

CANADIAN MENNONITE

April 27, 2009
Volume 13 Number 9

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EDITORIAL

Why Earth Day?

DICK BENNER
EDITOR/PUBLISHER

“In our language there are no words for ‘environment,’” says Ruby Dunstan, an Nlaka’pamux elder, “because we have always been taught that this is part of our everyday living. Daily teachings from our parents, grandparents and great-grandparents show us how to look after the foods that we depend on and that are part of the environment, and that’s also part of spirituality.”



Many of us are fresh from consciousness-raising activities on Earth Day (April 22). Could it be that, on a warming planet plagued by diminishing supplies of fossil fuels and the melting of glaciers worldwide, it just might be the right time to get the arm’s length buzz word “environment” out of our vocabulary and adopt the First Nations’ mantra of making this a part of our spirituality?

Yes, we are making a good start by forming the Mennonite Creation Care Network of persons making this a lifestyle priority. This serious group is sharing compelling stories of individuals and agencies doing creative acts of “caring” and calling congregations to account with an energy audit.

And as good stewards of God’s earth, we have made it an operational part of our theology for 14 years now, by declaring in our 1995 *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective* that, “as stewards of God’s earth, we are called to care for the earth and to bring rest and renewal to the land and everything that lives on it.”

As people of the Book, we share delight

in God’s creation of all living things and in his asking us, as part of the blessing, to be a part of that continuing creative act by “filling the earth and subduing it.” We recite, with exuberant joy, the song of David: “*The earth is the Lord’s and everything in it, the world and all who live in it.*”

Still, stories and theological statements can be interesting parts of our literature and form an important part of a developing ethos in stewardship, peace and justice.

If they are only on paper, though, and not integrated into our daily living, they can remain wonderfully symbolic but not very dynamic.

We salute those among us who have moved from the symbolic to the practical, by making it a part of their spirituality.

We commend, as brought to our attention by the Mennonite Creation Care Network, Milverton Mennonite Fellowship, Ont., that already installed a WaterFurnace® earth energy system for its new building’s heating and cooling needs in the summer of 1991. There are two large, underground, parallel, horizontal loops in the back of the church to service the sanctuary and basement, and one loop in the front to service the offices.

We applaud Rolf Thiessen, the Rockway Mennonite Collegiate teacher in charge of a solar energy project that motivated students to raise \$15,000 over three years to install six solar panels on the southern exposure of their Kitchener, Ont., school building. Thiessen says

that solar energy is part of caring for the creation God has given humans to steward. The Toronto Dominion Friends of the Environment Foundation, the Elora Centre for Environmental Excellence and the Kitchener-Waterloo Community Foundation matched these funds.

We are struck with the innovation of the Erb & Good Family Funeral Home in Waterloo, Ont., which, according to a story by Wally Kroeker in *Marketplace* magazine, has introduced innovative “green” practices into its business, such as using energy-efficient computers, drought-resistant plants and 100 percent recycled paper products, and by reducing the use of traditional formaldehyde embalming fluid. The funeral home, aware of the 65 percent still selecting coffins over cremation, found a small family-owned company in Ontario that produces chemical-free caskets using untreated local softwoods (poplar, pine and ash) and non-toxic glue.

Many of us have joined the 100-Mile Diet to change the way we eat. Locally raised and produced food has been called “the new organic”—better tasting, better for the earth, better for local economies, and better for our health. From reviving the family farm to reconnecting with the seasons, this local food movement is turning good eating into a revolution.

Are we ready to adopt our First Nations’ mantra in making this a part of our spirituality? Can we do away with Earth Day and make every day a time of “creation caring”? It could be a way of banning the word “environment” from our vocabulary forever.

ABOUT THE COVER:

Fifty Canadian Mennonite University volunteers, including students and faculty, spent two-and-a-half hours creating a sandbag dike around a home just south of Winnipeg earlier this month as the Red River began to crest after record flooding south of the border. See story on page 21.

PHOTO: CORDELLA FRIESEN, CANADIAN MENNONITE UNIVERSITY

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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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MARLENE FROESE urges MEDA diners to live out their faith. Since her own retirement she has supervised berry pickers, helped find housing for low-income families, and worked as a chef for seniors. She is waiting to see where God leads next.



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ALEXA DIRKS, a member of Jubilee Mennonite Church, Winnipeg, is now a Juno Award-winner. Chic Gamine, the band she sings in, was honoured in the Roots and Traditional Album of the Year category.

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Believe behave belong

(Or how the church has got the art of discipleship backwards for so long)

BY HENRY NEUFELD



Adapted from a sermon he preached at Point Grey Inter-Mennonite Fellowship, Vancouver, B.C., in 2007, Henry Neufeld suggests a different order of making disciples than normally practised by most churches—but a way that he believes Jesus used in his ministry and that was employed by the early church.

For Judaism, the practical consequences of belief in God are important, not the belief itself.

At a dinner discussion, an Anglican priest described three components of the Christian life: believing, behaving and belonging. He said we usually arrange them in the wrong order: We want people to believe in Jesus, then to behave in a Christ-like way, then to join the church and belong. Believe, behave and belong. But that is backwards, he said. A formula for selling heavenly insurance, he called it.

“Do you agree with these Four Spiritual Laws?” Yes. “Then you’re a Christian.” I am? Is it really that simple?

A rabbi touring British churches and synagogues as a judge for a “Preacher of the Year” competition noticed that most vicars in the Church of England emphasized faith and how important it was to believe in God. Rabbis, on the other hand, talked about practical matters—from business ethics to coping with cancer.

The bishop of Oxford reviewed a book by a Jewish



writer and noted the same thing: 280 pages were devoted to what to do, 20 pages to what to believe. He said that if it had been a Christian publication, it would have been the other way round: 280 pages on what to believe, 20 on what to do.

For Judaism, the practical consequences of belief in God are important, not the belief itself. This has led to an emphasis on action, rather than faith. It gives rise to a somewhat tongue-in-cheek saying that contains a sizable grain of truth: "To be a good Jew, you don't have to believe in God, just do what he says."

A backwards formula

In John 10, Jesus' critics asked him, "*How much longer are you going to keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us openly.*" Jesus' reply is quite simple, and it refers to what he did, about his behaviour: "*I told you before and you don't believe, you've seen what works I've done. You don't believe because you are no sheep of mine.*"

Jesus concludes his comments with, "*I and the Father are one.*" This makes them mad and they gather stones to kill Jesus. To which he responds, "*I have shown you many good works from my Father; for which of these are you stoning me?*" In effect, for which of my miracles do you want to kill me?

His critics in turn reply, "*We're stoning you not for doing good work, but for blasphemy, you claim to be God.*" But Jesus says, "*If I'm not doing my Father's work, there's no need to believe me, but if I am doing it, believe in my work, even if you*

don't believe in me."

That's a startling line: Even if you don't believe in me, believe in my work. The New English Bible translation says, "*My deeds are my credentials.*" Ignore his words, he tells them, but look at my behaviour and see what I've done, evidence that is right in front of their eyes.

The Jewish leaders had no problem with his miracles; his claiming to be God is the problem.

Get your theology right and everything will be fine.

Well, the Jewish leaders knew their theology and they knew the Scriptures. Believe in the Mosaic law, and behave according to it. Then you will belong.

Believe, behave and belong. That's the formula. And it's backwards.

Simply follow Jesus

It should be belong, behave and believe, because that's Jesus example. When Jesus called his disciples, he did not give them a test about their beliefs, about their theology, about their faith. He didn't ask them if they believed the Ten

what we're about. Or we could take another route and say, like Jesus did, look at my life, at the things I've done, and then decide about the Christian faith. I'm not sure I want to do that, to have someone look at my life and then decide about becoming a Christian. If my deeds are my credentials, that gets quite personal. It's downright scary.

The pattern Jesus sets is this: Join up with me, behave like I do, and from that your faith will grow. Don't worry about your faith, just join the group, behave and eventually you'll believe.

What about the verses where Jesus told people to believe in him?

- *Repent and believe the good news.*
- *To those who believed in his name he gave the right to become the children of God.*
- *Whoever believes in him shall not perish but have everlasting life.*
- *The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent.*

The context of these statements is important. The difficulty for the Jews of Jesus' day was profound. They were under Roman military occupation and

When Jesus called his disciples, he did not give them a test about their beliefs, about their theology, about their faith.

Commandments and the Mosaic law. He simply said, "Follow me." We would say, "Hang out with me for a while. Join up with me. Watch what I do."

I wonder what a church growth strategy would look like if we said to people, come hang out with us for a while, see

hoping for a messiah to deliver them. Jesus comes along and announces he is the one. But he isn't worried about the Romans. It's no big deal if a soldier wants you to carry his backpack for a mile—you carry it for two. If your enemy is hungry, feed him. Repay evil with good.

This is not the kind of messiah they expected . . . or wanted. They wanted a military leader to drive the Roman occupiers out. For Jews of his day to believe in Jesus as the Messiah required a radical shift that was beyond their comprehension. It required a total rethinking of everything they believed. That's what Jesus called for when he asked people to repent and believe in him. Change your behaviour totally. Re-jig your thinking because you have it all wrong.

Starting over

That's what conversion in Jesus' day required. And Alan Kreider, in his 2000 book, *The Change of Conversion and the Origin of Christendom*, notes that the church of the first few centuries made a huge issue of behaviour before getting to the belonging and believing parts.

But conversion doesn't require that from us today. We don't ask people to reject their fundamental thinking and behaviour. Instead, we say, "Believe this and you're saved." That's the heavenly insurance formula. But Jesus didn't give them a simple formula. He said if you want to follow me, start over.

Our preoccupation with correct belief is excessive. Obsessed with correct theology and correct doctrine, we have creeds, statements of faith and covenants, all designed to keep us on the straight and narrow. If we all just believe the same thing, the same words in this creed or covenant, everything will be fine.

When potential pastors are being interviewed, they are asked such questions as:

- Do you believe the Bible?
- Is it inerrant?
- Do you believe in the Trinity?
- Do you believe in a literal hell or in a specific form of baptism?
- Do you believe women in ministry is biblical?

But rather than focusing on the candidate's theology, the person's behaviour should come under scrutiny. Your deeds are your credentials, so tell us what you've done. Candidates should be asked what they've done to alleviate suffering in the world. Interviews with the applicant's spouse, children and neighbours would

help clarify the candidate's actions.

At one point the disciples told Jesus they saw someone casting out demons in his name, but he wasn't part of Jesus' group. "Because he's not with us, we tried to stop him," they reported. He doesn't

belong to our group, his theology is different and probably wrong. But Jesus rebuked them: "Anyone who is not against you is for you."

On another occasion, James and John wanted to call down fire from heaven on the Samaritans and Jesus said no. Just because people believe differently than you—that's no reason to condemn them. That's not how to treat people with whom you disagree.

Jesus said of the Pharisees: they have the right doctrine and they believe all the right stuff, but where is it going to get them? The important thing is to live

like Christ, not to believe in a prescribed creed or statements of faith. Love is more important than doctrine. The purpose of Christianity is not to discuss the details of theology, but to minister to human misery.

The purpose of Christianity is not to discuss the details of theology, but to minister to human misery.

Yet if I insist on a "belong, behave, believe" order, I am simply replacing one formula with another. Maybe the sequence of these three isn't that important. Maybe what is important is that all three happen—and continue to happen. A healthy interaction between believing, behaving and belonging is needed. If we want to assess our faith, a review of the integration of our behaviour, belonging and beliefs would be an effective tool.

Hang out with us for while, see what we're about, get to know us, see what we do. That was the way of him who said, "My deeds are my credentials." ❧

/// For discussion

1. If someone claims to be a Christian, what expectations do we have about that person's behaviour? How much of our behaviour is determined by what the people around us do, and how much is determined by our beliefs? What motivates traditional (conservative) Mennonite people to follow their church's rules?
2. According to Henry Neufeld, we don't expect conversion to bring profound change in behaviour; we just say, "Believe this and you're saved." Do you agree with Neufeld that we have over-emphasized belief and under-emphasized behaviour? What would be some positive and/or negative consequences of shifting that emphasis?
3. If love is more important than doctrine, and your deeds are your credentials, does that mean that someone who ministers to humanity could get to heaven without believing in Jesus? How do you interpret Jesus' story of the sheep and the goats in Matthew 25:31-46, or James 2:14-26, where James says faith without deeds is useless? Is this an invitation to "works" righteousness?
4. For hundreds of years some Christians have taught that you cannot earn your way to heaven, pointing to Romans 3:22 and saying righteousness comes by faith. What role has this played in a lack of emphasis on right behaviour? How do we discipline church members who misbehave? Has the church been dispensing "cheap grace"?
5. Do you think the Mennonite Church has been too permissive? Are we facing a time of change?

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.

✉ African aid worker provides another 'contrary view' to global consumption

RE: OLIVIA DYCK'S "A contrary view to a contrary view" letter, March 2, page 7.

Dyck's response to Al Doerksen's opinion piece ("A contrarian view of anti-consumption Christmas rhetoric," Dec. 15, 2008, page 6) begs for a reply on so many different levels I hardly know where to begin.

To suggest that I might be greedy—or worse—to enjoy a banana, coffee or some other imported product, and that we should avoid all such products, is truly unenlightened. There is a difference between "free trade" and "fair trade." Banana and coffee farmers in Africa, for example, want to sell their produce to the world, but on a level playing field. They are not concerned about North American consumption, but they are very much concerned about the agricultural subsidies North Americans and Europeans provide to their own farmers, which price African products out of the market.

Doerksen's point, I believe, is that humans do have to consume . . . we all have to eat. So the question is, how to do this in a way that benefits all parties?

Finally, Dyck's point about cell phones is uninformed and just a tad patronizing. Here in Africa, a cell phone is truly a populist item. It is democratic because it bypasses the inefficient and expensive land line phone systems, and is an income-generating business for some because they can charge others for use of the phone and make a living. Cell phones put people in touch with friends and family, and, despite what Dyck suggests, their use is relatively cheap in most countries around the world.

I invite Dyck to come to Africa and learn from the

good folks here what the reality is, not what she thinks it is.

DOUG AMSTUTZ, ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA

Doug Amstutz is the Mennonite Central Committee co-country representative for Ethiopia.

✉ Claims regarding the church and Bible disputed

THERE WERE SOME rather interesting claims made in the March 2 article, "Ten Things to Remember," page 4.

The Bible is the creation of the church? The common scriptures—which Christians paternalistically refer to as the Old Testament—emerged well before the church ever came on the scene, and I was under the impression that these Scriptures also are part of the church's Scriptures.

And "the church decided that the 27 books we now have in the New Testament were the believers' reliable guide for faith and life"? I looked over my listing of church councils, but could find no reference to a church decision about what should be invoked as Scripture until the Council of Trent, but that's 16 centuries down the road.

An invitation from



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*God is calling us to Paraguay...
¡Vamos!*

"Come together in the way of Jesus Christ."

—Philippians 2:1-11

Rather, the church recognized the Scriptures' authority. The church didn't create them. As Athanasius, the bishop of Alexandria in the fourth century, wrote, "These are the sources of salvation," listing those books that the Alexandrian Christians recognized as authoritative. But he didn't create it. The Scriptures created the church, not the other way around.

Finally, the author's counsel to act as the Bereans did in interpreting Scripture in community results in sectarianism. As long as Bereans consult only with other Bereans (and Mennonites with other Mennonites), we cut ourselves off from the communion of saints. Instead, the author of the Letter to the Ephesians

urged us with a breathtaking hermeneutical ecumenism, "to grasp with all God's people"—not just with fellow Mennonites or Bereans—the sweep of scriptural intent.

VERN RATZLAFF, SASKATOON, SASK.

✉ Bible reading series proves a blessing for reader

I WAS READING the March 2 edition of *Canadian Mennonite* and was blessed by the "Reading the Bible for all it's Worth" article by John H. Neufeld.

Here is my answer to the "For discussion" question,

GOD, MONEY AND ME

On receiving graciously

MIKE STRATHDEE

Lesson four in Mennonite Foundation of Canada's study series, "God, Money & Me," is entitled "We are all receivers." The lesson asks provocative questions that challenge conventional thinking, particularly our desire for independence and the need to always be on the giving, rather than the receiving, end.

There is no question that I owe an incalculable debt to many people—my wife Carolyn, my daughters, parents and in-laws, friends and relatives, neighbours, teachers, pastors, mentors—for the blessings I have enjoyed in life. Yet I have remained stubbornly suspicious of, and frequently resistant to, the idea of incurring debt, financial or otherwise. This attitude may come from a subconscious awareness of being descended from generations of tenant farmers, shepherders who scratched out a bare existence among the rocks of northern Scotland.

Carolyn and I have tried to live with as little debt as possible, allowing her to stay home with our girls and nurturing the middle class fantasy of being mortgage-free by the time our oldest child is ready to attend our local Mennonite high

school. That, I've often dreamed, would allow us to merely substitute one set of payments for another, and allow Ella to benefit from Christian education without having to cut back on giving to causes we care about.

After all, as Jesus is quoted as saying in Acts 20:35, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." And God laughs at my presumption and tendency to comprehend only part of the passage. The Bible doesn't say that those who receive aren't blessed, so why am I uncomfortable be-



Now we talk about how soon we will need to begin tapping a home equity line, and for how many years.

ing on the receiving end of things?

Since our youngest daughter, Kate, was diagnosed with borderline autism, our preoccupations, outlook and financial plans have shifted dramatically. Conversations about when we can afford to do which renovation and still stay on track to be debt-free have gone by the wayside, as we started expensive and intensive private therapy that costs tens of thousands of dollars a year. It is therapy that could make the difference in whether Kate is able to enjoy a

productive adulthood or will be ever dependent on assistance from the state.

Now we talk about how soon we will need to begin tapping a home equity line, and for how many years. Still, when the first of several friends asked if there was a way they could assist financially, I replied, "Your prayers are what we need and covet most."

My wife's parents most generously presented us with a series of cheques to help defray part of the therapy costs. We are thankful for their selflessness, and are trying to work at being okay with the fact that we will neither be able to pay it back nor "pay it forward," for many years at least.

Receiving graciously is a challenge. It's a challenge to acknowledge dependence and interdependence. But maybe I'll

be able to better live out the challenge of the song "Will You Let Me Be Your Servant" once I can fully accept the line that says, "Pray that I may have the grace to let you be my servant too."

Mike Strathdee is a stewardship consultant at the Kitchener, Ont., office of the Mennonite Foundation of Canada. For stewardship education and estate and charitable gift planning, contact your nearest foundation office or visit Mennofoundation.ca.

“What is your favourite Scripture passage?” I have different scriptures for different times that I believe are given from God my Father through the Holy Spirit. For the last two years, John 17 has become big for me: Jesus has prayed for all the ones that will accept him as Saviour, and for me too; it’s a wonderful assurance that I will make it in this world. God my Father—Jehovah Jirah, our rock of ages—is able to keep my spirit, heart, mind, soul and body together, and to never lose hope until he calls me home.

And it’s the same for the church, the bride of Jesus. The thing is to trust that all my brothers and sisters in

Christ will work by the Spirit. God’s power is bigger than Satan’s, and the Holy Spirit is leading us right through the power of prayer. I believe my Father in heaven loves to answer prayer.

MARLENE HIEBERT, BLUMENORT, MAN.

✉ Help needed for summer youth assembly

THIS SUMMER AT the Mennonite Church Canada youth assembly, plans are underway to assemble

FAMILY TIES

Dance lesson No. 4: Healing touch

MELISSA MILLER

A childhood memory captures it well. My father, a lively tease, would trap my little wrists together in one of his large, strong hands. Holding me captive, he would then use his free hand to tickle my ribs and tummy, making me squirm and wriggle. It was fun because Dad was paying attention to me, and we laughed at the game, enjoying the physical closeness. And it was not fun because tickling can be uncomfortable. I couldn’t escape and, since my own hands were trapped, I had little capacity to resist.

Such experiences with physical touch lay down a track for a child’s self-identity, and for relationships with others. Humans need touch, and they need to receive touch that is safe, consistent and nurturing. Tickling too often sends the opposite kind of message—one of aggression and dominance.

My experiences being tickled by my father gave me a mixed perspective on touch. If I had to put into words the lesson of that childhood game, I would say I learned that physical closeness is risky: It might be fun or it might be uncomfortable, even painful. I also learned that my

partner—in that case, my dad—had control, and that I was vulnerable. In short, it set me up to feel ambivalent about physical touch, especially that from men.

All this remained in the shadows of awareness until my recent experiences with dance lessons. Dance involves getting close, moving into that dangerous physical zone of risk. Unknowingly, I was wary, carrying with me the need to be on guard, just in case the play sud-



Is it too much of a stretch to imagine God might use unorthodox means to bring about healing...?

denly became painful. Dancing with my husband, I suddenly glimpsed the tension I had long carried. Simultaneously, I realized that dance lessons were melting that tension.

The insight came with joy and promise, like that inspired by an unexpected sighting of a sunrise glowing beautifully in an eastern window. In a flash, I realized as I was dancing that I had generalized from the negative experiences of my childhood into other interactions involving physical touch. And I knew that I no longer had

to carry that old memory with such vigilance. I could be open to new learning about touch that was safe, respectful and pleasurable.

What a holy gift! Christianity is an embodied religion. We proclaim that God took on bodily form and lived as a human being in the person of Jesus. Many of Jesus’ miracles involved physical healing of human bodies. Jesus’ touch was often a significant part of his interactions with others.

Today, we often pray for God’s help with the physical illnesses of ourselves or our loved ones. Is it too much of a stretch to imagine that God might use unorthodox means to bring about healing, like ballroom dance lessons?

Writing now, I find myself humming a song in the hymnal which includes

the words, “New man, woman new” and “Spirit of life moving” (*Hymnal: A Worship Book*, No. 299, “New Earth, Heavens New”). In the season of Easter, we are especially conscious of the new life that the Spirit of God brings to us, perhaps even in surprising and unexpected ways.

Melissa Miller (familyties@mts.net) lives in Winnipeg, where she ponders family relationships as a pastor, counsellor and author.

10,000 school kits for Cuban students. This is quite an ambitious project, something that can only happen if we all work together.

We have approximately 5,000 school kits accounted for, but that leaves us with the need to find the supplies or money for 5,000 more. At \$7 to \$10 a kit, that's over \$35,000!

We need your help in getting there. There are many good reasons why you should consider helping us out. Here are two of them:

1. Investing in the youths of your church is one of the best investments you'll ever make.
2. Investing in the education of students around the world is one of the best investments you'll ever make.

We're asking for donations of money or school kit

materials (thanks, but we have enough bags). If you would like to donate supplies, send them with the nearest youth group going to the assembly.

If you would like to donate money and receive a receipt, please send the money to Mennonite Church Canada and designate it as "Youth Assembly School Kits."

Every pencil, notebook and donation will make a huge difference, both here in Canada and around the world.

KYLE PENNER, WINNIPEG

Kyle Penner attends Springfield Heights Mennonite Church, Winnipeg, and is a member of the Youth Assembly Planning Committee.

FROM OUR LEADERS

See you in Saskatoon

DAVE BERGEN

In only a few short weeks, on June 5-7 in Saskatoon, Sask., members of Mennonite Church Canada congregations will meet for our annual delegate assembly. Some may ask why in the world we summon folks from hither and yon, year after year, to meet together in this way. True, we are required, legally, to meet certain minimum requirements pertaining to the approval of budgets and the way we do business as a charitable organization. But this hardly scratches the surface.



Quite simply, we meet because, in the words of Ralph Milton, "none of us is as smart as all of us" (*God for Beginners*, Northstone Publishing 1996). However, even a statement this simple needs some unpacking.

We meet together because we believe that we are not sufficient unto ourselves either as Christians or as congregations. We need one another to be faithful to our calling to "be" the church as envisioned by God—one people, one body, called, equipped and sent "to engage the world with the reconciling gospel of

Jesus Christ" (MC Canada Statement of Identity and Purpose).

With our differing gifts and functions in God's reconciling work, we need to come together because we complete one another. We have many different vantage points, located as we are in different geographic, social and cultural settings across Canada. We meet together in order to test what we think we are hearing

We meet together in order to test what we think we are hearing from the Spirit

from the Spirit, so that the voice of God through the church will be able to summon the best of what we are and what we can be, together, for the mission of God in the world.

From our various locations in life and faith, we bring our incomplete understanding of faithful living, and search together for a word from God that is stronger and clearer because we have sought direction by the Spirit, with one mind, in one community. As a visible, Canadian, Mennonite representation of

the worldwide body of Christ, we discern together the times in which we live, so that our response to injustice and oppression in the world will be illuminated by the light of the Christ who frees from oppression and brings good news of peace to all.

We meet together as a Mennonite Church body in Canada because we are being formed daily into the likeness of Christ, our head, who prayed that the church would be one with the purposes of God, just as Jesus himself was.

Much more can be said. I would simply invite you, a part of the beautiful, diverse, complex and wonderful body of Christ,

to make your way to Saskatoon this June, and there to cultivate again your deep, vital connection to the other members of the body of Christ. Come to learn from Scripture and from each other. Come to worship and work and celebrate. Come to be renewed and stretched in the faith of this living body we share. See you in Saskatoon!

Dave Bergen is executive secretary of formation ministries for Mennonite Church Canada.

/// Milestones

Births/Adoptions

- Bigham**—Eli James (b. April 8, 2009), to Daniel and Meredith Bigham, St. Jacobs Mennonite, Ont.
- Chodos**—Samuel Robert Krahn (b. March 30, 2009), to Dave Chodos and Natasha Krahn, Waterloo North Mennonite, Waterloo, Ont.
- Cornies**—Henry Wallace (b. April 5, 2009), to Ron and Karen Cornies, Waterloo North Mennonite, Waterloo, Ont.
- Fieguth**—Ian Neil (b. March 4, 2009), to Ferdinand and Lynn McDonough Fieguth, Niagara United Mennonite, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ont.
- Heinrichs**—Isabelle Janessa Suzanne (b. Jan. 25, 2009), adopted by Steve and Ann Heinrichs, Church of the Way, Granisle, B.C.
- Janzen**—Asher Isaiah (b. Jan. 20, 2009), to Marla and Nathan Janzen, Zoar Mennonite, Langham, Sask., in Edmonton.
- Jonjegan Harder**—Tobias Gavin (b. Feb. 13, 2009), to Charleen and Kendall Jongejan Harder, Valleyview Mennonite, London, Ont.
- Kroeker**—Carson Anthony David (b. March 5, 2009), to Anthony (Tofield Mennonite, Alta.) and Andrea Kroeker, in Ft. MacMurray, Alta.
- Renaud**—Wynter Maggie Mae (b. Dec. 17, 2008), to Lou Renaud and Heather Perquin, Valleyview Mennonite, London, Ont.

Marriages

- Freeman/Wills**—Kim Freeman (St. Jacobs Mennonite, Ont.) and John Wills, at Grey Silo Golf Course, Waterloo, Ont., March 14, 2009.
- Goertzen/Janzen**—Andrew Goertzen and Jill Janzen, at Sherbrooke Mennonite, Vancouver, April 4, 2009.
- Kim/Woelk**—Hong-Soek (Scott) Kim and Cheryl Woelk (Zion Mennonite, Swift Current, Sask.), in Seoul, South Korea, March 28, 2009.

Deaths

- Bergey**—Lorna Lucile (nee Shantz), 87 (b. May 29, 1921; d. March 22, 2009), First Mennonite, Kitchener, Ont.
- Derksen**—Abram, 80 (d. March 25, 2009), Winkler Bergthaler Mennonite, Man.
- Dettweiler**—Howard, 79 (b. April 16, 1929; d. April 2, 2009), Breslau Mennonite, Ont.
- Driedger**—Helen (nee Epp), 79 (d. March 26, 2009), Leamington United Mennonite.
- Fast**—Mary Ethel (nee Thiessen), 93 (b. June 25, 1915; d. March 30, 2009), Nutana Park Mennonite, Saskatoon, Sask.
- Goertz**—Willy, 79 (b. May 31, 1929; d. March 27, 2009), Niagara United Mennonite, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ont.
- Peters**—Peter Heinrich, 65 (b. Dec. 7, 1943; d. April 5, 2009), First Mennonite, Winnipeg, in Qualicum Beach, B.C.
- Hubert**—Leola Jean, 59 (b. July 5, 1949; d. March 4, 2009), Zoar Mennonite, Langham, Sask.
- Regier**—Hans Joachim, 72 (b. July 15, 1936; d. March 23, 2009), Niagara United Mennonite, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ont.
- Rempel**—Abram, 77 (b. Oct. 3, 1931; d. March 21, 2009), Jubilee Mennonite, Wnnipeg.
- Rempel**—John, 84 (d. March 10, 2009), Leamington United Mennonite, Ont.
- Siemens**—Katharina (Tina) (nee Neufeld), 87 (b. April 24, 1921; d. April 3, 2009), Rosthern Mennonite, Sask.

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



YOUNG PROPHETS

A most beautiful way

BY CHRISTINA BARTEL BARKMAN

Burned out homes, evacuees tenting along the beach, helicopters flying low overhead and soldiers patrolling the streets—hard evidence of a community devastated by war. These scenes greeted me as we drove into the municipality of Kauswagan in Mindanao, Philippines, with Peacebuilders Community Inc., a ministry supported by Mennonite Church Canada Witness, to distribute relief to internally displaced Filipino people.

Kauswagan is one of the many communities affected by the recent escalation of armed conflict in rural regions of central Mindanao, resulting in roughly 400,000 displaced people throughout the area. War broke out in July 2008 after the failed signing of a Memorandum of Agreement on Ancestral Domain between the Moro Islamic Liberation Front and the government of the Philippines, an agreement that would have increased an existing Muslim autonomous zone and enhanced peace talk efforts between the two groups. An attack by rebel forces on Aug. 18 in the municipality of Kauswagan killed 21 civilians and burned 20 homes.

With the looming threat of further civilian raids in Kauswagan, I assumed a solemn and gloomy atmosphere would permeate the air, but, instead, I was welcomed with smiles and playful laughter. Soldiers carrying their rifles grinned and waved hello with surprising enthusiasm as we drove through checkpoints. Local volunteers welcomed us warmly, happily preparing feasts and providing us with a place to stay.

Amidst my disgust at the capacity humans have to bring devastation to one another, I glimpsed the beauty and wonder of the human spirit. What compelled an armed bandit to clean and bandage the gunshot wound of a young man he had just shot? And what made rebels show mercy to a pleading family who offered them food if they would be spared? How was that same family able to invite the rebels into their home for karaoke? This astounded me. How are rebels and victims able to join together in song?

After witnessing the devastation inflicted by the conflict, we met with our field workers to help distribute relief to 270 displaced families. With their

farms now a battlefield, these families have pitched makeshift tents along the beach and are ready to escape by boat to the nearby city of Iligan if they hear any gunshots.

With fluttering hands and broken English, a mother who had just received her food package expressed her fear that rebels would attack again. As her hands depicted an exploding bomb, I sensed her terror and quietly prayed that she and her community might someday experience peace and no longer live in fear.

Despite their apprehension, the people of Kauswagan seemed remarkably joyful. Women chatted happily with wide-eyed smiles as they waited in line to receive their food packages. Youths giggled as they eagerly gathered around my “foreigner” husband, Darnell, to have their picture taken. Even the face of an elderly woman, crippled by a recent stroke, shone with delight when we greeted her.

My Lonely Planet guide to the Philippines says that, according to a 2005 global survey, “Filipinos came out as one of the world’s happiest people.” With 70 different dialects, the article claims that Filipinos don’t have words for depression, anxiety, anguish or even boredom. How is this the case in a country stricken by war, poverty, colonialism and corrupt leadership? My western worldview tries to tell me that material security brings happiness, but here in the Philippines I have been moved by the human ability to love, show mercy and experience joy in desolate situations.

We can choose how we react to calamities and trials. As Austrian neurologist and psychiatrist Viktor Frankl writes, “Everything can be taken from a man, but one thing: the last of the human freedoms—to choose one’s attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one’s way.” The Filipinos have a wonderful capacity to choose a most beautiful way. ❧

Christina and Darnell Barkman of Peace Mennonite Church, Richmond B.C., are serving in Mindanao, Philippines, for 10 months on an internship assignment with Mennonite Church Canada Witness. Witness and Mennonite Central Committee both contributed funds for relief.

PHOTO BY MIKKI BARTEL



Darnell Barkman, in the green head-covering, is pictured with Kauswagan youths at a relief distribution site. The makeshift tent in the right background now serves as a family’s home.

VIEWPOINT

Whom can you trust?

BY KARL KOOP

It is sometimes said that we live in an age of mistrust. We are sceptical of what politicians say, just as we've learned that economic forecasters can be wrong.

In matters of faith, we may also have our questions and doubts. Perhaps this is especially the case during the Easter season, when we are invited to celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Can we trust this story even though it does not seem to mesh well with what we know from experience? From what we know, people do not simply rise from the dead after lying in a tomb for two or three days. Belief in such matters seems far-fetched. Indeed, if we have been paying any attention to the crusading atheists of our day, perhaps we should consider abandoning

century forecasting the final disappearance of religion appear to have been wrong. To be sure, Europe and North America have seen a decline in religious adherence, yet observers of religion have noted that religious revival and spiritual energy has been surging, especially in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

It is worth noting that the biblical writers did not concern themselves with arguments for the existence of God. On the other hand, they did address matters of doubt. The doubting disciple, Thomas, in the Gospel of John comes to mind, as do the stories of Abraham in Genesis and the story of Israel in Exodus, along with the Psalms of David and the Book of Job. Here, we encounter people of faith who are angry with God, who doubt his

Yet the attempt on the part of political leaders to enforce atheism largely failed, and many of the predictions of the last century forecasting the final disappearance of religion appear to have been wrong.

altogether what we have been told about God's existence!

While there were those in the ancient world who denied the existence of God, atheism has largely been a modern and western phenomenon that gained momentum following the Age of Enlightenment and the French Revolution. In the 19th and 20th centuries, religious sceptics like Freud and Marx concluded that belief in God was a kind of wish fulfillment, or it functioned like opium that was intended to pacify the masses.

Yet the attempt on the part of political leaders to enforce atheism largely failed, and many of the predictions of the last

purposes and actions, who feel that they have no place to turn. The issue that the biblical writers were addressing was not whether God exists, but whether he is still present and listening.

In this respect, the Bible is not always full of comfort and assurances. As Anglican archbishop Rowan Williams has observed, the Bible is often about the appalling cost of letting God come into our lives and trusting him even when the evidence is somewhat uncertain. Nevertheless, one has to see that the angst and struggle that Abraham and Paul exhibit in their lives "is itself a kind of argument for God: if they take God that seriously, at least this isn't some cosy

made-up way of making yourself feel better," Williams writes in *Tokens of Trust*. If we consider some of the better-known biblical characters, doubt seems to be a component of faith, rather than its negation.

It is true that the existence of God or the resurrection of Christ cannot be proven scientifically or otherwise, and it is unlikely that someone will come along in the future with a novel argument that will establish once and for all that God exists. Yet it is also the case that atheism is also impossible to prove. High-profile atheists often fail to admit that their disbelief in God is also a "leap of faith." The very intellectual scepticism that they see lacking in Christians is often absent in their own thinking. Atheism, too, is a kind of confession of faith.

Arguments for or against the existence of God rarely convince, and usually do not have the power to transform people's imaginations and beliefs. But then God did not choose to reveal himself through argument; rather, he chose to make himself known through love exhibited in the birth, death and resurrection of Christ. This love has now entered into people's lives as an ongoing witness of God's presence and actions. This puts enormous responsibility on believers who inevitably make mistakes, like anyone else. But it can also be an affirmation of God's presence at a time when people are asking, "Whom can you trust?" ❧



Karl Koop is the director of graduate studies and associate professor of history and theology at Canadian Mennonite University, Winnipeg. A longer version of the article was originally published

in Community Well, the monthly newsletter of First Mennonite Church, Winnipeg.

STORIES OF FAITH IN LIFE

Breaking bread in a barn

BY JACK DUECK

The 1917 Communist Revolution destroyed the well-being of the Mennonites in southern Russia and sorely tested their biblical faith. The ensuing civil war and its roiling anarchy—the White army, the Red army and the Nestor Makhno bandits—swept over the Mennonite villages 27 times until their livestock, property, families and hope all lay in ruins. Their fervent prayers often seemed to be counterpointed by boxcars creaking to the Siberian Gulag Archipelago.

Dietrich Wiens (a pseudonym) had been a wealthy landowner with a large work force of servants and farm labourers, some from among the Russian peasants. Now he finds himself hiding in a riverside bush. His large estate lies vacant, home only to the wind. His fields neglected, all livestock confiscated, his son banished to Siberia, his older daughters massacred by the Makhno, his wife and younger children vanished. Grief and starvation consume him; prayers and hope wither away.

Obsessed by ravenous hunger, he remembers that shortly before the last Makhno pillage he had buried salted pork and roasted *zwieback* (rolls) beneath a pile of straw in a corner of the barn. Driven by a craving for food, he slinks out of the bush, and in a terrified stumble lurches along the hedgerow to the estate. Terrified, he edges from building to



building towards the barn, feeling in his bones that the communist thugs or the Makhno bandits are lurking in wait of him.

Almost too weak to stand, he wiggles his frame between the two rail-hung barn doors. In the dark interior, the dust mites dance in the sunlight

that shines through the holes left by the bandits' bullets. The barn's skeleton creaks in the cooling late afternoon air.

Wiens knows the enemy is poised to pounce. The hair on his neck bristles, his skin crawls, but still, as to a magnet drawn, he bends staggering to the lumped straw in the gloomy corner.

The straw quivers and bursts into his face. A foe set on his demise? But no, this creature, cringing and cowering before him, is a former servant he had once severely beaten. The servant is gnawing Wiens's *zwieback*. Cowering before Master Wiens, the emaciated peasant knows he is about to receive a beating for devouring the rich man's bread. (*There were no labour laws in those days. Fathers also beat their children. Did not the Scriptures warn us not to spare the rod?*)

Wiens had been a large landowner with a complex and diverse agricultural system to maintain. He was also a determined manager; that's how he had become an estate owner. On his property everyone—children and peasants—needed to know their roles, responsibilities and expectations. The family dined in



Bandit Nestor Makhno

the elegant dining room attended to by uniformed servants. Servants and even the Mennonite teacher, hired to teach the estate children, dined apart. It was an ordered world: God was in his heaven, and all was right with the world.

Wiens, deacon, elder, and graced with wealth, knew how to order the world and the church. Order and even peace had to be firmly enforced. The proof of the pudding—so to speak—was in the eating. And God did seem to help those who helped themselves.

Now, Wiens's world freezes in time: Two emaciated humans, the cowering peasant and the feared Mennonite. A trusted deacon in the church, Wiens had regularly served communion. In a flash, he now knew what communion meant. Kneeling before the abject Russian peasant, he took the bread, crying out, "No! No! We are no longer master and servant, Russian or Mennonite, but brothers under God's creation." Huddled in the mouldy straw and cow dung, they broke the bread, sharing, as he later said, "communion of our Lord and only master." ❧

Cowering before Master Wiens, the emaciated peasant knows he is about to receive a beating for devouring the rich man's bread.

The story was compiled from oral sources. E-mail Jack Dueck at ejadueck@gmail.com or visit him online at jackdueck.com.

GOD AT WORK IN THE CHURCH

And the two shall become one

MC Manitoba, Evangelical Mennonite Mission congregations merge, forming new community fellowship

BY EVELYN REMPEL PETKAU
Manitoba Correspondent
NIVERVILLE, MAN.

Although the population of Niverville has doubled in recent years, the churches haven't grown, Ken Warkentin, pastor of Niverville Mennonite Church, reported at the annual delegate sessions of Mennonite Church Manitoba in February.

Niverville, a community of between 2,500 and 3,000 people, lays claim to the title of being the fastest-growing rural community in Manitoba, and has become a bedroom community for Winnipeg. That growth, however, has not been reflected in the churches of Niverville.

"Officially, the initial idea of finding a way to work together as churches and pool resources came from Elim (an Evangelical Mennonite Mission Church congregation)," said Warkentin. "Unofficially, neighbours have been talking over the fence for the past five years about working together."

In September 2007, the leadership of Niverville Mennonite, Elim and 4th Ave. Mennonite Brethren Church began to meet together.

"We realized we were not growing and that we have to be more effective in the community. This is about reaching out," said John Klassen, pastor at Elim, adding, "We were clear from the outset in our partnering that we didn't want to bring any unresolved issues or baggage."

In June 2008, the MB church decided to withdraw from the discussions to work on

some of its own issues.

"We decided to continue as two churches but left the door open to them," Klassen explained.

Niverville Mennonite and Elim held joint and separate prayer meetings as they continued the discernment process. Last summer, they held a healing service.

"Forty-three years ago, the Niverville Mennonite Church went through an uncomfortable and unpleasant split," said Warkentin. Issues of language, style of leadership, and culture resulted in the split. About 20 years ago, the splinter church, Elim, became an EMMC congregation.

Part of the discerning involved a survey of the community.

"We discovered lots of needs that we could meet and we learned that the perceptions of the churches were not all positive," said Warkentin.

Late last fall, the two churches voted separately about working together to form a new congregation. Each church gave strong endorsement to move in this direction. On Jan. 1, they began to worship together.

"We want to be more engaged in the community," said Klassen. "We want to discern what this new church would look like when we see the wider community as our parish."

Elim had a membership of approximately 120. Niverville Mennonite's membership was somewhat higher. Currently, the new congregation is using the Niverville Mennonite facility and the youths hold their activities at the Elim facility. Sunday morning attendance is between 200 and 245 now.

"We were prepared to lose 10 percent, but that hasn't happened," said Klassen.

Morning worship services are followed by "Explore and More," a Sunday school hour. A "talk back" time also follows the worship service.

"It's been amazing, the tremendous unity, such cohesion of purpose and vision," said Klassen. "Personally, I would have loved to see 4th Ave. come on board. It would be an even stronger witness to the community, but we parted on good terms."

Warkentin and Klassen share pastoral responsibilities.

"We are assuming our new congregation

is welcomed with open arms in both conferences," said Warkentin. "Sometime in our second year, we will deal with the question of conference membership."

At a special service on March 1, the new congregation discerned its new name: Niverville Community Fellowship. ❧

PHOTO BY ANITA KEHLER



With MC Manitoba conference pastor Henry Kliever, standing fourth from left, leading the group of pastors in prayer, Evangelical Mennonite Mission pastor Allen Kehler, kneeling, cast the lot at the March 1 service to determine the name of the new congregation: Niverville Community Fellowship.

❧ Briefly noted

Former pastor to do development work

ABBOTSFORD, B.C.—The Evangelism and Church Development Committee of Mennonite Church British Columbia has hired Wally Nickel on a six-month contract to do research and development work. His focus will include doing a demographic study in preparation for a possible church plant, as well as connecting with some of MC B.C.'s other church plant projects. Nickel is a former associate pastor at Sherbrooke Mennonite Church, Vancouver, and has recently been occupied as a stay-at-home dad.

—MC B.C. Release

FROM ANABAPTISM TO TRADITIONALISM

Liturgical alternative for Mennonite worshippers

STORY AND PHOTO BY EVELYN REMPEL PETKAU

Manitoba Correspondent

WINNIPEG

A growing number of Mennonite young people in Winnipeg find themselves in the pews of Anglican churches on Sunday mornings. Many of them strongly adhere to their Mennonite Anabaptist faith and identity, but are thirsting for a different kind of worship experience than they find in most Mennonite churches.

"Many of these young people have left the Mennonite Church because the worship style is not meeting their needs," says Stephen Nighswander Rempel.

So Nighswander Rempel and his wife Heidi, along with Maggie Nighswander, Elsie Rempel, and Hippo and Miriam Tshimanga, have been the "drivers" in shaping and providing a new Mennonite liturgical worship experience. They met last fall with Norm Voth, Mennonite Church Manitoba's director of evangelism and service ministries, to discuss ways of meeting this need. Since January, they have held monthly evening worship services at various Mennonite churches in and around Winnipeg, with 20 to 30 attending.

For the Nighswander Rempels, the desire for a more liturgical form of worship grew out of their three-year experience in Australia. "We began attending the Anglican service because there were few Mennonites where we lived," says Stephen. "We enjoyed the liturgical style. You knew what to expect. The service creates a sense of community when you know the same words and recite them together with people around the world."

"It also is a way that bridges history," adds Heidi. "Singing the Psalms combines music and Scripture. It is meditative and it bridges time because that style of music comes out of an ancient setting."

"Music has always been important to me, but four-part harmony is not always inclusive enough. Chanting is more unifying because all can participate," says Maggie

Nighswander. "There is a beauty in the simplicity of it. The music supports the words, but the words are always the key focus."

Silent spaces throughout the service offer times of reflection after each Bible reading and at points during the reciting of the early church creeds. The atmosphere is contemplative, while the service involves physical participation through sitting, standing and kneeling.

For Elsie Rempel, MC Canada's director of Christian education and nurture, the practice of communion has been particularly important. "I work a lot with worship resources and have done research on children and communion," she says. "I long to see communion restored to the heart of Mennonite worship, to see a combining of worship with the Word and worship at the table. This group puts into practice what I became convinced about."

The liturgical worship services include regular communion. All those who are not baptized are invited to come for grapes and a blessing during this time.

"We are not trying to ignore our roots," Nighswander explains. Embedded in the hour-long services are seven-minute homilies, whose focus for the next several months will be the Sermon on the Mount because it has been so formative for Anabaptists.

The group receives support from several MC Manitoba pastors as it continues to work out the kinks. "We value the stability of the liturgy, but we also want to have room for flexibility, adapting the service around special events such as baptism and working more with the children," says Nighswander.

For now, the group acknowledges meeting once a month is often enough. It plans to continue monthly services until the end of June, when the group will break for the summer and evaluate its efforts to date.

The group's next service is at Charleswood Mennonite Church on May 24 at 7 p.m.

For more information, visit the Winnipeg Liturgical Mennonite Service website at wlms.weebly.com. ☘



Stephen Nighswander Rempel, holding his son Ben, left, Elsie Rempel, Maggie Nighswander and Heidi Nighswander Rempel meet together to plan monthly liturgical worship services for Mennonites in the Winnipeg area.

FROM TRADITIONALISM TO ANABAPTISM

PHOTO BY LINDA SHELLEY

Anabaptism gives birth to new church in Cuba

BY DEBORAH FROESE
Mennonite Church Canada Release

The Mennonite Church in Cuba—Iglesia Menonita en Cuba—will soon be a year old.

From a Mennonite Church Canada perspective, it was an unexpected birth. When MC Canada first began walking with Cuban Christians some 20 years ago, there was no intention to create a new church, since the country already had numerous denominations.

“We knew there was a lot of interest in Cuba for the Anabaptist vision and our strategy was to nurture that interest,” says MC Canada general secretary Robert J. Suderman. “It was clear to us that we were not there to start another church.”

But a strong desire for peace theology enhanced the appeal of an Anabaptist vision. With the conviction of pastor Alexander Reyna, whom Suderman describes as “the motor behind the movement,” and the new church’s treasurer, Iglesia Menonita en Cuba has grown to include 10 cell groups with a total of about 120 people.

In late November, a delegation consisting of Canadian and American Mennonite representatives, met with Iglesia Menonita en Cuba to determine how other Mennonite organizations can support it. The delegation also met with a number of potential partners in Cuba.

Through a translator, Reyna said, “Our vision has been to start groups with a Mennonite identity and this can have a bigger impact in society. . . . God doesn’t need reformers, but people who will practise a living faith that isn’t just theoretical. I think that the Mennonite Church, from what I have been able to see, is able to do this. I have had a new birth, a new baptism in a sense.”



A strong desire for peace theology enhances the appeal of an Anabaptist vision for the new Iglesia Menonita en Cuba.

The wider church has had its share of struggles in Cuba. Before the revolution of 1959, there were 54 registered denominations. By 1967, an alignment with the then Soviet Union affected church activities and atheism became the official state position. A constitutional adjustment in 1992 loosened the atheistic position and churches began to operate more openly.

The Anabaptist vision provides Cubans with a theology that expresses the gospel in a socially relevant way—a contrast to the hierarchical structure of traditional churches. In many traditional churches, women are not permitted to hold leadership roles in ministry and the churches generally consider themselves to be disengaged from problems of society because the government has taken care of social matters for many decades.

Reyna pointed to the deliberate decision to call the new church Iglesia Menonita en Cuba. “Usually it’s ‘de Cuba,’” he said, “but we want to say ‘en Cuba’; ‘de’ indicates ownership. We want to show that the church is incarnated in society.”

Currently, Iglesia Menonita en Cuba is not officially recognized by the Cuban government, thus limiting membership to cell groups of no more than 15 people. Because Cubans cannot own real estate,

and only registered churches are assigned property or given authorization to build, these cell groups must worship in private homes. Worshipping in private homes requires permission from local authorities, and whether or not permission is granted depends upon the relationships between the cell groups and local authorities.

Pastoral and congregational training is also complicated by Cuba’s legal system. Without official status, Iglesia Menonita en Cuba cannot arrange visas for people such as Suderman to teach. The new church must rely on the support of proven, officially recognized organizations that will request visas on their behalf. So far, the Martin Luther King Memorial Center and the Cuban Council of Churches have been willing to assist the new church in this way.

Plans for the near future include the possibility of sending two people from Iglesia Menonita en Cuba to the Mennonite World Conference in July and inviting at least one Cuban pastor to Canada for IMPaCT (International Pastors Coming Together), a program of MC Canada Witness, although the availability of Canadian visas for IMPaCT visitors has been a problem for some Latin American pastors in the past. ☸

Creating a culture of wellness

Pastors and support committees look at self-care

BY DAVE ROGALSKY
Eastern Canada Correspondent
WATERLOO, ONT.

A prayer room, yoga, healthy snacks and the Wellness Wheel were all components of Mennonite Church Eastern Canada's Healthy Pastors/Healthy Congregations training event last month, led by Melvin Rose, an ordained United Church minister, clinical manager at Lutherwood Family Counselling in Waterloo, and a marathon runner.

Building on the MC Canada Pastoral Trends Survey, which showed that pastors who care for themselves are more likely to last in ministry, pastor/congregational relations committees, church council members and pastors were invited to learn about wellness. Rose said that pastors are healthier when congregations and the members themselves are working at health issues. Beginning with a focus on unhealthy church culture, including unhealthy congregational expectations of pastors, the day progressed from who needs to do self-care (everyone), to what needs to be done (a balance of many aspects), to how to do what needs to be done.

Rose used the Wellness Wheel, a self-evaluation tool that looks at 10 different dimensions: spiritual, psychological, relational, physical, economic, vocational, sexual, intellectual, institutional/organizational and environmental. The goal is to be healthy in as many dimensions as possible, he said. Although he has run the Boston Marathon several times, Rose gave himself a score of just three out of five on his "physical" dimension, confessing to needing to improve his diet. All participants were encouraged to find their rates of health and then choose one imbalanced



Melvin Rose trains Mennonite pastors in the use of the Wellness Wheel at the Healthy Pastors/Healthy Congregations event on March 28.

dimension and form a plan to work on it.

But Rose took the plan a step further, noting that weight loss programs and counselling have high success rates "for those who keep with the plan." Key in keeping with the plan is accountability. Central in accountability is finding people to trust. Knowing that the pastor's support group is interested in not only the pastor's health, but also their own and that of the congregation, makes it easier for pastors to be accountable to such a group. On the other hand, some pastors prefer external groups of peers to whom they are accountable.

Rose admits that this model will "possibly not be accepted or understood" by

all members, especially in a congregation in which all members feel they are the pastor's employer—a situation that can place unreasonable demands on pastors. In this case, pastors often feel accountable to each and every member, who all have different ideas of how pastors should do their ministry.

Pastoral support groups need to communicate their priorities for the pastor to the congregation by addressing the benefits of healthy, balanced pastors to them. They need to work with the pastor to create a "culture of wellness in the congregation," he said. ☞

/// Briefly noted

Church reaches out through coffee, discussion

ABBOTSFORD, B.C.—How should life be lived? In asking that question, Level Ground Mennonite Church in Abbotsford is hoping to stimulate discussion through a ministry called Re:Think Café. The group meets for coffee and conversation on the first and third Thursdays of each month at the House of James, a local Christian bookstore and coffee shop. The evening usually starts with live music while people order their drinks and chat around tables. The topic of the evening is presented, followed by handing out discussion questions for each group. After 15 to 20 minutes, the groups come together with closing thoughts and then people are free to mingle and chat with each other or listen to more music. Conversation and relationship-building are the main focuses of the night, which makes it a great place to bring a non-Christian neighbour, co-worker or friend, according to the organizers, whose hope is that the evening will be part of helping people from all walks of life—believers and non-believers—engage in meaningful discussion about life, truth and spirituality. Re:Think Café is open to anyone in the community. For more information, visit rethinkcafe.com or contact dan@levelgroundchurch.com.

—BY AMY DUECKMAN

Chinese pastors meet for encouragement, fellowship

BY JEANETTE HANSON

Mennonite Church Canada Release

In China, large congregations with several thousand members are served by only one pastor, who receives little or no support from external sources. Graduates from seminaries across the country accept this as part of their job description and work alone for years, without the opportunity to meet, learn from or share with others.

But late last year, church leaders provided the opportunity for pastors to come away and rest, just as Jesus invited his disciples to do in Mark 6:31. Ninety-six grassroots pastors and church leaders gathered in Chengdu, Sichuan Province, to worship, pray and share their experiences with each other.

Guest speakers addressed issues of church administration, strengthening the connections between rural and urban churches, and the development of church-run social service projects.

Retreat organizer Peter Yuan wrote that the presentation on church administration shared a great deal of how-to information for engaging believers in activities of the

church. He observed how the retreat discussions offered encouragement to pastors who often rely on their own strength to carry out all necessary tasks within their congregations.

One of the speakers, Pastor Sun, referred to Jesus' teaching about salt and light, saying, "Care for the poor is at the very heart of the message of Jesus Christ." Sun said that in today's Chinese churches there is a large disparity between urban and rural congregations in every aspect, from material conditions to mission and Bible training. "Our church is one body in the Lord. We must aid and assist each other," he said.

Both speakers drew from their experiences in church leadership, offering encouragement to participants, most of whom had never had the opportunity to engage in practical ministry training and theological teaching. Yuan said that most participants urged leaders to hold a similar event at least every two years. "Everyone also expressed that this type of retreat not

only gave their bodies rest and refreshment, but, more importantly, tended to their spirits," he said.

For only the cost of bus tickets, food and lodging, these pastors received a gift that will encourage and refresh them for further work in their congregations. For those pastors without adequate resources, Mennonite Partners in China was able to provide assistance with the support of Mennonite Church Canada, Mennonite Mission Network, Eastern Mennonite Missions and Mennonite Central Committee. ☼

☼ Briefly noted

CMU launches new graduate ministry program

WINNIPEG—A new graduate-level program that will enable people to explore or strengthen their capacity for various types of church-related ministry will begin at Canadian Mennonite University (CMU) this fall. Called the master of arts in Christian ministry, the program is designed to "give students both the intellectual and theological framework and the practical competencies they need to become involved in the ministry of the gospel," says Karl Koop, who directs the biblical and theological studies graduate program at CMU. "The goal of the program is to offer training for people already involved in ministry, as well as for those who want to test their call to ministry," he adds, noting that "it will give them a profoundly biblical and theological literacy, so they can draw wisely on Scripture and on Christian tradition as the basis for Christian life, thought and ministry." The new degree will be offered in cooperation with Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary, Fresno, Calif.; Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, Ind., and Steinbach Bible College, Man. This is the second graduate-level program offered by CMU; the first, the master of arts in theological studies, began a year ago. —CMU Release

PHOTO BY TODD HANSON



Chinese pastors often work in isolation with few resources for many years.

Amidst the powers

Conference explores new and evolving forms of church in Canada

BY STEVE DRUDGE

Special to *Canadian Mennonite*
OAKVILLE, ONT.

Both critique of culture and hope for it characterized the “Evolving Church Amidst the Powers” conference organized by four graduates of Tyndale University College and Seminary last month. Held at The Meeting Place (a Brethren in Christ congregation) in Oakville, participants were invited to “figure out what the church looks like and who she is called to be, here, today, in 2009?”

Relief, development and service agencies, including Mennonite Central Committee, were featured among the lobby displays and the program booklet suggested that care for the poor is part of the church’s call.

The “powers” referred to in the conference’s title are necessary systems that run things, and which “do good and evil,” participants were told. Young adults, well represented in the mixed-age crowd, nodded in affirmation as professor Walter Wink, one of the keynote speakers, read carefully and passionately from a manuscript building on the affirmation that “powers were created, are fallen and shall be redeemed.” The “angel” or spirit of a system can become pathological and needs to be called back to its sole divine purpose—serving human need—he said.

Stanley Hauerwas, named “America’s best theologian” by *Time* magazine in 2001, began his densely packed presentation by stating that “war is a moral practice. . . . If Christians are serious, we are the alternative to war.” Noting that war and Christ both require sacrifice, Hauerwas concluded that the sacrifice of war is not a Christian’s story. “In the cross of Christ, war was abolished,” he said.

In “Sharing Power Between Generations,” one of 16 workshops at the day-long event, a

/// Briefly noted

Brice Balmer appointed to Waterloo Lutheran Seminary faculty

WATERLOO, ONT.—Waterloo Lutheran Seminary announces the addition of Brice Balmer to the seminary faculty. Balmer, an ordained Mennonite minister, will act as assistant professor of functional theology. With the help of a grant for the Interfaith Social Assistance Reform Coalition (ISARC) project for 2007-10 from the Atkinson Charitable Foundation, Balmer will dedicate most of his time to working on ISARC multi-faith and anti-poverty efforts. “Brice is a natural organizer,” notes David Pfrimmer, the seminary’s dean. “He excels at bringing people together in the best of the social gospel tradition.” Balmer has had a long history of teaching and working with seminary interns at the seminary over many years. He will continue to teach in the area of counselling, addictions, spirituality and multi-faith relations. As well, he will continue to help organize the Abrahamic Faiths Forum that meets twice a year at the seminary. Balmer was chaplaincy director for 23 years with the House of Friendship, a multi-service agency working with socially and economically marginalized people in the Waterloo Region of southwestern Ontario. He earned his doctor of ministry degree at the Toronto School of Theology in 1996.

—Waterloo Lutheran Seminary Release

wise and kindly 57-year-old Free Methodist bishop said of a 34-year-old church leader, “He understands, appreciates and critiques both the modern and postmodern world and church. It’s not about one or the other, but what God is up to.”

With that spirit, many left feeling that there is much hope for the evolving church today. ✎

Steve Drudge is a member of the pastoral team at Steinmann Mennonite Church, Baden, Ont.

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COVER STORY

Sandbagging (in Jesus' name)

CMU volunteers sling 5,000 sandbags to protect home

BY CAROL A. THIESSEN

Canadian Mennonite University Release
WINNIPEG

Canadian Mennonite University (CMU) students, staff and faculty traded their books for brawn one day early last month as they slung sandbags as part of Winnipeg's flood protection efforts. Approximately 50 volunteers from CMU heaved 5,000 sandbags to build a half-metre-high ring dike around a home just south of Winnipeg.

"It was a great opportunity to take some time off from studying to do some active service," said student council president Zach Peters, who helped organize the volunteer event. "We thought it was something CMU, being a liberal arts university learning about our place in the world, should be involved in."

At the time, southern Manitoba was bracing for the Red River to crest after witnessing record flood levels in places like Fargo, N.D. The province was on high alert for days anticipating greater than usual spring flooding as the river moved north, exacerbated by ice jams that clog the river.

Volunteers included five students from CMU's new Disaster, Vulnerability and

Recovery course, taught by Lois Nickel, director of programs and region relations for Mennonite Disaster Service, who helped coordinate the flood mitigation efforts with the City of Winnipeg.

John Brubacher, assistant professor of

biology at CMU, ignored his pile of essays waiting to be marked, and joined the students on the sandbag line. "I've never sandbagged before. Partly it was to live the Winnipeg experience," he said with a laugh. "But, really, I like the community aspect of everyone pitching in."

He said the camaraderie of the students kept the serious work light-hearted. "There was singing. There was a lot of laughter. There was a lot of really good energy there," Brubacher enthused.

By the end of two-and-a-half hours of work, the CMU volunteers had completed an entire dike around the home on Christie Road.

"Going home tired at the end of the day and realizing we'd doing something useful was great," said Peters. ☸

Students put their faith in action

Service week helps homeowners on the U.S. Gulf Coast

Rosthern Junior College Release

Twenty-six Rosthern Junior College (RJC) students and six chaperones spent a week in Pass Christian, Miss., this spring as part of the school's annual Alternative Learning and Service Opportunities (ALSO) Week.

While there, the group partnered with Mennonite Disaster Service (MDS) in its ongoing efforts to rebuild this small coastal

city following the devastation of Hurricane Katrina in 2005. The group was engaged in all aspects of new home construction for homeowners unable to rebuild their homes on their own due to age, disability or poverty. After a quick orientation, the students worked alongside adults as they painted, hung drywall, mudded and taped, insulated, constructed stairs and railing,

MENNONITE DISASTER SERVICE PHOTO



Canadian Mennonite University volunteers who helped create a half-metre-high sandbag dike around a Winnipeg area residence took a break to enjoy muffins made by one of the university's residences.

MENNONITE DISASTER SERVICE PHOTO



Students from Rosthern Junior College, Sask., gather for a photo with long-term Mennonite Disaster Service staff in Pass Christian, Miss., during their service week this spring.

and installed siding on four houses in various stages of construction.

The students were able to spend time with the homeowners of the houses they were working on. They heard the stories of devastating loss and despair, as well as the gratitude and hope that accompanied the promise of a new house built by MDS volunteers.

Billy Morgan, a man whose house RJC students helped build last year, impressed the students with his faith in God and his optimistic outlook on life. He thanked them for coming, calling MDS and the response by Mennonites as a “miracle” and an “answer to prayer for him and his community.”

RJC invests a significant amount of time and effort in providing all of its students with a service experience during ALSO Week, believing that experiences like this change outlooks and lives. By providing opportunities for students to see the importance of putting faith into action through service, the college hopes to cultivate a spirit of service to others that will last a lifetime. ❧

MEDA casts wider net to save more young lives

BY LINDA WHITMORE
MEDA Release

MEDA (Mennonite Economic Development Associates) is on the front lines of a new \$21 million project in Tanzania to get young children sleeping under life-protecting malaria nets.

Working with the country’s Ministry of Health and Social Welfare and the Global Fund for Aids, Tuberculosis and Malaria, MEDA will be coordinating the distribution of 7.2 million long-lasting insecticidal nets at no cost to children under five years of age at village events over the next year through a massive nationwide catch-up campaign.

The aim of the project is to cover 80 percent of all children under five with a net in



MEDA PHOTO

Two young Tanzanian boys are thankful for their insecticide-treated nets that will help protect them from malaria.

a country that sees 18 million cases of malaria—and 80,000 deaths resulting from it—annually. Eighty percent of the victims are children under five or pregnant women.

Since 2004, MEDA has distributed more than 4.6 million insecticide-treated nets to pregnant women and infants through Hati Punguzo, a program of Tanzania’s Ministry of Health and Social Welfare’s National Malaria Control Program that is funded by the Global Fund and USAID’s President’s Malaria Initiative.

This year, in addition to the mass net distribution, MEDA will also be upgrading the Hati Punguzo voucher program targeted at pregnant women and infants. The new fixed “top-up” voucher means customers will pay about 30 cents, regardless of the retail price of the net or where they live in the country. This is in contrast to the previous fixed-value voucher, which covered up to 70 percent of the cost of the net, where the top-up amount can change relative to the retail cost of the net.

To accomplish this across all 21 regions and many remote areas, MEDA has developed a distribution network of almost 7,000 retailers, 260 wholesalers and four manufacturers. Women receive a voucher during prenatal visits at one of 4,300 clinics across the country.

With an estimated six lives spared for every 1,000 nets sold, Hati Punguzo and MEDA have already saved more than 27,000 young lives. ❧

/// Briefly noted

Afghanistan faces food shortages, church agencies warn

The most severe drought in a decade is fuelling a food crisis in Afghanistan that now threatens millions of people with possible starvation, church-linked humanitarian agencies have warned. “Unless the international community responds to the issue of hunger in Afghanistan, we will not be able to fulfill any other promises we are making to the Afghan people,” says Marvin Parvez on behalf of Action by Churches Together (ACT) International, a global humanitarian alliance of churches and other agencies. The alliance warned that a \$1.26 million US ACT appeal for the Afghani drought was severely under-funded, and had received less than 3 percent of the requested amount. “Funding for this emergency remains a significant challenge,” says ACT director John Nduna. “What are we saying when only high profile emergencies receive our support?”

—Ecumenical News International Release

Iraqi Christians want role in restoring country

A group of Christians meeting in Lebanon have declared that people of their faith have belonged to Iraq since the nation’s birth and that they are an essential part of Iraqi society deeply rooted in its history and civilization. “As authentic children of this land, they have the right to live freely in it and enjoy equal rights and responsibilities along with all other citizens,” the 12 Iraqi church leaders said after their meeting earlier this year in Dar Sayedat Al Jabal, Fatka, Lebanon.

—Ecumenical News International Release

GOD AT WORK IN US

Serving the poor and lonely

MEDA diners encouraged to live out their faith

BY KARIN FEHDERAU

Saskatchewan Correspondent
SASKATOON, SASK.

Marlene Froese knows a little how the other half lives. But the retired teacher had to wait until her career with the school board was finished before walking with the poor and defenceless.

Froese was the guest speaker recently at a gathering of Mennonite business people in Saskatoon. The local Mennonite Economic Development Associates (MEDA) chapter meets once a month for breakfast to encourage members to live out their faith in the working world. Froese spoke on business and service, using many personal stories.

After retiring from teaching, the mother of two and a member of Nutana Park Mennonite Church, Saskatoon, began looking for opportunities where she could serve God in a different way.

Her first role came as supervisor of migrant berry pickers at a berry farm just outside the city. "We had the United Nations in small form," she said. More than half did not speak English, so she was forced to communicate more with body language than with words.

Realizing their vulnerability, she tried hard to show the workers she was willing to build a relationship of trust, not deceit, with them. They, in turn, warmed to her.

Froese had doubts about the next job God sent her way. Still, she took on the role of helping 10 low-income families find homes through a project involving several agencies working together. Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) and the government were two entities that provided funds and staff to help coordinate the effort, which permitted no more than \$56,000 to be spent

on each dwelling.

The need to find cheap homes forced her to see with new eyes the living conditions low-income families face. "They're not fit for a dog," she stated bluntly, wondering aloud how society could treat people who were already so beaten down this way. Taken aback with the harsh realities she saw, Froese noticed people without abilities or hope. She realized these people needed faith to believe that change was possible.

One family in particular was transformed by the experience in the housing co-op, as they were shown how to plan an addition to the home they had bought. After the renovations were finished, she noticed family members walked with new pride in themselves, and the father even went back to school to train.

Working as a personal chef was the next step on the road and Froese proved to be a listening ear to the many sad and lonely seniors she cooked for. An invitation to



Marlene Froese, who owned a personal chef business, prepares a weekly lunch in the Mennonite Central Committee Saskatchewan kitchen in Saskatoon.

prepare weekly lunches for MCC staff and surrounding Saskatoon businesses grew out of that, a commitment that ends in June.

With a smile, Froese admitted she doesn't know what her future looks like. "I'm open," she said simply. ❧

Obituary

Pioneer of Mennonite integration dies

ELKHART, IND.—Erland Waltner, president emeritus of Mennonite Biblical Seminary, died late Easter Sunday, April 12, in Goshen, Ind. He was 94 years old.



Waltner served the seminary and the church in many roles over a long lifetime of ministry, not only with Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary, but also with Mennonite World Conference (MWC), the General Conference Mennonite Church, Mennonite Health Association (MHA) and Mennonite Medical Association. Waltner's most significant contribution was his leadership in bringing together Mennonite Biblical Seminary (MBS), the General Conference seminary in Chicago, and Goshen Biblical Seminary, a seminary of the former Mennonite Church (MC) in Goshen, Ind. As president of MBS beginning in 1958, when it relocated to Elkhart, he helped guide the cooperative program to maturity. He retired as president in 1978, but continued to teach at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary, as it came to be known, until the 1990s and to provide spiritual direction until shortly before his death. In 2002, AMBS honoured Waltner for his lifetime of service with a festschrift, *The Work is Thine, O Christ*. Waltner was president of the General Conference Mennonite Church from 1956-62, in addition to serving on the General Conference Board of Education and Board of Missions.

—AMBS Release

CMU student completes practicum at Winnipeg city hall

Internship leads to summer job for Cordella Friesen

By JOHN LONGHURST

Canadian Mennonite University Release
WINNIPEG

It's not easy to see or talk to the mayor of Winnipeg; he's a very busy man. But that wasn't a problem for Canadian Mennonite University (CMU) student Cordella Friesen. She was able to see Mayor Sam Katz every week.

Friesen, who is graduating this month with a degree in political studies, didn't need to pull any special strings to get access to the mayor. All she needed to do was show up for work as an intern in his office.

"It was an amazing experience," says Friesen of her internship, which she needed to do to fulfill the practicum requirement for graduates from CMU. "It was great to get an inside look at how city government works."

As an intern, Friesen spent one day a week at city hall during the school year doing a variety of administrative duties, including research, responding to requests from residents, assisting with the mayor's communications and other tasks. She also sat in on meetings of city council and the Executive Policy Committee, which formulates recommendations for council regarding policies, plans, budgets, bylaws and other matters.

Of her time in the mayor's office, Friesen says she came away with the deep conviction that "people who work there really have the best interests of the residents of Winnipeg at heart." She was disappointed, however, to discover how little interest people show for the affairs of city government. "This is the level of government that is closest to people, but very few seem to have any interest in how it works, or in the decisions that affect their lives," she says.

In addition to the experience she gained, the internship provided Friesen with another benefit: she's been offered a job in the mayor's office for the summer.

Friesen says she would like to "be involved in politics or government at some level after university," adding that it could be as a civil servant or being involved with non-profit groups that lobby governments in efforts to promote change.

It might also involve running for office. "A councillor told me that I'd make a great politician," she says, recalling a recent conversation. "Does that mean you'd vote for me? I asked him. 'See, you're already doing it!'" he replied.

In 2008, 126 CMU students did practicums in Canada or around the world. ❧



A practicum experience in the office of Winnipeg mayor Sam Katz has led to a summer position at city hall for Canadian Mennonite University student Cordella Friesen.



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ARTBEAT

Mennonite 'chic'

Chic Gamine band wins Juno Award for first CD

BY AARON EPP

National Correspondent
WINNIPEG

Singer Alexa Dirks never dreamed she would win a Juno Award when she joined four other musicians in June 2007 to form the band Chic Gamine. But this past March, that is exactly what happened. The quintet won the 2009 Juno Award in the group category for Roots and Traditional Album of the Year.

"It's a really cool award and accomplishment," says Dirks, who attends Jubilee Mennonite Church, Winnipeg. "To get that recognition after just a year-and-a-half is a little unbelievable. It affirmed that we're doing the right thing."

The Junos are awarded every year by the Canadian Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences to celebrate the best in Canadian music. Chic Gamine's award was one of 32 handed out at a non-televized gala in Vancouver, B.C., on March 29, the night before the televised ceremony.

Because of prior touring commitments, the group was not in attendance at the gala. Instead, they were performing in Hamilton, Ont., and heard about the win during their concert's intermission. Surprised and thrilled, the group composed an "acceptance ditty" and posted a quickly shot video on their website after the performance.

Dirks, 21, is quick to point out the group never expected to win, as it was up against more established acts like Elliot Brood and The Duhks. "I don't think we were on anyone's radar in a big way, which is fine—I didn't mind," she says.

In the less than two years the group has been together, Chic Gamine (a French term that, roughly translated, means "stylish woman") has sold several thousand copies of its independently released, self-titled debut CD. The band has also brought its unique mix of gospel, soul, R&B, doo-wop

and world music to audiences all across North America, including opening slots for Motown legend Smokey Robinson and gospel great Mavis Staples, both of whom are members of the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame.

Dirks got her start in singing years before she joined Chic Gamine, though. While attending Mennonite Brethren Collegiate Institute, a teacher recommended Dirks to worship leader Jon Buller for his "Hear the Music" ministry. It wasn't long before she was spending Saturday nights singing back-up at Buller's worship concerts.

When Buller left Winnipeg, his Hear the Music band reformed as the R&B/funk combo Little Boy Boom. The other members of the yet-unformed Chic Gamine heard Dirks sing with the band and asked her to join their new project.

While writing the three songs she contributed to the group's CD, Dirks drew from her everyday life and her faith. "Shake Off Your Worries," in particular, was influenced heavily by her love of gospel music. In fact, it could very well be the first gospel song about a Mennonite grandmother.

"Gospel music doesn't usually talk about perogies and moving to Paraguay on a boat, but that song is based on my grandma," Dirks says with a laugh. "I'm not sure she'd pick up on it if she heard it, but the song is about how, even though she experienced a life of struggle, she always told us not to worry."

The five summers Dirks spent working at Mennonite Church Manitoba's Camps with Meaning have also been hugely formative. "Camp is where I made some

of the best friends that I have," she says. "I also learned a lot about what it means to be Mennonite—the practical stuff, like service, pacifism, being globally aware and how that applies to everyday life."

The faith of her parents—Katie, a bank teller, and Ray, who is curator of the Mennonite Heritage Centre Gallery—also inspires her. "They are so supportive of everything I've done," she says. "The love that they show me is pretty incredible."

Ray and Katie are, understandably, proud of their daughter. "She's very committed to her faith, but she's not someone who's going to be out there and every song she sings is going to be overtly Christian," her father says. "She's living in a secular world where she believes her integrity and the example of how she lives are really important."

While it can be difficult being away from her family, friends and church when she is on tour, Dirks is confident in her decision to be a part of Chic Gamine. "I'm on a good track. I feel like I'm where I'm supposed to be," she says. "I've lucked out with being in this group." ❧

PHOTO BY RAY DIRKS



Alexa Dirks, one of four singers in the Juno Award-winning music group Chic Gamine, performs at the Winnipeg Folk Festival in July 2008.

What's the buzz? Tell me what's a-happenin'!

Winnipeg musicians band together to perform songs from Jesus Christ Superstar, just in time for Easter

BY AARON EPP

National Correspondent
WINNIPEG

Musicians from two acclaimed Winnipeg bands, both with Mennonite roots, presented an alternative to Maundy Thursday church services this past Easter by performing an hour of songs from the 1970s rock opera *Jesus Christ Superstar*.

A sold-out crowd of more than 225 packed into the Park Theatre, a popular live music venue in Winnipeg's south Osborne area, on April 9 to watch The Liptonians and Flying Fox & the Hunter/Gatherers perform 15 songs from the musical, which tells the story of Jesus and his disciples in the days leading up to his crucifixion.

"I think we were almost surprised that it all came together, and that it all came together so well," says Liptonians' singer/guitarist Bucky Driedger, who sang the part of Judas. "I don't think we could have expected it to go better than it did."

The idea for the performance had its genesis two or three years ago when Driedger and his bandmates began throwing Easter parties at the house they share. Eventually, at some point in the evening, they would perform a few songs from the musical.

Doing it on a much grander scale this year meant "marathon" rehearsal sessions with no less than 17 musicians, which included a horn section, six-voice choir, Fly

Fox singer/guitarist Jesse Krause (as Jesus), Chic Gamine vocalist Alexa Dirks (as Mary Magdalene) and From the Moon frontman Lyndon Froese (as King Herod).

"It really immersed me into the Easter story more than anything else this year," says Flying Fox trombone player Paul Schmidt, who made a *Jesus Christ Superstar* mix CD to listen to while driving from Carman, Man., where he is the youth pastor at Carman Mennonite Church, to rehearsals in Winnipeg. "I like the story because it brings out the politics and emotions and passions that we don't always talk about in the Easter story. It explores the characters, and what they might have thought about Jesus' life and death. We don't usually talk about Herod or Pilate's involvement in Jesus' death, or why Judas felt he needed to betray Jesus—things like that."

And the music rocks, too.

"It appeals to a really wide audience—a lot of age groups get the music," Driedger says. "The story is religious, but I think it's told in such a new way that it appeals to both religious and non-religious people. Many non-religious people count *Jesus Christ Superstar* as their favourite musical, and I think it's special in that way." ❧

/// Briefly noted

Mennonite composer nominated for Juno Award

Although his "Notes Towards A Poem That Can Never Be Written" didn't win him a Juno Award for Classical Composition of the Year, composer Timothy Corlis says the nomination "affirmed my own desire to be honest when I write music. I don't feel nearly as shy about expressing my faith in my music, regardless of the context. . . . I'm trying to give voice to the marginalized, to the Holy Spirit, the divine empowered voices that give life." The nomination read in part, "The music of Timothy Corlis emerges from a choral tradition where composition is all about singing in the community." Corlis began his career as music director at Stirling Avenue Mennonite Church, Kitchener, Ont., where he enjoyed writing for church and community choirs in the Waterloo Region. His music has since received performances and broadcasts across North America. Corlis's music has been described as "atmospherically striking," "bursting with vigour and truth," and has received a five-star review from the CBC's Rick Phillips. His passion for peace theology has led him to found the Vancouver Peace Choir while doing his Ph.D. in composition at the University of British Columbia.

—BY DAVE ROGALSKY



PHOTO BY TIMOTHY JOEL DYCK

Winnipeg musicians pose for a photo that was used to promote a concert that featured 15 songs from the 1970s rock opera Jesus Christ Superstar.

FILM REVIEW

Violence in the cause of noble ends

Watchmen.

Directed by Zack Snyder. Based on the Hugo Award-winning graphic novel series by Alan Moore and Dave Gibbons. A Warner Bros. film. Rated: 18A.

REVIEWED BY TOM PRICE

Contemporary political issues burst from comic book pages as characters wrestle with the fine line between being heroes and vigilantes. That theme, executed so well in *The Dark Knight*, the critically acclaimed Batman film of 2008, resurfaces in *Watchmen*, which, like its predecessor, rocketed to the top of the box office in its debut week in early March.

Yet, unlike Bruce Wayne, most of the characters in this 2009 adaptation of an acclaimed graphic novel stray from the path of self-sacrifice. When difficult choices confront the Watchmen, a coalition of costumed defenders, the characters' responses raise questions about the very nature of those who would put themselves forward in such a manner. Can one justify the pre-emptive use of violence by the speculation that it will prevent quantifiably greater violence? And, in perpetrating violence for noble ends, is a "hero" debased in the process?

These questions are raised, but not answered satisfactorily, in *Watchmen*. Set in an alternative 1985, in which America won the Vietnam War and Richard Nixon is serving his fifth term as U.S. president,



Watchmen conjures up a gritty, darker reality than perhaps the bleakest days of the Cold War. The Soviet Union threatens nuclear war, the "Doomsday Clock" is set to five minutes to midnight.

The cataclysm is staged off for the moment by Dr. Manhattan (actor Billy Crudup), a blank-eyed, blue, bald and often mostly naked hero. He alone of the Watchmen group possesses supernatural powers, resulting from a nuclear physics experiment gone awry. Yet Dr. Manhattan has been playing god for so long that the line between humanity and divinity has blurred for him.

The film begins with the murder of the Comedian (Jeffrey Dean Morgan). Revealed in numerous flashbacks as a reactionary, cigar-chomping soldier of fortune, the Comedian helped win the Vietnam War without regard to things like the conventions of warfare regarding the treatment of civilian non-combatants.

Enter Rorschach (an inspired performance by Jackie Earle Haley), a sociopathic hero hidden beneath a grey ski mask of shifting inkblots. "An attack on one is an attack on all of us," he says, seeking to uncover a plot to kill all superheroes.

Most of the Watchmen were forced into

self-retirement by a 1977 Congressional act outlawing costumed vigilantism. Rorschach is the exception. "God doesn't make the world this way. We do," he says, before taking horrific vengeance after a criminal's sickeningly gruesome act.

The film, also showing in IMAX 3-D, comes across as if the graphic novel literally served as the storyboard for replication on film. The script does stand on its own for viewers who have not read the circa 1986-87 series—but only if they are really committed to seeing it through. At two hours and 43 minutes, *Watchmen* feels ponderously overlong in the way the best adventures do not.

The climax may inspire moral debate about the different approaches of the primary characters, with a final conflict inspired by the reported remarks of a U.S. army officer in Vietnam: "We had to destroy the village in order to save it."

It is also foreshadowed by an earlier interchange between the Comedian and another member of the Watchmen:

"We're society's only protection," says the Comedian.

"From what?" the other responds.

"You kidding me? From themselves," the Comedian asserts, exerting random vengeance and delivering perhaps his only punch line.

With heroes like these, society would probably rather take its chances on its own. ❧

Tom Price lives in South Bend, Ind. He formerly directed marketing and communications for Mennonite Mission Network. Originally published on the thirdway.com website. Reprinted by permission.

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Art works link Ghandi, Mennonites

By DEBORAH FROESE
Mennonite Church Canada Release

When Ray Dirks was invited to exhibit his work at the Jawahar Kala Kendra Art Centre in Jaipur, India, earlier this year, he was told, "Don't be religious in your art."

But the Mennonite Heritage Centre Gallery curator was not deterred by the polite but firm request. The exhibit Dirks brought to India consisted of nine portraits of Gandhi, several paintings of outcasts from different countries, and manipulated photos from his own heritage.

Dirks shared with his hosts some of the ways Mennonite organizations work for peace among all people regardless of

religion or culture. He found his audience receptive to this idea, saying, "On the level of individuals, there is a yearning for non-violent solutions. Many Hindus believe that this is at the core of who they are and who they want to be."

Dirks noticed that as people toured his exhibit, they were at first pleasantly surprised by his portraits of Gandhi and then intrigued by the other paintings. They asked questions about how the images were connected, which, in turn, raised questions about being Mennonite.

Dirks set off to India with his daughter Alexa, a singer, and his friend and fellow-artist, Manju Lodha. Now living in Winnipeg, Lodha is originally from the Indian state of Rajasthan. It was through her connection with the art centre's curator that the invitation arose.

Lodha and Dirks had exhibits set up on opposite sides of the centre's courtyard, but under the same name, "In the Spirit of Humanity."

A broader project under the same name as the exhibition in India has been awarded

a grant by the Winnipeg Foundation, a community philanthropy organization, to set up three exhibits, present school workshops and offer churches cross-cultural, multi-faith presentations in Winnipeg. ✻

PHOTO BY ALEXA DIRKS



Artists Ray Dirks and Manju Lodha pose in front of one of Dirks's paintings of Gandhi that were exhibited in India in January.

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FOCUS ON BOOKS&RESOURCES

The write stuff

Young author hopes to spread a positive message with self-published book

STORY AND PHOTO BY AARON EPP

National Correspondent
WINNIPEG

It has been said that everyone has a book in them. Paul Loewen has more than 20.

Over the past eight years, Loewen has written 500,000 words of fiction—four complete novels, two incomplete ones and numerous short stories. He is currently seeking publication for his third novel, *Buzz*, and says he has 20 more novel-length stories swimming in his head waiting to be written.

“There’s no lack of ideas,” the 22-year-old says over drinks at a coffee shop near the apartment he shares with his wife Jeanette. “There’s a lack of time, if anything.”

Right now, Loewen is most excited about his latest project, *Make Jesus Lie*. It’s a self-published book he wrote in what he calls “an inspired flurry” last September and October, and which he released in February.

The story addresses the problem of pain through the eyes of Almana, a 17-year-old girl living in an inner-city neighbourhood. After running away from home, Almana finds shelter in an abandoned church, where she decides to put God on trial for all the pain and suffering she has

“She doesn’t blame God—she just wants a reaction,” Loewen says, adding that although the story is tough to read at times, ultimately it’s about God’s hope in the midst of it all.

Perhaps more intriguing than the plotline is what Loewen hopes to accomplish with the book. The decision to publish the book himself was deliberate and, instead of selling it, he is giving it away for free.

“I want [the book] to spread because people like the message and the story, not because it’s marketed well or because it was placed prominently in a bookstore.”

The novel is published in a blue report folder, making it easy for people to make photocopies. Loewen also has a website, MakeJesusLie.com, where people can download a pdf file of the entire story.

He acknowledges this is not the most



Winnipeg writer Paul Loewen is giving his latest novel, *Make Jesus Lie*, away for free.

Right now, Loewen is most excited about his latest project, Make Jesus Lie.

experienced.

From 8 a.m. until noon each day, she reads aloud evidence of the things that have gone wrong in her life. In the afternoon, she waits for God to respond. As the story progresses, Almana befriends others in the neighbourhood, and their stories become part of the mounting evidence.

conventional way to release a book. “I realize that I’m taking a step of faith and it could fall flat on its face, but I’m okay with that.”

Les Stobbe, Loewen’s literary agent, is confident that his work will find an audience. “Paul is a quiet, creative young man who writes well,” Stobbe says during a

phone interview. “He’s a writer who tackles contemporary issues with zest and creativity, in an attempt to help the reader face up to issues that he sees in society.”

Loewen is currently working on the sequel to *Buzz* and finishing up a bachelor of theology degree at Canadian Mennonite University, Winnipeg. He and his wife also work part-time at Douglas Mennonite Church as junior youth pastors.

While they have a desire to continue in that line of work, Loewen says that, ultimately, he would love to write full-time. “I want to write fiction—that’s my passion,” he says. “Stories stick in people’s minds, and I like writing fiction because you can really grab people’s emotions.” ❧

BOOK REVIEWS

Not a Mennonite children's story

Pax Avalon: ConflictRevolution.

By Steven 'Reece' Friesen. Herald Press, 2008, 120 pages.

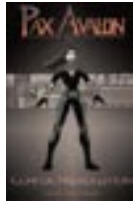
REVIEWED BY DON DOUGLAS

Every so often someone attempts to redeem the medium of graphic novels (comic books) by making a "Christian" one. Usually, these attempts have consisted of efforts to convert people to Christianity or to introduce children to stories from the Bible or biblical teaching. Rare has been the attempt to use this medium to challenge adults to look at real issues from a Christian—perhaps even Mennonite—position. *Pax Avalon: ConflictRevolution* by Steven "Reece" Friesen, is just such an attempt.

Friesen knows how to tell a complex, thought-provoking story. He succeeds in creating characters and situations that challenge the norms of traditional super hero comic books. Perhaps more interesting, Friesen is also willing to let his characters and plot challenge his own view that violence is never the best solution. Although the peace position is the one the reader is meant to sympathize with, the argument for the use of violence in some situations is given time to try and make its case. This is a very mature way of presenting this issue in a narrative form.

The author/illustrator gives us a main character who has a healing gift. Pax offers this power freely, actually refusing to accept payment or bargain for its use. She strives to find equality between rich and poor, she prays for guidance in the midst of crises, and she refuses to use violence or support others in the use of violence, even when it would appear to be the most efficient way to deal with her terrorist foes.

Artistically, Friesen shows promise. Although the art is uneven and inconsistent, there are certain panels that are brilliant in terms of composition, detail



or simple beauty. The dialogue is intelligent and the plot moves at a steady, yet unhurried pace.

It is possible that some readers will still think of the graphic novel as a children's medium. It needs to be clear that this is not a children's

story. There are some violent scenes in the book and, although not portrayed in a positive light, they may not be appropriate for young readers. The book has an appendix of questions that could be food for thought, particularly for someone not from a Mennonite background. The questions could be used to lead a study group of teens or adults, but for someone with a familiarity with both graphic novels and pacifism, the questions might seem simple.

Herald Press deserves applause for publishing this much-needed contribution to popular culture. I hope it receives the attention and readership it deserves. ❧

Don Douglas is a teacher and former youth pastor living in Edmonton.

Community dynamics

The Emerald Angel.

Wilma L. Derksen. Herald Press, 2008, 198 pages.

REVIEWED BY BETTY L. DYCK

First-time novelist Wilma L. Derksen has delivered a heart-warming story about a precious relationship between Ava, a young granddaughter, and her *Oma* (Grandmother). Expertly woven throughout the story are "Mennonite" homilies and bits of history and tradition, appealing to both young and older readers.

Told in Ava's voice, the story will stretch the mind and imagination of a pre-teen as Ava sits in on conversations between Grandmother and people who walk the path through the orchard to her "open" door. Grandmother has been given a special gift following the visit of an angel, which enables her to help people, mostly by listening, and subtly pointing them in the direction that will solve their problems. Usually during the afternoon visits Grandmother serves tea and homemade cookies, having learned in Russia that "a cup of tea with something sweet is the



answer" to lift the spirits.

Ava begins to visit Grandmother when she is about four years old and finds a place where she is loved. In her own family, Ava feels neglected, invisible and unable to understand her mother's rejection.

Scenes show some of the work ethic of the valley people, including the onerous procedure

of drying the fruit from Grandfather's orchard. Derksen deftly moves into the making and serving of *plumemooss* (fruit soup). In one of the many homilies, Grandmother explains how the fruits together nourish people, but there is a time for each fruit to be independent and yet a time to put them together "to make something that rises above whatever they can do alone."

Tensions in the story centre around issues like the feuding between two churches, where "one sprinkles and the other immerses" during baptism. Another is the depression of Ava's mother and her

unexplained rejection until it is resolved.

Derksen uses fresh similes such as: “snowflakes as round and as big as tea plates,” and “trees, houses, clotheslines . . . were strung with beads of rain that dripped constantly like monotonous torture.” She also creatively blends many of her own

religious and healing experiences into the tapestry of the story.

A little editing would have caught occasions when Derksen’s Ava steps out of the first-person point of view, and in other instances contradicts a previous observation. Still, it is a very good first novel. ✎

The Zen of dementia

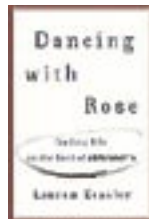
Dancing With Rose: Finding Life in the Land of Alzheimer’s.

By Lauren Kessler. Viking, 2007.

REVIEWED BY DAVE ROGALSKY

Lauren Kessler succeeds in doing three things with her investigative journalistic foray into dementia care:

- She manages to do penance for her dysfunctional relationship with her mother, a relationship which was already bad before she took over caring for her mother in the later stages of Alzheimer’s.



- By working in a facility focused on care of later-stage dementia patients, she uncovers the injustice of expecting our most fragile elderly to be cared for by untrained, non-unionized, minimum-wage workers.

- And, finally, she manages to find peace and joy in the midst of physical and emotional incontinence.

She does this by interweaving the story of her relationship with her mother; her time as a resident assistant in “Maplewood,” the fictitious name of a facility focused on care of people with dementia; and her interviews and reading on the latest thinking by specialists on both dementia and the care of those with the condition.

One of those specialists she interviews actually thinks about dementia as a kind of Zen way of being—focused entirely in the present as the past is slowly eroded by the disease that tangles the *ganglia* (nerve cells outside of the brain) and fills the brain with impermeable plaque.

Kessler finds that the essence of the patients for whom she is responsible remains, and that she can care for them as she learns to know who they are. The engineer who broke everything in life down into minute steps needs to have everything explained to him in the same way: pick up your fork, poke the meat, put the meat in your mouth, chew, swallow. As Kessler does this, she discovers herself working for people with Alzheimer’s, rather than functioning as a drudge for “dementias.”

The information on validation therapy, as opposed to reality therapy, is worth the price of the book. Validation therapy works with the dementia sufferers where and when they are, rather than trying to force them into “normal” time and place, which is known as reality therapy.

The stories of the women with whom she works catch our hearts, too, as they rotate through low-paying, entry-level jobs while trying to juggle child care, improve their education and deal with the expectations of their employer and the families who are paying the bills.

Kessler finds catharsis as she cares for a series of women, including the Rose of the title. Rose wanders, makes messes all over the home, and in her essence loves music. Rose, who cannot dress herself, can dance, if Kessler will let her lead: an iconic symbol of caring for those who live only in the present but carry with them the whole of their lives and being. ✎

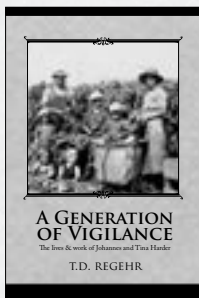
Dave Rogalsky is Canadian Mennonite magazine’s Eastern Canada correspondent.

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A GENERATION OF VIGILANCE

The Lives & Work of Johannes and Tina Harder

T.D. REGEHR



Some have suggested that both the strengths and weaknesses of the Harders were rooted in their efforts to recreate in British Columbia a church and community modelled on the Russian Mennonite Brethren experience.

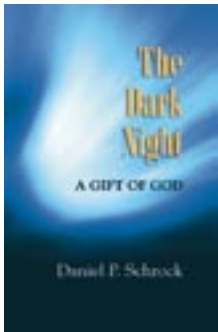
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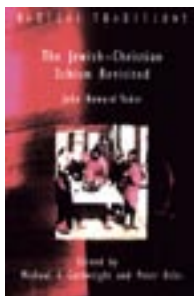
The Dark Night: A Gift of God. Daniel P. Schrock. Herald Press, 2008, 217 pages.

Schrock, a Mennonite pastor and spiritual director, says many Christians experience a "dark night" of testing and spiritual dryness,

which actually strengthens faith in the end. This phenomenon is common, it is part of discipleship and should not be confused with depression, he says.

The Jewish-Christian Schism Revisited. John Howard Yoder, Michael G. Cartwright and Peter Ochs, eds., Herald Press, 2009, 295 pages.

This collection of essays by John Howard Yoder, written between 1971 and 1996, argues that Jesus did not reject Judaism and that the division between Christianity and Judaism was not inevitable.



Keeping in Step with the God of Peace: The Biblical Theology of Pacifism. Arden Thiessen. Steinbach Bible College, 2008, 208 pages.

Thiessen, a retired teacher and pastor, explains the Bible's message of peace in a very direct and uncomplicated way. Each of the 12 chapters concludes with questions for study and discussion.



Like Those Who Dream: Sermons for Salford Mennonite Church and Beyond.

James C. Longacre. Cascadia Publishing and Herald Press, 2009, 197 pages.

Longacre has chosen some of his story-filled sermons for this collection. They were preached at Salford Mennonite in southeastern Pennsylvania between 1992 and 2006.

Loving Enemies: A Manual for Ordinary People. Randy and Joyce Klassen. Cascadia Publishing House and Herald Press, 2008, 147 pages.

After reviewing the prevalence of violence and warfare in the world, the Klassen use biblical references,



stories and personal anecdotes to encourage readers to live a life of forgiveness and love of others.

Peace to War: Shifting Allegiances in the Assemblies of God. Paul Alexander. Cascadia Publishing and Herald Press, 2009, 429 pages.

In researching his own Pentecostal tradition, Alexander discovered that before World War II the Assemblies of God had been opposed to war. He traces how this denomination became pro-military and how his study led him to embrace the peace position.



Reasoning Together: A Conversation on Homosexuality. Ted Grimsrud and Mark Thiessen. Nation. Herald Press, 2008, 318 pages.

Two professors of theology, Grimsrud from Eastern Mennonite University and Thiessen from Eastern Mennonite Seminary, respectfully present arguments on opposite sides of the homosexuality debate.

The Roots of Concern: Writings on Anabaptist Renewal 1952-1957. Virgil Vogt, ed. Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2009, 197 pages.

In the 1950s, a group of Mennonite graduate students met in Amsterdam, where they discussed the church and the Anabaptist view of discipleship. This is a reprint of the first four volumes of their writings.

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Pandora Press, Cascadia Publishing House, Good Books, Herald Press, and Faith & Life.

Springs of Living Water: Christ-Centered Church Renewal. David S. Young. Herald Press, 2008, 390 pages.



This manual for congregational renewal has 16 chapters, each with questions for reflection and discussion. It also has a variety of resources to help the renewal process. Young is from the Church of the Brethren.

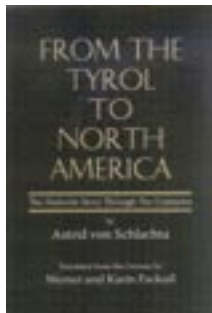
Through a Lens Darkly: How the News Media Perceive and Portray Evangelicals.

David M. Haskell. Toronto: Clements Academic, 2009, 289 pages.

Haskell, an associate professor of journalism at Wilfrid Laurier University, Waterloo, Ont., reports on his study of the Canadian news media, showing that journalists tend to be biased against Evangelical Christians.

History

From the Tyrol to North America: The Hutterite Story Through the Centuries. Astrid von Schlachta, translated by Werner and Karin Packull. Pandora Press, 2009, 266 pages.



This book, which covers 500 years of Hutterite history, was published in Innsbruck, Austria, in the German language in 2006.



Women in Early Austrian Anabaptism: Their Days, Their Stories.

Linda A. Huebert Hecht. Pandora Press, 2009, 290 pages.

Hecht has gathered previously untold stories of Anabaptist

women in Austria in the 1500s through court records. These are inspiring stories of committed women who shared their faith and defied the law by being baptized.

Marpeck: A Life of Dissent and Conformity. Walter Klaassen and William Klassen. Herald Press, 2008, 423 pages.

This biography of Pilgram Marpeck, a leader in the Anabaptist movement of the 16th century, shows that he was more influential in Austria and Switzerland than previous scholars assumed. Available in hardcover, this is Vol. 44 of the Studies in Anabaptist and Mennonite History Series.



A Prairie Pilgrim: Wilhelm H. Falk. Mary Neufeld. Winnipeg: M. Neufeld, 2008, 461 pages.

This self-published biography of William Falk, the bishop of the Rudnerweider/ Evangelical Mennonite Mission Conference in southern Manitoba, is written by his daughter. Falk, like other conservative Mennonite leaders, found the years after World War II particularly difficult.

Other Books

At-Tuwani Journal: Hope and Nonviolent Action in a Palestinian Village.

Arthur G. Gish. Herald Press, 2008, 366 pages.

Gish, a member of Christian Peacemaker Teams, writes about his experiences in promoting peace between Palestinians and Israelis. He served in a Palestinian village for four winters between 2004 and 2008. This is a sequel to his *Hebron Journal* published in 2001.



/// Briefly noted

Pastor to publish book on how church survived Hurricane Katrina

GULFPORT, MISS.—Nelson Roth, pastor of Gulfhaven Mennonite Church, has signed a contract with Tate Publishing & Enterprises to publish his book *Nehemiah Response* in 2009. Gulfport was one of the communities hit by Hurricane Katrina in 2005 and this book is the story of how the pastor and congregation responded to this natural disaster. Roth says, “Principles we learned from Nehemiah in the Bible helped us through our crisis. In the storyline of the book, we discuss these principles that are transferable to other types of crises, like marriage, finances, etc.” One of Roth’s responses was to found Relevant Ministry, which places interns from colleges, universities, seminaries and churches in the community of Gulfport to meet spiritual needs there.

—Relevant Ministry Release

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The Coat is Thin. Leonard Neufeldt. DreamSeeker Books, Cascadia Publishing, 2008, 99 pages.

This small book is a collection of poems. Although Neufeldt lives in Washington State, his poems have references to locations in British Columbia.

Hope Indeed! Remarkable Stories of Peacemakers. N. Gerald Shenk. Good Books, 2008, 106 pages.

Shenk has put together this collection of peacemaking stories from today's world because he believes such stories can foster peace. The 15 chapters also have discussion questions.

Long After I'm Gone: A Father-Daughter Memoir. Deborah Good with Nelson Good. Cascadia Publishing, 2009, 208 pages.

Deborah Good gathered stories from her father after he was diagnosed with cancer. The stories mix together the daughter's grief and loss with her father's memories and wisdom.

The Mill Grinds Fine. Helen Wade Alderfer. DreamSeeker Books, Cascadia Publishing and Herald Press, 2009, 135 pages.

This collection of poems explores the author's childhood as well as ordinary events and situations throughout her long life. Alderfer edited *Christian Living* magazine for 25 years.

Pax Avalon: Conflict Resolution. Steven "Reece" Friesen. Herald Press, 2008, 120 pages.

This graphic novel (comic book format) explores issues of peace and conflict in the fictitious Avalon City.



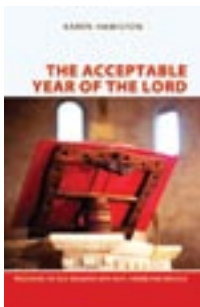
Somewhere Else. Jan Guenther Braun. Arbeiter Ring Publishing, 2008, 232 pages.

Jan Braun's first novel tells the story of a young woman, daughter of the president of a Mennonite college, who struggles with her homosexuality. Braun grew up in Osler, Sask.

Resources

Abuse Response and Prevention. MCC, 2008, 32 pages.

This booklet, designed for church leaders, provides guidelines for response and suggestions for preventing abuse.



The Acceptable Year of the Lord: Preaching the Old Testament with Faith, Finesse and Fervour.

Karen Hamilton. Novalis, 2008.

Hamilton, the general secretary to the Canadian Council of Churches, provides insights into Old Testament texts. It is designed for preachers who use the Common Lectionary.

DVDs

Colombian Churches Call for Peace. MCC, 2007, 11 minutes.

Churches in Colombia are praying and working for peace by responding to the humanitarian crisis resulting from armed conflict. Grade 9 to adult.

Ours to Share. Mennonite World Conference, 2009, five minutes.

This overview of how the people of Mennonite World Conference share with each other is available in English, French, Spanish or German at kitchener@mwc-cmm.org.

Remembering Russia 1928-1938: Collectivization and Mass Arrest. Otto Klassen Production, 2007, 52 minutes.

Klassen documents the suffering of Mennonites in the Soviet Union during this difficult decade. It is available from MCC offices.

Taming Hunger. MCC, 2007, 15 minutes.

As well as stories from MCC's mobile meat canner, this DVD tells stories from Burundi, where the meat plays a role in agricultural development and community building.

Tsunami's Wake: Healing from Trauma. MCC, 2007, 54 minutes.

These stories of healing after the trauma of a major tsunami come from India and Indonesia.

Unexpected Peace. MCC, 2008, 10 minutes.

A young woman whose father's was murdered suffers years of anger and bitterness until she participates in victim-offender mediation.

—Compiled by Barb Draper, Books&Resources Editor

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BOOK REVIEW

CPT hostage story not an easy read

118 Days: Christian Peacemaker Teams Held Hostage in Iraq.

Tricia Gates Brown, ed. Christian Peacemaker Teams, Toronto, 2008, 227 pages.

REVIEWED BY ECKHARD GOERZ

Peacemaking is at the heart of our Mennonite identity. Consequently, this narrative of the Christian Peacemakers Teams (CPT) kidnapping and subsequent murder of one and rescue of the other three in 2005-06 should prove vital and interesting reading. But while there are fascinating and illuminating elements in the book, it is also a frustrating, unfocused and uneven read.

At its core it is a collage of 23 articles lightly edited by a member of CPT. It



is self-published and suffers accordingly, in that it reflects solely an introspective view, resulting in a slightly amateurish quality.

Church publishers reportedly declined to publish the book, primarily due to CPT's insistence that the homosexual

relationship of Canadian James Loney be included as an essential element of the story, in part as an example of present day "violence" within western society against some of its citizens. This theme

tends to overshadow the story of the kidnapping.

The deliberate—and judged necessary—exclusion of Jim Loney's partner from the negotiations and media coverage until after his release is one example of this, illustrating the disconnect faith communities continue to encounter on this issue locally and across world and religious communities. It colours how the whole story is read and potentially influences the perception of the overall work of CPT.

The strongest contributions appear at the end. One focuses on Tom Fox, a Quaker, who was inexplicably murdered by his captors just prior to the rescue of the others, while the concluding article, written by Loney, a member of Catholic Worker House, is a deeply personal tribute to his fellow captive, Fox. These reflections provide valuable insight into the character and faith dynamics of both individuals.

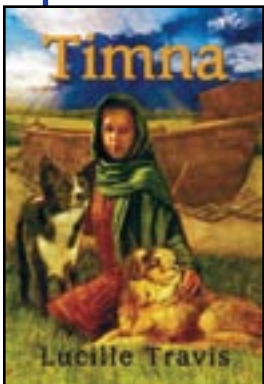
Intentional Christian peacemaking as an alternative to military solutions to the evils in the world continues to present moral and faith challenges. This tragic event illustrates some of the complexities and potential associated costs. As an avenue of service, CPT is not for the faint-hearted. Clearly, the good work of CPT was reflected by the more than 100 organizations that formally expressed support for the four hostages during their violent confinement.

118 Days presents an honest, multifaceted account from many individuals impacted both directly and more peripherally by the event. It shows how faith can transform intellectual assent into a lifetime—and life-costing—commitment to real tangible action, a journey all of us need to spend more time on.

But it is not an easy read. ☿

Eckhard Goerz is a former CEO of Eden Health Care Services, Winkler, Man.

Herald Press: New Books for Spring



Timna

Timna is the wife of Shem, one of Noah's sons. As this story by Lucille Travis for 9-to-14-year-olds open, the family has loaded the ark with animals and supplies as God has ordered, and they are ready to shut the doors. Soon the Flood will begin. Along with two enchanting and mischievous dogs named Thief and Mangy, Timna seals herself into the ark. She doesn't know what to expect, only that she is obeying—and trusting—God.

Paper, 168 pages, \$11.49

The Dark Night: A Gift of God

"Daniel P. Schrock offers us a rare gift. He shepherds us into this dark terrain and brings light and understanding to this puzzling and oft-times misunderstood experience."—Wendy Miller, *Eastern Mennonite Seminary*

Paper, 218 pages, \$19.54

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Calendar

British Columbia

May 24: "Reach Up In Out," an MC B.C. joint service featuring worship, fellowship and food; Chandos Pattison Auditorium, Surrey, 4 p.m. Meal ticket deadline: April 30; tickets available from local congregations or the MC B.C. office.

Alberta

June 6: Camp Valaqua hike-a-thon For more information, call 403-637-2510 or e-mail valaqua@telusplanet.net.

June 10: Alberta heritage retreat at Camp Valaqua. For more information, call Kurt Janz at 403-271-7477.

June 12-13: MCC Relief Sale, Didsbury. Events include a Friday barbecue, sale and bike-a-thon. For more information, call Adam Beriault at 403-275-6935.

Saskatchewan

May 27: MEDAffinity breakfast, at the Saskatoon Club, 7 a.m. Speaker: Ken Sawatzky. Topic: "Keeping the faith."

Manitoba

May 13: Westgate Mennonite Collegiate work day.

May 15: "Going Barefoot II," a conference for church communicators, with keynote speaker Mike Tennant of The Age of Persuasion. For more information or to register, visit cmu.ca.

May 22-24: Birding retreat at Camp Koinonia.

May 27: Westgate Mennonite Collegiate Grades 7-9 spring concert, at Bethel Mennonite Church, Winnipeg, at 7 p.m.

May 28: Westgate Grades 10-12 spring concert, at Bethel Mennonite Church, Winnipeg, at 7 p.m.

Ontario

May 5: Church leadership seminar: "Transforming the culture of the congregation," in Waterloo.

May 5-6: Church leadership seminar: "Leading the church through times of conflict and change," in Waterloo.

May 9: Grand Philharmonic Choir presents Franz Lehar's *The Merry Widow*. Centre in the Square, Kitchener, 7:30 p.m. Tickets available at 519-578-

6885.

May 9: DaCapo Chamber Choir presents "Fire and Air: Kindling sun, moon stars and spirit," St. John the Evangelist Church, Kitchener, 8 p.m. Advance tickets available online at dacapochamberchoir.ca (follow the "ticket info" link) or by phone at 519-725-7549.

May 11: Spring seniors retreat at Hidden Acres Mennonite Camp. Speaker: Rick Cober Bauman, executive director of Mennonite Central Committee Ontario. Topic: "But we like the old wine: Shaping MCC for the 21st century." For more information, call 519-625-8602.

May 16: MC Eastern Canada presents "Ministering to the chronically mentally ill and their families" event; Erb Street Mennonite Church Waterloo; 8:45 a.m. to 3 p.m.

May 22: Fundraising yard and bake sale at the Wanner Mennonite Church picnic shelter, Cambridge; 5 to 9 p.m. Rain date: May 23.

May 26-29: "Quilts for the World" at St. Jacobs Mennonite Church; 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. (26-28), 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. (29). Guest artist: Judy Gascho-Jutzi. Gift shop, appraisals, quilting bee.

May 27: Solar energy information night, Erb Street Mennonite Church, Waterloo, 7 p.m. Learn about solar energy options for your church, home or workplace. Join MCC Ontario constituents in purchasing solar energy together in an effort to care for God's creation.

May 29-30: New Hamburg Mennonite Relief Sale, New Hamburg fairgrounds and arena. Gates open at 5:30 p.m. (29) and 7 a.m. (30). For more information, visit nhmrs.com.

May 30: Willowgrove annual fundraising golf tournament at Angus Glen Golf Club, Markham; 1:30 p.m. shotgun start. Silent and live auctions and dinner included. Download registration forms at willowgrove.ca. For more information, call Ron de Roo at 905-640-2127.

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.

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We are looking for a person who:

- has a strong personal commitment to Jesus Christ.
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- has gifts of leadership in evangelism and visitation.

Please submit inquiries, resumes and references to:

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First Mennonite Church of Winnipeg, Man., is inviting applicants for the positions of **LEADING MINISTER** and **YOUTH MINISTER**. We are a large and diverse community of believers belonging to MC Canada and served by a five-member pastoral team that is committed to the MC Canada Confession of Faith. Our congregation has Russian/German roots, a strong musical tradition, and three distinct Sunday services.

We seek a Leading Minister who is:

- a spiritual leader with pastoral experience and an M.Div. or equivalent training;
- gifted in preaching, interpersonal relations and administration;
- energetic and positive; and
- can inspire and embrace the many gifts of our congregation. Position begins in Spring, 2010.

We seek a Youth Minister who:

- is an enthusiastic and motivated self-starter holding an under-graduate degree with significant biblical/theological content;
- has some experience working with young people;
- relates well to young people and their parents; and
- desires to inspire youths to Christian discipleship. Position begins in Fall, 2009, for a one-year term.

To apply in confidence or for more information, contact:

Richard Klassen, Chair Ministerial Search Committee
First Mennonite Church
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Full-time Associate Pastor: Youth and Youngadult

Bethel Mennonite Church in Winnipeg, Man., invites applicants to apply for the position of **ASSOCIATE PASTOR FOR YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULT MINISTRY**. BMC is an inter-generational congregation of 450 active members and 80 children/youths.

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Canadian Mennonite is seeking an approximately 40% time Advertising Representative for the biweekly magazine. Pay is a negotiable combination of commission and salary, plus expenses and benefits. The majority of work can be done from home if desired. Resumes will be considered starting April 1 with the position starting June 1.

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Upcoming Advertising Dates

Issue Date	Ads Due
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June 8	May 26
June 22	June 9
<i>Focus on Children's Books & Resources</i>	
July 6	June 23
July 27	July 14
Aug. 17	Aug. 5
Sept. 7	Aug. 25

Violence

is for those who have lost

their imagination



PHOTOS BY RICHARD ALBRECHT

Banners and puppetistas (puppeteers who use their creations in public demonstrations and street theatre) contribute to the annual Stirling Avenue Mennonite Church Palm Sunday Peace Walk through downtown Kitchener, Ont. (photo above). Jim Hett offers a prayer for people to “imagine peace” (photo left), while Noah Albrecht gets in on the action (photo below).

