacher may exhort on love with abstract words or give long-winded stories of

missionaries overseas or saints through the ages. This mundane sermon can be a signal for transcendence to enter in.

Indeed, a boring sermon may actually be a gift. It's a gift to us listeners because it forces us to come alive from within, instead of being stimulated from the outside:

Step one: See the blandness as bland.

Acknowledge the ho-hum sermon as problematic.

Step two: Revise it in your head, let it ignite some passion, see the possibility. Wouldn't it be neat if the preacher would connect us with the suffering right here in our community, tell us stories of people in need just outside our doors?

Step three: Thank the preacher—even if it is only in your heart—for creating a desert of inspiration by clearing the way for imagination to turn towards love and justice.

Step four: Leave the sanctuary aflame,

having received the precious gift of inner wisdom. This may sound silly, but I'm actually serious. I truly believe the Spirit of Life is, at every moment, calling us to life anew. Why can't that wonderful moment start with the next so-so sermon?

Aiden Enns can be reached at aiden@geezmagazine.org. He is a member of Hope Mennonite Church in Winnipeg and sits on the Canadian Mennonite board.

✉ More than one desert in Canada, reader maintains

RE: “SERVICE AND spiritual discipline in the desert for Eden youths,” Aug. 18, page 20.

I would just like to inform Rob Brown and B.C. correspondent Amy Dueckman that the desert in

Osoyoos, B.C., is not the only desert in Canada.

You must visit Manitoba and go to the Spruce Woods Provincial Park, where you will find the Carberry Sand Hills, or Camp Shilo, where armies from around the world, mostly Germany, come to train.

ERNA BERGMANN, MORDEN, MAN.

OUTSIDE THE BOX

The grind of pastoral life

PHIL WAGLER

Some chats with leaders from across Canada and denominational lines have unearthed some disturbing pastoral realities: weariness, despair and quandary.

One pastor friend, sporting a different brand of kingdom wear (he’s Reformed—I still love him, but of course I was predestined to!), reminded me that recent U.S. statistics show 1,500 church leaders leaving ministry monthly because of conflict, burnout or moral failure. They’re not taking a break; most have no intention of returning to the grind of pastoral life.

All this makes the whole idea of the “pastoral life” a horrible oxymoronic and sarcastic kick to the nether-regions. “Pastoral life” can conjure up images of quaint log cabins or hillsides dotted with cud-chewing, tail-swishing cattle. What I’m hearing—and granted this is not every leader’s current experience—is that the life of a pastor is anything but tranquil. This, of course, is nothing new. Leaders have always been fair game from without and within. Those who have experienced the church under persecution realize that the enemy always aims for those living the pastoral life first.

These current trends, however, are a revealing indictment of a church not

facing overt persecution. Perhaps the enemy is using more subtle tactics. As an under-shepherd with my weary brothers and sisters, allow me make the following observations:

• **The pastoral life is being made weary by the unrealistic demands of consumerist religious idolatry.**

This sounds harsh, but a culture demanding what it wants, expecting what it wants, and generally getting what it wants, has invaded our churches without anyone asking for proper identification. We are idolatrous consumers who expect a church life that will feed our spiritual, fee-for-service, drive-through appetites.



[Pastors] wonder if we’re still necessary when Oprah is more popular than Jesus, even in the church.

Leaders are weary and burned out trying to meet these impossible demands. Too many have been told their job is simply to keep people happy. Too few have been given the charge to simply do the will of the Father.

• **The pastoral life is plagued with despair by the dysfunctional mess of our age.**

Every era has its quirks, but a unique challenge of this age is the rapid unraveling of the home. While the mess left by

a hurricane through your home can produce some wonderful clean-up stories, pastoral leaders are dealing with increasingly complicated family dysfunction that leaves them without answers when they are expected to have them.

Too many pastors are being told they bear responsibility for fixing messes they didn’t create. Too few have been freed to call for the responsibility of the individual and the community to the repenting, embracing and healing process of increasingly broken lives.

• **The pastoral life is left in a quandary by the unstoppable shift of culture.**

The boundary lines have moved. The church no longer functions anywhere near the centre of cultural conversation. We are a side-show, a nicety for the old, unscientific and ignorant; at least that’s what the culture believes.

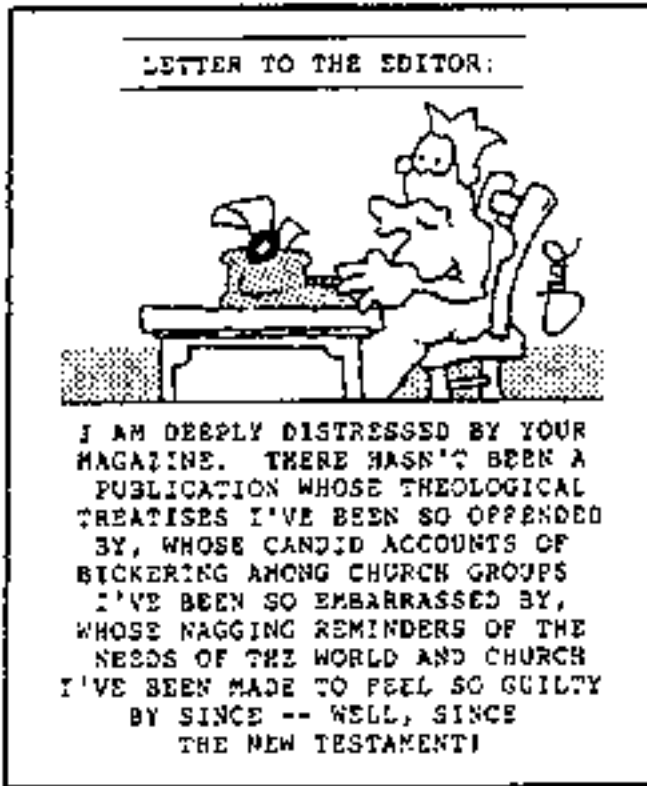
To be a leader of this chastised remnant of yesteryear is not a title many clamour after. Many leaders are baffled why pews are empty or their best-laid plans produce nary a blip on the radar.

We wonder if we’re still necessary

when Oprah is more popular than Jesus, even in the church. Too many pastors have been told they must simply do what has always been done. Too few have been released to lead their community into full-fledged missionary engagement with the world as it now is.

Phil Wagler is pastor of Kingsfield-Zurich Mennonite Church and Kingsfield-Clinton, Ont. You can reach him at phil_wagler@yahoo.ca.

Pontius' Puddle



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✉ Environment should top Christians' priority list

I HOPE THIS letter is only one of many that are written in response to Kevin Schroeder's letter to the editor in the Aug. 18 issue ("Don't place the environment above human beings," page 9). To say that his letter reflects disturbing theology is an understatement.

I do share Schroeder's belief that the earth is a gift from God, a gift we must share with all God's creatures. No doubt God created the earth and all that is in it for us to use, but not to abuse. The Almighty did not offer this beautiful planet for us to chew up and spit out like spoiled, reckless, selfish children.

Our culture of over-consumption flies in the face of God's generosity. The scriptural basis for environmentalism is broad and deep; it transcends proof-texting. One can't pull out a verse on global warming because it is only the last two centuries of human greed that have created this problem.

The truth is that the entire Bible speaks of a creator who shows boundless love and also expects a mature response to this love. This response was modelled by Jesus in his examples of gentleness, humility and giving. The challenge for us as Christians in this time is to follow Jesus' example in a world that continues to cling to the fallen ways of greed and domination over other people and the planet that is God's gift to us.

This is not a distraction, as Schroeder argues. I believe it to be our highest and most urgent priority as children of God and disciples of Jesus.

SCOTT MORTON NINOMIYA,
ST. JOHN'S, Nfld.

✉ Christ's compassion for lost sinners extended to death on a cross

HOW PAINFUL IT was to read in the pages of *Canadian Mennonite* ("Postcard Project sends controversial letters on homosexuality," June 23, page 12) that a group of Mennonites in Winnipeg is "asking for support in its desire to change the church's position that homosexual activity is sinful."

Do we not have a clear, sound scriptural basis to say no to dialogue? Is it possible that Mennonite Church Canada is so easy and soft on homosexuality—for that matter, sin and such—that people feel free to make such a proposal?

It seems that one part of Scripture in connection with this issue has been totally ignored: the Letter of Jude. If we read and re-read it, statement by statement, we will find that it refers directly and plainly to Sodom and Gomorrah, the spawning places of homosexual practice. We also need to note that, although

Jude stresses the ugliness of this sin, there is a ray of hope in verses 22 and 23.

As for Aiden Enns's "Transgressing privilege" column (June 23, page 12) that pointed out the people with whom the Saviour dealt with in compassion and love—that he did indeed! And he still does, when we seek him, even in the dead of night, and repent and confess our sins. In all this, we need to remember Jesus' words in John 3:3: "I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above."

And about the love of God? When we read the account of Jesus dying on the cross and his excruciating cry, "My God! My God! Why have you forsaken me?" he suffered for our very lostness, our very hopelessness, our very sins. We need to realize that the love of God has teeth in it. It is a love unspeakable!

Can we look to our theologians to help us in dealing with this sin of homosexuality?

PETER UNGER, ABBOTSFORD, B.C.

✉ Mennonite Church needs consistent sexual ethic

RE: "PUSHING SEXUAL boundaries takes church away from God," Sept. 15, page 15.

I was very interested to see Gerhard Janzen mention homosexual activity and sodomy separately, since most people incorrectly assume they are the same. To the church fathers, sodomy was "venereal pleasure," an excess of desire. Any sexual encounter that could not result in reproduction was "sodomy" to differing degrees (see Mark D. Jordan's *The Invention of Sodomy*). Contraception and oral sex would be out, then, but

Mennonites have been reluctant to condemn these acts.

This highlights the quandary about boundaries that Janzen raised. Where can we justifiably draw the lines and when do we fall off the edge of the earth? By what principle can intentionally non-reproductive male-female intercourse be blessed by the Mennonite Church (and presumably by God) but condemned in same-sex couples? Or how is the church going to deal with inter-sex Mennonites when it finally becomes aware of them? (An inter-sex person is an individual who may be born an ambiguous gender and whose DNA will be a combination of male and female chromosomes.)

Fixating on particular boundaries and selecting individual passages of Scripture out-of-context is not the answer. Things will only get more complicated if we try to cram the experiences of 21st century Mennonites into the worldviews of centuries past.

We need an ethic that deals with divinely created beings and with all of Scripture, tradition and experience. I would propose that we start by trying to understand how people in a relationship are going to flourish today, not 200 years ago.

We don't simply throw past boundaries out the window. Rather, we thoughtfully consider their intention and application to our lives today. The church still has a message for modern society about healthy relationships and good sex, but many of us confuse it with traditionalism. Proclaiming a liberating message of hope is a huge risk—but with love for God and neighbour on our minds and prayer on our lips, we may just move closer to the heart of God.

JACOB QUIRING, CAMBRIDGE, MASS.

/// Obituaries

Rempel, Katharina ('Tina')

Our mother was born on May 3, 1908, in Waldheim, Molotschna, South Russia. Her parents were Tobias and Maria (Funk) Ewert. Isaac and Mariechen were her older siblings; Hans and Agnes her younger ones. Four other siblings, Heinrich, Abram, Susa and another Heinrich, died as children. "I had the great privilege," our mother wrote, "of being raised in a Christian home. Early on I learned to know the Holy Scriptures and was shown the way to the Saviour." Mother experienced a golden childhood in the blossoming of Mennonitism in Russia before the revolution. During revival services by minister Johann Toews mother came to faith. Her faith matured and when she was 17 she was baptized by minister Gerhard Unruh on her confession of faith in Jesus Christ and was received



into the Waldheim Mennonite Brethren Church. Young people's meetings and singing in the youth and congregational choirs brought her, in spite of the hard times, much joy. In 1928, our mother and her siblings immigrated to Canada, making their way to Winnipeg. She met our father, Henry Rempel, in Kitchener in 1933. In 1937, minister Henry Janzen officiated at their wedding. Three children, Henry, Rita and John, were born to them. The most important thing in mother's life was to care for her children physically and spiritually. Our mother was a member of the women's group and the choir of the Kitchener Mennonite Brethren Church as well as of a choir that sang for patients at K-W Hospital. Our parents cultivated friendly contacts with the local General Conference Mennonite Church to help reconcile the two streams of Mennonitism. Until our father's death in 1977, they shared retirement years

of satisfaction and mutuality, of which the high point was the visits of their grandchildren, Christopher and Whitney Brown and Karen Rempel. In 1983, our mother moved to Tabor Manor in St. Catharines. There she called on bedridden residents and was an enthusiastic letter-writer and diary-keeper. She enjoyed a long and blessed "Indian summer", reaching a very old age in good spirits. Until recently she took an interest not only in the well-being of her children, grandchildren and great-grandson David, but also that of her nieces and nephews, and the Mennonite world at large. The richest aspect of our mother's quarter-century of life in the old people's home was her daughter Rita's company. The staff of Tabor Manor gave her excellent care. On Sept. 3 our mother died peacefully of old age and was buried in the Mennonite cemetery in Kitchener. The funeral in the Kitchener Mennonite Brethren Church was presided over by the minister, Vidya Narimalla. Scott Brubaker Zehr preached the English sermon and Tom Yoder Neufeld the German one. Our mother has "fought the good fight, she has finished the race, she has kept the faith" *II Timothy 4:7*. We grieve but not as those who have no hope, Henry Rempel, Rita Brown, John Rempel.

Rempel, Helen (Klassen)

Born: Oct. 20, 1907; Died: June 28, 2008. Reached the age of 100 years, 8 months, and 8 days.

Helen, nee Klassen, was born in Wassiljevka, Ukraine, as the 2nd youngest of 7 children (4 brothers and 2 sisters). Her parents were Dietrich and Judith (Bergen) Klassen. Helen spent her childhood in the cities of Melitopol and Berdyansk. Her father was employed as an engineer in a factory. Helen grew up with special love and affection for her father, and she adored her older brothers. Helen's father died of typhoid fever in 1919 and was buried in Berdyansk. Her 4 older brothers eventually perished in Communist Russia, though several survived into the World War II era. One brother even became mayor of Melitopol, but died (of poisoning?) when the German army retreated. Helen's two sisters lived storied lives in their own right. The older sister, Maria, died in Paraguay and the youngest, Anna, moved back to Germany from Paraguay- having been married 4 times- before she died in Bielefeld in 1997. The Communist Revolution brought great hardship for the country, including the Mennonite settlements. Hunger, disease, persecution all took their toll, also claiming her dad as yet one more of the millions of victims. Helen's mom and all siblings moved from Berdyansk back to Osterwick, the birthplace of her mother. Helen loved school, learned easily, spoke German and Russian fluently, won prizes for her



outstanding elementary school accomplishments. She was an avid reader to the end; many of us have seen her with a book in hand. She has written volumes of material and documented the life of her family and for many years served as the Bote correspondent of the Eden Church. In 1926 Helen was baptized on her confession of faith in the beautiful Osterwick church. She became a lifelong, committed believer and faithful follower of Jesus. Her prayers were invariably punctuated with endearing adjectives for the name of Jesus, her Saviour. Only a week before her death she had a long, long, fervent prayer on her hospital bed. Back in 1927 Helen married our father, Frank Rempel; other suitors tried unsuccessfully to woo her. Helen was a devout Christian and mother. She did lots of sick visitations in the village in addition to raising a growing family: Helen- born in 1928; Franz- born in 1932; Dietrich- born in 1935; Franz- born in 1936; John- born in 1938; Henry- born in 1941; Frank- born in 1943. Two Franks died early in childhood. Helen's mother, who had remarried upon her return to Osterwick, died in 1938. WWII started June 22 and by Aug. 19 the German army was in Osterwick. Two fascinating years under the Germans followed, but by October 1943 our village was evacuated en masse by freight train to Germany, where they arrived at the beginning of November. Some 2-3 weeks later, the 'surviving' Frank was born under very stressful circumstances. Until January of 1945 the family lived in the city of Katsher and Ratibor in large groups under one roof. In January of 1945 Helen and her children fled before the advancing Russians. Her husband had been drafted into civilian military transport. In May 1945 the war ended and the family found refuge in a small village near Goslar. By the end of September Helen's husband miraculously found us after he had spent imprisonment in Auschwitz. The family was together. Soon the famous MCCer C.F. Klassen found us; by 1947-48 many Mennonites moved to Paraguay. But Helen had experienced a major heart attack and so they waited for a possible sponsor to Canada. That materialized in 1949, thanks to Uncle Ben and Tante Neta and sponsors John and Evelyn Klassen (Evelyn is a member of Eden church). The family arrived in July of 1949, picking berries and hops, and found warm acceptance and fellowship in the Eden congregation. This church remained their spiritual home until their death, Franz in 1986 and now Helen. She was possibly the oldest member at the time of her death. Helen leaves to mourn her 5 children and spouses, numerous grandchildren, great grandchildren, and two great great grandchildren. Helen, our mom, grandmother and great grandmother was a great blessing to us all. Her love for Jesus was exemplary, her love for her family, and her wider friendship circle were greatly appreciated. "Well done, thou good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of the Lord."

/// Milestones

Births/Adoptions

Brown—Liam James (b. July 30, 2008), to Philip and Fiona Brown, Leamington (Ont.) United Mennonite.

Brown—Olivia Ruth (b. Aug. 30, 2008), to David and Hannah Brown, Leamington (Ont.) United Mennonite.

Fox—Ryenne Kathleen (b. Sept. 18, 2008), to Kevin and Melodee Fox, Waterloo North Mennonite, Waterloo, Ont.

Friesen Smith—Nalah Mari (b. Sept. 17, 2008), to Marianne Friesen and Dexter Smith, Tiefengrund Rosenort Mennonite, Laird, Sask., in Saskatoon, Sask.

Gader—Judah Myer (b. Aug. 23, 2008), to Grace (Fast) and Tracy Gader, Rosthern (Sask.) Mennonite.

Harris—Conall Theodore (b. Sept. 15, 2008), to Katrina Regier and Christopher Harris, Tiefengrund Rosenort Mennonite, Laird, Sask., in Rosthern, Sask.

Hewitt—Ella (b. Aug. 28, 2008), to Megan Hewitt, Wellesley (Ont.) Mennonite.

Maddigan—Philip Jordan (b. Sept. 16, 2008), to Brad Maddigan and Carolyn Sherk Maddigan, Waterloo North Mennonite, Waterloo, Ont.

Pooley—Evan Michael (b. Aug. 10, 2008), to David and Elizabeth Pooley, Waterloo North Mennonite, Waterloo, Ont.

Schellenberg—Samuel Dennis (b. June 7, 2008), to Dennis and Teneille Schellenberg, Tiefengrund Rosenort Mennonite, Laird, Sask., in Edmonton.

Baptisms

Bethany Unger—Tiefengrund Rosenort Mennonite, Aug. 30, 2008.

Marriages

Balicki/Klaassen—Sharon Balicki and Melvin Klaassen, Tiefengrund Rosenort Mennonite, Laird, Sask., Aug. 3, 2008.

Dyck/Fuglerud—Kendra Dyck (Hanley [Sask.] Mennonite) and Clinton Fuglerud, near Hanley, July 26, 2008.

Holst/Lichty—Lynette Host and Fraser Lichty (Wellesley [Ont.] Mennonite), at Community Christian Reformed Church, Kitchener, Ont., Aug. 9, 2008.

Kelterborn/Tusch—Scott Kelterborn and Melissa Tusch (Wellesley [Ont.] Mennonite), at Wellesley Mennonite, Aug. 9, 2008.

Klaassen/Thompson—Curtiss Klaassen and Joeleane Thompson, Tiefengrund Rosenort Mennonite, Laird, Sask., July 5, 2008.

Kynock/Procter—April Kynock (Brussels [Ont.] Mennonite) and Mike Procter, in Belgrave, Ont., Aug. 8, 2008.

Deaths

Bergen—Reginald Henry (Reg), 53 (b. Sept. 9, 1954; d. June 16, 2008), Home Street Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Derksen—Helen, 85 (d. July 29, 2008), Zion Mennonite, Swift Current, Sask.

Derksen—Jacob, 97 (d. July 16, 2008), Leamington (Ont.) United Mennonite.

Driedger—Eleanor, 68 (d. May 8, 2008), Leamington (Ont.) United Mennonite.

Driediger—Katherina (Tena), 81 (b. Feb. 24, 1927; d. Sept. 18, 2008), Hanley (Sask.) Mennonite.

Dyck—Sally, 76 (d. July 14, 2008), Zion Mennonite, Swift Current, Sask.

Gossen—Martha, 96 (d. Aug. 1, 2008), Leamington (Ont.) United Mennonite.

Janzen—Erwin Johannes, 70 (b. May 22, 1938; d. Aug. 1, 2008), Tiefengrund Rosenort Mennonite, Laird, Sask.

Janzen—Harry, 78 (b. May 11, 1930; d. Sept. 2, 2008), Niagara United Mennonite, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ont.

Klaassen—Erica (nee Janzen), 65 (b. Sept. 21, 1942; d. July 30, 2008), Eden Mennonite, Chilliwack, B.C.

Lehn—Maria, 97 (d. July 23, 2008), Leamington (Ont.) United Mennonite.

Martin—Leah Snyder (b. April 17, 1918; d. Aug. 26, 2008), Hawkesville (Ont.) Mennonite.

Neeb—Bruce, 67 (b. May 19, 1941; d. Sept. 9, 2008), Bloomingdale (Ont.) Mennonite.

Peters—Elisabeth (nee Kroeker), 85 (b. March 2, 1923; d. Sept. 13, 2008), Niagara United Mennonite, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ont.

Reimer—Sara, 82 (d. Aug. 25, 2008), Whitewater Mennonite, Boissevain, Man.

Richert—Florence (nee Warkentin), 76 (b. Dec. 16, 1931; d. Sept. 21, 2008), Nutana Park Mennonite, Saskatoon, Sask.

Schmidt—Elizabeth, 81 (d. Aug. 27, 2008), North Leamington (Ont.) Mennonite.

Canadian Mennonite welcomes Milestones

announcements 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.

GOD AT WORK IN US

A desert experience

Youth retreat focuses on spiritual disciplines and service

By ROSS W. MUIR

Managing Editor
OSOYOOS/KELOWNA, B.C.

For five days in late August, youths from Eden Mennonite Church in Chilliwack, B.C., spent time in the desert around Osoyoos and in Kelowna, where they learned about spiritual formation and discipleship.

“This past year, our youth group focused their discipleship lessons by learning and practising some of the spiritual disciplines,” says Eden pastor Rob Brown. “The focus on the spiritual disciplines is based on the conviction that to be followers of Christ and this faith we need to bear the wonder of Christ’s story not only in our minds but bear this story in a physical way by bearing it in our bodies

PHOTOS BY REATHA THIESSEN



Eden Mennonite youths helped paint lines in the parking lot at Kelowna (B.C.) First Mennonite Church during a summer retreat that also included spending time in the desert near Osoyoos.



Learning the spiritual discipline of servanthood, Eden Mennonite Church youths helped Kelowna First Mennonite volunteers remove several pews and install a raised platform to make the sanctuary more accessible for worshippers in wheelchairs.

as well. These practices help us to be in a place to hear God’s voice. After a year of teaching on these disciplines, our youths culminated their learning with this trip that incorporated many of the disciplines that they had learned about.”

Group members spent their first 40 hours at Osoyoos fasting and spending some of that time in solitude and silence in the desert. *(See their stories next page.)*

On Aug. 24, the Eden youths and leaders joined Kelowna First Mennonite congregants in worship and then fellowshiped over the lunch meal. The Eden youths led the service, performing a skit and basing their message on the parable of the sower and the seed from Mark 4.

After an overnight campout at nearby Fintry Provincial Park, the Eden group gathered again at First Mennonite on Monday for a work day, as they practised the spiritual discipline of servanthood. Together with local volunteers, they removed several church pews and installed a raised platform to make the sanctuary more accessible for worshippers in wheelchairs. Another work group painted new lines in the parking lot, while others assisted senior members with their yard work.

Each day of the retreat was also punctuated every three hours with prayers that are known as “the daily offices” in some Christian traditions.

“Every evening we had reflection and journaling time as we investigated

and learned more about some of these disciplines,” Brown says. “We then would break into small groups to pray for one another and talk about how we might incorporate these disciplines into our lives at home in the daily grind of life. In our final evening session we had a special foot-washing and communion service around our campfire to finish our retreat.” ❧

From reports by Eden Mennonite pastor Rob Brown and Kelowna First Mennonite correspondent Helene Wieler.



PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

What I learned on my summer vacation

Three Eden Mennonite Church youths write about their 'desert experiences' during a retreat this summer to Osoyoos, B.C., which was combined with worship-leading and service work at Kelowna First Mennonite Church.

Time to think

Sitting in the desert alone and hungry for three hours at first seemed long and pointless, but it was one of the best experiences of my life. It's very rare that anyone can find time like that in their busy lives to talk to God or even acknowledge him in any way. As I was sitting there I started to notice every little bug, cactus and living thing around me, and I remembered that God made everything there. It's amazing how perfect his creations are.

That time also gave me an opportunity to think about relationships in my life and where they were going. Talking to God in a quiet place like that really gave me a better understanding of the kind of

person I wanted to be and how I could change to get there.

LISE PEARCE

Just meditate on God

Recently in our church we have had a fair amount of deaths in our community, some we all knew fairly well. Just before we left (for the retreat), we actually attended the funeral of a girl who used to go to our youth group, so we were all feeling a sort of sense of sorrow while we were doing this. But out in that desert I learned to cope with this and many other things upsetting me in my life.

We went and found ourselves our own little spot in the desert, all alone and

away from everyone. I was silent for a long time, maybe an hour or so, but in that silence I found comfort with nothing to distract me. In that silence I felt God spoke with me and guided my thinking to answers for my questions.

After I was silent for a long time I felt compelled to read the Gospel of Luke, and so for the remainder of my time there I meditated on the book. It was weird; having been raised in church my whole life I'd heard these stories many times over, but for some reason as I reread this gospel I was drawn in, excited to read every word and have a deeper understanding of it.

I do not know exactly what happened in the desert that day, but I felt as if God was there talking to me the whole time, helping me through my questions. I encourage everyone to try meditating in solitude. You may not have a desert next door, but find a quiet place and just meditate on God.

LUKE WHITE

A mountaintop experience

As we got to the desert plains and split up, there was only one thing on my mind and that was to get away from civilization. I had walked for about 20 minutes in the direction of a mountain and I realized that the only peace I could get was on top of that mountain.

As I climbed the surface I realized that God was leading me up a safe way. I prayed about three times on my way up just to make sure God heard me. Then I realized how awesome God's creation was and how peaceful the world was with no civilization around.

I started praying for all the people I knew and for some events that had happened. When I had finished, it felt as if God was sitting right beside me and speaking to me. It was the best thing I had ever felt.

TED KIM

A group of Eden Mennonite Church youths from Chilliwack, B.C., spent time in the desert around Osoyoos this summer, learning to practise the spiritual disciplines, including prayer and service.

PHOTO BY ROB BROWN



GOD AT WORK IN THE CHURCH

Abandoned pioneer cemetery receives marker

Riser/Reschly burial plot now acknowledged

BY BETTY STECKLY
AND DAVE ROGALSKY
KINGWOOD, ONT.

With the dedication of a memorial stone on Sept. 13, the Riser/Reschly Burial Plot was established as an abandoned cemetery in Wellesley Township.

The plot, located a half-kilometre west of Kingwood, was used by Amish Mennonite settlers from 1850-78. Research by Lorraine Roth, an historian of Amish Mennonite families, noted that Joseph Reschly had purchased the plot from Christian Riser in April 1865, giving it official status as a cemetery. A stipulation for its maintenance was placed in the hands of subsequent owners, but was somehow forgotten, and eventually the plot became part of a farmer's field.

About 200 descendants gathered at Faith Mennonite Church in Kingwood for the program chaired by Joe Gerber. Greetings

were extended by Wellesley Township Mayor Ross Kelterborn and Ron Hackett, chair of the Wellesley Township Heritage/Historical Society, among others. Speaking at the event were Roy Scheerer for the Ontario Mennonite Historical Society and Debbie Kroetsch for the Waterloo Historical Society, as well as Beatrice (Brunk) Wilkinson, a Riser descendant.

Descendants adjourned to the abandoned cemetery for the unveiling and dedication of the memorial stone. The stone's inscription was read by Susan (Reschly) Gilmore from Iowa. Art Gerber gave the meditation. To complete the afternoon, reminiscences were shared during a potluck lunch at the church. ❧

Dave Rogalsky is Canadian Mennonite magazine's Eastern Canada correspondent.

PHOTO COURTESY OF BETTY STECKLY



A memorial stone was dedicated on Sept. 13 for the Riser/Reschly Burial Plot, establishing the site as an abandoned cemetery in Wellesley Township, Ont. About 200 descendants of the Amish Mennonite settlers believed buried there took part in the event that culminated with a potluck lunch at Faith Mennonite Church in Kingwood.

PHOTO BY MARLACE ZACHARIAS



The last Sunday in August was especially meaningful for the members of Fiske and Herschel Ebenfeld Mennonite churches. On Aug. 31, they witnessed the ordination of their pastor, Claire Ewert Fisher, kneeling left, and the commissioning for her next role as executive director of Mennonite Central Committee Saskatchewan. MC Saskatchewan conference minister Jerry Buhler, centre, performed the ordination, while a joint choir led in the singing of Ewert Fisher's favourite songs. Ewert Fisher and her husband Garth, right, have served as co-pastors in both congregations for the past nine years.

❧ Briefly noted

Church finds ministry opportunities close to home

REGINA—Peace Mennonite Church, with an active membership of only 27 that meets in the home of Otto and Florence Driedger, has had the world come to it. "It began with helping Grace Mennonite," says Florence. Grace Mennonite was experiencing an influx of refugees and two of the cultural groups represented historically didn't get along. So the people from Peace Mennonite, just a short drive away, stepped in to help. From there, it just grew, and now the church is helping the Open Door Society in Regina with the needs of various immigrants coming to the city. Some of these refugees are coming to Peace Mennonite's Tuesday night Bible studies. "We encourage them to bring their own Bible in their own language," Florence explains. But the reach of this body of believers doesn't end there. The Driedgers' work with the Circles of Support and Accountability organization, and their love for social justice issues, has inspired the members of Peace Mennonite to spend time with people nobody else wants to associate with: ex-convicts. Almost everyone is part of a "circle" and the church even helped one ex-convict purchase a home.

—BY KARIN FEHDERAU

PHOTO BY IRENE CROSLAND



Ken Tse, left, pastor of Edmonton Chinese Mennonite Church, and his wife Jodi share some conversation with Tofield Mennonite Church pastor Bob Crosland, right, while members of their congregations enjoy a potluck lunch in the Tofield church gymnasium. The desire for the recent get-together was that neither congregation would be the guest of the other, but, as Tse put it, "We come as family." The churches share common challenges: Edmonton Chinese Mennonite finds that the newly immigrated families that it hosts move to the suburbs once they are settled, while Tofield families find their children leave the rural Alberta community for post-secondary education or job opportunities.



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MAXTM *Creating and Sustaining* WHOLENESS

Waterloo North elders group a godsend

BY PALMER BECKER

Special to *Canadian Mennonite*
WATERLOO, ONT.

A decade or so ago, Helen Isaac and Mary Stewart of Waterloo North Mennonite Church became jealous of an energetic group of young adults meeting regularly in the church.

Those young adults were having such a good time and helping each other in so many ways, they said, that they considered starting something “for us older folk?” And so they did.

Following the lead of the Canadian Association of Retired Persons, Isaac and Stewart invited those over 50 years of age to gather on the second and fourth Wednesdays of each month. At first, only a few came, but it has now grown to about 30 regular participants.

Members soon realized they didn't know each other very well, so for a year or more the group focused on one life story per meeting.

“It helped us to get to know each other at a rather deep level,” says Ralph Lebold, one of the early leaders of the group.

The group has become known as the 50s Plus Group. However, since people under 50 occasionally attend, it is technically called the 50s Plus/Minus Group. Although separately organized, the group submits a year-end report to the congregation.

The social group has become a prime place for friendships, mental stimulation and spiritual growth for seniors and their friends. At 10 a.m., members gather in groups of six to eight around tables for simple refreshments. This is followed by an hour of personal storytelling, relaxed visiting or interaction with a guest speaker.

Recent guests have included a drama group doing a skit about elder abuse, a Mennonite Economic Development Associates board member speaking about small business loans in Africa, an ethics instructor from a secular university, Mennonite Central Committee Ontario

staff person Adrian Jacobs talking about aboriginal relations, and MC Canada Witness worker Cheryl Woelk speaking about the ministries of the Korea Anabaptist Center.

Christmas and anniversary dinners, a field trip to the Toyota assembly plant in Woodstock, and an outing to the Famous People's Players in Toronto have added

special interest to the group.

Says Lebold, “For Eileen and myself, 50s Plus/Minus is the most significant care group for us. We never miss unless we are away or have medical appointments. There is a lot of informal pastoral care that takes place through this group.” ☞

Palmer and Ardys Becker joined the 50s Plus/Minus Group two years ago. “We look forward with eagerness to these times of interacting with our friends and interacting on interesting and important issues,” Palmer says.

PHOTO BY PALMER BECKER



MC Canada Witness worker Cheryl Woelk, of the Korea Anabaptist Center, addresses the 50s Plus/Minus Group at Waterloo North Mennonite Church.

/// Briefly Noted

Canadian MBs set a new direction for the next decade

MONTREAL, QUE.—In a city filled with *joie de vivre*, more than 330 Canadian Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches delegates and guests met this summer to celebrate, reconnect and hear of a vision that would launch the Mennonite Brethren denomination into a new decade of ministry. The Canadian conference executive board presented its main recommendation, an initiative called “Regenerate 21-01.” Described as “a prayer and process for change,” the program aims to see 21st century churches reflect a first century dynamic—to be more mission-minded and passionate in reaching their neighbours. “People in Canada are bypassing our existing churches, so this new initiative will help people encounter Christ,” said executive director David Wiebe. “Will there be challenges? Sure. Will there be blessings? Absolutely!” Regenerate 21-01 will distribute \$4 million over five years in three key areas: church health, developing leaders and reaching out. Local churches will be able to access programs in each of these areas in order to stay healthy, mobilize leaders, and reach their communities. The money for the programs will come from Stewardship reserve funds, government grants, individual donations and participant fees.

—BY LAURA KALMAR

GOD AT WORK IN THE WORLD

Violence issues come to class

Mennonite educators frustrated over media coverage as attempts at violence-reduction lead to unwanted exposure

By DAVE ROGALSKY

Eastern Canada Correspondent
KITCHENER, ONT.

For the second time in little over a year, a Waterloo area Mennonite institution has found its participation in a violence-reduction effort played out by the media in unexpected ways.

In late August, Rockway Mennonite Collegiate in Kitchener was the location for a training video production by the Canadian Distance Education Institute (CDEI) to help teachers and administrators respond appropriately in the case of a violent intrusion on a high school campus. A photo of SWAT team members at the Mennonite school in full gear and carrying assault rifles—and a student (portraying a victim of school violence)—was plastered across the local paper's pages.

In May 2007, Conrad Grebel University College hosted a Shia Muslim-Mennonite dialogue in conjunction with Mennonite Central Committee, whose opening night public discussion was attended by protestors from Toronto. Local media and *Canadian Mennonite* coverage included photos of Special Weapons and Tactical (SWAT) team members on the roof of the college.

Of the most recent event, Rockway principal Terry Schellenberg says, "I felt very uncomfortable with what I deemed to be the narrow and sensationalist press that emerged from the rehearsal. It did not reflect the holistic sense of how I see this initiative in its broader scope."

Schellenberg had hoped for coverage that reflects Rockway's "holistic instruction on all aspects of violence-prevention—including everything from how to manage a critical incident well ... to how to develop peer-mentoring and conflict resolution programs."

Schellenberg notes that "the relationship between a school with a strong peace

commitment and the use of the police ... is challenging and complex, and it gets messy in my own mind."

"What does it mean to be 'in the world but not of the world,' in a situation such as this?" he wonders.

In response to questions from the Rockway constituency, parents and Mennonite Central Committee Ontario generated by the coverage, Schellenberg says that "Rockway is planning to shape a series of chapel forums for our teachers and students that open again our peace commitment, along with a number of these challenging questions from a range of perspectives."

Steve Brnjas, one of the pastors at Bethel

Mennonite Church near Elmira, Ont., and a former Waterloo Regional Police officer, welcomes such efforts. "There is a need for an ongoing discussion on this," he says, "not just at the theological level but at the reality level, including the reality of policing, which is unwelcome to most Mennonites—a deep discussion on the interaction of peace and violence. . . . Mennonites feel very uncomfortable with Jesus' [violent] actions in the temple."

Glen Woolner, former development director at Rockway and part owner of CDEI, had to work hard to convince the various media that covered the video shoot what the scene at Rockway was really about. This was repeated in the following days, when he was interviewed in regard to actual armed incidents and school lockdowns first in Toronto and then in Finland (where 10 students were killed before the gunman committed suicide).

Working to create curriculum based on "intelligent awareness," planning and thinking ahead, using values of peace and justice, Woolner says CDEI is trying to help schools "create community and make sure everyone has a meaningful place in the community." ❧

CANADIAN DISTANCE EDUCATION INSTITUTE PHOTO



When photographs of Rockway students being escorted out of their school by armed police officers this summer appeared in the media, it led to questions by parents, the Rockway constituency and Mennonite Central Committee Ontario about the college's involvement in the production of an anti-violence training video.

A garden to call your own

CMU community gardeners harvest vegetables while growing community life

BY AARON EPP

National Correspondent
WINNIPEG

When she's not working the early shift at a local bakery, recent Canadian Mennonite University (CMU) graduate Gabrielle Plenert is busy canning. That's because she's one of more than 40 people harvesting vegetables from the community garden on campus.

Plenert came up with the idea for the garden last October along with Bethany Paetkau, her friend and fellow international development studies major. The two 21-year-olds were reading about food justice issues for a course they were taking with instructor Kenton Lobe and wanted to put into practice some of the things they were reading about.

"We thought it would be really cool if we could start a community garden ourselves," Plenert says, "so that we could grow food and have a garden be part of our daily lives as Christians."

The two students approached Lobe with the idea and began conversations with CMU administration, which supported the idea. The gardeners were given a plot of land on the northwest corner of the university's campus and gardening began in May.

Forty-seven students, faculty, staff and alumni currently participate, tending to the 28 plots into which the garden has been divided. Some tend to their own plot, while others share a plot with two or three friends. The garden is chemical-free; turkey manure is used as fertilizer and the weeding is done by hand. Beans, squash, pumpkins, corn, potatoes, cauliflower, carrots, beets, strawberries and spinach are just a few of the things the group has grown.

In a time where parts of the world

PHOTO BY JOHN LONGHURST



Nicola Schaefer, a student at Canadian Mennonite University, is one of 47 people taking part in the community garden on campus.

experiencing famine and food issues are receiving more global attention than in the past, Lobe says the benefits of a community garden extend beyond just having fresh produce to eat. "I don't think there's a decrease in [world] hunger that happens when people garden," he says, "but I think there's an awareness that happens between food, the people and the land that opens all kinds of relevant conversations."

Many city-dwellers are disconnected from the land, Lobe points out, and gardening is a way to begin to reconnect. It also shows solidarity with the small farmers

who grow food in poor countries and challenges the notion that Canadians should only grow what they can export.

Lobe is also excited by the fact that participants are learning new skills and having new conversations about things like how and when to plant, and how and when to can their harvest. Plenert is one of those people. Prior to this past year, she had never done much gardening. Now, she says, "there's very little that beats being in a garden and eating food you just picked, and then sharing it with friends." ❧

/// Briefly noted

Container of blankets shipped to Afghanistan

PLUM COULEE, MAN.—Ten thousand heavy-weight comforters made by volunteers for Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) were shipped to Afghanistan from the MCC warehouse in Plum Coulee in late August. A container of 13,000 health kits was shipped from the MCC warehouse in Ephrata, Pa., at about the same time. Both containers were expected to arrive in Afghanistan in late September and be distributed by two MCC partner organizations: Help the Afghan Children and Le Pelican. These supplies are distributed to people who have been forced to flee their homes to safer regions within Afghanistan, refugees returning to their homes, and other vulnerable populations living in tents, makeshift shelters and bombed-out buildings. Although long-term sustainable development is an ongoing goal, the immediate need created from decades of war means that humanitarian assistance and emergency relief are still important priorities. MCC does not have workers in Afghanistan, but contributes funds to support the work of partner organizations. This work includes education, vocational training, community development, peacebuilding and health programs. Earlier this year, MCC sent a container of 9,000 school kits to Afghanistan.

—Mennonite Central Committee Canada Release

Up close and personal

St. Catharines' resident Aaron Enns sees Hurricane Katrina damage first-hand

By JOHN LONGHURST
Mennonite Disaster Service Release
NEW ORLEANS, LA.

Imagine that up to half the neighbours on your street are gone, their homes abandoned, damaged or destroyed. Empty lots are all that's left where some houses once stood, while others are boarded up and vacant.

Aaron Enns doesn't have to imagine it. As a volunteer with Mennonite Disaster Service (MDS) in New Orleans from June to August, he saw the devastation caused by Hurricane Katrina first-hand.

"It's pretty amazing to see all the destruction," says Enns, a member of St. Catharines (Ont.) United Mennonite Church of the effects of the storm that hit the city on Aug. 29, 2005. "I thought after

almost three years it might be more rebuilt than it is. It's not going as fast as people hope."

Progress is slow due to the enormity of the challenge: 80 percent of the city was submerged when the levees surrounding the city broke. In many places, house after house is boarded up, the owners still trying to decide whether to move back and rebuild.

It's the same for businesses. A drive through the hardest-hit areas reveals empty and abandoned banks, hotels, restaurants, grocery stores, strip malls, department stores and gas stations.

Despite the problems, things are slowly returning to normal for many people, thanks to the efforts of people like Enns, 19, who served as a crew chief with MDS. His job was to direct volunteers from across North America who had come to repair and rebuild homes damaged by the storm.

"I worked at eight or nine houses this summer," he says, adding, "It's been a great experience. The people we worked for were so gracious and welcoming. It felt good to be able to help them."

Enns was given a leave of absence by his boss at Amber Stairways to serve with

MDS for the summer. "I had always wanted to do some kind of mission trip or service," he says. "Coming to New Orleans shows me that you don't have to go around the world to serve others."

For people like Catalina Boisseau, the service provided by Enns and the other volunteers was a godsend. "After I saw what the storm had done to my house, I cried a lot," says Boisseau, who lived with her disabled husband and daughter in a small trailer since the hurricane. "I wondered if there was anyone who could help me. I was losing hope."

Through help from MDS, Boisseau's house was completely rebuilt. She moved in on Aug. 7. "Now I am so happy," she says. "I got my life back again."

Robert Green echoes her sentiment. The resident of the Ninth Ward—one of the hardest-hit areas of the city—not only lost his house, but his mother and granddaughter died during the storm. For him, the presence of volunteers from MDS and other agencies has been a blessing. "So many people from around the world have responded to our need," he says. "It helps me get over the anguish I feel over the loss of my mother and granddaughter. It's made it possible for me to move on."

Will Enns consider future service with MDS? "Oh, definitely," he says. "It was a great experience. I loved it." ❧

MDS PHOTO



Nineteen-year-old Aaron Enns, a member of St. Catharines (Ont.) United Mennonite Church, served as a crew chief with Mennonite Disaster Service in New Orleans, La., this summer, helping to repair nine homes destroyed in 2005 by Hurricane Katrina.

John Longhurst was part of a group from the River East Mennonite Brethren Church in Winnipeg that volunteered with Mennonite Disaster Service in New Orleans from July 28 to Aug. 4. He is the director of communications for Canadian Mennonite University.

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Business collapse leaves community in turmoil

Churches, seniors not immune to 'unfortunate financial circumstances'

BY KARIN FEHDERAU
Saskatchewan Correspondent
WALDHEIM, SASK.

Waldheim residents who invested \$16.5 million with a local entrepreneur received the shock of their lives recently when they were told their money may be gone for good.

Marathon Leasing Corporation, owned by Ron Fast of Waldheim since 1980, provides a rent-to-own car service in Saskatoon. Four years ago, Fast began offering people the chance to invest money at a 12 percent annual return rate if they kept the money invested for five years. More than 200 people, many from Waldheim, signed on.

No claims of wrongdoing have been made against the company or Fast, who was willing to face the disappointed creditors during a recent meeting in Saskatoon to decide if the company should be forced into bankruptcy. Rather, the situation has occurred because of "unfortunate financial circumstances," noted an article in the local paper.

Henry Block co-pastors the Zoar Mennonite Church in Waldheim. He knows this will affect his church. "Some have invested heavily in the business," Block said, adding, "I'm still trying to figure out what a pastor's role is in all this."

"It's hitting our community pretty hard," added Justin Klassen, associate pastor of Waldheim Mennonite Brethren Church.

People who invested with Fast, including many seniors, are being forced to change their lifestyles. Some people borrowed money from the bank to invest; others will have to mortgage their homes, or find another way to make up the loss.

Oliver Heppner, 79, who didn't invest with Fast, said of those who did, "I see people taking action to get to the bottom of this." ❧



**Mennonite
Central
Committee**
British Columbia

Mennonite Central Committee BC invites applicants for the following positions

Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) is a church based international relief, development and peace agency that seeks to demonstrate God's love by serving among people suffering from poverty, conflict and natural disasters. In British Columbia we support international relief and development efforts by sending funds, personnel and material aid, and we also have local programs that assist people in need here in BC. Qualified candidates for the following positions need to share the mission and beliefs of MCC as well as the specific qualifications for the position.

Please check the website www.mcc.org/bc or call for a detailed job posting on these and other positions. MCC values diversity and invites all qualified candidates to apply.

Assistant Accountant

The assistant accountant is responsible to the director of finance and administration and is responsible for specific accounting tasks within the department. In addition to overseeing accounts payable and receivable, this position will also have responsibilities related to payroll, benefits, vacation records, supporting the year end audit, record keeping, and recording Thrift Shop activity. Several years of accounting experience and a related degree are required, payroll training and several years toward a CGA or CMA preferred. Ability to provide IT problem solving support for office staff is an asset. This is a full-time salaried position based in Abbotsford.

Resource Generation Assistant

The Resource Generation Assistant provides support to the Director of Resource Development in a variety of roles related to communications and donor relations. This includes assisting with the creation of promotional materials, responding to donor inquiries, ordering and organizing communication resources, assisting with special events such as fund raising banquets, organizing schedules, taking minutes and record keeping. The specific qualifications include good communications skills, being organized and able to multi-task, willing to take the initiative in new situations, and being a flexible and collaborative team player. This is a part-time salaried position based in Abbotsford.

Executive Assistant

The Executive Assistant provides support to the Executive Director in day to day activities by assisting with special events, board meetings, annual general meetings, taking minutes at board and management meetings, keeping official records, general filing, correspondence, church relations, alumni activities and a variety of other duties. Specific qualifications include several years of experience in a similar role and excellent skills related to written and verbal communications, inter-personal relations, computer literacy and being well organized. This is a full-time salaried position based in Abbotsford.

Thrift Shop Manager- Furniture and More and Surrey MCC Thrift Shop

The Manager leads a small staff and over 60 volunteers in the daily Thrift Shop operations. This includes empowering and encouraging staff and volunteers, as well as working under the general direction of the Thrift Shop Committee. The specific duties include: budgeting, annual planning, promotion, assisting customers, organizing displays, recruiting and training volunteers, and other duties to keep the shop running smoothly. These are full-time salaried positions based in Abbotsford and Surrey.

To apply please send a cover letter and resume to:

Attention: Marie Reimer, Human Resources Director (confidential)
MCC BC Box 2038, 31414 Marshall Rd., Abbotsford, B.C. V2T 3T8
By fax: 604-850-8734 or by email to hrdirector@mccbc.com

For more information call 604-850-6639 or check www.mcc.org/bc

Interviews will continue until qualified candidates are selected. All applicants are appreciated, only those selected for an interview will be contacted.

FOCUS ON TRAVEL

VIEWPOINT

Travelling for God

Spanning out across the globe engenders understanding and peace among nations

BY ED EPP

One way to build trust and community is to share stories face-to-face. Isolationism—be it cultural, economic or religious—can breed suspicion and fear of others, which too often erupts into conflict. This is true locally, regionally, nationally and globally.

Without travel, the world would be poorer and more dangerous. There would be more misunderstanding and suspicion if we could not share our stories, fears, hopes and dreams. There would be more conflict if our understanding of each other depended solely on a select few. I certainly would be fearful of a world where people only knew of the other's country, customs and stories through the media, religious leaders or politicians.

In the summer of 2009, the Mennonite

world will continue to build its global community in Paraguay. From every part of the world, people will come together to eat, share stories, sing, worship and perhaps even dance! This coming together in one place is healthy for the global Mennonite community. Much can be missed if contact is limited to letters, e-mails or the reliance on spokespeople as our representatives. This involves travel.

Discussions today on travel usually focus on its negative environmental impacts. Some even go so far as to say people should not travel at all. What is too-often missed in those discussions is the positive impact travel can have on people and community:

• **Travel transforms people.** On every trip I take there is at least one moment where I see this transformation.

I have witnessed people's views of religious tolerance being transformed while standing in a mosque in Central Asia, where, in 1881, Mennonites were invited to worship. In the same location, 126 years later, we were again invited by a local imam to sing a hymn and to pray.

Another group understood more about hospitality while waiting in a rural spot for a bus. A farm family living next to the road spontaneously and joyfully invited us all for lunch.

I have witnessed North Americans' views of poverty and aid being

transformed while visiting small businesses in Nicaragua and feeling the owner's pride of self-sufficiency.

My own two daughters' views of the world have been transformed by having the opportunity to talk to children in Tanzania, Egypt and Afghanistan.

Such transformations are much more difficult, indeed maybe impossible, without travel.

• **Travel builds community.**

Experiencing transformational moments and then discussing them together strengthens a tour group's internal sense of community. Purposeful group travel with skilled cultural interpreters and storytellers contributes to that experience. Most importantly, breaking through the walls of culture and language expands the group to include people of other cultures, languages and even religions.

Feeling part of a global community can help us interpret events in the world. Believing that they are in a larger global community, people have a bond that allows them to see faces and stories that go beyond ideology or slogans when confronted with political differences, natural disasters or even conflict.

Being stewards of God's creation, we should take seriously the environmental issues of travel. There are ways today to offset carbon emissions from travel, and to make as small an environmental footprint as possible. There are even "Mennonite options" for carbon offsets being developed by Mennonite Economic Development Associates.

Although we do need to minimize our environmental footprint, it is wrong to focus only on the negatives of travel without promoting the positives. The discussions and questions on travel should centre on "how," not "if," we are going to travel.

The world needs face-to-face community-building. Travel, done right, is a kingdom-building activity! ☸

Ed Epp works for TourMagination in the areas of tour development and leading, and marketing. TourMagination (tourmagination.com) is based in Waterloo, Ont.

TOURMAGINATION PHOTO



TourMagination tour leader Ed Epp points to one of the many areas of the world where his company offers travel packages.

Global church is in her blood

New YAMEN! coordinator believes international participants gain a broader worldview as they travel the world to serve others

By FERNE BURKHARDT

Mennonite World Conference Release
AKRON, PA.

Andrea Geiser is excited about her new job as the coordinator of YAMEN! She expects participants in the Young Anabaptist Mennonite Exchange Network to grow spiritually and emotionally. She also hopes they will help build bridges and break down misconceptions held by people in the countries where they work and in their own home churches.

YAMEN! is a joint Mennonite World Conference (MWC) and Mennonite

Central Committee (MCC) initiative committed to building church-to-church relationships and strengthening the global Anabaptist Church. In the program, single young adults from outside North America serve in countries where MCC works, where they connect with local Anabaptist churches or MCC in-country programs.

Geiser began her new job in mid-July, adding to her responsibilities as the MCC International Volunteer Exchange Program (IVEP) coordinator. Six young people from Zimbabwe and Indonesia were in YAMEN! orientation in Akron in August before dispersing for the next year to Tanzania, Indonesia, Bolivia, Egypt and Brazil.

All participants are expected to share their experiences and what they learned with their home congregation and area churches upon their return. Geiser also hopes this year of service will give them a taste for longer-term international service. That's been her experience.



Geiser

After graduation from Houghton College in western New York,

Geiser signed up as an MCC SALTER (Serving and Learning Together) and

went to Cambodia to teach English at the Royal University of Phnom Penh. That year of service led to three more years in Cambodia, where she helped to develop a music program at a Bible school, taught music, worked with IVEP and helped to organize IVEP reunions in Cambodia.

The global church is in Geiser's blood. Her parents served in Korea, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Labrador. In 1997, they took the entire family to the MWC global assembly in Calcutta, India.

Geiser first learned about YAMEN! some months after returning from Cambodia, and when the coordinator's position became available, she applied and got the job.

"The South-to-South exchange is really neat," she says of YAMEN!'s mandate.

Her job has its challenges, though, particularly since she coordinates the program from the U.S. while none of the participants are from North America. However, with her past experience, she understands the frustrations and joys of serving internationally in a new cultural setting and of trying to fit back into one's home culture upon return. ☺

Transforming opportunities

'[W]e have to go to different places to represent our God'

By TIM SHENK

Mennonite Central Committee Release
AKRON, PA.

When Sithabile Ndlovu learned at her church about volunteer service assignments in other countries for young adults, she knew it was something she wanted to do.

"It has always been my wish to travel," says Ndlovu, who attends Pumula Brethren in Christ Church in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe, a Mennonite World Conference (MWC) member congregation. "It's as the Bible asks of Christians; it says we have to go to different places to represent our God."

Ndlovu, 23, is one of nine young adults serving in international assignments through the Young Anabaptist Mennonite Exchange Network (YAMEN!). While she does not yet speak Low German or Spanish, Ndlovu is eager to learn from her experiences in Bolivia and serve as an "ambassador" of her country and faith community.

Ron Flaming, MCC's director of international programs, spoke to the YAMEN! recruits during a commissioning service at Akron Mennonite Church this summer and reflected on the power of relationships to transform a person's worldview. "You represent more than a hundred ambassadors [in various MCC programs] to engage in this kind of transforming relationship," he said. "In the end, this may be more important than anything else you accomplish in your assignment, as important as that may be."

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Motorcycle tour covers B.C. back roads

Area church organizes day-long ride through the Fraser Valley

By AMY DUECKMAN

B.C. Correspondent
ABBOTSFORD, B.C.

Cyclists from British Columbia's Lower Mainland who came together for a day-long tour of the Fraser Valley this summer had so much fun they agree it was an experience they'd like to do again.

Organized by Garry Janzen, MC B.C. executive minister, the tour began at Peace Mennonite Church in Richmond with seven bikes and eight riders. They met 13 more riders at Columbia Bible College in Abbotsford, where the group had a short prayer before continuing along the back roads of the south side of the Fraser Valley.

Stops during the morning included Yarrow, Cultus Lake for ice cream and a café near Minter Gardens for lunch. In the afternoon,

the group rode through more beautiful scenery on the north side of the Fraser Valley at Agassiz, Harrison Hot Springs and Sasquatch Provincial Park. In Mission, they enjoyed more back roads and a snack at Cedar Valley Mennonite Church. The last leg of the journey included a view of Burrard Inlet before

the Vancouver and the Abbotsford groups parted ways to go home.

Altogether, 23 riders on 20 bikes participated.

"This was a wonderful way of connecting people and building camaraderie," says Janzen, who came up with the idea as a way of involving a different sector of MC B.C. constituents who may not ordinarily attend conferences and other church events. "It was a great time of meeting folks from a number of different . . . congregations from around the Lower Mainland. We plan to do another ride next summer, maybe to [Vancouver] Island." ❧

PHOTO BY CHERYL DYCK



Cyclists from British Columbia's Lower Mainland came together last month for a day-long tour of the Fraser Valley and fellowship.

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Advertorial

Travellers encouraged to go 'behind the veil'

EGYPT—Ever dreamt of visiting Egypt? The third annual Behind the Veil Tour, to be held from Nov. 16-28, 2009, offers travellers the chance to explore how an ancient civilization lived. Starting in Cairo, a city of 25 million people, the tour moves on to Aswan in Upper Egypt, where a three-day boat cruise is planned along the Nile River, the sustainer of life in this desert land. The boat cruise

includes stops to see the mighty Aswan dam, the Valley of the Kings, and Karnack Temple in Luxor.

A highlight of previous tours has been a visit with the Egyptian children who are benefiting from the work of Mennonite Economic Development Associate's microfinance partner on a project called Promote and Protect the Interests of Children Who Work.

The tour is hosted by Ed Epp of TourMagination and MEDA member relations director Bob Kroeker.

For more information, or to book a seat, call TourMagination toll-free at 1-800-565-0451 or e-mail bkroeker@meda.org. ✉ MEDA/TOURMAGINATION JOINT RELEASE

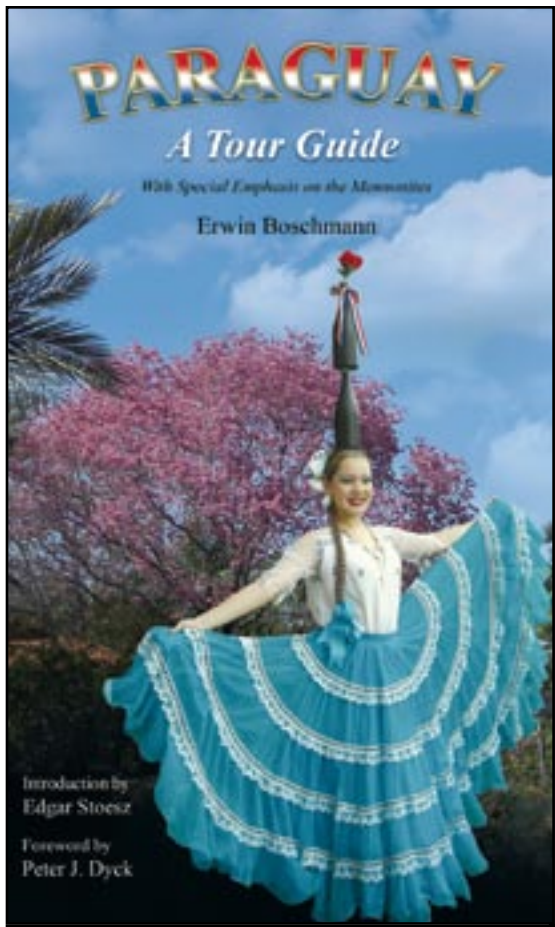
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For more information contact Darrell and Florence Jantzi, Tour Leaders, 14 Nightingale Cres., Elmira, ON, N3B 1A8 519-669-4356 or jantzi@golden.net

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



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Upcoming Advertising Dates

Issue Date	Ads Due
Nov. 10	Oct. 28
<i>Focus on Music</i>	
Nov. 24	Nov. 10
<i>Focus on Mission and Service</i>	
Dec. 15	Nov. 25
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Briefly noted

CMU names new athletics director

WINNIPEG—Russell Willms has been named director of athletics at Canadian Mennonite University (CMU). Prior to coming to CMU, Willms, a native of Kelowna, B.C., was very involved in Bison Sports at the University of Manitoba in the areas of event planning and coaching. He was the voice of both the men's and women's volleyball and basketball teams until 2006, and was an assistant coach with the University of Manitoba women's soccer team for four years. As an athlete, he competed at an elite level in soccer, both provincially and abroad. "Athletics at CMU boasts well-organized and established programs based on our commitment and dedication to excellence," says Willms. "To this end, my goal is to direct our athletes and coaches in their pursuit of their highest aspiration—academically, spiritually and athletically." CMU fields teams in basketball, volleyball, hockey and soccer; it is a member of the Central Plains Athletic Association and the Association of Christian College Athletics.

—Canadian Mennonite University Release

CBC adds to advancement team staff

ABBOTSFORD, B.C.—Paul Loewen has joined the Columbia Bible College (CBC) advancement team in the area of church and donor relations. He has substantial experience in pastoral work among Mennonite Brethren (MB) churches in several provinces, serves on the MB Canadian Conference Executive Board, and has been involved in several businesses. "My call to CBC fits my personal call to equip... young leaders to impact their home, church and society for the kingdom of God," Loewen says. "I'm anticipating how God will bring people and resources together for this to become an ever-increasing reality in the lives of CBC students." Vern Heidebrecht, who has Parkinson's disease, has increased his workload on the church and donor relations team to one day a week. A former board chair of the college and now pastor emeritus at Northview Community Church, Heidebrecht's heart for future leaders is strong and he inspires fellow staff and students. Jennel Youssef brings to the team her organizational experience gained working at another school as well as through her own event management company.

—Columbia Bible College Release

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Calendar

British Columbia

Nov. 3-5: Annual retreat at First Mennonite, Kelowna. "Blooming deserts and prickly cactus: The story of the Mennonites in the green hell of Paraguay" with Harry Loewen.

Nov. 13-16: Fraser Valley Arts and Peace Festival, at CBC.

Nov. 14-16: MC B.C. senior youth IMPACT retreat at Camp Squeah.

Nov. 15: MCC B.C. annual general meeting, at CBC.

Dec. 6-7: Advent Vespers with Abendmusik Choir at Emmanuel Free Reformed Church, Abbotsford 8 p.m. (6) and Knox United Church, Vancouver, 8 p.m. (7). Donations to Menno Simons Centre.

Saskatchewan

Oct. 25: MC Saskatchewan Equipping Day, at Mount Royal Mennonite, Saskatoon.

Oct. 26: Food for All benefit concert, at MCC Centre, Saskatoon, at 7 p.m. Featured artists: Brian Moyer Suderman, Val Wiebe and Darryl Bueckert.

Oct. 29, Nov. 26: MEDAfinity breakfasts, at the Saskatoon Club, at 7:30 a.m.

Oct. 31: MCC church leaders seminar, at Grace Mennonite, Regina.

Oct. 31-Nov. 1: MCC Saskatchewan annual general meeting, at Parliament Community Church, Regina.

Nov. 1: RJC fundraising banquet, at RJC, at 6 p.m.

Nov. 14, 15: Mennonite Historical Society of Saskatchewan re-presents the "Mennonite Great Trek to Turkistan" conference, at Bethany Manor.

Nov. 14-16: "Enlarging Our Practice of Prayer" event with CMU prof Gerry Ediger, at Zoar Mennonite Church, Waldheim.

Nov. 15: Eigenheim Mennonite Church fundraising arts, crafts and bake sale, at Rosthern Elementary School, from 9:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Nov. 15, 16: Evangelical Anabaptist Fellowship presents "Christian Discipleship and Peacemakers" events featuring Hutterite choirs and storytelling, in Saskatoon.

Nov. 22: MC Saskatchewan leadership

assembly.

Dec. 6, 13: Buncha Guys concerts; at Knox United Church, Saskatoon (6), and at Shekinah Retreat Centre, at 7:30 p.m. (13).

Dec. 14: RJC chorale performance at Knox United Church, Saskatoon.

Dec. 19: RJC Christmas concert, at RJC.

Manitoba

Oct. 23: Mennonite Church Manitoba fall delegate session, 7 p.m. at Springfield Heights Mennonite.

Oct. 25: Workday at Camp Koinonia.

Oct. 25: CMU fall dessert evening and fundraiser. For more information, visit cmu.ca.

Oct. 25-26: Seminar and workshops with Robert J. Suderman on "Seniors and the future of the church," at Steinbach Mennonite Church. For more information, call Homer Janzen at 204-326-6985.

Oct. 26: Camps with Meaning celebration banquet at Camp Koinonia.

Oct. 27: MCI soup and pie supper and fall concert, Gretna.

Oct. 31-Nov. 2: Quilting/scrapbooking retreats at Camp Koinonia.

Oct. 31-Nov. 2: Quilting Retreat I at Camp Moose Lake.

Nov. 1, 2: Camps with Meaning celebration banquets at Winkler Bergthaler Mennonite (1) and Douglas Mennonite (2).

Nov. 3: Annual General Meeting at Westgate Mennonite Collegiate, 7 p.m.

Nov. 4-5: John and Margaret Friesen Lectures at CMU with Alfred Neufeld, dean of the School of Theology at the Protestant University of Paraguay. Topic: "Church and ethnicity: The Mennonite experience in Paraguay." Visit cmu.ca for more information.

Nov. 7-9: Quilting Retreat II at Camp Moose Lake.

Nov. 8: Westgate 50th anniversary mass choir concert at Jubilee Place, Winnipeg. Rehearsals on Oct. 25 and Nov. 1 at First Mennonite Church, Winnipeg. Interested singers can register online at westgate50th.com.

Nov. 9: Evangelical Anabaptist Fellowship presents "Christian Discipleship and Peacemakers" event featuring Hutterite choirs and storytelling, at Grace Mennonite Church, Steinbach, at 10 a.m.

Nov. 13: Evening with the Arts at Westgate Mennonite Collegiate, at 7:30 p.m. Bring submissions to the school by Oct. 30.

Nov. 14-15: MCC Manitoba annual meeting.

Nov. 14, 15: MCI alumni and community drama presentation, Gretna.

Nov. 29: North Kildonan Mennonite Church Quartet's annual Advent concert and introduction of its new CD, *Near to the Heart of God*, at North Kildonan Mennonite Church, Winnipeg.

Nov. 29, 30: Faith and Life choirs Advent concerts; at Springfield Heights Mennonite Church, Winnipeg at 7 p.m. (29), and at Winkler Bergthaler Mennonite Church at 3 p.m. (30).

Dec. 18, 19: MCI Christmas concerts, Gretna; 7:30 p.m. (18), 1:30 p.m. (19).

Jan. 3, 2009: Westgate 50th anniversary basketball tournament, at Westgate.

Jan. 16-18, 2009: MMYO Junior High Retreat at Camp Koinonia.

Jan. 22-24, 2009: CMU Refreshing Winds conference. Theme: "Worship: Come to its senses." Keynote speakers: Don Saliers, retired theology and worship professor at Emory University; and Doug Gay, lecturer in practical theology at the University of Glasgow.

Ontario

Oct. 23-25: Ten Thousand Villages Fair Trade craft sale and Villages café, Hamilton Mennonite Church; 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. (23, 24), 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. (25).

Oct. 24: Sawatsky Lectures at Conrad Grebel University College, at 7:30 p.m. Speaker: Mary Oyer. Topic: "Songs That Have Endured."

Oct. 25: Letters From Stalin's Russia lecture and film presented by author and historian Ruth Derksen Siemens, at Conrad Grebel's Great Hall, at 7 p.m.

Oct. 25: "Enlivening the Tradition" workshop for song and worship leaders, at Conrad Grebel University College. Workshop leader: Mary Oyer.

Oct. 25: Menno Singers presents a "Celebrating congregational song" workshop with Marilyn Houser Hamm, from 9:15 a.m. to 3 p.m., at Stirling Avenue Mennonite Church, Kitchener. For more information, visit mennosingers.com.

Oct. 25: Menno Singers presents "Rejoicing" featuring Marilyn Houser Hamm, at 8 p.m., at St. Jacobs Mennonite Church.

Oct. 25: CPT benefit concert at Breslau Mennonite, 7 p.m. Featuring Rev. Douglas W. Hallman of McGill University on piano. For tickets, e-mail Benno Barg at bennobarg@sentex.net.

Oct. 25: Women of Mennonite Church Eastern Canada Enrichment Day, at Rouge Valley Mennonite Church, Markham, from 10:15 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Theme: "Our neighbours—Across the street from around the world." Bring a bag lunch or book a Sri Lankan lunch by contacting Florence Jantzi at 519-669-4356 or jantzi@golden.net.

Oct. 26: Menno Singers presents "Rejoicing," featuring Marilyn Houser Hamm, at 7 p.m., at Steinmann Mennonite Church, Baden.

Oct. 26: Fanfare of Canadian Hymns concert by Pax Christi Chorale and chamber chorale, at Grace Church-on-the-Hill, Toronto, at 3 p.m. Guest host: Howard Dyck. For tickets, call 416-491-8542.

Oct. 26: Second choir reunion celebration concert at St. Catharines United Mennonite Church, at 7 p.m. For further information, contact Art Wall at 905-634-0364 or Carol Penner at carol@penners.ca.

Oct. 26: Hymn Sing at Zurich Mennonite Church, at 7 p.m. For more information, visit kingsfieldcommon.ca.

Oct. 31-Nov. 2: Mennonite and Brethren Marriage Encounter weekend, in Cambridge; For more information, or to register, call Marjorie Roth at 519-669-8667.

Nov. 2: "Leaders Who Lead: An Afternoon with Nelson Kraybill," at Steinmann Mennonite, Baden, at 3 p.m. Co-sponsored by AMBS and MC Eastern Canada. For more information, visit mcec.ca or call 519-650-3806.

Nov. 5-8: Annual Ten Thousand Villages Festival Sale at Vineland United Mennonite Church; 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. (5-7), 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. (8). Tea room open each day.

Nov. 9: MC Eastern Canada "Junior Youth Breakaway" for students in Grades 6 to 8 and their Sunday school teachers, at Rockway Mennonite Collegiate, Kitchener. For more information, or to register, visit mcec.ca. Registration deadline: Oct. 27.

Nov. 11-15: Ten Thousand Villages

Handicrafts and Arts Sale, at the Old Town Hall, Aylmer; 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. (11,12), 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. (13,14), 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. (15). For more information, call 519-765-3020.

Nov. 14: Spirituality and aging lectures at Conrad Grebel University College with Rev. James Ellor: "Caring for the Spiritual Lives of Seniors," from 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.; "Using Spiritual Assessment to Facilitate Spiritual Care," from 1:45 to 5:15 p.m. Pre-register at infocguc@uwaterloo.ca.

Nov. 21: Eby Lecture at Conrad Grebel University College, at 7 p.m. Speaker: Marlene Epp.

Nov. 22: Nithview Auxiliary Christmas Tea and Bake Sale, from 2-4 p.m., at Nithview, New Hamburg.

Nov. 22: Mennonite and Brethren Marriage Encounter annual general meeting, at Hawkesville Mennonite Church, at 10:30 a.m.

Nov. 24-26: Church leadership seminar: "Theological perspectives on conflict resolution," in Waterloo.

Nov. 26: Church leadership seminar: "Understanding the congregational life cycle," in Waterloo.

Nov. 28, 29: Nairn Mennonite Church, Ailsa Craig, presents "Spirit of Christmas" craft show with live music; 7 to 9 p.m. (28), 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. (29).

Dec. 6, 7: Pax Christi Chorale presents Haydn's *Creation*, at Grace Church-on-the-Hill, Toronto; 7:30 p.m. (6), 3 p.m. (7). For tickets, call 416-491-8542.

U.S.A.

Nov. 6-9: MEDA presents Business as a Calling 2008, "Dividends of Hope" at Columbus, Ohio. Visit meda.org or call 717-560-6546 for details.

Paraguay

July 14-19, 2009: Mennonite World Conference assembly, Asuncion. Registration materials available at mwc-cmm.org.

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

Classifieds

Ministry Training



Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary invites AMBS graduates who are in the first two to five years of their first congregational ministry assignment to apply for Clarifying the Call,

a weekend of conversation, support and learning. Graduates of other ministry training programs may apply and will be considered as space allows. The event will be March 26-29, 2009, at AMBS. See more information and an application form at www.amb.edu/clarifyingthecall or call the AMBS Church Leadership Center, 574-296-6269.

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CANADIAN MENNONITE

EDITOR/PUBLISHER

Canadian Mennonite is seeking an editor/publisher for the bi-weekly periodical, based in Waterloo, Ontario.

Canadian Mennonite is one of the primary communication vehicles in Mennonite Church Canada and its five area conferences. Owned and operated by Canadian Mennonite Publishing Service, *Canadian Mennonite* works in a relationship of trust with the church, seeking to provide fair and accurate information, faith profiles, inspirational articles, news, and analysis of issues facing the Mennonite church. *Canadian Mennonite* is guided by the church's Confession of Faith and a representative Board.

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Applicants should have strong commitment to and knowledge of the Mennonite faith community and for *Canadian Mennonite's* ministry and mission; a commitment to our Confession of Faith; membership in a Mennonite church; communication and listening skills; denominational knowledge; administrative and personnel skills; knowledge of publishing; a journalism degree or related experience; computer competence; and be self-motivated.

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Marvin Wiens of Emmaus Mennonite Church in Wymark, Sask., flies the Palestinian flag to show solidarity with Palestinian farmers who have lost their livelihoods to the Israeli occupation of territory they claim as their own.



Turning tanks into combines

Saskatchewan farmer flies Palestinian flag during annual fall harvest

BY RAY FRIESEN

Special to *Canadian Mennonite*
WYMARK, SASK.

Marvin Wiens proudly flies a Palestinian flag on his combine as he harvests durum wheat on his and his neighbours' farms.

Asked why, he replies, "I fly this flag in recognition of a people who have lost their freedom and lost their farming livelihood, two things I cherish very much and have the privilege to continue to enjoy in Canada."

Like many Canadians, Wiens says his views of the creation of the State of Israel were shaped by the media. But last year he began reading the stories sent home by Rachelle Friesen, a young adult from his home congregation, Emmaus Mennonite Church in Wymark, who was working with Wi'am: The Palestinian Conflict Resolution Center. Her stories told about the Palestinian experience of living under Israeli occupation in the West Bank.

Then, Alex Awad, a Palestinian Baptist pastor and professor at Bethlehem Bible College, spoke at Mennonite Central Committee Saskatchewan meetings last November, offering his perspective on the current Israeli/Palestine situation.

Wiens has also supplemented this with his reading of

Blood Brothers by Elias Chacour, Archbishop of Galilee in the Melkite Greek Catholic Church. Wiens took particular note of the story of Chacour's father, who originally welcomed the forming of the State of Israel as a fulfillment of biblical prophecy. But then, Chacour's father lost his land and its well-kept olive orchard when the Israeli army tricked him into leaving. To support his family, Chacour Sr. ended up working for the man who was given the orchard, tending his own trees for someone else while being paid a hired hand's wages.

As a farmer and landowner himself, Wiens has a sense of what that must have been like. "That story is just absolutely heart-rending," he says. "And still, after all the people experienced, Elias Chacour has become a peace advocate!"

Wiens feels strongly that Mennonites have to tell the Palestinian story so that people hear both sides of what has happened, and is happening, in Israel/Palestine. For Wiens, flying the Palestinian flag is one small way of helping bring to reality the biblical dream of the time when swords will be turned into plowshares and tanks into combines. ☛