

CANADIAN MENTAL HEALTH MAGAZINE

January 19, 2009

Volume 13 Number 2

Faith and finger paints

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EDITORIAL

Where our treasures lie

TIM MILLER DYCK
EDITOR/PUBLISHER

The Beatitudes (the series of blessings Jesus gives in Matthew 5 and Luke 6) are teachings of Jesus that the Mennonite Church holds very close to its heart. Mennonites have claimed the seventh Beatitude in Mark (*"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God"*) as our own; it is the foundation of our belief in pacifism.

However, there are eight other blessings listed in Mark and three other blessings in Luke (as well as some warnings). We are not to put ourselves into one of the categories—the poor in spirit, the meek, the peacemakers—and leave the rest for others to work on. Each Beatitude is for every Christian. Just like you don't want to exercise nothing but your abs or nothing but your biceps in order to be fit, all the Beatitudes are important for growing in the faith.

At the same time, the first Beatitude does stand out as an entranceway to the rest. *"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven,"* says Matthew 5:3. It's one of the most general teachings in the passage and offers a blessing—the kingdom of heaven—that is a common phrase in the gospels.

Yet the verse is really shocking in its call, as are all the Beatitudes.

This first Beatitude is given both by Matthew and Luke, and it's an eye-opener for me to compare the two. In Luke, the text is, *"Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God."* Matthew

identifies a specific form of poverty, while Luke just talks about poverty in general. Those who have wealth are happy for Matthew; those who have little money are happy for Luke. Especially in this case, it's important that we hear both texts, recorded by Matthew and Luke for the instruction of the church.

There are many biblical teachings that support the idea that it's harder for the rich to enter the kingdom of heaven than the poor. The point here, I think, is, where do our treasures lie? There are all kinds of Caesars in which we are tempted to place our trust and our loyalty. To a student, grades in the 90s may be more valuable than simple money. Or perhaps praise from a particular person is what drives you. Perhaps public recognition in your career is what provides inner wealth. We know the disciples were, at times, driven by the desire to be the greatest in their little group (see Mark 9).

Clarence Jordan, in his book *Sermon on the Mount*, writes, "It is exactly this attitude of self-praise and self-justification and self-satisfaction that robs [us] of a sense of great need for the kingdom and its blessings. When one says, 'I don't need to be poor in things; I'm poor in spirit,' and another says, 'I don't need to be poor in spirit; I'm poor in things,' both are justifying themselves as they are, and saying in unison, 'I don't need.'"

I've heard Christian evangelism

summed up as "one beggar telling another beggar where to find some bread." Both versions of the first Beatitude help us to remember that there are many things that keep us from knowing how deep our need for the kingdom of heaven is, many things that we pursue that distract us from turning to God and God alone. Without that turning to God, the rest of the blessings Jesus gives will remain distant.

Introducing two new columns: We're starting two new column series this year. Sue C. Steiner, chair of Mennonite Church Canada's Christian Formation Council, is writing a column series on how we can all care for our pastors and help them thrive. Her column started last issue (see page 13 of the Jan. 5 issue) and will appear monthly. Christine Longhurst, who teaches worship and music at Canadian Mennonite University, is writing "Worship Wisdom," where she presents a number of her thoughts and ideas to help us all worship together better. Her column is starting this issue (see page 16) and will also run monthly.

Letters on homosexuality: If you think there have been a lot of reader letters on homosexuality published recently, you're right. I keep figures on the letters we publish and we've received about as many letters sent in by readers on this subject in just the last five months as in all of 2006 and 2007 put together. Our general letters policy is to publish all letters received, but given how this topic has been dominating the Readers Write section, I think it's time to take a breather on this particular topic for a while and focus on other things in that section. We still have some letters from readers expressing their thoughts on this subject that have already been received but not yet published, and these will be printed in our Feb. 2 issue.



ABOUT THE COVER:

Most students can attest that the middle of every school term is filled with stress and tension as midterms loom, workloads increase, and projects pile up. Last fall, Conrad Grebel University College's chapel program addressed the need to decompress by devoting a chapel service to finger painting, games, a story time, puzzles and belly laughs! See page 29 for our annual Focus on Post-Secondary Education section.

PHOTO: CONRAD GREBEL UNIVERSITY COLLEGE

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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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Ministry to all members of

From bipolar disorder to schizophrenia and Down syndrome, read stories of challenge, hope and healing when the church embraces opportunities to minister to—and with—those with mental illnesses and developmental challenges with the same care as they do to those who can sit quietly in the pew each Sunday, intellectually absorbing the sermon’s message and applying it rationally to their lives.

People, like Ben, who have bipolar disorder—and their families and friends—find themselves in circumstances they never would have imagined.

Responding to the bipolar parishioner

BY JOANNE KLASSEN

Ben’s parents were mystified and deeply concerned. They had received a call that their 22-year-old son was being taken for a psychiatric exam at the hospital. The hospital waiting room was filled with people, and there was Ben, sitting handcuffed between two RCMP officers. He had a wild look in his eyes, but his body was slumped in defeat. He glared at his parents and accused them of trying to get him arrested.

Ben’s parents were shocked that their son would think and say such things. They were worried about his mental health and well-being, and they were mortified since they knew many families sitting in their small town emergency room.

People, like Ben, who have bipolar disorder—and

the body of Christ

their families and friends—find themselves in circumstances they never would have imagined. Since mental illness occurs at the same rate in church members as in the general population, it is important that congregations learn how to interact with people affected by conditions like bipolar disorder.

What is bipolar disorder?

Bipolar disorder has two components: depressive episodes and manic episodes:

- **A depressive episode** may include a loss of interest or pleasure in what used to be enjoyable, irritable moods, dramatic

changes in weight or appetite, insomnia, fatigue, feeling worthless or guilty about everything, difficulty thinking or concentrating, and recurring thoughts of death or suicide.

- **A manic episode** may include times of feeling larger than life, needing little sleep, being more talkative than usual, racing thoughts, being easily distracted, bursting with goal-directed activity, or being physically agitated or acting impulsively (including doing things that may have painful consequences, like spending sprees, sexual indiscretions, gambling or driving recklessly).

Problems for the church

A belief that mental illness is the result of sin or Satan's influence is relatively common in some churches. These beliefs make it hard to walk compassionately alongside a person with mental health challenges and they may increase people's fear of relating to someone with bipolar disorder. Another church issue may be the time and care required to be with a person during the most painful parts of their illness. Caring may be difficult when the person doesn't change, or when the illness causes them to be unpleasant or challenging to be with. Congregations may tire of going through the cycles of crisis, intervention and care.

By acknowledging those issues and fears, they can be addressed

What if mental health issues are spoken of using "us" language rather than "them" language?

by gathering information and knowledge. Organizations like the Mood Disorders Society of Canada (mooddisorderscanada.ca) offer information and reading materials, and contacts to specific agencies. A counselling agency or mental health professional might offer an adult education option Sunday mornings, or provide information or suggestions to pastors, deacons or other congregational caregivers.

A great problem in the church is that people with mental health issues often disappear—sometimes by choice and sometimes because they are ignored or misunderstood. People with any medical problem, including mental illnesses, tend to do better when

they have social and family supports. When a congregation asks, “How can we help?” this is a great resource.

Theological education

Sometimes churches look for theological hints or biblical clues when it comes to understanding mental illness. In biblical times there were few ways to explain or understand mental illness: “Go and sin no more.” “Be healed.” “Hard heart.” “Choose the good things.” “Don’t be anxious.”

Misusing these phrases and attitudes can imply that people with bipolar disorder are choosing sinful behaviours and attitudes, and that they should be able to triumph over their illness through confession, their spiritual relationship with God, and willpower.

Forgotten at times are the stories of Elijah and Jonah, who both begged God to let them die, and also the Psalms in all their raw humanity: “*My tears have fed me day and night*,” cries the psalmist to God when he is down and out. Forgotten also are Paul’s “thorn” (a burden he had to bear that would not go away) and his admission in Romans 7:14-15 about not being in control of his behaviour and not understanding his own behaviour. These are examples of understanding and mercy that we can identify with when we or a family member suffers with mental illness.

The Bible is clear that God’s people are to be a light to the world. We are to be leaders in compassion and justice. When the church seeks to be a compassionate

The resurrection of Joslyn

BY BILL AND MARIANNE THIESSEN

Special to *Canadian Mennonite*

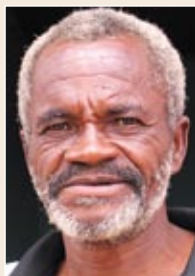
In 1990, Joslyn, a resident of Malvern, Jamaica, was wrongfully imprisoned in the maximum security prison in Kingston. He had become unstable and unpredictable due to what was later diagnosed as schizophrenia. No one—including his five children and his friends—heard from him again until 2002, when he was released. The authors visited him on his farm between October and December 2006, and arranged for the restoration of his house. In 2008, they returned and helped with the completion of the house, which took place on April 30, 2008. —Ed.

Welcome back, Joslyn! Welcome back to the path towards wholeness and love. Welcome home!

April 30, 2008, was a momentous day. It was the culminating event in Joslyn’s journey, with a home of his own on his own property, an ironically picturesque setting surrounded by the hills on the fringe of Malvern. On that day, his house received a final dressing of two coats of a striking “flamingo” on the outside, and “bluebell” blue on the inside. The doors received a coat of “golden brown” and the trim was painted white.

As we bid farewell and walked away along the pathway to our car, we paused, looked back and pondered. It was not only a completion of a meaningful venture; it was a significant symbol of Joslyn’s personal development and recovery from the scourge of schizophrenia, and his being imprisoned for it.

Following the completion of the job, Joslyn was “beside himself” with excitement and satisfaction. In a



Joslyn

completely normal and orderly state of mind, he eagerly assisted the painters and watched the transformation of his house from a dull grey cement finish to an attractive glow, inside and out.

When the job was completed, he, like an “eager beaver,” and completely self-motivated, went about meticulously putting his modest possessions, including his clothes, back in exact and tidy order, all the while quietly talking, as if to himself. Every item, including the beds,

had their exact location and place. No one needed to prompt him. This was a sign of a man with a healthy sense of dignity and self-respect.

A path used by neighbours walking to and from Malvern leads across his property and passes by his house. As people walked by, he would call out to greet them, even by name, even while he was busily putting his house in order.

During the course of the day we learned—and

light to the world, it begins by acknowledging and identifying with a person's suffering. It works to include people with mental illnesses in the congregation.

Valuing gifts, judging not

If we take seriously the image of the church as a body, we must ask what each person has to offer to the community.

"In fact, some parts of the body that seem weakest and least important are actually

dignity" (I Corinthians 12:22,24).

Often we think of those with bipolar disorder as a burden to the church. However, each and every person has gifts. One of the best ways for a person to feel a sense of belonging is to be a participant, to have something to offer that others need. The body is made up of many parts, and when we are open to diversity we are enriched, even if we may be uncomfortable.

that result in impulsive, destructive behaviour. Occasionally a person with bipolar disorder may do things we don't understand: spending huge amounts of money unwisely, abusing substances, talking wildly about connections to the universe, acting out sexually, or acting illegally (committing theft or recklessly driving).

In the church we often have a no-nonsense approach to undesirable or sinful behaviour: We tell the person to stop sinning. The complexity of bipolar disorder, however, challenges such a basic approach to behaviour change and raises tough questions:

- When, if ever, are people not responsible for their behaviour?
- What role do physical factors play with

Some common stories or sayings from the Bible have influenced the way we think about mental illness

the most necessary. . . . So God has put the body together such that extra honour and care are given to those parts that have less

While we don't entirely know what is going on in the person's brain, bipolar disorder can cause thought disturbances

observed—that he is an industrious farmer, having planted potatoes, yams and tomatoes, *cho chos* (edible gourds), beans, carrots, scallions and more on his 1.6-hectare farm.

We learned more about his life in prison and about his excitement when there was hope of his release. He seemed to remember well. He talked with animation about the fear (mainly due to the unpleasant side effects) he has for the injections he needs to maintain his stability and to control the effects of his illness.

It was an occasion for his invaluable neighbours, the Lewises, to remind him that if he resists—and the injection is delayed—he needs a double dose and the side effects are then even more severe. Although there is a residual fear that he will slip into a state of mental instability, the Lewises have promised to never forsake him as long as God grants them health.

Joslyn is now surrounded not only by the hills of Malvern, but also by caring neighbours and relatives. His five children, from whom he was separated when most of them were very young, are also returning for visits and are demonstrating their revived love for their father.

Wholeness. Joslyn is no longer "dead," as his family and community were made to believe so many years ago. By the grace of God, he is alive and well with medication.

And so it was, as we walked away from the site of the home glistening in the bright Jamaican sun, we glanced back along the trail in the woods leading to the main

road. We stopped, and with emotion, thanked God for evidence of his grace and love in the person of another life restored.

Bill and Marianne Thiessen of Abbotsford, B.C., have been on staff or volunteering with Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) for many years and are now regular MCC volunteers in their retirement.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF BILL AND MARIANNE THIESSEN



Members of the Malvern community help Joslyn finish painting his house.

Sermons from Down syndrome ministers

BY MELODIE DAVIS

Dave Gullman is pastor of Pleasant View, Inc., a wonderful organization in Broadway, Va., supporting people with disabilities. He recently shared a lesson by one of the people he pastors, who happens to have Down syndrome. Among people who work and live with those with a range of abilities and disabilities, this is not that unusual, but I share it (with his permission) because we can all learn something profound.

Many of the people connected with Pleasant View attend their own congregations each week, but one Friday evening a month they gather for their own “Faith and Light” service, where they help lead worship services with Dave as pastor.

The participants enjoy performing dramatic re-enactments of Bible stories, like anyone else. On one Friday evening, John, a man with Down syndrome, played the part of the Prodigal Son (from Luke 15) who asks for an early inheritance from his father and then proceeds to “live it up” with prostitutes, alcohol and the like.

Dave, as pastor, narrated the story. He said that shortly after the re-enactment began, “the story began to take on a life of its own.” John, as the Prodigal Son, proceeds to dole out his inheritance to many of the worshippers gathered that evening and shares his root beer with them. The narrator gently puts an end to that to get on

with the story.

As the story goes, the Prodigal Son realizes his mistakes and asks his father for forgiveness. His father welcomes him home and throws him a lavish party. If you know the story, the older son, who has faithfully worked for his father while the younger son is blowing his inheritance, becomes angry and stays outside of the party room.

Dave, as pastor, intended for the drama to stop then and speak briefly about the lessons learned from the story.

But John is not done. He sees his older brother on the

*“Once again, someone with a disability, when given the chance, has “preached” the message of the night.”
(Pastor Dave Gullman)*

outside of the circle and goes to him and acts out words of love and reconciliation. He urges the older brother back into the circle of the welcome home party.

Dave worried that things were getting a little chaotic that night “until I saw that John had understood the deeper reason for Jesus to tell this story: the younger son, in John’s interpretation, takes what he has learned from the father and extends that same love to the older brother.”

He concluded, “Once again, someone with a disability, when given the chance, has ‘preached’ the message of the night.”

emotions and relationships?

- How much does my brain affect my relationships?
- What about choice and tolerance?
- If a person chooses a behaviour that we have trouble with, can we tolerate it in order to remain in relationship?

There are natural and sometimes legal consequences for behaviours that fall outside the norm. How might we take to heart Jesus’ words, “*Judge not lest you be judged*”? Might we advocate for a person in the health care system, the judicial system, with an employer, at a store or with family members?

Mental health and worship

A very damaging aspect of a bipolar diagnosis is the stigma that comes with it. Society and the church sometimes

perpetuate the stigma out of fear or misunderstanding. How liberating might it be to hear Scripture, prayers, songs and sermons that take mental illness as seriously as physical illness? What if mental health issues are spoken of using “us” language rather than “them” language?

When we have the courage to speak about bipolar disorder and mental health compassionately, intelligently and publicly, we begin to make our congregations safe places for people whose lives are not all in order—all of us, to some extent. When things are spoken aloud, they become less secretive, less shameful, less binding; they have less ability to produce fear and fearful reactions.

Preventing burnout or fatigue

While everyone has abilities to offer the

church, there are some people whose problems also require much care and support. In small churches, or small towns, it may seem as though the same person, or a few people, are constantly available for crisis care or support. After a time, these people may become exhausted from their efforts to help.

There are ways to prevent fatigue. They take effort to establish, but eventually make the quality of care-giving and one’s personal life go up:

- First, have a group of people as supports for a high-needs individual.
- Second, have personal boundaries. If Saturday is your family day, set a limit on care-giving activities that day.

The church is made up of human beings in all our diversity, uniqueness, abilities and difficulties. It’s a place where

I had to think of a sermon preached at my own congregation by Gary, who is totally non-verbal, at least as far as I know. When Gary first started coming to our church, he was frequently fearful and agitated; the caregivers who accompanied him would sometimes take him out of the service if he became too agitated. Over the years, as he was challenged by the people at Pleasant View to grow in his social skills, he became relaxed, obviously enjoying the interaction with other worshippers. He would willingly put out his hand for a handshake and his friendly smile frequently cheered me up.

One Sunday another woman from Pleasant View who came infrequently was upset for some reason. She began to make noise and became agitated. Gary put his arm around her in the most comforting pose and patted her shoulder, somehow wordlessly assuring her that she was okay. I will never forget the care and empathy that showed in his eyes.

John Swinton, in an article entitled “The body of Christ has Down syndrome” in the *Journal of Pastoral Theology*, 2004, wrote about the L’Arche communities that today include an international network of inclusive communities. (People with developmental disabilities live and work with people who do not have such disabilities.) L’Arche was founded by Canadian Jean Vanier on the Beatitudes, in particular the idea that Jesus taught that the person who is poor in what society generally values is, in fact, blessed and has deep gifts to offer.

Lest you think I idealize this situation, having persons with special needs in the life of a congregation can be messy, frankly, and Swinton also notes this in his article. Helping other adults attend to bathroom needs or clean up food from faces is not necessarily pleasant, yet very human. But don’t we all need help at both ends of life? Some simply have those needs throughout their lives.

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PHOTO COURTESY OF PLEASANT VIEW, INC.



Pleasant View pastor Dave Gullman, left, and John (who played the Prodigal Son), work on planning a Faith and Light worship service together.

we can come together to explore our common humanity and grow together into people who express our greatest potential. This is a journey we take together as we encounter a world that is often challenging. Let us delight in our relationships with one another! ❖

Joanne Klassen, who holds masters degrees in marriage and family therapy, and theology, is the director of Recovery of Hope, a counselling program offered by Eden Health Care Services in five communities in southern Manitoba. The article was written for Meetinghouse, an association of Mennonite and Brethren in Christ publications. ❖

/// For discussion

1. What experiences have you had with mental illness or individuals who are developmentally challenged? How well does your congregation include families or individuals with special needs?
2. Have you, or someone close to you, suffered an episode of depression, emotional distress or mental illness? How did people react? What was helpful or unhelpful? What are our biggest fears in dealing with people with special needs?
3. Has your congregation offered opportunities to learn about mental health issues? How important is it for pastors and deacons to have training in this area?
4. Are there situations in which a mentally ill person is not responsible for his/her actions? Is there a point at which a church should limit its involvement? How tolerant should the congregation be towards people with special needs?
5. How has our society’s attitude toward mental illness and developmental challenges changed? How could your congregation be more inclusive?

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.

✉ CMU president reflects on university's 10th anniversary

Nov. 18, 2008, marked an important anniversary for Mennonite churches in Canada.

Ten years to the day earlier, representatives of Concord College, Canadian Mennonite Bible College (CMBC) and Menno Simons College gathered in the CMBC chapel in Winnipeg to publicly sign a memorandum of association to create what we called, at that time, the "Mennonite College Federation." Today we call it Canadian Mennonite University (CMU).

There are, of course, other important dates and events in the formation of CMU, but I always look at Nov. 18, 1998, as the critical date, since it was then that the colleges and their owners agreed to take the risk of working together for the cause of Mennonite higher education.

Anniversaries are a time to step back and reflect on the past. I do this with immense gratitude to all those who had the vision for what came to be called CMU, and who put in countless hours of work to refine and build it. I thank God for leading and blessing us during this decade. The CMU of today may not be exactly as was envisioned back then, but in many ways I would assert that it is much more than we even hoped:

- Students have responded positively; this year some 1,600 students are registered in a program of CMU, with full-time equivalency of around 950.
- Finances always remain a challenge, and yet we have paid for the purchase of 500 Shaftesbury Blvd. (the former Manitoba School for the Deaf, now our Founders Hall); we have constructed a new environmentally friendly residence; and we have ended this period with

zero operating deficit.

- Merging three institutions is inherently complex, yet we have come together as a team and are moving ahead into the future with a new vision and a deeper commitment to our mission of inspiring and equipping women and men for lives of service, leadership and reconciliation in church and society.
- And, most recently and very importantly, our admission into the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC) is a key step in CMU's broader recognition by Canada's educational community.

CMU continues to evolve, and yet its mission is unchanged. Our mission statement speaks of CMU as a "Christian university, rooted in the Anabaptist faith tradition, moved and transformed by the life and teachings of Jesus Christ." Our recently adopted vision statement uses the catch-phrase, a "university of the church for the world," and then adds that CMU has been "established to build up the church and help it more effectively reach out to society."

All of these statements highlight that CMU can only hope to achieve its mission if it works in close cooperation with the church which founded it. Together, we have created something marvellous that serves not only our Mennonite churches, but the church at large, and Canadian society in general.

GERALD GERBRANDT, WINNIPEG

Gerald Gerbrandt is president of CMU.

✉ Views of the Bible a source of contention in homosexual debate

THE LETTERS TO the editor regarding our sisters and brothers in the gay/lesbian/bi-sexual/transgendered (GLBT) community are increasingly offering only a single perspective. Although there have been some letters defending the inclusion and avocation of the GLBT community in the Mennonite Church, there has been a significant imbalance.

For some, this has resulted in cancelled subscriptions. However, I learned from a friend a while ago, that abandoning one's faith community because there is disagreement is not the answer. Instead, he suggested it is best if one works from within her or his community for change. It is for this reason I wish to offer an additional perspective with respect to the stream of dogmatic letters regarding this hot-button issue.

Understand, first of all, that within the Mennonite community there are many of us who read the Bible metaphorically. We read many of the passages that have been noted in recent months from a much more cultural context than others may read them.

Still others do not see the inerrancy of the Bible as

a foundational principle in our faith journey. When letter-writers drop Bible verses and say, in essence, “the Bible said it so that is the end of the discussion,” your argument is unhelpful, for our basis of understanding the Bible is simply not the same as yours.

It is for these reasons that I ask the dogmatists of the church not to attempt to close the door on this issue. We want to be part of the Mennonite community and will continue to work from within the church to see

that our sisters and brothers are recognized as full members of our community.

Although I am not a part of the GLBT community, I can only imagine a few other things more un-Christian than excluding individuals from becoming full members in our community because of their sexual orientation. They cannot change their sexual orientation. It is us who must change.

BRIAN HULL, WINNIPEG

NEW ORDER VOICE

Resist productivity with ‘delicious time’

AIDEN ENNS

I’m at the brink of discovering what I call “delicious time.” It’s hard to find because it is deep and useless. It is rich, yet costs nothing. It’s indulgent. And to me—a life-long Mennonite who needs to change the world, who needs to change myself, who needs to fix, heal, solve something, anything—this delicious time feels absolutely sinful. Wrong.

Here’s an example. It snowed heavily the other day. I guess it was a Sunday, but I lost track because it was one of those times of the year when days fade into a luxurious flow, where you lose the rhythm of a productive week, where you no longer need the weekend to survive the burden of the week.

I guess it was a Sunday morning between Christmas and New Year’s. It had just snowed and there were centimetres of it sparkling in the sun. With my life partner, I walked down the back lane. It was puffy. Long stretches of deep snow sucking my boots into the fluff. No cars had broken the path. I was walking on a cloud so quiet and soft. I looked around and saw familiar buildings, but didn’t recognize my neighbourhood, it was too wonderful. I was lost in a time that felt suspended.



“Let’s walk on the river,” I said. And we did. We broke snow for a while. Strolled along a path, under the bridge. According to my watch, we wandered for hours.

Oh, that’s right, we were looking for a coffee shop and nothing was open. It was New Year’s Day, actually, and most things were closed. Resting. Everybody was resting. We were resting from the obligation

In terms of saving the world or being Jesus to anybody, it is positively unproductive.

to go somewhere, to be somewhere. It felt as if no one was watching and I had permission to just be myself.

The moments unfolded into, well, nothing. There was freedom to go or stay. We found a diner with weak coffee. She had white toast and bland eggs. I had pancakes. I never have pancakes. They were gooey. But in that time I had the freedom to order anything. It was all delicious.

Why is this pleasure sinful? Because it’s so self-centred, indulgent, it’s not helping anyone. In terms of saving the world or being Jesus to anybody, it is positively unproductive.

And I suppose this is the point in my

reflection, dear reader, where I insert some kind of moral to make that useless day seem worthwhile. As one who’s at odds with consumer society, maybe I’d call it a “secular Sabbath,” or “action through contemplation.” Well, in the spirit of offering you your own delicious time, I want to resist the temptation to moralize.

Mahatma Gandhi was a tireless writer and editor of newspapers. He said good journalism should not instill fear, but inspire people to be brave. What about resisting the inner clock of productivity? It may very well be the machine-like side of our minds that’s driven us to gobble up so much time and resources? Oops, I’m getting preachy.

When dissatisfaction with self abounds, when time needs to be filled with more than one task, when a quiet moment needs background music, it may take sheer raw bravery to indulge in aimless activity. When I step into the time zone I call “delicious time,” I enter the same dimension that unfolded in the Garden, when Adam and Eve ate with delight, named the animals and romped around naked. It’s there waiting for me, and maybe for you.

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

✉ Live out a rich heritage of faith left by Mennonites

THE MENNONITE RIVER of history is red with the blood of its martyrs, men and women who refused to recant their faith in Christ. First known as Anabaptists, they battled for survival, were hunted down like animals and subjected to cruel torture. In the 1500s, more than 1,500 Mennonites met death at the hands of those dedicated to cleansing the land of such “heretics.”

Manias Mayr was drowned at Wier, in the district of Baden, Germany, refusing to recant his faith.

Two young girls, in 1550, were condemned to death following their conversion to Christ by faith, declaring, “Since the Lord Christ wore a crown of thorns for us, why should not we wear these crowns of straw in honour of him?”

An 84-year-old man was burned alive, tied to a stake, refusing to recant his faith. “God carried me for 84 years, why should I let him down now?” was his testimony.

Maerten Jans’s tongue was seared, yet he boldly declared, “Thus I must now testify to the truth; for if I had not cared for my salvation, I would have escaped much conflict and obtained pardon, but now I have fought a

OUTSIDE THE BOX

Lead with your tongue

PHIL WAGLER

Each of us is possessed with great influence and a great influencer—our tongues. The words we say matter very much. Even further, identifying those who should have influence over us is founded on whether their words are truly from heaven. Are they truly wise? How do we know? We know because those who have golden tongues are those whose speaking matches God’s speech and whose speaking matches their God-shaped living.

The bishop of Constantinople (present day Istanbul) in the early days of official Christendom was John Chrysostom. In the late 300s A.D., Christianity had become the official religion of the Roman Empire. With this rise to prominence, the church went from being a dynamic, organic movement to a religious institution, and power and money began to erode the truth of the gospel.

Constantinople—named after Emperor Constantine, who legalized the Christian faith—became one of the main centres of Christianity, and John was the preacher of this important city. Because of his masterful way with words, he became known as “Chrysostom” (the golden mouthed). But John did not play the part

that the powerful wanted him to. Instead of patting the back and tickling the ears of the comfortably religious, he called for truth, justice and Christ-like living.

In one inspired moment he waxed eloquently, “Do you pay such honour to your excrements as to receive them into a silver chamber-pot when another man made in the image of God is perishing in the cold?” When a church culture pays



If you teach what is right, be prepared! Golden tongues often get not-so-golden handshakes.

more attention to poop than people, you know something smells. John’s tongue was a sword of truth. Needless to say, his golden mouth got him into trouble and eventual exile to the hinterlands of the Caucasus. If you teach what is right, be prepared! Golden tongues often get not-so-golden handshakes.

The true teacher knows truth is not negotiable. The true teacher knows whom he or she answers to. The true teacher is captured by the Teacher, lives the faith and yearns for faith to be lived. Words matter. We lead with our tongues.

This is why false teaching is a

predominant concern in Scripture. A small bit can control a horse, a small rudder can steer a ship, and a tiny spark can destroy a whole forest. Our tongues—connected to what lives in our hearts and minds—can turn the course of lives and communities for good or ill (James 3:3-6).

What we teach and speak, has influence. Remember Eden: What led us under the bondage of sin? It was not the fruit, but the forked-tongue of the serpent: “*Did God really say . . . ?*” (Genesis.3:1). Since then, our tongues lead towards hell. Destruction rather than redemption can be our witty aim. We use words to tear down and gossip.

Without shame, we’ll even use our sophisticated and learned tongues to twist the speech of God.

Does your tongue guide those you influence into the truth of God? Do your words harness kingdom beauty and strength? Whose teaching is given influence over our communities? Where is the tongue leading these days?

Phil Wagler is humbled by the responsibility his tongue has in his sphere of influence in southern Ontario (phil_wagler@yahoo.ca).

good fight, finished my course and kept the faith.”

Five centuries of political turmoil, persecution and starvation, interspersed with times of peace and prosperity, have brought us to who we are and why we are here today, in the free nation of Canada. But the history of the Mennonite people continues to be written. The stern warnings God gave the children of Israel before they entered their promised land might well be directed to not only the Mennonite people, but people of all faiths. The Israelites were warned of the deceit of wealth and prosperity, and we do well to take heed to those warnings.

The haunting question we all must face is simply this: “How would I have responded had I been facing death as did our ancestors? Had it been me facing a firing squad, had it been me with the tip of a sword at my throat, what would have been my course of action:

denial or death?”

But perhaps an even more penetrating question might be: “How do I, in the 21st century, live out my faith in appreciation of the rich heritage and legacy left to us by our forefathers and in gratitude and thanksgiving to Jesus who suffered so much more on my behalf?”

WALTER ANDRES, ROSTHERN, SASK.

✉ ‘Negative comments’ about homosexuals may turn to abuse or worse

AGATHA REMPEL ASKS, “Why are some people being defensive and ready to pounce on anyone who suggests a negative comment about alternative sexual lifestyles?” in her letter, “Only sex between a man and

FROM OUR LEADERS

Cast your net on the other side

MAURICE MARTIN

According to John 21:1-8, the disciples fished all night. When Jesus appeared on the shore and saw that they had caught nothing, he said, “Cast your net on the other side.” Then they landed a big catch.

William Barclay writes that this is not necessarily to be seen as a miracle, it’s just how fishing is done in that part of the world. The man in the boat cannot

see the fish, which are right next to the boat. The man on the shore, from his perspective, can see

the school of fish clearly, so he instructs the fisherman where to cast his net. Jesus was simply acting as a guide to his fishermen friends.

I see in the phrase “cast your net on the other side” a metaphor about the life and work of the church. Sometimes the obvious is right in front of our eyes, and we don’t see it because we’ve gotten so used

to it. How often do we step back a few paces to look at the life and work of the church, perhaps through a different lens or point of view? And how ready then are we to try something different?

“On the other side” could mean on this side of postmodernity. This is an era when “truth is stranger than it used to be.” People no longer live by absolutes. People are suspicious of creedal religion. They

see various paths to God and various ways to live faithfully. The individual has become the ultimate arbiter of truth.

We also exist in a post-denominational time. Denominational loyalties hang on a slender thread. So some congregations have developed a kind of corporate “individualism.” In such times, how then can we “cast the net on the other side” to find

new ways to be the faithful church? In my work as regional minister, I look for ways in which congregations might form partnerships.

A wise counsellor once said, “If you keep on doing what you’ve always done, you’ll always get what you’ve always got.” If this is true of our personal lives, it is true also of the life of the church.

Maybe we need to think differently about what church actually is, or, for that matter, where it exists. I read in *The Collaborative Leader* of “a lady who described the desk in her office as her altar. It was there that she daily dedicated herself to God, that she confessed and reconciled, that she sacrificed, that she celebrated life and delivered messages of God’s love to others.”

Cast your net on the other side might invite us to re-examine our church structures to see if they still serve us well. But in the final analysis, what people

want is not better structures or more programs. What they want is for the church to be a safe place where their real questions of life and faith are addressed in an atmosphere of unconditional love.

Maurice Martin is the western regional minister for Mennonite Church Eastern Canada.



‘If you keep on doing what you’ve always done, you’ll always get what you’ve always got.’

woman within marriage is holy," Nov. 24, page 9.

The answer, I suspect, is that gays and lesbians have, over the past few hundred years, been burned at the stake, mutilated, ridiculed, shunned, fired from jobs, run out of town and denied basic human rights. So if they are a bit touchy when someone "suggests a negative comment," I think it's understandable.

Similarly, I think we can understand why Jews get defensive when someone makes a joke about the Holocaust; why women might not appreciate being called "the weaker sex"; and why Mennonites might not like being called "cowards" and "draft dodgers."

In October 1998, Matthew Sheppard, a 22-year-old university student, was murdered because he was gay. He was beaten, tortured and left for dead. I suspect that the hate-filled path followed by his killers began with a few "negative comments" that they heard as children, and then came to repeat and believe as adults.

The same thing happened 2,000 years ago when people began to murmur and make negative comments about a troublesome Jew who refused to accept the status quo.

MARK MORTON, KITCHENER, ONT.

✉ MCC director addresses Barack Obama in advance of his inauguration

CONGRATULATIONS ON YOUR historic election to the [U.S.] presidency. I pray that God will grant you wisdom and courage as you lead.

In my work with Mennonite Central Committee (MCC), the relief, development and peacebuilding agency of Mennonite and Brethren in Christ churches, I am privileged to hear stories of desire and longing. As you assemble advisers and prepare to take office, there are undoubtedly many voices clamouring for your attention, but I ask that you would listen to the voices that emerge from the communities where MCC works in this country and around the world. Listen to their concerns, their hopes for change:

- **People who live in poverty in the United States.** They want access to safe, affordable housing, living wages and adequate healthcare. In particular, the federal government should work quickly and efficiently to provide rebuilding assistance, with proper oversight, to Gulf Coast residents who faced the inequities of poverty and racism before any storm hit.
- **Young people and adults caught up in our criminal justice system.** They need a restorative and holistic response, rather than one that is simply punitive, as well as ways to integrate into their communities upon release.
- **Native Americans.** They desire acknowledgment of their contributions to the culture and development of this country, and an honouring of the promises and treaties made with them.
- **Migrant workers and others who have entered the United States without proper documentation.** They hope for immigration policies that allow them to work legally and to maintain ties with their family members.
- **Parents around the world who can't feed their children an adequate diet.** They long for sustainable, affordable food, brought about in part by just economic policies. U.S. trade policy should be formulated to respect the rights of other nations.
- **People in war-scarred communities.** They hope for an end to fighting, and for peaceful relations with their neighbours and global powers like the United States.
- **The environment around us.** God has entrusted us with the rightful stewardship of the trees, sky and oceans. We can take bold steps to reduce the impact of global climate change and move our society toward sustainable practices.

—RACHELLE LYNDAKER SCHLABACH,
WASHINGTON, D.C.

Rachelle Lyndaker Schlabach is director of the MCC U.S. office in Washington, D.C. Excerpted from a longer version of a letter to U.S. president-elect Barack Obama, who is to assume office on Jan. 20.



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/// Milestones

Births/Adoptions

Dyck—Natalie Kumsri (b. Dec. 10, 2008), to Helmut and Katay Dyck, North Kildonan Mennonite, Winnipeg

Hunsberger—Logan Raine (b. Dec. 3, 2008), to Tina (Jantzi) Hunsberger (formerly of Kitchener-Waterloo, Ont.) and Kyle Hunsberger, St. Louis Mennonite, Mo.

Jansen—Keira Soli (b. Dec. 14, 2008), to Kurt Jansen and Jessika Huard, North Kildonan Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Martens—Ella Marie (b. Oct. 16, 2008), to Theo and Michelle Martens, Hoffnungsfelder Mennonite, Glenbush, Sask.

Monteith—Cheyenne Brooklyn (b. Dec. 29, 2008), to Chad and Pam Monteith, Zurich Mennonite, Ont.

Walker—Sheldon John (b. Nov. 1, 2008), to Steve and Kathryn Walker, Bethany Mennonite, Virgil, Ont.

Wiebe—Joseph Riley (b. Nov. 17, 2008), to Andrea and Maria Wiebe, North Kildonan Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Baptisms

Carlo Nickel, Judy Nickel—Sherbrooke Mennonite, Vancouver, Dec. 21, 2008.

Marriages

Drudge/Ward—Darryl Drudge and Ashley Ward, at Zurich Mennonite, Ont., Dec. 13, 2008.

Ediger/Hall—Ryan Ediger (North Kildonan Mennonite, Winnipeg) and Tara Hall, at Pinewood Lodge, Dorothy Lake, Man., Dec. 13, 2008.

Friesen/Redekop—Katherine (Katie) Friesen and Stephen Redekop, at North Kildonan Mennonite, Winnipeg, Dec. 6, 2008.

Harrigan/Wiens—Allison Harrigan and Jonathan Wiens (North Kildonan Mennonite, Winnipeg), at Assiniboine Park Conservatory, Winnipeg, Dec. 19, 2008.

Shantz/Yantzi—Trevor Shantz and Stephanie Yantzi, at East Zorra Mennonite, Tavistock, Ont., Dec. 31, 2008.

Deaths

Ens—Elizabeth, 92 (d. Dec. 21, 2008), Zion Mennonite, Swift Current, Sask.

Friesen—Anne, 80 (d. Dec. 22, 2008), Zion Mennonite, Swift Current, Sask.

Hunsberger—Greta (nee Snider), 94 (b. Sept. 14, 1914; d. Dec. 11, 2008), Erb Street Mennonite, Waterloo, Ont.

Koloff—Joanne (nee Carney), 46 (b. Nov. 22, 1962; d. Dec. 8, 2008), Zurich Mennonite, Ont.

Loewen—Richard, 60 (b. Jan. 3, 1948; d. Oct. 29, 2008), Bergthal Mennonite, Didsbury, Alta.

Neufeld—Aganetha (Neta), 92 (b. Oct. 25, 1916; d. Nov. 29, 2008), North Kildonan Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Oloff—Jacob, 86 (d. Dec. 24, 2008), Zion Mennonite, Swift Current, Sask., in Calgary, Alta.

Roes—Mildred, 75 (b. Feb. 15, 1933; d. Dec. 16, 2008), Riverdale Mennonite, Millbank, Ont.

Shantz—Stanley, 88 (b. Feb. 25, 1920; d. Jan. 2, 2009), St. Jacobs Mennonite, Ont.

Swartzentruber—Willis, 79 (b. March 7, 1929; d. Dec. 30, 2008), East Zorra Mennonite, Tavistock, Ont.

Walters—Howard, 83 (b. Sept. 9, 1925; d. Dec. 22, 2008), Riverdale Mennonite, Millbank, Ont.

Weber—Wayne, 60 (b. May 1, 1948; d. Nov. 19, 2008), Community Mennonite, Drayton, Ont.

Widrick—Edith (nee Swartzentruber), 85 (b. Aug. 31, 1923; d. Dec. 15, 2008), Steinmann Mennonite, Baden, Ont.

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.

Pontius' Puddle



WORSHIP WISDOM: PART I OF VI

How would God rate your Sunday service?

BY CHRISTINE LONGHURST

How would you evaluate your last worship service? Did anyone welcome you personally? Was your pew comfortable? On a scale of 1 to 10, how good was the preacher? Which part of the service was like being in heaven? Which part of the service was like being in . . . er . . . the other place? How would you describe the after-service coffee?

Those questions come from the Mystery Worshipper project, a Christian website in England that sends out anonymous observers into worshipping communities around the world to observe, evaluate and report on services. Churches are only notified that they have been visited by a mystery worshipper through a card slipped into the offering plate during the service. Completed evaluations are posted on the website for all to see.

This kind of anonymous evaluation is interesting; it's always good to get a sense of how visitors experience our services. But as a tool for evaluating worship, it has some significant flaws. Simply put, it asks the wrong questions. The questions suggest that personal satisfaction is the primary criteria by which worship should be judged: Did you like it? Did it make you feel good?

Questions like these imply that worship is something we consume, something done for us by others. Worship is seen to be "successful" only to the extent that it moves, inspires, educates or entertains us personally. In our consumer culture, this tendency to evaluate worship based on our personal level of satisfaction shouldn't really surprise us. But neither should we be content with it.

In the Bible, corporate worship is quite different. It's a deeply participatory,

relational event between God and God's people. In fact, the primary scriptural metaphor for worship is that of a dialogue—honest conversations between God and God's people that establish, maintain and strengthen the covenant relationship. Understanding worship as a conversation between God and the covenant community might help us avoid some of the common pitfalls we see in worship today.

For one thing, it can help us understand our role as worshippers. In today's entertainment culture, it's easy to simply sit back and let others do the work of

Worship is seen to be 'successful' only to the extent that it moves, inspires, educates or entertains us personally.

worship for us. But worship that is dialogue demands that we all get involved in the conversation—both speaking to, and listening for, God.

Seeing worship as dialogue also helps us recognize that in worship we do more than simply talk to one another about God—we engage with God directly. It reminds us that, through the work of the Holy Spirit, God is present and active when the community gathers.

Viewing worship as a corporate conversation also helps us resist the notion that community worship is primarily a private experience, something that happens just between God and me. This is not to suggest that personal worship isn't an essential part of the life of faith. The danger is that we allow our culture's growing individualism to undermine the biblical view of corporate worship as a communal experience—something we do together with other believers. Picturing worship as a conversation between God and the

covenant community reminds us how important it is to find ways of strengthening the corporate nature of our services.

Seeing worship as a dialogue also encourages us to broaden the range and scope of the conversation. Too often, worship services tend to limit human response to expressions of praise and thanksgiving only. But just as frank and open dialogue is important in human relationships, honest dialogue with God is also essential if the covenant relationship is to remain healthy. We need to make room for a wide variety of different expressions in our worship: petition, lament, confession, thanksgiving, questioning, blessing. Like the psalmists in the Old Testament, we are free to offer God the full range of human experience and emotion.

What's a better way to evaluate worship? Rather than asking questions that focus on our personal level of satisfaction, perhaps we might consider questions like these instead:

- Did the worship service give us opportunity to speak directly to God?
- How wide-ranging was the conversation? Were we able to speak deeply and honestly about the things that matter most to us?
- In what ways were we given opportunity to listen for God's voice?
- Did the worship offer us a chance to respond to what we heard God saying to us?
- Did we leave worship with a renewed sense of our identity and mission as God's covenant community?

Now that's a mystery worshipper evaluation I would like to see. ☺



Christine Longhurst teaches at Canadian Mennonite University and leads workshops on worship and music. She can be reached at clonghurst@faithmatters.ca.

VIEWPOINT

Bi-national connections need to be encouraged

BY PETER EPP

Sixty-one Americans! Apparently, this was the American remnant of our recently thriving bi-national family. Mennonite Church Canada's family gathering with Mennonite Church USA at last summer's summit, "At the Crossroads," was clearly missing some members. It was as if Grandpa and Grandma had died, and the surviving family suddenly saw no reason to get together anymore. The saddest part was that I couldn't even remember there having been a funeral! Was this it?

It all seemed so fresh and hopeful to me at my first assembly—Wichita '95—as a youth. The MCs and the GCs were coming together. We were witnessing history: Mennonite denominations coming together, not breaking apart. The day after the merger, however, I remember hearing rumblings about a new split, rumblings that would eventually shake out the two national denominations: MC USA and MC Canada.

The reasons for the new split sounded ambiguous and complex, but a common theme seemed to be a Canadian concern that our (I was attending an MC Canada church at the time) unique national perspective would be overlooked. Just a few bi-national conventions later, in Charlotte, N.C., it appeared that MC Canada and MC USA would be unable to collaborate on a bi-national convention in Canada. Canadians felt slighted.

My Canadian identity found it easy to see how Canadians saw their fears coming true. My American identity (I have always been a dual citizen, and I now attend an MC USA church) found it easy to see that a Canadian convention would raise the cost to a level that was nearly unacceptable. Unfortunately, though, it didn't seem easy for anyone to fully

understand where the other was coming from. The idea of the Winnipeg summit was to come together to focus on common issues; instead, we didn't really come together at all.

This leads back to the original question: Have we become so ambivalent to our brothers and sisters across the border that we will let the dwindling momentum at the Winnipeg summit run its course?

I think we have some profound reasons to say no.

First of all, the numbers in both of our churches are declining—our number of members and our number of tithes. It's something we all know about, and it's a topic that is frequently connected to our young adults. As a young adult hoping to

The idea of the Winnipeg summit was to come together to focus on common issues; instead, we didn't really come together at all.

do my part for the future of this church, I recognize that we will need to be planning to pool our resources soon.

All of this leads to another profound reason for rebuilding our connection: Pooling worldwide Mennonite resources is already a growing part of our denominational fabric. The only problem is, we're sewing connections worldwide while we neglect a tear on our own continent. Mennonite World Conference is alive and well. The work of Amigos, its young adult branch, is evidence that it might even grow in the future. For the first time, North American Mennonites are starting to fully grapple with the fact that most of our global church is not ethnically European Mennonite. Within our own continent, however, we seem unable to overcome a relatively minor

cultural divide. If we hope to be able to nurture deeper relationships with our global neighbours, we will surely need to learn how to begin with our most similar neighbours.

In fact, it is both our similarities and our differences that are calling us to greater co-operation. We share similar attitudes, similar influences and a similar level of affluence. How do we deal with having so much in a world with so many have-nots? How do we respond to the fact that our two countries are some of the richest countries to refuse to abide by the Kyoto Accord? Surely, these are questions that Canadians and Americans should be answering together.

Our differences need just as much dialogue, too. American Mennonites, for example, should be helping Canadians achieve a more active and divergent peace stance. Canadian Mennonites, for example, should be helping Americans to see the subtle, unacknowledged consequences of living in a more militaristic society. The similarities we share, some of which we share only with one another, provide us with opportunities that can-

not be found anywhere else.

The uniqueness—and the opportunities—of this cross-border relationship make me sincerely hope that Winnipeg was not the funeral for our bi-national relationship. Instead, I hope it will become a reminder of what we could be about to lose. That reminder, I hope, will be what inspires us to a renewed relationship, a relationship that will spawn new summits, maybe even combined conventions and assemblies again some day. I hope this because it is through these potential summits, conventions and assemblies that we can help one another to find further faithfulness—faithfulness as national bodies, and faithfulness as a unified family. ❧

Peter Epp grew up a Manitoba Mennonite; he now resides in Oregon.

CANADIAN WOMEN IN MISSION

—A place to belong—

WOMEN WALKING
TOGETHER IN FAITH



For the beauty of the earth

BY PATTY FRIESEN

There is no better place to be in Saskatchewan on a brilliant fall day than at Shekinah Retreat Centre on the North Saskatchewan River. Bright yellow birch on the bluffs wave in the wind, as long vees of geese cry overhead. Coyotes yip in the newly harvested fields and the setting sun gleams off the river.

PHOTO BY JOANNE EWERT



Because childhood geographies significantly shape our relationships to nature, our Women in Mission retreat met in small groups, sharing stories of where we grew up; what the trees, bushes and flowers looked like in our yard; where we went on family picnics; and how our childhood experiences in nature shaped our relationship to God.

Many spoke of their mother's garden as a place of feeling connected to the earth, a place of colour and beauty on the bald Prairies. Still others spoke of the importance of playing and relaxing in nature during family picnics along a river or lake, or driving to the mountains in Alberta.

My own first childhood experience of God was in nature, swinging under a poplar tree in my backyard at age five and singing "Jesus Loves Me." I felt like a small but important part of creation—of tree, sky and swing.

We also pondered together what happens when a generation is raised in front of the television and misses out on many of these connections with nature.

In *Last Child in the Woods*, Richard Louv writes about previous generations working together outside as a farm

family and really knowing their land and the wildlife on it. My generation was raised in town, but we could still ride bikes to the edge of town and play in the woods. It was safe and our parents didn't worry about us. Now we are more safety-conscious and keep our kids close by, which means limiting their play to the backyard. Or they end up inside spending more time in front of the computer. As a result, Louv writes, children know more names of corporate logos than they do the names of wildflowers.

Louv believes a connection to nature helps kids be imaginative, curious, creative and calm. When children play in nature, they observe and increase their attentiveness and problem-solving. Children need regular, playful contact with nature for their well-being. We all do!

Personally, I continue to be nurtured in my relationship with God through nature when I go for walks along the South Saskatchewan River near my home in Saskatoon. The beauty of sun, water and birds never fails to lift my spirits. Walking together with my husband along the river has been good for our marriage. When we are unhappy with each other, we find the peace of "wild things" calms us and helps us look beyond ourselves.

Any care for creation, or sense of responsibility for it, comes from our love for it. We care for and protect what we love, especially if it is an important part of our spiritual lives. Creation sustains us and, in the same way, we seek to sustain it through creation care.

For Mennonite women, this may include doing things like raising and canning our own food, recycling old jeans into rugs and old dresses into comforters, or being considered "cool" by our neighbours because of using *More with Less* cookbooks and practising a "green lifestyle" long before it was deemed necessary!

Earlier motivations for doing these things may have been frugality and necessity, rather than environmental concerns, but the lessons learned—combined with a faith that seeks to integrate a love of God, creation and others—is an attractive Christian witness in these days of environmental crisis.

So let's continue to reflect on how we are sustained spiritually by creation, and how, in turn, we can live in ways that sustain creation, as we further develop a theology of creation care and hope. Let's invite our neighbours and share the good news! ❧



Patty Friesen attends Nutana Park Mennonite Church, Saskatoon, Sask. She works part-time as chaplain at the Mennonite Nursing Home in Rosthern, Sask., and provides pulpit supply around the province.

This article is adapted from her presentation at the Saskatchewan Women in Mission retreat last fall.

GOD AT WORK IN THE CHURCH

Happy 60th

Crystal City Mennonite Church celebrates 60 years of ministry with worship, service and offerings

BY TERESA FALK

Special to *Canadian Mennonite*
CRYSTAL CITY, MAN.

Crystal City Mennonite Church has a special place in Elvira Schwartz's heart. The 87-year-old was one of the first people to be baptized in the church after leaving Russia and immigrating to Canada in 1949.

"This church is very important to me," she said with tears in her eyes on Nov. 9, 2008, during the church's 60th anniversary celebrations. "I'm so happy to be a member here."

Schwartz has fond memories of church life over the past six decades. She especially enjoyed *Jugend Verein*, a special evening held once a month when the young people would get together to worship. Schwartz said George Bock, one of Crystal City's past ministers, also had an impact on her life. He always spoke from the heart, she said.

Schwartz was one of more than 200 people who gathered to remember, reflect and reminisce about the past 60 years during anniversary celebrations on Nov. 8 and 9. "I wouldn't miss this day for anything," said Schwartz.

Celebrations kicked off with a community coffeehouse on Nov. 8 in the Crystal City Community Hall. The coffeehouse was an opportunity to thank area communities for supporting Crystal City Mennonite over the years. Between each performance, emcee Erin Morash, the church's pastor, shared light-hearted jokes and stories with the approximately 175 community members in the audience.

The following morning's worship service was followed by a soup and pie lunch. The service included words of greeting from past ministers and others, congregational singing and special music, an offering

to the Canadian Foodgrains Bank, and a time to honour those who have served in the church. The service concluded with a message, "Pilgrimage: Our 60-year journey," by Jake Harms, who served as an elder at Whitewater Mennonite Church in Boissevain, Man., and came to Crystal City Mennonite from 1965-67 to perform communions and baptisms.

The lunch included an anniversary cake made by Karen Thiessen, a slideshow presentation containing pictures of the life and work of Crystal City Mennonite over the past 60 years, and more time to share

memories of the church.

The church continued its anniversary celebration by participating in a Mennonite Disaster Service (MDS) project in Newton, Tex., from Nov. 15 to 22.

As part of the 60th anniversary celebrations, Crystal City Mennonite will be giving a total of \$25,000 to organizations the church has supported over the years: MDS, Mennonite Central Committee, Canadian Foodgrains Bank, Oak Valley Productions in La Riviere, Man., the Rock youth ministry in Pilot Mound, Man., and Mennonite World Conference. ❧

PHOTO BY TERESA FALK



Erin Morash, Crystal City Mennonite Church's pastor, cuts two cakes during the congregation's 60th anniversary worship service on Nov. 9, while a couple of young congregants wait eagerly for a piece.

/// Briefly noted

Speakers named, program announced for Paraguay 2009

ASUNCIÓN, PARAGUAY—Outgoing and incoming Mennonite World Conference presidents will speak at evening worship services at Assembly Gathered 2009. Current president Nancy Heisey of the U.S. will address the over-arching Assembly 15 theme, "Come together in the way of Jesus Christ," based on the key assembly biblical text, Philippians 2:1-11, on July 14, and the July 18 service will feature president-elect Danisa Ndlovu, bishop of the Brethren in Christ Church in Zimbabwe. Assembly Gathered will conclude on July 19 with a mass outdoor rally in Asunción. The National Coordinating Council, composed of representatives from Mennonite World Conference member churches in Paraguay, is planning that service on the theme, "On the way together; first stop—Asunción." Alfred Neufeld, Paraguayan theologian, author, teacher and minister, will preach. The daily morning Bible studies and evening worship sessions will be led by speakers from Paraguay, Congo, Spain, Colombia, Puerto Rico, New Zealand and Zimbabwe.

—Mennonite World Conference Release

The deep end of the 'sound pool'

Mennonite musicologist Mary Oyer lectures on 'hymns that have endured'

BY SUSAN FISH

Conrad Grebel University College Release
WATERLOO, ONT.

Think of the music that defines a church for you, the music you are most comfortable with. This music can be called your—or your church's—"sound pool." This description of favourite music was introduced to the audience of the Rod and Lorna Sawatsky Lectures at Conrad Grebel University College last fall by Mary Oyer, who delivered the 2008 lecture on the theme of "Hymns that have endured."

Oyer, the first North American woman to earn a doctoral degree in music, was a major contributor to the last two Mennonite hymnals and is a noted Mennonite hymnologist and pre-eminent song leader with an active mind and clear passion for hymns and the church, even midway into her ninth decade.

Oyer held the audience in thrall for 90 minutes in a wide-ranging talk that included

art from Hildegard of Bingen, global hymnody, insight into the discussions that take place in the choosing of hymns for a hymnal, the changes on music wrought by new technology, and the reasons and value of repetition in modern songs. The evening was devoted to considering—and singing—hymns that Oyer considers classics, and a discussion of why they have survived through time and sweeping cultural changes. "Hymns are so much more interesting when we think about what was going on at the time they were written," she said.

A key point of interest for Oyer is the idea of a sound pool. The term was originally coined by Lawrence Hoffman to describe the music a person or congregation is most at home with. She commented that she likes the term because it is not judgmental. She described the texture that is added to a piece of music over years of singing it in a sound pool and the enriching

associations that come with memory.

As an ethnomusicologist who has worked and lived cross-culturally for many years, Oyer presented an impassioned argument for appreciating the music of other cultures as a way of being missional and including all voices at the table. She spoke candidly about her own mistakes in assuming her way and her music were the right kind, and said with the wisdom of her years that "I will always like my own music better, but I'd like to have a song from each culture in my sound pool."

Oyer gently addressed elements of music that can be divisive or threatening, suggesting that new songs need to be introduced slowly, with the congregation singing simple parts and practised members singing the rest. She also advised that a new song is best introduced when its message fits perfectly into the context of a service.

Oyer closed the evening by leading the "song that is at the centre of our sound pool," first explaining why No. 606 ("Praise God From Whom") is no longer found in its traditional place in the hymnal she helped assemble: "Because that's the funeral section!" ❧

Choir sings in support of conscientious objectors

BY KARIN FEHDERAU

Saskatchewan Correspondent
SASKATOON, SASK.

During a sobering service of remembrance at Mount Royal Mennonite Church on Nov. 16, Hutterites and Mennonites joined together to hear stories of men who suffered for refusing to fight.

The Baker Colony Choir from Manitoba travelled to Saskatoon as part of its peace-making tour. Pulling examples from three Anabaptist groups, the staff presented touching accounts of heroic individuals who took a stand for nonviolence, some of whom suffered and died for their convictions.

During World War I, Johannes Klaassen was called up for duty in 1917 and sentenced to 25 years in an American military prison after he refused to put on a uniform.

He died a year later of the Spanish flu and his body was shipped back to Oklahoma with the uniform. His family was deeply offended and removed the military garb before burying the body, which prompted a public outcry against them.

Four Hutterite men, three of them brothers, from the Rockport Colony, S.D., were also conscripted and, after refusing to fight, they too went to prison, this time to San Francisco's infamous Alcatraz. Tied up for nine hours a day, the men were given little to eat, enduring physical torture as well. To encourage each other, they sang German hymns.

Turning to examples from Canada, Hutterite storyteller Dora Maendel retold the story of Sam Martin, a Mennonite who was put in isolation for his refusal to bear arms. "It shows that obedience to God can

PHOTO BY FRED MARTIN



Mennonite musicologist Mary Oyer, left, gets a hug from Lorna Sawatsky after she delivered this year's Rod and Lorna Sawatsky Lecture on the theme of "Hymns that have endured" at Conrad Grebel University College last fall.

THE FAITH

PHOTO BY KARIN FEHDERAU



The Baker Colony Choir from Manitoba sang in between touching stories of faithful service to God.

put us in hard places," she pointed out.

In remembrance of the contributions of conscientious objectors during World War II, the Evangelical Anabaptist Fellowship, based in Winkler, Man., is selling plaques to churches to "recognize the importance of this expression of biblical faith." To order, e-mail eafellowship@gmail.com. 卐

A new hymnal?

Denominational consultants ponder timing of next hymnal project

Joint MPN/MC Canada Release

Results of an online survey completed by individuals representing Mennonite Church Canada and MC USA congregations indicate that many congregations may be ready for a new printed hymnal in the next 10 to 15 years.

The survey, conducted in early 2008, included questions designed to provide insight into current congregational usage and needs regarding music and worship, and also predict future ones. Congregations were asked to submit one response. Mennonite Publishing Network (MPN) received responses from 94 Canadian and 264 American congregations.

The consultants studied these responses

and other research they had completed on topics related to worship and music practices, demographics, technology and finances. They concluded that, although technological advances and other changes in worship point to significant unknowns, in the future a good number of Mennonite congregations will still want a printed hymnal from which to sing together.

Survey comments showed strong support for current denominational music and worship resources, as well as eagerness for future resources. "Keep putting new things in front of us," said one respondent. "It helps make the old sounds fresh again."

Some comments also underscored financial or other realities: "I'm not sure we would replace all 200 hymnals in our pews, given that we still haven't sung probably half the songs that are in the one we have!"

Eleanor Snyder, director of Faith & Life Resources, the congregational division of MPN responsible for overseeing a future hymnal project, said the results revealed overall loyalty to Mennonite-published music resources as well as a deep love for good hymnody.

Snyder noted that the results of the survey provide only partial insight into denominational needs. "Mennonite Publishing Network is interpreting this information as a call to proceed with caution," she said. "Over the next few years, we will continue to listen, study and plan carefully and prayerfully. A new hymnal project

Hymnal survey excerpts

MPN received responses from a total of 358 congregations—264 from USA and 94 from Canada.

In our congregation, we sing from the following Mennonite hymnals and songbooks:

<i>Hymnal: A Worship Book</i> : 80%
<i>Sing the Journey</i> : 55%
<i>Sing the Story</i> : 29%
<i>Mennonite Hymnal</i> : 39%
<i>Sing and Rejoice</i> : 18%
Other Mennonite hymnals: 11%

In our congregation, we sing from hymnals or bound songbooks from other than Mennonite publishers.

No: 62%
Yes: 38%

What is the life span of a denominational hymnal?

25 years: 34%
20 years: 14%
30 years: 21%
Other: 31%

Our congregation sings a capella (unaccompanied) music:

Always: 3%
Often: 33%
Occasionally: 38%
Never: 24%

Our congregation uses these instruments to accompany singing:

Organ: 36%
Piano: 97%
Guitar: 84%
Percussion: 64%
Wind instruments: 44%
Brass instruments: 25%

Alongside a printed hymnal, we would want to have:

Electronic version: 49%
A companion resource: 52%
Accompaniment resources: 82%
Music CDs: 49%

is a huge, complex undertaking. We appreciated the help of this ad hoc group of consultants, and of our congregations, as we took a first step in that direction."

The survey was intended to help MPN and the two national church bodies discern whether a new hymnal project should be undertaken—and if so, how soon. The current hymnal, *Hymnal: A Worship Book*, was published in 1992. Two supplements to *Hymnal* have also been published: *Sing the Journey* (2005) and *Sing the Story* (2007). 卐

SINGING THE FAITH

Martyr legacy a challenge for today's Mennonites

BY BARB DRAPER

Editorial Assistant

Hans Nickel and Arnie Froese used stories, songs and narration to present 500 years of Mennonite history at Bethany Manor in Saskatoon, Sask., and at Rosthern and Trinity Mennonite churches in rural Saskatchewan and Alberta last fall. Through these presentations they raised \$3,100 for Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Ukraine.

They began at Bethany Manor, with the room lit with only five candles, each representing 100 years of Mennonite history. Nickel and Froese told stories from the *Martyrs Mirror* and about the Anabaptist Trek, with its persecution and movement from Holland and Switzerland to Germany and Prussia, and finally to southern Russia. At this point, Froese performed three Russian songs that were popular among Mennonites there.

In the middle of the story of Mennonite prosperity and subsequent suffering, starvation and persecution during the Bolshevik Revolution and Stalinist years, the congregation sang "Holy God, We Praise Thy Name," imagining themselves beneath the legendary oak tree in Chortitza. They also heard about the migrations to North America during the 1870s, and 1920s and '30s.

In the third segment of the presentation, Nickel talked about the role of MCC in Ukraine in the 1920s and today, as it is helping churches and communities to make some economic recovery. Describing the Zaporozhe Mennonite Church in modern Ukraine, the duo sang "*Gott Ist Die Liebe*" (entitled "For God So Loved Us," in English).

Nickel and Froese asked for support for MCC Ukraine. The duo challenged their listeners to remember who they are and their roots, and to be thankful for the grace of God and the legacy of the martyrs. ❧

PHOTO COURTESY OF HANS NICKEL



Arnie Froese and Hans Nickel present the story of Mennonites through five centuries at Bethany Manor, Saskatoon, Sask., in word and song.

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From a report by Hans Nickel.

Ethiopian church finds new home

Seeks to join Mennonite Church Eastern Canada

BY DAVE ROGALSKY
Eastern Canada Correspondent

For several years, the church calendar in the Ottawa Mennonite Church bulletin stated that at 3:30 p.m. on Sunday, “our facilities will be used by the Ethiopian Fellowship.” But last October, the congregation moved to Cedarview Alliance Church in the Ottawa suburb of Barrhaven, although it is in the process of joining Mennonite Church Eastern Canada.

Officially known as the Church of the Living Word of Ottawa, the congregation is led by four elders. According to elder Tefri Kifitew Gifawossen, the congregation began meeting in 2005 in homes and other rented facilities.

Most congregational members were refugees who left Ethiopia to live in other countries—including Kenya, Italy or Greece—before settling in Canada. They



now describe themselves as born-again Christians, and practise baptism when they accept Jesus as Saviour.

Living Word currently consists of about 25 families, including about 20 children ranging from pre-schoolers to teenagers. Members are drawn from a variety of occupations, but unlike most Mennonite congregations Living Word does not yet have any retirees.

Each Sunday, adults meet for prayer, worship and preaching in Amharic. Most of the preaching is done by experienced elders and teachers, who preach two or three Sundays in a row on subjects that are chosen through prayer. The group meets in homes every other Saturday for Bible study and once a month for prayer and fasting. Three children’s classes meet for Bible study in English and youths meet every Saturday for Bible study.

Elder Gethway Neway says that it is difficult for members across generations to share a complete service, as some adults speak very limited English and some children are more comfortable in English than in Amharic.

Gifawossen notes that Living Word has become more cohesive and members often pray for each other, with good results. The church sponsored a family of five from Kenya, and shared the responsibility of helping to resettle them.

Currently, the congregation is working on starting a choir, planning more organized mission work and doing outreach through small groups. ☸

With notes from Denise Climenhage and Ellen Shenk.

☸ Briefly noted

New church christened ‘Level Ground’

ABBOTSFORD, B.C.—The city’s newest Mennonite Church B.C. congregation began 2009 with a new name. The church that formed when Wellspring Christian Fellowship joined with West Abbotsford Mennonite Church last fall became officially known as Level Ground Mennonite Church on New Year’s Day. “We feel that this name reflects our identity as a community of very diverse people who all stand on level ground before the cross of Christ,” says pastor Karen Heidebrecht Thiessen. “The enrichment and growth that has come to us as a church with the addition of many people who are discovering Christ for the first time, [including] many people from the recovery community joining us, has shaped us significantly.” Members of the congregation had several weeks to submit suggestions for a new name. The top three were brought before the congregation, and everyone from Grade 6 and up who regularly attends the church was given three stickers to rate each suggestion. “Level Ground” was the name most generally favoured. Currently, Level Ground has two Sunday morning worship services, a traditional service at 9 a.m. and a more contemporary service at 10:30 a.m.

—BY AMY DUECKMAN

PHOTO BY ELEANOR DYCK



Pictured, from left to right, three of Church of the Living Word of Ottawa’s elders: Kiffle Gebremichael, Tefri Kifitew Gifawossen and Gethway Neway. Missing: Rediet Zemichael.

Church snapshots

PHOTO BY DAVE ROGALSKY

PHOTO BY ANDREA EPP



George Dyck of Vineland United Mennonite Church, Ont., hosted the church's second annual varenecki (stuffed dumplings) and sausage dinner, a sold-out fundraiser for Friends of the Mennonite Centre in Ukraine. Dyck, who chairs the committee, presented an informative slideshow of the centre and its work, using personal photos from his nine trips to Ukraine. He also sold CDs of an award-winning Ukranian choir, one of the projects the committee funds.



*Nathan Funk, right, assistant professor of peace and conflict studies at Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo, Ont., spoke at the annual pastors breakfast on Remembrance Day, Nov. 11, 2008, about the role of inter-religious dialogue as a hopeful part of peacemaking in the world. Quoting Alain Epp Weaver in *Borders and Bridges*, he said, "Borderlands of encounter with people whose experience and convictions differ from our own, are sites of revelation." He encouraged pastors—including MC Eastern Canada conference minister Muriel Bechtel, left, and Tim Reimer, pastor of Danforth Mennonite Church in Toronto—to take time to listen to the stories of those involved in Remembrance Day ceremonies in their communities.*

UNIVERSITY OF WINNIPEG PHOTO



*Lloyd Axworthy, left, president of the University of Winnipeg, was on hand for the official opening of the offices of the D.F. Plett Historical Research Foundation in the university's Bryce Hall building on Nov. 10. Delbert Plett, who died in 2004, was an enthusiastic promoter of history with a keen interest in telling the story of Traditionalist Mennonites, publishing more than a dozen books on the theme. Hans Werner, right, is the executive director of the Plett Foundation and teaches Mennonite studies and Canadian history in the university's Department of History. The Plett Foundation publishes the annual history magazine, *Preservings*, and issues grants for research and publication of conservative Mennonite history.*

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Mennonites on camels

Historical society event recreates Great Trek to Uzbekistan

BY KARIN FEHDERAU
Saskatchewan Correspondent
SASKATOON, SASK.

New information about the 1880 Mennonite migration over the Russian border, around the Caspian Sea and on to present-day Uzbekistan startled many at a recent Mennonite Historical Society of Saskatchewan event last November. It came to light in recent times because of Russia's willingness to release records from that period, explained event organizer Jake Buhler.

But rather than dwell on the unfortunate things that happened during that somewhat unstable period in Mennonite history, organizers brought new life to an old story. Citing material brought to light during a 2007 Mennonite history tour to Uzbekistan, presenters provided a more-rounded picture of that journey.

Memories of the trip read by a local

PHOTO BY KARIN FEHDERAU



descendent of trek participants were a special highlight. Albertine Speiser, 93, read from a diary written by her grandmother, Elizabeth Unruh, who was 14 during what became known as the Great Trek and kept a detailed account of the events and her feelings. Now a priceless peek at a turbulent time, the diary was a source of wonder for historical society members, as Speiser read of sandstorms and riding on camels through the Karakum Desert. The account has been turned into a book entitled *What a Heritage*.

Mennonite historical researcher and author Walter Klaassen also has a family connection to the migration. His father was 13 and Klaassen said he was impacted by what he heard growing up. "The stories I heard were adventure stories," he told those at the event, adding that his father felt embarrassment after migrating from Uzbekistan to the United States because of the group's association with the charismatic leader, Claas Epp. In the 1870s, Epp predicted the imminent return of Jesus Christ, which prompted the move to Uzbekistan to escape the Tribulation, and he later claimed to be the fourth member of the Trinity.

Like many similar situations in Mennonite history, the migration occurred because of the threat of increased military participation, as well as the need for more land. Some groups that travelled to Central Asia settled and prospered, trading hoes for hammers to do woodcarving and carpentry. Historical data reveals some even worked on Khan Muhammad Rabim II's palace in the Uzbek city of Khiva.

A second tour to the area is being planned from May 24 to June 4 through TourMagination and will look at the Islamic architecture and attend the grand opening of a new museum in Khiva that documents the Mennonite connection to the region from 1884-1935. ❧

Albertine Speiser reads from her grandmother's diary about the Great Trek from Russia to Uzbekistan in the late 1800s during a Mennonite Historical Society of Saskatchewan event at Bethany Manor in Saskatoon.

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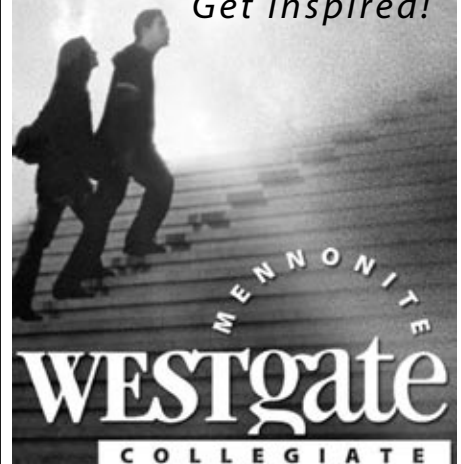
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GOD AT WORK IN THE WORLD

MCC responds to economic blockade of Gaza Strip

By GLADYS TERICHOW

Mennonite Central Committee Release

The Israeli economic blockade of the Gaza Strip, home to 1.5 million Palestinians, continues to push people into deeper levels of poverty.

"The situation was very bad in July, when we visited Gaza, but it is a lot worse now," says Bassem Thabet, administrative director for Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) in Jerusalem.

MCC staff have not been able to visit Gaza in recent months, but partner organizations there are reporting that some of the most vulnerable families now use milled animal feed to make pita bread and discarded plastic pipes as fuel to cook bread and meals.

In response, MCC approved an emergency cash grant of \$10,000 in early December to help the Amira Society, Al-Najd, and the Culture and Free Thought Association to distribute food assistance to 350 of the most vulnerable families in the Gaza Strip. A further \$15,000 grant was announced on Dec. 31.

Although there is a shortage of food in Gaza, and prices are high, the partner organizations will purchase the basic food staples, such as rice and flour, within Gaza.

"There are no other options," says Thabet, noting that the economic blockade makes it very difficult to get food, fuel, medical supplies and other necessities into the region.

Currently, the Israeli government is allowing a few trucks a day with humanitarian supplies to enter Gaza, but most of the food, fuel and basic supplies sold there have been smuggled through underground



PHOTO BY NANCY SABO

At 101 years of age, Ada Brubacher is still making comforter tops that the Fidelia Ladies' Group at Preston Mennonite Church, Ont., make into blankets for Mennonite Central Committee. She donated nine comforter tops last September and then brought more in November. Since Brubacher has been living at the Fairview Mennonite Home apartments in Cambridge, Ont., she has pieced more than 70 comforter tops for the Preston ladies, as well as some for St. Jacobs Mennonite, Ont. The Preston sewing group has an average age of 79.

tunnels from Egypt. The Israeli government closed all of its crossings into Gaza early last November and attempted to demolish the tunnel systems.

"This economic blockade has many ripple effects," says Ryan Lehman, MCC's representative in Jerusalem, adding that Gaza does not have enough fuel to operate its electrical power plant at full capacity.

"The only things that have kept Gaza from becoming a large-scale humanitarian crisis are regular food and medical shipments from the World Food Program and other humanitarian organizations," says Lehman, noting that about 75 percent of the population is now dependent on humanitarian assistance.

Representatives of MCC's partner organizations continue to feel optimistic that things will improve, Lehman says, but he notes that it is getting harder for them to remain optimistic and hopeful. MCC aid packages remind the partner organizations and the people they serve in Gaza that they are not forgotten, he says. "It is a gesture that shows we care." ❧

/// Briefly noted

MEDA reports on 'dividends of hope'

OSLER, SASK.—About 80 supporters of Mennonite Economic Development Associates (MEDA) gathered on a somewhat snowy, blustery Nov. 26, 2008, evening at Osler Mennonite Church for the annual Saskatoon chapter meeting. MEDA president Allan Sauder reported that, because of the generosity of members, "contributions increased by 12 percent, to \$2.9 million, continuing a very positive trend." He said he was particularly pleased to announce that "later this year there will be a worldwide announcement of a \$5 million MasterCard Foundation grant to MEDA to expand MEDA's work with youths and microfinance in Egypt, and to replicate that work in Morocco." Sauder also noted that microfinance programs around the world continue to bring dividends of dignity, trust and hope to the poor of the world.

—By JAKE NICKEL

Community snapshots

PHOTO BY ELMER HEINRICHS



The cutting and deboning of hog carcasses by Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) volunteers at Winkler, Man., are at the very heart of the annual meat canning process that includes stops in two Canadian provinces and 14 U.S. states. During a four-day session in November 2008, more than 300 volunteers joined a five-man mobile canning crew (which included Peter Reimer of Tolstoi, Man.) in a 60-hour canning marathon in Winkler, to produce 22,500 cans of pork, which are tentatively earmarked for North Korea or Rwanda.

PHOTO COURTESY OF ERNIE AND ANNE WALDE



Lorne, Hailee, Talya and Janaya Walde package school kits at the home of their grandparents, Ernie and Anne Walde of Brooks, Alta. For several years, the Waldes have sewn kits bags and purchased supplies, and then enjoyed having the grandchildren over for an afternoon to package school and health kits for Mennonite Central Committee.

PHOTO BY PHYLLIS HOCH / CAPTION BY SUE WEBER



Members from Bloomingdale Mennonite Church, Ont.— Sue Weber, left, Mac Hoch, Gerry Fehrenbach and Ralph Weber— help fill a pick-up truck with groceries for the Woolwich Community Services food drive on Nov. 22, 2008. A total of 13 church members canvassed the communities of Maryhill, Bloomingdale and part of Breslau in aid of the food drive.

GOD AT WORK IN US

'Good memories'

Living link to pioneer days in Waterloo County revisits family home/Mennonite museum

BY SUSAN FISH

Conrad Grebel University College Release
WATERLOO, ONT.

“They made things well in those days,” she says, holding her hands apart to illustrate the sturdiness of the beams of Brubacher House. “It’s going to stand for another hundred years.”

Dorothy Schweitzer Elliott is speaking of her family home—now a University of Waterloo museum operated by the Mennonite Historical Society of Ontario and Conrad Grebel University College—but she could be describing herself. At 101, Elliott provides a living link to Waterloo County’s pioneer days.

Last spring, Elliott visited Brubacher House, where she had lived as a young girl, and was able to identify many of the house’s artifacts. These included a wall hanging of the Brubacher family tree she had made from pure wool imported from Scotland, and two tea-sets which had belonged to John E. Brubacher and his wife Magdalena, her great-grandparents.

Elliott herself was “nearly born in a barn on a Sunday,” on June 2, 1907, to a family related to theologian/physician Dr. Albert Schweitzer on her father’s side, and to the Brubachers on her mother’s side. Elliott’s Brubacher family came to Canada in 1806 from Pennsylvania.

Elliott’s grandmother, Anna, known as Nancy, was the third of John E. Brubacher’s daughters. When she was a little girl, she lived with her parents, sisters and grandparents in the Brubacher House, which had a log-house addition on the back and which included as many as seven bedrooms.

As a child, Elliott attended the Mennonite church in Bloomingdale, Ont., where she recalls meeting the girl who would be her best friend for 87 years, and also remembers the two of them “being bad” as they crawled under the seats during long prayers to pinch the legs of adults before scurrying back. Elliott played the organ and later the piano at the Bloomingdale church for more than 80 years.

She and her sister Olive used to dress up

in long dresses and give tours of Brubacher House when it first became a University of Waterloo museum, and they were also among the founders of the Pennsylvania German Folklore Society, for which she played the piano for 20 years.

Elliott believes it is vitally important for Brubacher House to keep operating, so that people will understand what life was like for early Mennonites in Waterloo County. She pulls out a letter written by her mother, describing the transformation she had witnessed from times when streetcars were pulled by horses, bears were common and people used stumps for kitchen tables, to modern 20th century life.

Today, Elliott has outlived most of her contemporaries and relatives. She lives in a comfortable apartment in Waterloo’s Luther Village, where she knits mittens for children, visits with friends, listens to church services and stock reports on the radio, and remembers.

Her mind still sharp and her face alert but peaceful, Elliott says, “When you get to be my age, you don’t need to go out. You have memories. Good memories.”

PHOTO BY FRED MARTIN



Brandon Leis, current host of Brubacher House, a Mennonite museum on the grounds of the University of Waterloo, holds a wall-hanging 101-year-old Dorothy Schweitzer Elliott made of her family’s coat of arms. The hanging is featured in the museum that served as her family home when she was a child.

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FOCUS ON POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

VIEWPOINT

Why choose a Christian higher education?

BY JOHN LONGHURST

Choosing where to study after high school is a big decision—there are lots of choices. Why should youths choose a Christian college or university? Here are a few good reasons:

Smaller class sizes and strong academics

Christian colleges and universities tend to be smaller than public universities. Students can really get to know each other, get more chances to participate in discussions, and get to know their professors in a much more personal way—all things that are key to academic success.

Sense of community

Studying at a Christian college or university is about more than what happens in the classroom. It's also about the relationships they develop with classmates in their residence, during late-night discussions, at sporting events, retreats, worship, and in other ways. During their years at a Christian college or university, they will develop some of the best and deepest friendships of their lives—friendships with people from around the world that will last a lifetime.

Residential life at a Christian college or university is a great place for those who are living away from home for the first time. It's a safe and caring environment where students look out for each other, hold each other accountable for their actions, and where student life staff members provide assistance and support.

Strengthen their faith

The world is a challenging place for young Christians today. They live in a world where claims about truth are greeted

with scepticism, a world dominated by consumerism and individualism.

In such a world, how will they be able to know that Jesus is the way, and speak to others about their faith? How will they be able to make good choices about beliefs and values? How can they model a way of living that values community, that shows care for others, and that sees service as a greater good? In this fast-paced world of instant communication and full-speed living, how will they learn that being a disciple of Jesus is a life-long commitment?

At Christian higher education institutions, faith is part of learning. But this doesn't mean that they are told what to believe. Instead, they are exposed to various perspectives and ideas, and invited to

Studying at a Christian college or university is about more than what happens in the classroom.

examine their beliefs, put them to the test and make them their own. In this way, their faith can grow deeper.

At the same time, they are prepared to participate as a Christian in the great conversations of life around them. Platitudes learned in Sunday school won't do when co-workers, friends and neighbours ask tough questions that challenge their beliefs.

That's where studies at a Christian college or university are beneficial. It can help them become thoughtful Christians, people who can provide good answers to life's hard questions.

Worship

Worship is vital to Christian life and learning. At Christian colleges and

universities, students worship with their peers and staff, taking time to honour God and refresh their spirits. At the same time, they can be exposed to new ways of worship, expanding their ideas of what worship is and what it can be.

Sports

Some Christian colleges and universities offer competitive sports programs. At these schools, competition is tough and tryouts aren't easy, but the sports programs don't emphasize a "sports-is-everything" approach. Instead, they seek to balance the athletic, social, academic and spiritual lives of student athletes. These programs are perfect for students who like to play competitive sports but don't want sports to dominate their lives.

The importance of Christian higher education

In his book, *The Fabric of Faithfulness*, Steven Garber notes that during the university and college years decisions are made "that are determinative for the rest of life. In the modern world, the years between 18 and 25 are a time for the settling of one's convictions about meaning and morality: 'Why do I get up in the morning?' 'What do I do after I get

up in the morning?' One then settles into life with those convictions as the shaping presuppositions and principles of one's entire life."

That's why Christian higher education is so important. At a time when the church needs leaders—people who have taken time to think about what they believe, and why they believe it, and are prepared to give good answers to questions about faith—Christian colleges and universities provide environments where youths can begin their journey towards being Christians who can serve the church and the world. ❧

John Longhurst directs communications and marketing at Canadian Mennonite University in Winnipeg.

Economic downturn leads to academic uncertainty

Mennonite institutions unsure of impact at this point, but hope traditional donors will continue their support

BY AARON EPP

National Correspondent

While the economic downturn has meant bad news for many universities, post-secondary institutions supported by Canadian Mennonites say they have yet to experience the radical economic shifts others have faced.

"The biggest thing it means is uncertainty," Gordon Epp-Fransen, vice-president administration and finance at Canadian Mennonite University (CMU) in Winnipeg, said of the economic downturn during a recent interview. "This uncertainty is hard to plan for."

While investments for student aid and programs aren't producing income as they otherwise would, Epp-Fransen said the downturn wouldn't have any specific impact on tuition at the university. "Finances in a post-secondary setting like ours are always tight," he said, adding that the university believes its government funding will come through as usual.

Paul Loewen works at Columbia Bible College in Abbotsford, B.C., as part of the school's church and donor relations team. There are "some notable signs" that Columbia is in a recession, he wrote in an e-mail. According to him, the college is "slimming down" its operations "by putting on hold some new incentives it would otherwise have enacted."

Although Columbia's overall student numbers remain nearly the same as last year, the college has experienced a decline in enrolment in traditional programs. More are taking casual courses or auditing a class. More students also need part-time employment to support their educational costs.



The college has also been notified that some church support may be lost this year as a result of churches or conferences not being able to fully meet their budgets. Some individual and corporate donors have also indicated their support will be lower this year, he indicated. "A good percentage of our support comes from building- and land development-related businesses, and these are affected industries in B.C.," he wrote.

Fred Martin, director of development at Conrad Grebel University College in Waterloo, Ont., also acknowledged the ripple effect the economic downturn will have, affecting members of the community who support the school. Still, when asked what the best way is for Canadian Mennonites to support Mennonite colleges and universities



during these difficult times, Martin said it is important to keep those institutions as a priority in terms of giving.

"It's a significant chunk of revenue—10 per cent—that we receive from donated dollars," Martin said by phone. "Institutions are [also] vulnerable, depending on the fluctuation of government funding," so it helps when "alumni and supporters maintain the college on their list of charitable giving."

Ron Ringenberg, vice-president for advancement and administration at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Elkhart, Ind., agrees.

"I feel very strongly that Mennonites need to support Mennonite institutions," he said in a phone interview. While there is no shortage of excellent, non-Mennonite charitable giving opportunities, "if Mennonites don't support Mennonite institutions, no one else will, or very few will," he said, adding, "It needs to be a priority if it's important to us as a people, as a denomination, as a church."

Prayer is also important, he added. "I've been here five-and-a-half years, and clearly this is the work of the Lord. [AMBS] is really one of God's missions in the world. We have always relied on God, and that's what it really boils down to." ❧



/// Briefly noted

CMU joins Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada

OTTAWA—Canadian Mennonite University (CMU) has been named the newest member of the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC). CMU's membership was ratified on Oct. 22, 2008, during the AUCC's annual membership meeting in Ottawa. "We are delighted that the quality of the university education offered by CMU has been recognized by the AUCC," says CMU president Gerald Gerbrandt. "We look forward to being part of, and contributing to, this venerable organization." The AUCC is the voice of Canada's universities, representing 93 Canadian public and private universities and university-degree-level colleges. As a member of AUCC, CMU will be able to join other universities and colleges in advocating on behalf of higher education in Canada, and also benefit from joint programs and information sharing. For CMU students, AUCC membership will make transferring credits to other universities and colleges easier. For CMU faculty, AUCC membership will enable them to be eligible for additional research grants.

—Canadian Mennonite University Release



Advertorial

Putting theory into practice

Field studies enhance experience for Conrad Grebel peace and conflict studies students

By SUSAN FISH

Conrad Grebel University College Release
WATERLOO, ONT.

Peace and conflict studies (PACS) students at Conrad Grebel University College have a unique opportunity to put their learning to work in real life situations and get credit for the experience through field studies courses in Canada and around the world.

Home to Canada's oldest peace and conflict studies program, Conrad Grebel began its field studies course in 1985. Then-director Ron Mathies wanted to allow students an option of putting classroom theories into action as interns, in a variation on the University of Waterloo's celebrated co-op



program. Since the field studies courses began, nearly 200 students have worked in a variety of contexts in their home communities and in 48 countries around the world. Field study placements

are in diverse organizations: from social justice agencies and educational settings to religious organizations and multicultural groups.

Field studies are normally at least four months in length and can be up to a year. Students earn one course equivalent for their field study placement and can arrange for a directed reading course to conduct research

related to their field study placement. Peace and conflict studies advisors help students find a placement and provide supervision before, during and after the placement.

"Students are inspired by the courageous people they encounter who see opportunity for peace where others only see danger, who see hope where others only see despair, and who persevere in the face of difficult obstacles when surrender may seem to be the easier option. Students are profoundly touched by these courageous peacemakers they encounter locally, nationally and internationally," says Lowell Ewert, the current director of the peace and conflict studies program.

Sarah Jutzi, whose field study placement was with a peace promotion program in Nepal, would agree. "What I will take away from this trip regarding the peace process is an appreciation for its lengthy, complex and incredibly intense course of development in a culture that has been affected by years of violence, unrest and discrimination," she says. "Nothing is ever completely straightforward. If you want to truly understand a situation, you must look at it long and hard from the inside, and from all sides, in order to get a significant grasp on what is needed and what the next steps might be."

Denise Whaley, who worked in the Kitchener-Waterloo community, learned similar lessons at the Kitchener-Waterloo community centre, where she assisted in various community programs, including programs for new Canadians and children, as well as in food distribution programs. "I now see the subtler early stages of brewing conflict much more easily," she says. "My experiences in the last few months have helped me step back from my biases and preconceived notions, look at them, and consider how they are affecting how I interact with others."

Steve Rempel, who is in the new PACS major program, recently returned from a year in Bangladesh, where he worked as a peace coordinator with a Taize community. He reports that he comes back with a "multitude of questions" and a sense that "the world is a complex place. I feel as if I have a better working knowledge of some of those complexities and that I understand myself better," he says. ✎

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CMU students take the Pearson Challenge

Donate a percentage of their tuition fees to help children in Africa

By JOHN LONGHURST

Canadian Mennonite University Release
WINNIPEG

In 1969, then-Canadian Prime Minister Lester B. Pearson challenged the world's developed countries to donate 0.7 percent of their gross domestic product to help poor people in the developing world.

Canada has never met that goal. But almost 40 years later, students at Canadian Mennonite University (CMU) were given a similar challenge by the student council—to donate at least 0.7 percent of the money they spend on tuition to help children in Africa.

Called the Pearson Challenge, the fundraising effort found 66 students donating \$2,226 to Hope Never Runs Dry,

a Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Global Family program in Uganda.

"We were pleased with the result," says student council president Zachary Peters, noting that while the donation of about \$34 per student was not quite 0.7 percent of full-time tuition at the university, not all students take a full course load.

As for the project itself, it "was a perfect fit," he adds, since it allows students at CMU to help children in Africa to get an education. "We wanted to help spread the gift and blessing of education, something we so often take for granted."

The money will be used by MCC to help children in families affected by AIDS continue to go to school. According to MCC, parents in the last stages of AIDS aren't able to work; any money that does exist ends up being used for treatment. Children often drop out of school to care for the infected parent; when the parent dies, the children are rarely able to return to school because they lack money for basics like food and clothing.

Through Hope Never Runs Dry, MCC helps 200 orphans attend primary school, and also pays tuition for 12 orphans who are receiving technical or secondary education.

"It's great to see CMU's student body provide leadership in helping in this way," says Werner Wiens, who directs MCC's Global Family program. "I am inspired to see this generation's commitment to justice issues and broader world concerns."

Peters hopes that the challenge will become an annual event at the university. "I hope this project can grow in the future, so we can help even more children," he says. ☛

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'Baby catchers'

Early Mennonite midwives profiled by Marlene Epp during her Eby Lecture at Conrad Grebel and in new book

BY DAVE ROGALSKY

Eastern Canada Correspondent
WATERLOO, ONT.

Aganetha Unger Reimer, Sara Deckert Thielman and Barbara Bowman Shue were just three of the women featured in Marlene Epp's 2008 Eby Lecture, "Women who 'made things right': Midwife-healers in Canadian Mennonite communities of the past," at Conrad Grebel University College on Nov. 21. Interest in Epp's lecture ran high, requiring the lecture to be moved from its usual location in the chapel to the much larger Great Hall, which was filled to overflowing.

Epp gave life to these unknown women



who often held together their communities in Russia, on the Canadian Prairies and in rural Ontario. The lecture enlarged upon and drew from her recently published *Mennonite*

Women in Canada: A History (University of Manitoba Press, 2008), which received its Ontario launch the same evening.

The women Epp studied, often by reading their records and journals, were career healers, caring for pregnant mothers, attending births (more than 1,400 for Thielman), and doing follow-up with mothers and babies after birth. But many

of them also gained medical knowledge through official training, from books that they bought, and from both doctors and folk healers. They became de facto healers in their communities, often performing chiropractic procedures for men and women. In an interesting twist, their knowledge and comfort with human bodies often led them to be undertakers, too.

But their influence in history was far greater, according to Epp. Early Anabaptist "baby catchers," as the midwives were known as, often counselled parents to not baptize their babies. They effectively drew new folk into the fledgling Anabaptist communities, taught them and helped them to remain steadfast in the face of pressure to baptize their babies, and so guided them to the Anabaptist teaching of adult baptism. Later, midwives would often give spiritual counsel to mothers during difficult deliveries, and were there to bring God's comfort in the aftermath of the all-too-common deaths of mother or child.

The evening concluded with a reception and a book-signing by Epp. ☿

PHOTO BY DAVE ROGALSKY



Marlene Epp signs her book *Mennonite Women in Canada: A History* for Jonathan Seiling of Toronto following her Eby Lecture at Conrad Grebel University College.

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Canadian schools differ on national anthem

Goshen College called unpatriotic for refusing to play "The Star-Spangled Banner"

By Canadian Mennonite Staff

During the week of Nov. 10, 2008, Goshen College in Indiana fielded more than 400 calls and e-mails after American talk show host Mike Gallagher criticized Goshen for not playing the national anthem before sports games. *The Mennonite* reported in November that, after attending a Goshen basketball game, a man complained to the conservative radio talk show, which has four million listeners. Gallagher asked listeners to call Goshen and ask them to change the policy.

"There were a handful of supportive comments amongst the mostly dissenting voices," Richard Aguirre, Goshen College director of public relations, told *The Mennonite*. Some of the calls accused the college of being unpatriotic or suggested that, because Goshen students receive federal or state student aid, there is—or should be—an obligation to play the national anthem, said Aguirre.

In Canada, Mennonite post-secondary institutions do different things when it comes to the national anthem.

At Canadian Mennonite University in Winnipeg, it isn't sung or played before sporting events. Gerald Gerbrandt, the university's president, has worked at the school and one of its predecessor colleges since 1969. He said there has never been a formal decision one way or the other regarding the anthem.


Russell Willms, the university's athletics director, added that the other schools in the league CMU is a part of don't sing or play the anthem before games either.

At Columbia Bible College in Abbotsford, B.C., the anthem has been a part of athletic events for many years, and it has never been an issue. "Our intention of playing the anthem is to show respect for the country we live in and the tradition of playing anthems at sporting events," Rocky Olfert,

the school's athletic director, wrote in an e-mail. "As Christians, we are called upon to respect and pray for the leaders of our

country. We don't see playing or singing a national anthem as placing the country above God"

Conrad Grebel University College in Waterloo, Ont., does not have any competitive teams of its own, but some of its students do play on University of Waterloo varsity teams which do play the anthem before home games. "There are no other public events where it would be appropriate to play the anthem at Grebel," development director Fred Martin wrote in an e-mail. "It's not part of our culture to promote nationalism in this way." ❧



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PERSONAL REFLECTION

Finding my way with God at my side

BY ANDRÉA RESSLER

As I near the end of my college career, I'm plagued by the question, "What are you going to do next year?" The time has come to face the "real world" (more real than college?) and

discover what God is calling me to do.

My options seem endless at this point. I like my fields of study—communication and business administration. I love travelling. I find joy in serving. But I have yet

to discover exactly where I should go or what I should be doing in the future.

I've had many opportunities to explore future possibilities while at Bluffton University. Last May, I had a cross-cultural experience in Israel/Palestine that allowed me to travel, explore service work and non-profit organizations at work. I've taken a variety of classes in the past four years that have stretched my mind and worked in the public relations office building a portfolio.

My experiences have enabled me to piece together what a future career might look like, and I've begun applying for jobs with various voluntary service organizations, and I'm even considering graduate school. I admit that with all the possibilities before me, it's hard to narrow my interests down to one or two.

At this point, I don't know what I'll be doing next year or where I will be. But God is creating a sense of peace in the unknown for me, and I continually look to I Thessalonians 5:16-18 for encouragement: *"Be joyful always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."*

So I try to be patient. I try to look at all options, even those I wouldn't normally give a passing glance. And I try to continue to be joyful in Christ. As I debate the choices, I consider how blessed I am to have conversations with family, friends, profs, employers, pastors and campus staff, that help me to further discern what God may be calling me to do. Through all the uncertainty and the passing time, I feel comfortable with who I am becoming.

So, what am I going to be doing next year? This much I know: I'll be serving God. That might mean I'll be in an office job in Ohio or a volunteer position in the United States, or maybe doing relief work in some foreign country. Whatever I do, I know that God will be with me, leading me, and I'll have the encouragement of my family, church and university as I explore what it means for me to be part of God's global community. ✎

Andréa Ressler is a senior at Bluffton University, Ohio.




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ARTBEAT

Doing 'whatever kindles love'

Play explores the small but important role CPT peacemakers make around the world

BY ANDRÉA RESSLER

Bluffton University Release
BLUFFTON, OHIO

Actors play roles. They tap into another persona, place themselves in a world that is not their own, and develop a character. Sometimes the roles are fictional; sometimes they are based on real people. It can be difficult to emulate a character whose story is real, because that is when emotions are most real, stories most poignant and messages most challenging.

Those are just the sort of emotions, stories and messages that Bluffton University students embraced in order to perform the fall theatre production of *Whatever Kindles*, a fictional docu-drama about Christian Peacemaker Teams (CPT) and people's responses to Jesus' call to peacemaking in the world. The production ran from Nov. 12-16, 2008. Written by former CPT reservist Tricia Gates Brown, *Whatever Kindles* depicts the struggles and triumphs of CPT workers in Colombia, Iraq and Palestine.

Director Melissa Friesen was attracted to the play's message and its timely connection with Bluffton's yearlong civic-engagement theme, "Living with uncertainty in a complex world." "I am constantly seeking scripts for production which will not only challenge our student performers, technicians and audiences aesthetically and intellectually, but also connect to Bluffton's mission," says Friesen, who is associate professor of theatre and communication and holds the Mary Nord Ignat and Joseph Ignat Chair in Theatre. "Scripts which specifically address nonviolence as a tool for social change and an ethical and moral imperative are rare." In choosing such a script, the possibility that the performance would stir a lot of

emotions—both for the cast members and the audience—became real.

"As actors, we had to tap into different facets of emotions in a short time," says senior Nicole Bontrager, who performed the role of a Colombian CPT member. "Hopelessness. Fear. Strength. Frustration. Abundance of hope. It's hard to switch back and forth, but you appreciate more and more what CPT workers do. This story needed to be told, and I wanted to convey my character, Maria Inez, in a way that would share its meaning with others."

Sophomore Aaron Yost played Bill, a CPT worker in his mid-60s who served in Hebron and Iraq. "It was less like playing a character in a play," says Yost of his performance. "It felt real to be Bill, especially after I met a CPT worker who had actually lived in Hebron and Iraq."

During rehearsals, cast members grappled with the realization of what CPT workers do in order to make small differences in large conflicts. They struggled with the lack of tangible results.

"CPT workers don't always see a change or grand accomplishment," says Yost. "CPT's

goal is to stand in solidarity with people. But that's hard when you want to see results."

Bontrager agrees, adding that it was frustrating to take little steps in the right direction, instead of monumental ones. "CPT's work isn't going to change an international law," she says. "But it's changing hearts, one at a time. It's about relating to people and, through your presence, sharing your faith and struggles. It's more of a chain event."

Talk-back sessions created a space for open dialogue with the cast, CPT workers and community members.

"You could tell people were really thinking about what they had just experienced," says senior Anna Yoder, who served as a research assistant for the production, along with Yost. "Their questions allowed us as a cast to see that we had shared the message of CPT, and that they were thinking about the call to peacemaking. Those were the glimpses of change that are important to us."

While the message may be difficult and outcomes hard to see, CPT continues to work for change in a very uncertain world. Being part of *Whatever Kindles* gave Bluffton students the chance to support the organization's mission and to be challenged to think about what it means to practise nonviolence on a daily basis.

"It's like the last line of the play says: 'Do whatever kindles love,'" says Yost. "Sometimes that means doing something that doesn't accomplish anything tangible. But if it forms relationships and kindles love, then it's still doing something. If everyone had that mindset, we could create much-needed change." ❧



BLUFFTON UNIVERSITY PHOTO

Bluffton University students perform Whatever Kindles, a play about the peacemaking mission of Christian Peacemaker Teams in the world.

Goshen College play chosen for regional festival

Performance honours life of late theatre major

Goshen College Release
GOSHEN, IND.

The fall 2008 mainstage production of *The Saint Plays* at Goshen College was selected for inclusion in the American College Theater Festival, Region III, in Saginaw, Mich., earlier this month.

This is the first time the college has entered a production as a “participating” entry in the Kennedy Center American College Theater Festival. *The Saint Plays*, by Catholic playwright Erik Ehn and directed by assistant professor of theatre Michelle Milne, was to be performed at the festival twice on Jan. 9.

“This is a huge honour, and places *Saint Plays* among the top college and university productions in the country,” said Milne.

The Saint Plays are a series of six short plays that link saints from the past with ordinary people. Exploring the connect-edness between historical saints, contemporary life, earthly existence, spirit and eternity, *The Saint Plays* are about Joan of Arc, John the Baptist, St. Eulalia and St. George (who fought a dragon). In addition, Ehn wrote a special piece about St. Rose of Viterbo, one of two saints that mark former Goshen College student Deanne Binde’s birthdate.

Binde, a Roman Catholic student, touched the lives of many people at Goshen during her studies there as a communication and theatre major. After her death in a car crash last May, Milne, who had taught and directed Binde, decided to stage *The Saint Plays*. Although Ehn, dean of the theatre program at the California Institute of the Arts, did not know Binde and hadn’t written a play about the saint connected with Binde’s birthdate, he quickly offered to write a piece about Rose of Viterbo and Binde’s life when Milne contacted him.

“I find it deeply meaningful that a play honouring the spirit of Deanne continues to live on in this way,” said Milne. ❧

GOSHEN COLLEGE PHOTO BY EMILY MILLER



The Goshen College production of The Saint Plays was selected for inclusion in the American College Theater Festival, Region III, in Saginaw, Mich., earlier this month. The plays were originally performed at Goshen College as last fall’s mainstage production.

/// Briefly noted

New book on homosexuality ‘a courageous exercise in hope’: Tom Yoder Neufeld

HARRISONBURG, VA.—Mark Thiessen Nation, professor of theology at Eastern Mennonite Seminary, and Ted Grimsrud, professor of theology and peace studies at Eastern Mennonite University, have teamed up to address the difficult topic of homosexuality. They present places where they differ in their book, *Reasoning Together: A Conversation on Homosexuality* (Herald Press, 2008), but they also offer areas of agreement and consensus that emerged from a series of public conversations they led. The book has three sections: the first gives the context for the conversation; the second details each professor’s argument and responses to each other, and includes extensive theological and biblical reflection; and in the third section each professor asks the other two questions. In a review, Tom Yoder Neufeld, associate professor of religious studies at Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo, Ont., calls the book “a courageous exercise in hope,” saying, “All readers, regardless of strength of position or state of confusion, will find much in this book to destabilize certainties that need to be rattled, much to shore up inadequately grounded convictions, and much to help understand those who think differently. That is no small gift.”

—Eastern Mennonite University Release

Calendar

British Columbia

Feb. 15: Columbia Bible College citywide youth event, at Columbia Place, 7 p.m.

Feb. 20-21: MC B.C. annual general meeting, at Cedar Valley Mennonite Church, Mission.

Feb. 27, 28, March 6, 7: MCC B.C. fundraising banquets; Peace Mennonite Church, Richmond (27); South Langley Mennonite Brethren Church, Langley (28); Bakerview Mennonite Brethren Church, Abbotsford (6); Sardis Community Church, Chilliwack (7). For more information, call 614-850-6639.

April 4, 5: Lenten Vespers with Abendmusik Choir. (4) Emmanuel Free Reformed Church, Abbotsford; (5) Knox United Church, Vancouver; 8 p.m. both evenings. Donations to Menno Simons Centre.

Alberta

Feb. 20-22: Senior high snow camp at Camp Valaqua. For grades 10 to 12. Call 403-637-2510 for more information.

March 27-28: MC Alberta annual delegate sessions at Calgary Vietnamese Mennonite Church.

April 18-19: First Mennonite, Edmonton, will celebrate its 50th anniversary with worship, a program, social gathering and barbecue supper. Direct inquiries to Anne Harder at 780-470-0868 or aeharder@telusplanet.net.

Saskatchewan

Feb. 27-28: MC Saskatchewan annual delegate sessions, at North Star Mennonite Church, Drake.

Manitoba

Feb. 6: "Notes for the Road," A concert featuring MCI's chamber choir,

Resonate, and junior vocal ensemble; Buhler Hall; 7:30 p.m.

Feb. 6-8: Manitoba Mennonite Young Adult retreat at Camp Koinonia.

Feb. 6-March 29: Mennonite Heritage Centre Gallery exhibit of curated works from the Westgate 50th anniversary art show.

Feb. 13-15: MMYO Junior High Retreat at Camp Moose Lake.

Feb. 14: Westgate 50th anniversary celebration dance on Valentine's Day, at the Gateway Community Club, at 8 p.m.

Feb. 20-21: MC Manitoba annual delegate sessions at Winkler Bergthaler Mennonite Church.

March 6-8: Peace, Pray and Praise-It-Together (PIT) at CMU's Shaftesbury campus. Theme: "Face your fears." Speaker: Tony Campolo. For more information, visit cmu.ca.

March 12-14: MCI's presents "Ann and Gilbert; Buhler Hall; 7:30 p.m. each night.

March 16-17: CMU annual apologetics lectures with author and radio host Michael Coren. For more information, visit cmu.ca.

April 23-29: Westgate senior high musical.

April 25: Spring concert at CMU's Shaftesbury campus; at 7 p.m.

Ontario

Jan. 30-Feb. 1: MC Eastern Canada winter youth retreat, in Cambridge.

Jan. 31: Grand Philharmonic Choir presents R. Murray Schafer's *Threnody* and Karl Jenkins' *The Armed Man* with the KW Symphony Orchestra, Howard Dyck conducting. Centre in the Square, Kitchener, 7:30 p.m. Tickets available at 519-578-6885.

Feb. 6-8: MC Eastern Canada winter youth retreat, in Cambridge.

Feb. 16: Willowgrove Family Fun Day, Stouffville; 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. A range of winter activities for the whole family, including snowshoeing, cross-country skiing and wagon rides (weather permitting). Refreshments available.

Feb. 16: Family Day at Hidden Acres Camp. For more information, call 519-625-8602 or e-mail info@hiddenacres.ca.

Feb. 20: Ontario Mennonite Relief Sale Inc.'s 28th annual heifer sale; Carson Auction Facilities, Listowel; 11 a.m. All proceeds to MCC relief, development and peacebuilding programs. For more information, or to donate a heifer or cash, call Clarence Diefenbacher at 519-669-2164.

Feb. 28: Menno Singers presents Mozart's Requiem, St. Peter's Lutheran Church, Kitchener, 8 p.m. Tickets available at Music Plus, MSCU and at the door.

March 6-7: Engaged Workshop, Riverdale Mennonite Church, Millbank. For more information, contact Denise Bender at 519-656-2005 or denise_bender@yahoo.com.

March 7: Church leadership seminar: "Hope for the small church," in Waterloo.

March 21, 22: Grand Philharmonic Choir presents "Felix Mendelssohn and the Romantic Choral Heritage," featuring the GPC Chamber Singers, Howard Dyck conducting. (21) First United Church, Waterloo, 7:30 p.m.; (22) St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church,

UpComing

Chicago gallery issues 'call' for modern Mennonite art

CHICAGO—The Robert Wayner/Black Walnut Gallery in Chicago is accepting submissions for a group art exhibit featuring the artwork of Mennonite artists entitled "We, the Mennonites." The exhibit will run from March 1 to April 2, and feature modern artwork that is reflective of the Mennonite heritage of simplicity, pacifism and eco-friendly ideals. All genres will be considered; artistic quality and vision are the main criteria that will be used in considering the submissions. Acrylics, oils, photography and mixed media mediums will all be considered for this exhibit. For more information on the submission process, e-mail submissions@blackwalnutgallery.com. The deadline is Feb. 5.

—Robert Wayner/Black Walnut Gallery Release

Memorial to Soviet Mennonites to be unveiled

On Oct. 10, the International Mennonite Memorial Committee for the Former Soviet Union and the City of Zaporizhyya, Ukraine, will unveil a monument to "Mennonite victims of tribulation, Stalinist terror and religious oppression." The monument will be located on the main square of the former village of Chortitza, centre of the first settlement of Mennonites in Tsarist Russia. It will remember the third of all Soviet Mennonites who perished, most with no gravesite. The monument will share the Mennonite story with the children and grandchildren of the victims, and with citizens of the former Soviet Union, in order to combat intolerance and oppression in the world today. A 2009 Mennonite Heritage Cruise will feature this event in its program and act as a central registering agency for North American participants. The weekend of Oct. 9-11 will also include the opening of a special exhibit in Zaporizhyya's main museum; a service for descendants and friends to name those who perished and light candles in their memory; a worship service with Mennonites, Ukrainians and international visitors from four continents; and musical performances including Mozart's *Requiem*, directed by Howard Dyck. For more information, visit mennonitememorial.org.

—International Mennonite Memorial Committee Release



Cambridge, 3 p.m. Tickets for both shows available at 519-578-6885.

March 26,27: Bechtel Lectures in Anabaptist-Mennonite Studies at Conrad Grebel University College. Speakers: Ched Meyers and Elaine Enns. Topic: "Restorative Justice and Theology."

April 10: Grand Philharmonic Choir presents J.S. Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* with the KW Symphony Orchestra, Howard Dyck conducting. Centre in the Square, Kitchener, 7:30 p.m. Tickets available at 519-578-6885.

April 18: MC Eastern Canada youth Bible quizzing competition (first round).

April 24-25: MC Eastern Canada annual church gathering, in Kitchener.

April 25: Grand Philharmonic Choir presents "Love in a Northern Land—The Music of England, Scandinavia and Canada," featuring the GPC Chamber Singers, Howard Dyck conducting. First United Church, Waterloo, 7:30 p.m. Tickets available at 519-578-6885.

April 25: MC Eastern Canada youth Bible quizzing competition (finals).

April 25-26: Engaged Workshop, Living Water Fellowship, New Hamburg. For more information, contact Denise Bender at 519-656-2005 or denise_bender@yahoo.com.

Paraguay

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

Ukraine

Oct. 9-11: Celebration weekend featuring the unveiling of a monument to "Mennonite victims of tribulation, Stalinist terror and religious oppression" in the main square of the one-time village of Khortitsa, Ukraine. For more information, visit mennonitememorial.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.

FULL-TIME MINISTER OF YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULTS

Rosthern Mennonite Church invites applications for a pastor to provide programming and ministry among the youths and young adults in our community.

We are looking for a person who:

- has a strong personal commitment to Jesus Christ
- has an understanding of, and respect for, the Anabaptist faith
- is organized, self-motivated and able to work in a team setting

Please apply to:
Search Committee
Box 464

Rosthern, SK S0K 3R0

Or e-mail: [tbjanzen@sasktel.net](mailto:tbianzen@sasktel.net)

ST. JACOBS MENNONITE CHURCH – 0.75 FTE PASTOR

SJMC is a vibrant, active, caring congregation of 300. The village of St. Jacobs is located on the edge of the city of Waterloo, minutes from two universities (Conrad Grebel University College) and a community college. The candidate would be part of a three-member pastoral team (2.25 FTE). Within the structure of a strong pastoral team, responsibilities would include worship, preaching and pastoral care with an emphasis on Christian Formation. Please reply by Feb. 27, 2009, to: Muriel Bechtel, Conference Minister, Mennonite Church Eastern Canada, 4489 King St. East, Kitchener, ON N2P 2G2; 519-650-3806; muriel@mcecc.ca.

Vineland United Mennonite Church invites applications for the full-time position of **LEAD MINISTER**. We are a congregation of 220 active members located in a growing semi-rural community in the heart of the Niagara Peninsula.

Our church is seeking a transformational pastor to assist our congregation in implementing our vision for the future. The successful candidate will be committed to an Anabaptist understanding of faith and theology, deeply rooted in biblical teaching, a strong preacher and willing to work as part of the leadership team. Candidates should have previous pastoral experience and possess a desire to foster local outreach.

Please submit inquiries, resumes and references to:

Vineland United Mennonite Church
3327 Menno St.
Vineland, ON
L0R 2C0
Attn: Mike Hendriks

or e-mail mkhendriks@sympatico.ca

Classifieds

Employment Opportunities



MCC Canada is hiring for the following salaried position in the Human Resources Department:

DIRECTOR OF HUMAN RESOURCES - MCC Canada

The director of Human Resources is specifically responsible for the Human Resources function of Mennonite Central Committee Canada (MCCC). This includes recruitment, screening, placement, maintenance of personnel information and related data, training and care of workers, salary and benefits administration, policy development, national coordination of the Service Program, the Canadian Service Opportunities for Older People (SOOP) program and the Uniform Salary and Benefits Committee. The Director of Human Resources consults and collaborates with provincial and regional HR staff, and with the MCC HR department in the United States, and is the Canadian representative on the MCC Human Resources Policy Reference Council. This position is also part of the MCC Canada Management Team.

Application deadline Feb. 2, 2009.

MCC requires all workers to have personal Christian faith, be active members in a Christian church, and be committed to the teaching of nonviolent biblical peacemaking.

For more information and to apply, contact Marsha Jones at the MCC Canada office: phone 204-261-6381 or e-mail mgj@mennonitecc.ca.

For a complete assignment description, see the MCC website mcc.org.

Upcoming Advertising Dates

Issue Date	Ads Due
Feb. 16	Feb. 3
March 2	Feb. 17
Focus on Camps and Summer Christian Education	
March 16	March 3
March 30	March 17
Focus on Summer	
April 13	March 31

400 candles on Dutch church's cake

STORY AND PHOTOS BY JAN GLEYSTEN
AMSTERDAM, HOLLAND



During the renovation of the Singelkerk in 2008, a large banner proclaimed "400 years of Mennonites on the Singel."



The interior of the Singelkerk was built in 1639 to replace the original 1608 building. The ceiling, rebuilt in 1839, was restored in 2008.

Four hundred years ago, a hidden Anabaptist church was built behind a row of houses in Amsterdam. Today it is known as the *Singelkerk*. Although there were Anabaptists in Amsterdam by 1531, persecution was severe until a change in government brought reluctant tolerance after 1578.

In 1607, the Mennonite cloth merchant, Harmen Hendriksz van Warendorp, bought a large lot between the King's Canal (better known as the Singel) and the Gentleman's Canal. He built houses along both canals and the following year he used the courtyard space between them to build a wooden Anabaptist meetinghouse. It came to be known as the church *Bij't Lam* (near the Lamb) because there was an adjacent brewery named The Lamb.

The old wooden structure was replaced in 1639 with the present, more spacious, *Singelkerk*. A larger space was needed because the Flemish, Frisian and High German branches of the Anabaptist movement were coming together. The first union service on April 26, 1639, attended by 3,000 people, is said to have lasted five hours.

During the 1700s, Amsterdam Mennonites began to assimilate into society and made major contributions to the cultural, intellectual and economic well-being of the city. The large Dutch Mennonite historical library, which has recently moved to the University of Amsterdam, started out in the *Singelkerk* with the donation of one pastor's personal collection in 1680. The Mennonite Seminary began in the *Singelkerk* around 1730.

Unique to the *Singelkerk* are the folding chairs set up on the main floor. In years past, these chairs were kept in the entrance hall and women paid one *steiver* (five cents) for a chair. The men sat on the fixed benches along the three sides. A specific spot on a bench could be held for an annual fee of 50 *florins*. Two large balconies were occupied by less-well-to-do members and by children of the Mennonite orphanage.

During its 400th anniversary year, the *Singelkerk* underwent a massive restoration and remodelling project, including re-pointing the brickwork and the installation of an elevator. During most of last summer, the scaffolding outside was draped with an enormous four-storey-high banner proclaiming: "400 years of Mennonites on the Singel." ❧