

CANADIAN MENNONITE

July 27, 2009
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Building Relationships

p.12

inside

Listening with respect 4

Brave the shave 18

Challenge of the oil sands 23

EDITORIAL

Unfinished business

DICK BENNER
EDITOR/PUBLISHER

Harry Lafond thinks Mennonites have a lot of “unfinished business” with aboriginals, issues from which we should not “walk away.”

As executive director of the Office of the Treaty Commissioner in Saskatchewan, he might be expected to say this to a Learning Tour group taking the time to travel to Duck Lake following Assembly in Saskatoon last month (see our main feature on page 4).

For some of us this declaration might bring a sigh of weariness, for others another prick of the conscience. We have been on this journey for quite some time now.

Sorry for taking the land from First Nations people for more than a century, we asked for their forgiveness in a “litany of confession” as early as the 1970 Winkler Assembly. “We have erred where we have poured our energies and anxieties into doing things instead of listening and learning, where principles, policies, programs and right theology took priority over you, the people,” our leaders humbly wrote among a long list of confessions.

That act of official contrition sustained us for another 36 years until a group of farmers, pastors and members of the Young Chippewyan First nation met at Stoney Knoll, Sask., to “exchange stories, play games and link hearts,” according to our own *Canadian Mennonite* account. That was in the fall of 2006.

A year later, our church leaders in the persons of Lois Coleman Neufeld and

Robert J. Suderman joined the Anglican Church of Canada and the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Canada, along with other church bodies to sign a joint statement of recommitment to aboriginal justice. It was a Kairos moment, literally—an initiative guided by the organization Kairos on behalf of its church members.

Isn't that enough? some of us might be asking quietly.

That's precisely the point. We right-brain German/Russian/Swiss types have a different view of time, of work, of organization than do our First Nation counterparts. At times, and with the issues to which Lafond refers, our cultures couldn't be more at variance.

We Mennonites, though mostly gentle in spirit, are hard-driving, impatient, task-oriented, organized to the tee, orderly, systematic, logical and persistent. We set up measurable goals and expect results. We are known more for our good deeds than for our many words. Just look at how cheerfully we volunteer for the many projects of Mennonite Disaster Service, the partnerships we form with nationals all over the world through Mennonite Central Committee.

So why can't we bring some closure to our reconciliation with the aboriginals?

Could it be that, despite our best efforts, we still have trouble comprehending and accepting our cultural differences? To the aboriginal, time is the great teacher, not a commodity. Waiting for the “right time” is a virtue, not something to be anxious

about. “Time is money” or “Time is of the essence” are not their slogans. Things of the spirit are far more important than machines, technology and conveniences.

Elders are respected and cared for, not warehoused in retirement communities and nursing homes. Their wisdom is a cultural treasure, highly valued by members of all ages in the community. In their oral society, elders' well-chosen words of counsel and advice are taken seriously, not diminished because of the aging process.

The earth is the aboriginal's “mother,” nurturer/provider/protectorate all tied up in one, not a patch of dirt that gives back higher and higher yields per hectare. And it is to be shared with others who depend on it for sustenance, not marked off with “No Trespassing” signs. To be in tune with nature is to be at peace with oneself, with the universe, with the Great Spirit. While we tend to compartmentalize our lives into manageable systems, they see life as a whole, as a “circle,” to use Lafond's imagery.

So, despite our best efforts, our good intentions and contrite confessionals, this business of reconciliation, as Lafond puts it, is far from complete. It is only another milestone on the journey, a road on which “we are all learners in building bridges and relationships with our neighbours,” as Edith von Gunten puts it. She along with her husband, Neill, co-directs Mennonite Church Canada's Native Ministry.

Through the persistent efforts of Lafond, cooperating with Mennonites and other church bodies, the wider society is coming to terms with the merging of these two cultures. Last year, Saskatchewan became the first province to implement mandatory treaty education in the public schools, an event that on September 15, 2008, coincided with the 134th anniversary of the signing of Treaty 4. Last month Manitoba followed suit. Ontario has it under advisement.



ABOUT THE COVER:

Chloe Sonnenberg (19 months) already understands that Camp Valaqua is a place for building relationships. At the 50th anniversary wiener roast, she made friendly overtures to Finn Lee-Epp. Their parents hope that someday they will be campers and staff at Camp Valaqua, Water Valley, Alta.

PHOTO: DONITA WIEBE-NEUFELD

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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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contents



Listening with respect 4

There is unfinished business regarding treaty relationships between Canada and First Nations, reports

AARON EPP, one of the participants in MC Canada's Aboriginal Learning Tour.

Call for understanding and prayer in Bolivia rape case 13

MCC urges the wider Mennonite community to pray for the colonies in Bolivia that are reeling from accusations of rape.

Casting our bread upon the waters 15

Waters Mennonite Church had its beginnings when "Old" Mennonites from Waterloo Region moved to the Sudbury area writes **DAVE ROGALSKY** in this 50th anniversary report.

No longer parent and child 19

MC Canada reports that the four congregations of the Conference of Mennonites in Mexico are providing significant ministries to their neighbours.

Justice at the expense of peace?

Peace at the expense of justice? 22

Mennonite and Muslim scholars met for a fourth conference.

JEREMY BERGEN reports that while both sides value peace and justice, there are major differences in basic assumptions.

Secondhandpants surprised by popularity 25

CURTIS and **MARLON WIEBE** have been gaining popularity with their "science folkton" music, reports **AARON EPP**.

Regular features:

For discussion **6** Readers write **7** Milestones **10**

Pontius' Puddle **11** Yellow Pages **27**

Calendar **29** Classifieds **30**

Unfinished business 2

DICK BENNER

Just Say Charge It 7

HAROLD PENNER

Naming and Claiming Beauty 8

MELISSA MILLER

Confessions of a Former Pastor 10

WILLARD METZGER

New blog postings

[at canadianmennonite.org/blog/](http://canadianmennonite.org/blog/)

Meeting Jesus in the stranger: **HINKE LOEWEN-RUDGERS**

Yes, there's more action at MWC: **DICK BENNER**

Letters to a young poet: **DAVID DRIEDGER**

An adventure in God's goodness: **CHERYL WOELK**

MENNONITE CHURCH CANADA LEARNING TOUR

Listening with respect

First Nations seek to reinvigorate treaty relationships

BY AARON EPP

Although it still belonged to the Young Chippewayan, the government gave the land to new settlers 20 years later. These settlers included Lutherans and Mennonites, who were not aware of the injustice that was done.

“**H**ow much are you willing to let this [experience] change you?” That was the question posed by First Nations leader, Harry Lafond, during the Mennonite Church Canada Aboriginal Learning Tour that took place June 7-9, following this year’s assembly in Saskatoon. Lafond is the executive director of the Office of the Treaty Commissioner, an organization that aims to reinvigorate the relationship between treaty First Nations and the government of Canada by building on the relationship created by the treaties.

Standing in the lodge at Shekinah Retreat Centre, 50 minutes north of Saskatoon, Lafond spoke to the 20-plus tour participants about how treaties—documents in which the First Nations people signed over their land in return for certain concessions, such as annual payments and farming supplies—have gone unfulfilled, and how that affected the people who signed them. Of particular note was Treaty 6, which was signed in 1876 and which represents most of the central area of Alberta and Saskatchewan. Lafond spoke of how the history of the treaty is traditionally taught in schools, versus how the oral history of the Cree people reveals a broader

PHOTOS BY AARON EPP



The Skyboys and the Sunrise Dancers, a drumming and dancing group from Stobart Community High School in Duck Lake, Sask., share their talents at Shekinah Retreat Centre.

understanding of what happened.

By signing Treaty 6, the Cree did not ask to be taken care of, Lafond said. Rather, they wanted the right to make their own living in harmony with the European settlers. Legislation over the years has silenced the voice of First Nations people, he continued. The challenge today is to imagine how treaties can

“The most hurtful thing [for First Nations people] is not being able to be ourselves.”—Maria Campbell

be honoured in a way that benefits both sides.

“We have a lot of unfinished business, and we shouldn’t walk away from unfinished business,” Lafond said. Instead, people need to dialogue and ask the question: “Where is the opportunity here?”

Tour participants, who came from Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba and

Ontario, were exposed to this unfinished business. They were also exposed to the opportunity Lafond spoke of during a visit to Stoney Knoll, a slightly elevated area of land outside Laird, Sask. which was given to the Young Chippewyan First Nation as part of Treaty 6. Because they were nomadic people, they never settled on the land. Although it still

belonged to the Young Chippewyan, the government gave the land to new settlers 20 years later. These settlers included Lutherans and Mennonites, who were not aware of the injustice that was done.

On Aug. 22, 2006, the descendants of those settlers met with representatives from the Young Chippewyan to exchange stories, play games and sign a memorandum of understanding. The

memorandum acknowledges that “the Young Chippewyan band respects the current ownership of the land by the settlers and, in return, the Mennonites and Lutherans pledge to support the Chippewyan’s ongoing struggle to get compensation for this land.”

“We are all treaty people,” said Gary LaPlante, a representative from the Young Chippewyan who spoke to the tour group. Even today, First Nations people and European Canadians are implicated in what happened more than 130 year ago. The memorandum came about because the Young Chippewyan wanted to honour Treaty 6 and not spill blood. They recognized that Mennonites and Lutherans also have a spiritual connection to the land.

“[We] don’t want to take away what you have worked for, but we want to settle the issue in a peaceful way,” LaPlante said. “We must work together. We must

live together.”

That sentiment was shared by Maria Campbell when the tour group visited her home at Gabriel’s Crossing, near Batoche, Sask. A respected Métis author, playwright, academic and elder, Campbell told the group, “The most hurtful thing [for First Nations people] is not being able to be ourselves.”

Campbell is a descendent of Gabriel Dumont, a Métis leader best known as the man who led the small Métis military forces during the Northwest Resistance of 1885. At Gabriel’s Crossing, she hosts workshops that can include up to 100 people. During the workshops, people share stories, learn and create art. As a result of time spent at Gabriel’s Crossing, artists have recorded albums, produced plays, written dissertations, books and short stories. Those who have gone on to such success come back to Gabriel’s Crossing as teachers.

“All of us believe that education is the key to change,” Campbell said.

Organized by MC Canada in partnership with the ministries commission of Mennonite Church Saskatchewan and Mennonite Central Committee Saskatchewan, the Aboriginal Learning Tour was created to foster greater awareness of the challenges and responses of ministry in the First Nations and Métis context.

The tour also included a visit to the Duck Lake Regional Interpretive Centre, which houses a museum of artifacts relating to First Nations, Métis and Pioneer history from 1870 to 1905; input from Act Now, an anti-racism group from Stobart Community High School in Duck Lake; a performance by a group of traditional First Nation dancers and drummers from the high school; a visit to Batoche National Park, the site of the last battlefield in the Northwest Rebellion of 1885; and a visit to Fort Carlton, which was a Hudson’s Bay trading post from 1810 to 1885.

Reflecting on her experience during a phone interview a few days after the tour, participant Rita MacDonald said the biggest thing she learned was something that was simultaneously new to her and something she has known for years: “I



Twenty-one people participated in MC Canada’s Aboriginal Learning Tour.

need to listen.”

“Everyone has a story. I need to listen with respect, without preconceived notions, [and] with an open heart and mind,” explained the retiree, who resides in Rosthern, Sask.

MacDonald added that she feels she needs to be “more intentional” in her learning when it comes to First Nations issues, because the more she knows, the more she will listen.

Neill von Gunten, who co-led the tour and also directs MC Canada’s native ministry program with his wife, Edith,

says he is encouraged by the idea of tour participants doing more research into these issues on their own.

“I hope they felt the spirit of graciousness of the [First Nations] people they heard stories from,” he said in an interview after the tour. “I also hope they felt the heartbeat of a nation through the drum, because it was there—you could feel it.” ❧

With files from Deborah Froese and Karin Fehderau.

/// For discussion

1. What opportunities have you had to catch a glimpse of aboriginal culture? In what ways are First Nations’ values different from those of mainstream Canadians? Do you agree with Dick Benner’s assessment of how traditional Mennonites are different from aboriginals (page 2)?

2. Harry Lafond said there is unfinished business surrounding the treaties made between Canada and the First Nations. What do you think this unfinished business includes? Do you believe the government deliberately dishonoured the treaties?

3. How has the relationship between Canada and the First Nations changed over the past 150 years? What factors (negative and positive) need to be acknowledged about this relationship? What has been the church’s relationship to the First Nations? How do you respond to Sakoietá’ Widrick’s comments (page 7)?

4. Where do you think the relationship between First Nations and other Canadians might go in the future? If you had influence in making government policy, what changes would you try to bring about?

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.

✉ Church needs to also examine generosity to First Nations

It was with a feeling that the prophetic voice has finally been listened to that I read the editorial "Unexamined Generosity" in the latest issue of *Canadian Mennonite* (July 6). Not only has this problem exerted itself to other countries, but as Native North Americans, we have also been trying to tell the church for what seems like ages that it needs to listen to our community people, not just those who claim to be Christian, but the community as a whole, to work with us on what programs, finances, and "generosities" need to be shared.

The church has often come with a paternalistic approach to working with our communities that has diminished the power of the community by taking leadership in helping to outline needed programs. In most cases this overwhelming sense to be "generous"

GOD MONEY AND ME

Just Say Charge It

BY HAROLD PENNER

Charge your cell phone; charge your burger. A new credit payment method is being introduced in Toronto with plans for expansion across the country. *The Globe and Mail* reported on Visa Canada chief executive, Tim Wilson's introduction of this new payment method—none other than the ubiquitous cell phone. The chip technology that is being introduced into all credit cards over the next few years to improve security will be inserted in all new cell phones to allow them to be used in place of a credit card. The technology is already in use in places like Australia, France and Hong Kong.

Some of the advantages of chip-enabled cell phones being touted by Mr. Wilson are that the chip will also be able to store loyalty card information eliminating the need to carry loyalty cards, users will be able to pay for public transportation with a wave of their cell phones, and event passes may be purchased online then the phone scanned at the turnstile when entering the event.

Retailers will be able to forward coupons to your cell phone based on your spending habits and proximity to their store so you can take advantage of the coupon for additional savings (or be tempted to make an unplanned purchase).

Nathan Dungan of Share Save Spend™ predicted that this new technology



When using credit cards, average consumers spend 12-18% more than if they use cash.

would soon be introduced to North America when he addressed the Mennonite Foundation of Canada annual meeting in April, 2009. It appears it may be arriving even earlier than he had anticipated. Along with comments on the new technology, Nathan shared how spending habits are being impacted by the new technology. When using credit cards, average consumers spend 12-18% more than if they use cash. Where the new technology is already in use, consumers using chip-enabled cell phones

spend another 10-20% more than if they use traditional credit cards. Clearly there is a significant incentive to the retail and credit industries to encourage the transition to the use of cell phones for making purchases.

Whether using credit cards or eventually moving to a new payment method like the cell phone, we at Mennonite Foundation encourage you to stick to the basics: prepare a budget reflective on your income level; regularly review your spending to ensure you are within your budget; if using a credit card, determine beforehand how you will use it (type of

purchases and maximum dollar amount per purchase); pay the credit card invoice in full each month.

A word of caution, should this new technology take hold it will give a whole new meaning to an old credit card commercial tagline "just say charge it." After all a dead phone would leave you stranded in more ways than one.

Harold Penner is a stewardship consultant at the Winnipeg, Man., office of Mennonite Foundation of Canada.

by the church has really disempowered our people. Where we need to see generosity many times is in advocating for our rights, access to our lands and resources. We see only bits and pieces of that. I believe maybe because it doesn't fit into the context of conversion.

I am glad countries are finally starting to speak out about the methods and means by which the church holds the purse strings and "shares" its wealth, often with little regard for what is really needed in our communities. There is a way to work with communities that creates equality and commitment to the work and then there is a way to work that often satisfies the work

of the church only. All too often we have had to accept the latter. Things do need to change.

—SAKOIETA' WIDRICK, MOHAWK NATION, SIX NATIONS, ONT.

✉ Two questions for every 'vacationary'

Responding to Robert Lupton's article on "vacationaries," (July 6), let me suggest two questions every "vacationary" should ask before going. One, how will my visit encourage, empower and energize the local

FAMILY TIES

Naming and Claiming Beauty

MELISSA MILLER

Waiting at the restaurant for my order, I noted my hunger and looked forward to satisfying it. As the food arrived at my table, I murmured appreciatively, "Beautiful." "Thank you," replied the young waitress cheekily. I quickly glanced at her, as she feigned surprise, "Oh! I thought you were talking about me." By then a hint of blush was spreading across her round cheeks, I'm sure, an unconscious reaction to her forthrightness. We both smiled at the unusual exchange, and returned to our activities—my tackling my dinner and she tending her customers.

I kept thinking about her. There was nothing special about her looks that I could see, but...the ease with which she co-opted the compliment I'd paid the food made her special. Someone who felt good enough about herself to grab the word beautiful and bestow it on to herself. I agreed with her. To have that kind of chutzpah and confidence, to inject sparkle into a commonplace transaction between customer and wait person—that was beautiful.

My husband regularly tells me I'm

beautiful. Fortunately this happens when we're alone. Each time he speaks the word, I inwardly protest, wanting to reel off for him the hundred ways—inside and out—that I'm not beautiful. But I bite my tongue, not wanting to spoil the moment. I discipline myself to accept his praise because I know he is a honest man who means what he says. I don't want to reject his gift. And I also know that he speaks



Is it too much to imagine that God still sees goodness as he looks upon us today?

as a lover, and lovers see beauty where others do not.

Secretly I revel in his affirmation. It's likely one of the reasons I married him. I've had my share of "the uglies"—negative impressions of my self, my attributes, my shortcomings. I can ride that train for a long time. But when he says, "You're beautiful," it stops the train, halts it right in its track. At least temporarily. I make a choice about whether to restart the train, or to join the whimsical waitress in saying, "I AM beautiful."

In the opening pages of our Bible,

we read of God's delight in creation. Repeatedly God looked at the world—the sun and moon, fish and birds, land animals and human beings—and God pronounced it good, indeed very good. Maybe God even murmured, "Beautiful!" as he gazed at the creation he loved. Is it too much to imagine that God still sees goodness as he looks upon us today?

As God's children, we participate in this naming. We can give voice to the beauty that we see, naming the goodness and loveliness around us. To our lover or parent or child or sibling or friend we can say, "You are beautiful. I love you." When we hear such a treasure offered to us, we can say, "Thank you" and smile with all the pleasure we can muster.

A grandmother told me this story. One day, as she was holding her young grand-

daughter, she was surprised when the child grabbed the fold of skin below her chin (what the woman calls her "wattle"). Pulling her grandmother's face close to hers, the child exclaimed, "Oh, Grandma, you're so beautiful!" A glimmer of happy tears shone in the woman's eyes as she recalled the memory, allowing herself to claim the beauty her grandchild named.

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

workers? If my visit is going to tire them out for no good purpose, I need to find something else to do. Two, what am I bringing that will equip the local workers to minister more effectively? This might be a new and needed skill or hard-to-get supplies or the willingness to complete a mundane but necessary project that just isn't getting done

Last fall, I went as a "vacationary" to Romania. It was my fourth trip; I went to visit friends and to "run" a one-week afterschool program for children in a village close to Bucharest. I don't speak Romanian so I arranged to share leadership with one of my friends, a young village pastor who has experience working with children and youth. He recruited his wife and a few other friends to help. I provided the impetus and

2.5 suitcases full of curriculum, craft supplies, school supplies, sports equipment, etc. (for both immediate and long-term use). The week went very well, with 35 village children attending our host church on Sunday to sing for the congregation.

At the end of the week, we had a meeting with the youth and young adults in the church. They had watched our program (which we purposefully kept quite simple) and realized that they had the skills and the willingness to continue it. After I left, the Sunday School in that church was re-started and there is now a Children's Program running every Saturday as well. What was my contribution? Very simple: encouragement and equipping.

—CHERYL ENNS, VANCOUVER, BC

FROM OUR LEADERS

Confessions of a former pastor

WILLARD METZGER

After twenty years of pastoral leadership, I began working for the broader church in an international ministry capacity. Having experienced church life from a different perspective, my understanding of congregational well-being has been influenced. Now that I know what I know, perhaps a little confession is in order.

When I was a pastor, I considered it critical to have people engaged during wor-

ship services. Sometimes I would visit other congregations and piously lament the lack of participation from the people in the pews. But now that I join many others in an hour-and-a-half commute to work, and stumble into a weekend wearied of thinking and processing, I have a new appreciation for the merits of sitting quietly in church and allowing the vocal praises of others to draw my heart into worship. It feels good to rest and listen and allow the words to soak into my weary spirit. I confess that I did not fully

appreciate the needs of those who invited me to serve as their pastoral leader.

In like manner, when I was a pastor I considered it important to have people active in congregational life. But now that I finish a commute that often does not have me finish dinner until many meetings begin, my appetite for even-



Now I am one of those folks who go to church and look forward to being quietly renewed.

ing committee meetings has been lost. Now that weekends really are necessary for renewal, I have little energy to spend Saturday at a church function. Rest is critical to well-being.

It could be said that a job or ministry that negatively impacts your ability to function as a ready church volunteer should be replaced with something that offers more flexibility. However for many people these options are not available. In fact, for most people, evenings and weekends are important recouping times.

As I reflected on my twenty years of pastoral ministry, I recognized that the drive for active church life had as much to do with my sense of accomplishment as it did with God's mandate for the church. I now realize more fully, that serving the church is helping people discern healthy activity and guiding them to find appropriate ways to acknowledge God as Lord of their lives. This is not to suggest that church life is secondary to individual pursuit, not at all. But it can be said, that not all church activity is in the best interest of God's people nor the glory of God's name.

My confession is not one of over-activity as much as it is of misguided activity. I confess that I have not fully appreciated the spiritual worship of revitalization in

the company of God's people. Now I am one of those folks who go to church and look forward to being quietly renewed and restored by joining the worshipping community. The words soak into my weary being and I feel revived. I sit back and I breathe deeply, hoping that my pastor has a fuller understanding of the weekly context I have joined than I did when I served as a pastor.

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

/// Milestones

Births/Adoptions

Albrecht—John Funk (b. June 11, 2009) to Katherine and Scott Albrecht, First Mennonite, Kitchener, Ont.

Araki—Samantha Mei (b. May 25, 2009) to Jennifer (Rollins) and Tai Araki, Langley Mennonite, B.C.

Bergman—Luke Samuel Donovan (b. May 21, 2009) to Andrea (Loewen) and Donovan Bergman, Seeds of Life, Altona, Man.

Boese—Maxwell Camron (b. Feb. 25, 2009), to Jessica (Nesbit) and Shawn Boese, North Kildonan Mennonite Brethren, Winnipeg.

Jantzi—Madison Lisa (b. May 29, 2009) to Calvin and Jennifer Jantzi, Maple View Mennonite, Wellesley, Ont.

Klassen—Julieann Elisabeth (b. Dec. 28, 2008) to Darren Klassen (Hanley Mennonite, Sask.) and Kerri Banman.

Klassen—Seth Michael (b. June 16, 2009) to Michael and Misty Klassen, Douglas Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Lemke—Ty David (b. April 19, 2009), to Eric and Sherri Lemke, Avon Mennonite, Stratford, Ont.

Loeppky—Katelyn Isabelle (b. June 16, 2009), to Greg and Margaret Loeppky, Morden Mennonite, Man.

Nuss Hildebrand—Frieda Judith (b. May 30, 2009), to Jason Hildebrand and Katharina Nuss, Hope Mennonite, Winnipeg.

O'Brien—Casey Jane (b. June 6, 2009), to Jamie and Sean O'Brien, Morden Mennonite, Man.

Redekop—Colin Kerby (b. March 23, 2009) to Kathrina and Kerby Redekop, Langley Mennonite, B.C.

Robins—Leena Marie (b. March 2, 2009) to Heidi and Loren Robins, Hanley Mennonite, Sask.

Schwartzentruber—Christian Andrew (b. May 15, 2009), to Jesse and Valerie Schwartzentruber, The Gathering Church, Kitchener, Ont.

Voogt—Jordan Nicholas (b. March 28, 2009) to Wendy and Jason Voogt, Carman Mennonite, Man.

Wake—Liam Earl (b. June 3, 2009), to Colleen and Dean Wake, East Zorra Mennonite, Tavistock, Ont.

Baptisms

Laura Dawson, Mark Dawson, Tracey Herman, Daniel Ibarra, Denyse Pawliw—Avon Mennonite, Stratford, Ont., June 14, 2009.

Brent Dettweiler, Matthew Giesbrecht, Wendy Lebold—Breslau Mennonite, May 31, 2009.

Rachel Chiarello, Kassandra Chiarello, David Lundy—Crosshill Mennonite, Ont., June 28, 2009.

Nicholas Bergen, Daniel Driediger, Mikaela Ediger, Miriam Gross, Stephanie Jorritsma—First Mennonite, Edmonton, Alta., May 31, 2009.

Cara Fehr, Broedy Heinrichs, Josie Penner, Ethan Rempel, Judson Rempel, Nettie Wiebe, Rachel Wiebe—Gretna Bergthaler Mennonite, Man., May 31, 2009.

Corinne Illingworth, Dorothy Prehay, Esther

Kissoon—Jane Finch Faith Community, Toronto, June 21, 2009.

Kevin Epp, Alex Klassen, Jennifer Klassen, Spencer Neufeld, Sawai Phonsiri, Kelsey Willms—North Leamington United Mennonite, Ont., May 24, 2009.

Anne Bender, Melvin Bergsma, William Gunn, Tanya Mitchell, Tori Smythe—Tavistock Mennonite, Ont., May 31, 2009.

Reis Bender, Randy Fletcher, Shelby McLaren, Lindsey Werner—Tavistock Mennonite, Ont., June 21, 2009.

Peter Nijp, Sharon Nijp—Wellesley Mennonite, Ont., May 31, 2009.

Marriages

Bauman/Jagger—David Bauman (St. Jacobs Mennonite, Ont.) and Crystal Jagger in Waterloo, June 20, 2009.

Bender/Gunn—Anne Bender and William Gunn, Tavistock Mennonite, Ont., June 20, 2009.

Craig/Eigbike—David Craig and Christabel Eigbike, Langley Mennonite, B.C., May 23, 2009.

Cressman/Gilbert—Ashley Cressman (Breslau Mennonite, Ont.) and Andrew Gilbert at the bride's home in Waterloo, June 20, 2009.

Froese/Neufeld—Karla Froese (Hanley Mennonite, Sask.) and Scott Neufeld at Forest Grove Community Church, Saskatoon, Sask., May 30, 2009.

Gingrich/Hardman—Lindsey Gingrich (St. Jacobs Mennonite, Ont.) and Shayne Hardman at Doon Heritage Crossroads, Kitchener, June 20, 2009.

Martin/Petrie—Richard Martin and Amanda Petrie, Avon Mennonite, Stratford, Ont., in Niagara Falls, Ont., May 1, 2009.

Northey/Schoel—David Northey and Christina Schoel, Langley Mennonite, B.C., in Whonnock, B.C., April 4, 2009.

Patkau/Pryce—Kate Patkau (Hanley Mennonite, Sask.) and Lester Pryce at Spring Creek Church, Broderick, Sask., May 16, 2009.

Deaths

Bauman—Ethel Marie (nee Schmitt) 90, (b. Jan. 16, 1919; d. June 17, 2009), First Mennonite, Kitchener, Ont.

Dyck—Peter, 81 (d. June 17, 2009), First Mennonite, Edmonton, Alta.

Epp—Diedrick (Dick) Helmuth, 81, (b. Sept. 4, 1927; d. June 28, 2009), Nutana Park Mennonite, Saskatoon, Sask.

Loewen—Alfred, 94 (b. Oct. 16, 1914; d. May 6, 2009), Gretna Bergthaler Mennonite, Man.

Martin—Eldon, 83, (b. March 26, 1926; d. May 25, 2009), Elmira Mennonite, Ont.

Rempel—Kelli Leigh (nee Downey), 28 (b. Jan. 19, 1981; d. June 18, 2009), Nutana Park Mennonite, Saskatoon, Sask.

YOUNG PROPHETS

Are you the Prodigal Son's brother?

BY PAUL LOEWEN

SPECIAL TO CANADIAN MENNONITE

I was in the second last row of Winnipeg's MTS Centre recently, watching an AHL playoff hockey game. Behind me sat five young men, who were perhaps more obnoxious and rude than you'd like your seatmates to be. Displaying a disregard for cleaning up their talk, they discussed their various drunken exploits. Partway through the conversation, they dove into talking about the brother of one of these men.

"Your brother's a nut, man," one of them said.

"He is," the brother agreed.

"You're the only disciplined one in the family," another friend observed.

My jaw dropped. Thankfully they were behind me. He was the disciplined one in the family? What about the three or four disappeared hours during partying he had bragged about?

Before long, I was thinking I'm glad I'm not like that. And it's true: I am glad I'm not like that. My Friday nights in summer are spent playing ultimate Frisbee with my wife and friends. The only drinking that's done is straight out of a water bottle and the only trash-talking is the friendly ribbing that goes on between teams.

The story of the Prodigal Son tells of unhindered love from God for his

children. It reminds us that, no matter what we do, God is willing to open his arms and welcome us home—if we will only return. And that's a great message. But for some reason the story ends there for most people. Or maybe it doesn't. Maybe they do read the next section, but they seem to forget to apply it.



I'm not saying I'm perfect, but most of the time I'm not the Prodigal Son. I'm not lost, partying away my inheritance and living foolishly. I'm not returning home after blatant disobedience, afraid of what God will do with that disobedience. No, I'm usually the Prodigal's Brother.

And anyone who's ever thought, I'm glad I'm not like that, is right there with me. Do you remember the Prodigal's Brother? The brother that didn't ask his father for his inheritance? The one who stayed at home and worked? He's the one who becomes angry when he finds out a party is being thrown for his rebellious brother. He's the one who turns on his father and says, "Look! All these years I've been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends."

Now, I'm not asking for a goat to go out and barbecue. But when I catch myself thanking God with pride in my voice that

I am not like the men behind me at the MTS Centre, I have to remind myself of this story.

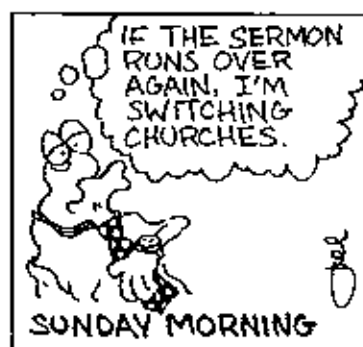
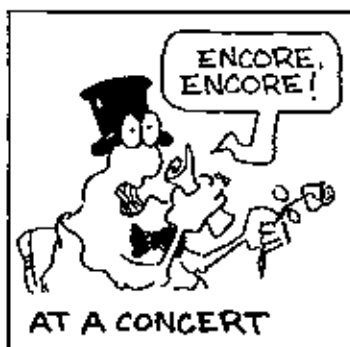
I am also like the worker hired first thing in the morning (Matthew 20:1-16), working hard all day, then eagerly anticipating my reward at the end. When those who arrive at the end of the work day receive the same reward that I do, there's a part of me that grumbles, "These men who were hired last worked only one hour and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the work and the heat of the day."

In that story, Jesus tells me that I agreed to do the work for the established reward. He's allowed to be as generous as he wants to be with the rewards he hands out to those who join the party at the last minute. It's his upside-down way of paying wages, of doing economics. And in the parable of the Prodigal's Brother, Jesus—through the narrative voice of the father—says, "My son, you are always with me, and everything I have is yours" (Luke 15:31).

I can't help but be a little envious because of Jesus' generosity, but when those moments come, I can rejoice and thank God that I have had the incredible opportunity to get to know him now already. Everything I have is yours, says God. The Prodigal Son is a story that reminds us that we can be saved no matter what we do. The end of the story reminds all those already saved, that jealousy and envy are useless—because the reward is already ours. ❧

Paul Loewen and his wife Jeanette are youth pastors at Douglas Mennonite Church, Winnipeg.

Pontius' Puddle



GOD AT WORK IN THE CHURCH

Standing on the Shoulders of Giants

Camp Valaqua Celebrates 50 years.

STORY AND PHOTO BY DONITA WIEBE-NEUFELD

Bird song harmonized perfectly with a joyful congregation as Camp Valaqua celebrated 50 years of ministry to Alberta Mennonites on June 13-14. An outdoor Folk Fest, worship service, camp activities, and tours were all accompanied by a hearty dose of reminiscence and fellowship.

Camp Valaqua began as an initiative of the Alberta Mennonite Youth Organization. In 1959, 20 acres of land was purchased along the Little Red Deer River just north of Water Valley. A boy's wilderness camp and a youth retreat were held the first summer. It soon became clear that more land, especially off the flood plain, was needed and a price of \$5,500 was negotiated for the rest of the quarter section. Walter Paetkau, Cory Hildebrandt and Jake Harder communicated to churches the value and vision

of the camp. By March of 1960, the debt was paid and an incredible legacy of faith and community building began.

Walter Paetkau, the first camp director, said; "It is a rich heritage to know I was part of something that has grown far beyond what we first thought."

Over the years, facilities, program and staff have undergone much growth and change. The camp progressed from being completely rustic to having a winterized lodge available for year-round conference and rental use. Summer programs have included horseback-riding, archery, trampoline, crafts, nature, basketball, climbing, ropes courses, fishing, swimming, and a sky-swing. A variety of off-camp trips have offered hiking, biking, and canoeing. Through the years, pastors of Mennonite Church Alberta congregations volunteered as chaplains, bringing solid Bible teaching to campers.

According to its vision statement, "Camp Valaqua is dedicated to proclaiming the Good News that God is the Creator, we are God's people, and the earth is placed in our hand as a gift and a trust." Jon Olfert, current director, says; "It's a huge blessing to be a part of Camp Valaqua...to meet and connect with staff and campers every year. The relationships and community we form here are unlike any other place."

At the worship service, Doug Klassen, pastor of Foothills Mennonite Church, said; "I can't help but think that the apostle

Paul would have liked Camp Valaqua. I can't help but think that when he was writing this letter to Timothy for his work in the Ephesian church, if there would have been a Valaqua option close by, I could have seen Paul getting everyone out of the city to a place free from distraction and nonsense, so that they could grasp the fullness of God as revealed in Jesus Christ."

Camp Valaqua's legacy lives on in the lives it has touched, building relationships between people, discovering and deepening faith in God, and developing leadership among young people. For 50 years, Valaqua has been a place to encounter God. Klassen concluded his message saying, "Let's continue to walk the next years firmly rooted in the word of God, looking to Jesus as the author and perfecter of our faith. Amen."

A history book, compiled and written by John Schellenberg, details the first 50 years of Camp Valaqua. The book, including a photo DVD, is available through the camp (403-637-2510) for \$25. ☘

☘ Briefly noted

Silver Lake Camp appoints interim executive director

David Erb has been appointed as interim executive director of Silver Lake Camp, located near Hepworth, Ont. He replaces Gwen Dell'Anno, who left her position in April with more than a year left on her three-year contract. Erb, who began as interim director in mid-May for 16 months, says that the change followed a number of years of decreasing financial support and fewer campers, calling the situation a "crisis of support." Erb sees his key job as reaching out to camp supporters in various regions of the province. He attended the New Hamburg Mennonite Relief Sale at the end of May as part of his attempt to make the camp more visible. Erb is no stranger to Silver Lake, having spent many childhood weeks there. He and Leanne Baer met there and eventually had their wedding on the campgrounds. Erb's job also includes trying to retool the director's job description, to determine if it should be full- or part-time, and how much time should be spent on finances and how much on community-building. Erb was the former managing partner of Erb & Good Funeral Home in Waterloo, Ont.

—Silver Lake Mennonite Camp Release



Curt Wiebe, former camp staff and assistant director, brings his wacky musical humour to the Valaqua Folk Fest stage.

Call for understanding and prayer in Bolivia rape case

By AMANDA THORSTEINSSON

Mennonite Central Committee release

WINNIPEG, MAN.

MCC is urging people not to judge the Mennonite colony that grabbed international headlines last month with shocking stories of mass rape.

Eight members of the Manitoba Mennonite Colony in Bolivia have been jailed on charges of allegedly drugging and raping more than 100 colony women over the course of several years.

“We can stand in judgment at the side and deride this awful immoral incident or we can compassionately stand with our brothers and sisters in working through the incredible pain, suffering and public scorn,” says John Janzen, coordinator of MCC’s Low German program.

As part of the wider Mennonite community and as an organization with a long association with Low German-speaking communities, MCC feels called to “reach out to our Bolivian brothers and sisters,” says Janzen. “We ask that the wider Mennonite community, and others, pray for the people in these communities as they struggle with what is happening.”

“We stand with our brothers and sisters, not in any way condoning this act or any other similar acts, but working through the pain, seeking justice, learning the lessons and preparing for a better future.” MCC Bolivia has offered counselling support for the victims, but it has been declined.

It is alleged that the men used an aerosol veterinary spray to drug the women and their husbands at night while they slept. They then used the opportunity to rape the women.

Hans Schroeder, director of MCC’s Low German program in Bolivia, visited the colony shortly after the arrest and talked with some of the victims, families and community leaders to learn about the issue firsthand.

The initial capture was made at 2 a.m. on June 20 by residents of the colony who harboured suspicions of what was happening.

The suspects were not beaten, as is often the case in the Bolivian colonies, but initially put into isolation and asked to record the names of their victims on a piece of paper with their signature at the bottom, according to Schroeder.

On June 22, colony leaders decided to bring the suspects to the Bolivian authorities.

It was a very sad day, Schroeder reports, for the colony to have to take their own to jail, but they felt that this was the right decision.

Two days later, the men pleaded not guilty in a hearing. The lawyers now have six months to prepare their cases for trial.

Forensic doctors and psychologists have been sent into the colony to examine the victims.

One colony leader made it clear that anyone who would enter another’s home with the intention to abuse the inhabitants was no longer welcome on the colony.

“I don’t think the colonists fully understand what after-effects the victims and the many families affected might face down the road,” says Schroeder. “My hope and prayer is that we, the broader community of believers, will be sensitive to their needs and be ready to help our brothers and sisters when the time is right.”

There are approximately 25,000 Mennonites living in colonies in Bolivia. They are the descendants of conservative Mennonites who came to Bolivia in the 1950s in search of greater agricultural opportunity and religious freedom.

The story has appeared in media around the world. ☸

PHOTO BY CLAIRE HANSON



Tim Kuepfer, pastor, is joined by Jeanette Hanson, MC Canada Witness worker, and other members of Peace Mennonite Church, Richmond, B.C., as he prays for four visitors from China: (from left) Pastor Lin Zhihua, Elder Wang Zhongkun, Pastor Sun Rengu, and Pastor Zheng Xiaogui. Peace Mennonite was the pastors’ first stop on a North American tour of Mennonite churches, schools, and ministries organized by Mennonite Partners in China.

Horse and buggy meets Web 2.0

New interactive website makes local Mennonite history available to all

Mennonite Heritage Portrait Release
WATERLOO, ONT.

On May 31, a new website was launched that marries the centuries-old Mennonite tradition of storytelling with the latest in web-based interactivity. The Mennonite Heritage Portrait (MennoniteHeritagePortrait.ca) is a new resource making thousands of original documents, photos and historical records from a wide variety of sources accessible online.

While many may find the idea of the Mennonite community being an early adopter of leading edge software peculiar, in Waterloo Region such collaboration does not seem out of the ordinary.

"In a community where it's commonplace to see a horse and buggy drive by while standing feet from the head office of Research in Motion, anything seems possible," says Mennonite Heritage Portrait project manager Janelle Martin. We [Centre for Community Mapping] began working with the Mennonite community because they have extensive, organized archives and were willing to trust us to present the material in an authentic and sensitive manner."

Ever since the Mennonite tradition began in the early 16th century, Mennonites and their close cousins, the Amish, have recorded their history. Now, with the launch of the Mennonite Heritage Portrait, these resources are available 24/7 online. The website provides an online "meeting place" where diverse cultures can meet and work together, and individuals can identify and discuss important aspects of their community cultural fabric while creating a record that helps to preserve their rich cultural heritage. The website also offers



PHOTO COURTESY OF W-K UNITED MENNONITE CHURCH

An example of the archival photographs on the Mennonite Heritage Portrait website, this photograph shows, from left to right, Hardy Janzen, J. H. Enns, and Woldemar Neufeld posing with their "touring sedan."

historic photo collections and important archives, and uses such features as global-positioning satellite technology and environmental applications, and blogs.

Created with a life of its own, the Mennonite Heritage Portrait will continue to grow, as new collections and archives are added to the fully searchable database, and as individuals contribute stories, memories, digital artefacts and photographs. Students using the site can contribute their



Martin

research; tourists visiting Waterloo are invited to upload their digital photos; teachers can access the educational modules that work with Ontario's curriculum; and church congregations can use the application to enhance the spiritual life of their congregations and take their sermon discussions into cyberspace. In conjunction with this interactive world, academic and technological experts involved in the project will provide their own authoritative data.

Institutions and individuals who have made their archival materials available to the Mennonite Heritage Portrait include the Mennonite Archives of Ontario at Conrad Grebel University College, the Mennonite Historical Society of Ontario, the Waterloo Historical Society, the Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online (GAMEO), painter Peter Etril Snyder (who donated his photo archive of over 55,000 images to the Mennonite Archives of Ontario), "The Mennonite Story" at the

visitors centre in St. Jacobs, Ont., and many individual church collections.

The Mennonite Heritage Project was made possible with the support of the Department of Canadian Heritage through the Canadian Culture Online Strategy. Funding partners also include the Ontario Trillium Foundation and The Kitchener and Waterloo Community Foundation. ❧

❧ Briefly noted

Award for Excellence named for Point Grey member

VANCOUVER, B.C.—The University of British Columbia Department of Surgery recently announced the establishment of the Henry D. Hildebrand Award for Excellence. The late physician was a pioneer and leader in vascular surgery. The cash award will be given annually to a promising junior resident surgeon. Hildebrand, originally from Niverville, Man., had a long and successful medical practice, taught medical students and served in Congo, Central America, Kazakhstan and Kenya. The inaugural award was presented at a recent ceremony by Hilda Hildebrand. The Hildebrands were long-time members of Point Grey Inter-Mennonite Fellowship, Vancouver.

—BY HENRY NEUFELD

Casting our bread upon the waters

Waters Mennonite Church celebrates 50 years

BY DAVE ROGALSKY
Eastern Canada Correspondent

In 1940 Thomas Martin, a former Old Order Mennonite from Erbsville, near Waterloo, Ontario, had a vision of extending God's church in Ontario's north. In 1936 Art and Marie Gingrich had already

moved near Sudbury to begin a mission work and soon Thomas and his wife Elvina were on their way north. In 1947 they were joined by Mahlon Bast, now seen as a co-founder of the Waters Mennonite Church at Lively, on the western edge of Greater Sudbury.

By the late 1950s the congregation had built a building but was feeling increasingly disconnected with the "Old" Mennonites who had supported them to that point. In 1956 the congregation voted to become a mission station under the Canadian General Conference, noting that the cultural and ethnic ways of the Old Mennonite Conference, in particular foot washing, dress style and the prayer veil for women, were uncomfortable for them. In 1959 the congregation formed under the General

Conference Mennonite Church, though charter members came from Amish, Swiss and Russian Mennonite as well as Baptist, Plymouth Brethren, United, Lutheran and Roman Catholic backgrounds.

A key feature of the congregation, which has a half-time pastor, is the speakers' group who take half the preaching ministry. Mary Wideman, a member of the group, writes that these 5 or 6 individuals, men and women, young and old, gather regularly "to review each other's sermons, occasionally giving bouquets and brickbats, but usually just suggestions and support. We read articles on sermon creation and presentation, and we pray together." Gary Harder took this idea with him, from his first pastorate at Waters, to his two long-term pastorates.

Like many rural congregations, albeit even more isolated from the larger MC Eastern Canada by geography, it has an aging membership. Attendance averages 25 with few children and young people. Though Lively is a growing bedroom community for Sudbury, there is increasing industrial activity near the church, and the congregation has questions about the future. But as David T. Martin writes in his foreword to the 50th Anniversary History book, "this congregation has touched the lives of countless individuals over the years, and made significant contributions to the local community. There is no question that small congregations can have a powerful impact!"

In the fall the congregation will reflect on their future. Dave Nicol, current pastor, "called from the pew to the pulpit," is hopeful for the congregation's future. The theme verse for the celebration is from Ecclesiastes 11:1, "Send out your bread upon the waters, for after many days you will get it back."

The celebration on June 6 and 7 not only looked backward but used part of the grant money received from MC Eastern Canada for its history book and part for a projector to use in worship and Christian Education. Seven of the charter members attended, as well as many of the pastors from the congregation's past. ❧

PHOTO COURTESY OF WATERS MENNONITE CHURCH



Pastors and spouses who have served at Waters Mennonite include (from left): Dave and Erma Nicol, June Schroeder, Henry Schroeder, Dennis and Alma Watts, Lydia and Gary Harder, John Zacharias, Anna Lisa Salo and Maurice Martin.

/// Briefly Noted

Wiebe resigns as camping director

WINNIPEG, Man.—Bob Wiebe has resigned as Director of Camping Ministries for Mennonite Church Manitoba, completing 18 years of service in that position. He will conclude his ministry in fall 2009. A process for leadership transition begins immediately, according to Edgar Rempel, executive director of MC Manitoba, who says MCM has been blessed by Bob's many years of ministry. "He has demonstrated a keen sense of vision and ministry for children and young adults. Bob's careful attention to keeping faith at the core of camping ministry has been a gift. He has brought the camping ministry through significant development in the face of numerous challenges. We are grateful to Bob for his dedication and hard work."

—MC Manitoba release

Church Snapshots

PHOTO BY DAVID EPP



Wilbert (Ike) Epp, lay minister in the Hoffnungsfelder Mennonite Churches of Glenbush, Rabbit Lake and Mayfair, Sask., had his head shaved on June 14, in Glenbush. He challenged the congregation that he would shave his bushy beard if they raised \$1,000 for refugees. The Zoar Mennonite Church of Waldheim plans to host refugees from Colombia, an extended family of more than 20 members. Money from the congregation, community, family and friends, totalled \$2,551, so Ike volunteered to get his head shaved as well. In the warm afternoon sun, everyone gathered on the church lawn to watch as fellow congregants and his wife and children took turns cutting and shaving all the hair from Ike's head and face. His appearance changed completely and another Colombian was funded.

—Naomi Unger

PHOTO COURTESY OF HANOVER MENNONITE CHURCH



Juanita Laverty (centre) was ordained at Hanover Mennonite Church on June 28. The service included an ordination liturgy and anointing led by Muriel Bechtel (right), MCEC Conference Minister; and a sermon by Renee Sauder (left), Juanita's mentor. Special music included an original composition, "When you follow me," played by Dave Sararus, Juanita's husband, and a duet, "Will you come and follow me" by Elaine Pearce and Juanita Laverty. The service of celebration on a beautiful sunny day ended with fresh strawberries, cake and ice cream.

PHOTO BY PAUL NEUFELDT



Crazy Alberta weather challenged hikers June 6 on Black Rock Mountain as they trekked in support of Camp Valaqua. Participant Rachel Braul said, "It was great, actually. It was snowy, but really fun and not too cold." The annual Hike-a-Thon raised just under \$8,000 for the camp's capital projects fund, which will be used for the construction of a new staff residence.

BC historical society remembers gospel songs

BY HENRY NEUFELD
ABBOTSFORD, BC

The sound of gospel songs filled the King Road Mennonite Brethren Church on an evening in June as hundreds of voices joined in singing songs popular in our churches in the last century. The Mennonite Historical Society of BC event drew many who grew up singing gospel songs. The richness and beauty of congregational singing was evident and was unhindered by amplifiers and other noisemakers.

Gospel songs were a staple in Mennonite church life in the previous century; now they are rapidly fading into disuse. Musicologist Evan Kreider, in tracing the development and popularity of these hymns, noted that gospel songs grew out of the great revivals of the 1850s. By the late 1800s some Mennonite churches began using gospel songs, first in evening services, for youth groups and eventually they became part of Sunday morning services.

“Successful revival movements bring an energy to church life,” said Kreider, citing the Brunk revival services of the 1950s as an example.

Gospel songs, with tunes often adapted from popular music of the day, focused on themes of assurance, personal salvation and heightened individualism. The individualism is evident in Fanny Crosby’s hymn “Blessed Assurance.” Kreider observed that this hymn says, “Jesus is mine.” Not Jesus is yours, or Jesus is ours, but Jesus is MINE.

Kreider noted that in earlier times children sat through the entire service—they weren’t shuffled off to children’s church—they heard and learned all the hymns.

“The songs we sang in our youth go with us,” he said. These songs are memories of our spiritual journey; now we are being asked to set them aside. A sad loss.

Kreider’s rich historical insights were interspersed with animated congregational singing of gospel songs, a male quartet and a ladies sextet. ☼

PHOTO BY DONITA WIEBE-NEUFELD



Aaron and Dwayne Derksen of Didsbury, Alta. purchased this 1947 John Deere “D” tractor for \$3,300 at the MCC relief sale in Didsbury, Alta. held June 12-13. The tractor was donated in memory of Hilton Mierau who died of cancer on May 9, 2009. Mierau’s wife, Karen, writes, “Hilton purchased this tractor in a million pieces and lovingly cleaned, painted, and assembled it. He was very proud of his accomplishment and used it for several seasons to rake hay...He always said that when he was done with his “D”, he wanted it to go to MCC.” Mierau served as sale chairperson every third year, when it was held in Didsbury, since 1994 and represented Canada on the North American relief sale board for 6 years. This year the sale in Didsbury raised over \$160,000. The bike, walk and motorcycle-a-thons together raised \$18,500 and the Penny Power \$20,000.

MC EASTERN CANADA PHOTO BY BEV RAIMBAULT



At a professional development day for church administrative assistants, held on June 3 at Stirling Avenue Mennonite Church, Kitchener, Ester Neufeldt, operations minister for Mennonite Church Eastern Canada, challenged more than 40 administrative assistants to think about their positions as one of the many ministries of the church. “This is the best job ever,” was a comment heard numerous times throughout the day, as many said it was privilege and honour to serve God and the church as administrative assistants. The day included a time of singing and worship together.

Brave the Shave

First Mennonite Youth Take the Challenge

BY EVELYN REMPEL PETKAU

Manitoba Correspondent
WINNIPEG, MAN.

Earlier this year, three grade 12 students received a challenge from Rudi Peters, their former Sunday school teacher, to make a personal sacrifice. “I would participate,” he wrote to them, “but my sacrifice would be less significant than yours. It would be something that would potentially make you the subject of laughter and ridicule but also heroes in the eyes of others.”

“It intrigued us and so we took it on,” said Kyle Froese who together with his first Mennonite Church friends, Andrew Plesniarski and John Hodge, accepted the challenge to raise funds and awareness for breast cancer. The young people set a noble goal to raise \$10,000 for a cause that was important to Peters who had many people in his life that had been touched by this disease, explained Froese.

“John and Kyle put together a Facebook page and I had to learn all about Facebook at my old age. I’m 62,” said Peters.

Other senior youth joined in and Peters spurred them on by volunteering to dye his hair pink at the official kick-off on March 29 if they got 15 people to shave their heads. That challenge was more than met and so after the church service Peters’ hair was dyed pink. Several people from other churches and the community joined in. David Wiebe from First Mennonite Church at age 80 was the oldest “shavee.” Most were teenagers.

Peters wondered for a while whether this was the right challenge to put to the youth, “but the answer kept coming back to me that this was the right thing to do now, asking them to make what amounted to a personal sacrifice. For someone bald like me it is not a sacrifice but for young people their appearance is very significant and hair is a big part of that. I felt the Spirit of God guiding us. I felt God pushing me in this direction.”

Later Peters heard that his sister who is a breast cancer survivor was diagnosed with terminal brain cancer. The fundraising event became a source of inspiration and strength to him. “I consider the whole experience a gift from God.”

With enthusiasm and creative energy the young people embarked on several fundraising strategies including a coffeehouse with live entertainment organized by Natasha Woelcke and a promotional video.

The climax came on May 11 when 30 people lined up for a free haircut in the lobby of the IMAX Theatre in downtown Winnipeg.

“We exceeded our goal of \$10,000,” said Froese. To date more than \$17,000 has come in. On June 7 the “shavees” were acknowledged during the Sunday morning worship service.

After the event several of the youth came to Peters and asked, “What next?”

“That probably was the best outcome that I could possibly have hoped for. I think they surprised themselves with how much they raised and how many people became involved. We have three young people from our church going to the world conference in Paraguay and I asked them to keep their eyes and ear open to see what is next,” said Peters. ❧

PHOTO COURTESY OF DEBORAH FROESE



Rudi Peters in the foreground had his hair dyed pink on March 29, part of a cancer fundraising campaign organized by (from left): John Hodge, Kyle Froese, Daniel Froese, and Natasha Woelcke from First Mennonite Church, Winnipeg.

/// Briefly noted

Schlegel Fund supports three initiatives

Three groups received grants from the Wilfred Schlegel Memorial Fund in 2009. Lao Mennonite Conference of Canada, a group of 10 Lao Mennonite churches stretching across Canada, received \$9,000 to explore planting Mennonite churches in Laos. Mennonite Publishing Network has developed Via, a program to explore what it means to be Mennonite for those new to the Mennonite faith. MPN will use the \$7,000 to produce a DVD to accompany the print materials. Quest Christian Community in St. Catharines received \$3,000 to establish an Art House where people can be engaged in telling and hearing stories. The Schlegel Fund supports leaders of the Mennonite Church who take risks to start new programs.

—Mennonite Church Eastern Canada release

No longer parent and child

Mennonites in Mexico now supporting MC Canada Witness programs

BY DEBORAH FROESE

Mennonite Church Canada Release

Four churches in Mexico that once received financial support from Mennonite Church Canada are now contributing back. They also send delegates to MC Canada assemblies and use Canadian assembly themes to shape their own gatherings.

“These brothers and sisters want to be part of a bigger identity and involved in wider mission. This is admirable,” says MC Canada general secretary Robert J. Suderman. “They feel most comfortable doing this via Mennonite Church Canada and our Witness initiatives. We are no longer parent and child. We are partners together reaching out in mission to God’s needy world.”

The Conference of Mennonites in Mexico was formed in 1963 and grew to include four churches in the Mexican state of Chihuahua. Earlier this year, Tim Froese, MC Canada’s mission partnership facilitator for Latin America, and Suderman travelled to Mexico to meet with the CMM churches and their leaders.

CMM began long before its official formation in ’63. After Mennonites first emigrated from Russia to Mexico in the 1800s, some members were banished from the colony for engaging in activities that contradicted the church’s conservative teachings—such as driving automobiles or pick-up trucks, or using rubber tires. The businesses of excommunicated families were boycotted, families were prohibited from attending worship, and children were not allowed to attend existing schools.

In the 1920s, more Mennonites arrived from southern Manitoba and Saskatchewan, followed by a second group of Russian Mennonites. Eventually, these less conservative Mennonite newcomers joined with those who had been excommunicated and invited support from the General Conference Mennonite Church. The Commission on Overseas Mission, a

forerunner of MC Canada Witness, helped them to open new schools and a German-language church with Sunday school and singing.

Today, CMM congregations are immersed in a sea of Old Colony, *Kleinegemeinde* and *Gemeinde Gottes* churches, but together all of these Mennonite congregations operate 10 schools from Kindergarten to Grade 12, with a combined enrolment of 854 students. They also manage a home for seniors, and a home for mentally challenged men and women.

As a small conference of around 700 people, CMM engages in a number of significant ministries, such as an addiction rehabilitation centre, a Bible school that operates from January through March each year, a credit union (the second largest of its kind in Mexico), and a modern and robust mutual aid/insurance ministry, as well as Colonia Reforma, a mission outreach in Cuauhtemoc.

Isaak Bergen, who leads Colonia Reforma, has helped plant four new Spanish-speaking churches in Cuauhtemoc and has also created a variety of services including: a work program for the physically disabled; a feeding program that serves 100 children a day, six days per week; and an alternative funeral home service for the poor. With Habitat for Humanity, Colonia Reforma has built a Spanish-speaking community of 360 homes. ❧

Leading through times of conflict and change

BY GARY KNARR

Special to *Canadian Mennonite*
WATERLOO, ONT.

Fourteen people representing a variety of vocations and denominations benefited from a conflict resolution training program led by Associates Resourcing the Church at Conrad Grebel University College in early May.

Participants were led through several presentations and exercises designed to enable them to understand and respond to conflict situations that arise within congregations. Presenters Betty Pries and Sue Steiner stressed the importance of accepting conflict as an inevitable and natural opportunity for spiritual growth and positive change in the church. Leaders were reminded to remain calm, as a non-anxious presence during times when others are becoming anxious and are not as able to concentrate on working through the issues as positively as they ordinarily would be.

They were encouraged to see the presence of Christ in those with whom they are in conflict, and to recognize the vital and positive contribution that each

person makes to the faith community, even though they may present challenges as well. Everyone needs to be heard and to feel that others care about them and their concerns, Pries and Steiner said.

Participants learned how important it is that everyone recognizes their own role and responsibility to work through the conflict and not blame others for causing a problem when issues arise. People need to learn all they can from those who express concerns about a situation and want something to become different. It is essential that everyone is gracious and respectful to one another in times of conflict, and work through conflict situations with caring, hope and courage.

When congregations clarify their mission and note the things on which their people can agree, they will be able to make good decisions together and render conflict an occasion for spiritual renewal and growth. ❧

Interpreting scripture through flowers

By SUSAN MARTIN
WMCEC release

It was a windy spring day when 335 women gathered at Steinmann Mennonite Church in Baden for the annual Women of Mennonite Church Eastern Canada (WMCEC) Spring Enrichment Day on April 18. After a time of visiting over refreshments provided by women of the Wilmot Cluster, we gathered in the sanctuary where Ilene Bergen, pastor at Steinmann gave an expressive and inspiring narrative based on John 20:19-29, reminding us that Jesus is the Messiah and has given us the gift of the Holy Spirit. We need to breathe in this good news and be

like the disciples who boldly announced Christ's resurrection and life!

Our guest speaker for the day was Rhoda S. Oberholtzer from Pennsylvania. Following the theme, "Scriptures Interpreted through Floral Design," Rhoda created floral arrangements while sharing biblical principles and practical spiritual insights. She gave personal examples of

how God has worked in her life, all the while continuing to create different flower arrangements. Rhoda shared in the morning and in the afternoon, creating at least 8 arrangements throughout her illustrated presentation.

The Fall Enrichment Day will be held Saturday, October 24, 2009 at Listowel Mennonite Church. ☸



Rhoda Oberholtzer from Pennsylvania, the guest speaker at the WMCEC spring enrichment day, arranges flowers as she interprets scripture.

☸ Briefly noted

CMU establishes School of Peacebuilding

WINNIPEG, MAN.—Canadian Mennonite University realized a dream as it launched its first summer courses through the Canadian School of Peacebuilding in July, featuring speakers from Kenya, South Africa and Canada. "The Canadian School of Peacebuilding offers an opportunity for peacebuilders from around the world and from diverse cultures and traditions to come together to learn, to share, to inspire, and to practice peace," says director Jarem Sawatsky, who heads up the summer program offering academic credits and training to peace practitioners and students. "We are very excited to inaugurate the Canadian Mennonite University's Canadian School of Peacebuilding (CSOP)," says CMU President Gerald Gerbrandt. "This initiative has been a dream of our founders predating the establishment of CMU."

—Canadian Mennonite University release

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GOD AT WORK IN THE WORLD

The wheels are turning

Rockway Mennonite Collegiate auto shop converts truck to electric

BY DAVE ROGALSKY
Eastern Canada Correspondent
KITCHENER, ONT.

Removing an engine and exhaust system, installing a new battery-powered electric motor, and researching motors, batteries and the ecological impact of gas versus electric: These are all components of a Grade 12 auto shop elective created by Don Dyck Steinmann, technology teacher at Rockway Mennonite Collegiate in Kitchener.

/// Briefly noted

Career guide posted on MEDA website

A new career guide to help young people flavour their work with faith has been released by Mennonite Economic Development Associates (MEDA). Entitled "You're hired! Looking for work in all the right places," it's available for free download at meda.org. "Today's youth face a blizzard of work choices as they enter the job market—up to 600 college majors and 20,000 occupations," says Wally Kroeker, director of MEDA's publications department. "As they start their career path, they'll find that a job is more than earning a living. It's also a place to express values and make a global difference. This short guide aims to help young people see their careers through Christian eyes and make a difference in the world."
—Mennonite Economic Development Associates Release



PHOTO BY DAVE ROGALSKY



Rockway Mennonite Collegiate students Alex Etmanskie, left, Josh Zacharias, Lucas Erdman and Adam Bromley are part of a Grade 12 auto shop elective that will eventually see this gas-powered pick-up turned into an electric vehicle.

The four students taking the course are overseen by Ted Wiebe, a retired technology teacher at Rockway. The course involves converting a 1997 GMC Sonoma S-10 pick-up from gas to electric. When completed, the truck will have no direct emissions and, with options to buy "green" electricity in Ontario, could end up being emission-free.

The students see this having a real impact on pollution, rather than just being a research project. Adam Bromley says that his generation is "paying for our parents' mistakes" in regard to pollution.

Although the truck uses batteries, they are 98 percent recyclable through existing programs, resulting in little waste down the road when the truck's lifespan comes

to an end. With the average person driving 40 kilometres per day, the truck's 70-kilometre range on a full charge will make it suitable for most people's driving habits.

Next semester, a new class will complete the project by installing 18 batteries under the bed of the truck and six more in the space left by the gas motor. The project, spread over two semesters, will cost \$20,000, half of which was raised by Rockway students through their environment/servathon fundraising event. Other support has come from gifts in kind from the automobile industry.

When completed, the truck will be sold, with the proceeds being ploughed back into future environmental projects at the school. ///

/// Briefly noted

Ed Epp new executive director of cbm Canada

STOUFFVILLE, ONT.—Edwin "Ed" Epp, who attends Waterloo North Mennonite Church, Waterloo, Ont., began his job as new executive director of cbm Canada (formerly known as Christian Blind Mission) on May 1. From 1986-91, Epp served as MCC's country director in Jordan and Lebanon, and then as director of Middle East programs from 1991-98. Over the past 10 years, Epp held several senior leadership positions with Mennonite Economic Development Associates (MEDA), including as director of international programs and director of strategic planning; recently, he served as vice-president of resource development. cbm is an international Christian development organization committed to improving the quality of life of people with disabilities in the poorest countries of the world. Epp succeeds Dave McComiskey, who has served as cbm's executive director since 1999.
—cbm Canada Release



Epp

Justice at the expense of peace? Peace at the expense of justice?

Fourth Mennonite/Muslim dialogue engenders mutual understanding, friendships

BY JEREMY BERGEN

Special to *Canadian Mennonite*
QOM, IRAN

The relationship between justice and peace emerged as a key theme of a conference involving 17 Mennonite-Christian and Shiite-Muslim scholars of religion who met together for four days in May.

In his opening lecture, Ayatollah Rajabi explained that, in Islam, justice is an absolute requirement, while peace is conditional upon justice. While peaceful means are ideal, violence may be required when justice is violated, the innocent are attacked, or people are prevented from worshipping God.

From the Mennonite perspective, such a framework appears to move too quickly to war. How does one know that all peaceful means have been exhausted? Yet, to the Shiite members of the dialogue, which was planned and hosted by the Imam Khomeini Education and Research Institute, the Mennonite commitments to pacifism and forgiveness appear to be at the expense of justice. While Mennonites may be interested in developing yet one more practice of nonviolence, is it morally justifiable to do so while innocent people are being killed?

"It seemed we were trying to ask them if there were moments in the Qur'an or Islam that could resource faithful, yet nonviolent, responses to injustice, while they were demanding us to be more realistic about all the ways they saw war or self-defence justified within our own texts," said Mennonite participant Susan Kennel Harrison.

Both sides agreed that the human pursuit of justice and peace ought to be rooted in God's justice and God's peace. Both have a future-oriented hope for justice to be fully realized upon the return of Jesus (Mennonites) or the 12th Imam (Shiites). Both Mennonites and Shiites are minority

groups within their respective religions, and have experienced persecution that shapes their perceptions of the world.

Gordon Zerbe, a first-time participant, noted how the Shiites have a religious imperative to dialogue because of what Islam holds in common with Christianity. At times, there was a remarkable similarity in theological language and concerns. Yet some conversations made evident the significant differences in culture, context and patterns of thinking. "This dialogue required me to contemplate some foundational assumptions of my own faith," he said. "We often take the logic of our own convictions for granted until we explain it to someone who has a very different frame of reference."

A difference emerged in the discussion of how to move from sacred text to contemporary context. One Mennonite scholar argued that the social location of the interpreter or the community of interpretation will partly shape what peace or justice looks like in practise. A Shiite scholar countered that the meaning of the Qur'an is always clear; perspective should not affect its meaning.

A related point of divergence was the Shiite conviction that revelation and reason, including the laws of cause and effect, are always consistent. By contrast, Mennonites have often emphasized the "foolishness of the cross." An institution such as the state may be necessary in a fallen world, but is "outside the perfection of Christ."

For the Shiites, though, if absolute pacifism is commanded by God, it must therefore be realistic and effective. Yet it appears

CONRAD GREBEL UNIVERSITY COLLEGE PHOTO



Henry Paetkau, left, president of Conrad Grebel University College, is deep in conversation with Shiite professor Mohammed Ali Shomali at the Mennonite/Muslim dialogue held in May in Qom, Iran.

to be neither. While Mennonites have preferred to speak about the church, rather than the state, as the community of peace and justice, Shiite dialogue partners asked whether this is a consistent position for assimilated U.S. and Canadian Mennonites, who benefit from the prestige and power of their states whether they like it or not.

The Mennonites presented papers on biblical perspectives, the centrality of Jesus for peace and justice, pacifism, church, martyrdom, advocacy, and the history of Mennonite practices of peace and justice. Shiite presentations examined the relationship between justice and peace in the Qur'an, war and jihad, eschatology, divine mercy, and the nature of the international political order.

This conference, the fourth in a series that began in 2002, grew out of an exchange program between Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) and Islamic research institute, in which Iranian doctoral students study at the Toronto School of Theology, and Mennonite couples from North America live and study in Qom. The Mennonite delegation extended an invitation to a fifth dialogue, to be held somewhere in North America in 2011. ❧

Encountering the challenges of the oil sands

BY AMANDA THORSTEINSSON
MCC Canada release
WINNIPEG, MAN.

Flying over northern Alberta and seeing the oil sand development below was a sobering reminder of humanity's willingness to exploit creation for energy needs, say two MCC leaders. For Abe Janzen, MCC Alberta executive director, the sight was both "dazzling and frightening." On the one hand it was testament to modern, technological accomplishment. On the

/// Briefly noted

Credit union supports conflict management workshop

KITCHENER, ONT.—Associates Resourcing the Church (ARC) was presented with a Mennonite Savings & Credit Union (MSCU) Charitable Fund grant at the Mennonite Church Eastern Canada annual meeting on April 25 at Rockway Mennonite Collegiate. ARC is an Ontario organization dedicated to developing the skills and spiritual strengths of churches and organizational leaders, especially in times of conflict and change. In 2008, ARC initiated the Conflict Management and Congregational Leadership workshop series, together with the Peace and Conflict Studies program of Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo, Ont. The MSCU Charitable Fund grant helps finance these church workshops, making them more affordable for local congregations. Established in 1999, the Charitable Fund is an endowment that offers project grants to churches and community-based charitable organizations.

—Mennonite Savings and Credit Union Release

other it was a stark example of what humans can do to the land if they set their minds to it.

Janzen, along with Don Peters, MCC Canada executive director, attended a learning tour to the Alberta oil sands at Fort McMurray in late May. The tour was organized by KAIROS Canada, an ecumenical justice group of which MCC Canada is a member. Leaders from other church groups also attended.

Janzen said it was a call to think more deliberately about the exploitation and exploration of God's creation. "We as human beings are supposed to work together with the earth. I have no quarrel with mining, but I worry that we are not being as accountable and careful as we can and need to be," he said. As a starting point, Janzen encourages his fellow Albertans not to take their lifestyles for granted. "We say grace before meals as a way of thanking God for one type of resource.

The Kairos group met with Aboriginal groups, oil industry representatives, government, local churches and community groups who are affected by northern Alberta oil sands development. After Saudi Arabia, Canada holds the largest proven crude oil reserves in the world, but the oil is trapped in sand beneath 140,000 square

kilometres of boreal forest. For decades, the expensive technology needed to separate the oil from the sand has been an obstacle, but as oil prices skyrocketed in recent years, so too did interest in the oil sands.

"Why does oil get up to a crazy \$120 per barrel? Because we're demanding more combustible fuels," says Peters. "It's not just about the tar sands. It's about the way we live."

For Peters, the role of the church goes beyond being caretakers of God's creation and trying to think more ecologically. "It is the churches saying 'We are in this together. The tar sands are there because we (the church included) are demanding them.'"

Surprisingly for Janzen and Peters, no one they met demanded that oil sands development stop. "I expected to hear from a lot of community groups that the tar sands should be shut down," said Peters. "I did not hear that once." Instead, a main theme from the oil companies to local Aboriginal groups was the need for improved government regulation. Both Peters and Janzen are actively looking for ways to encourage MCC and others to faithfully engage the challenges that come with such huge economic development. //

PEACEBUILDERS COMMUNITY PHOTO



A peace caravan that travelled through central Mindanao, Philippines, in support of displaced Muslim evacuees who live in this conflicted area of the country, attracted some 100,000 demonstrators and participants along the 500-kilometre route. Unfortunately, the caravan, part of Peace Power Day organized by Peacebuilders Community (a ministry of Mennonite Church Canada Witness), failed to garner any media attention in the Philippines.

YAMEN! opens doors to new ideas and skills in new places

BY FERNE BURKHARDT

Mennonite World Conference/Mennonite Central Committee Release

“God created people that are different and blessed them in different places in the world . . . but we need to work together to make our world a better place,” says Passionate Ncube, a Zimbabwean spending a year in Indonesia. It is his first time living outside his own country.

Ncube is one of nine international young adults volunteering in another country for one year through the Young Anabaptist Mennonite Exchange Network (YAMEN!), a joint program of Mennonite World Conference (MWC) and Mennonite Central Committee (MCC). The program is designed for single adults aged 18 to 30, primarily but not exclusively in the global south. Participants are committed Christians, supported by their church, and ready to serve and build church-to-church relationships within the Anabaptist family.

Ncube helps with the daily activities of the

MWC/MCC PHOTO



Six of the nine YAMEN! participants are pictured in Akron, Pa. They include Passionate Ncube, front row centre, and Ntuthuko Ndlovu and Yunarso Rosandono, back row left and centre, who are featured in the accompanying article.

Mennonite church in Srumpung Gunung, Central Java, and works with youths in the community. He had done volunteer teaching in Zimbabwe when the country's economic and political crisis left schools without teachers. In Indonesia, he teaches English in an orphanage and in junior and pre-schools with mostly Muslim students.

Yunarso Rosandono from Indonesia notes that when he arrived in Zimbabwe, “things were difficult. . . . There were no food commodities in the shops and there were queues everywhere.” A teachers' strike kept a school closed where he had been assigned to teach. Although life in Zimbabwe is getting better, it is far from stable.

Rosandono is now teaching at Magwegwe Primary School and at the Brethren in Christ Lobengula Pre-school, and he also works as a pastoral assistant. He found many similarities between his home church and those in Zimbabwe, but also a

difference. In Indonesia, there is no Sunday school for adults while Sunday school in Zimbabwe is for the entire congregation. He would like to bring that change to Indonesia when he returns home.

Ntuthuko Ndlovu of Zimbabwe, serving with YAMEN! in Indonesia, says his training and experience with English as a second language helps him teach English in a Mennonite theological college in Indonesia. He was surprised to find people in Indonesia who have never seen a black person. “Some people ask to feel my hair,” he says.

For Ncube, food and transportation in Indonesia were the surprises. People roared around on motorbikes loaded with many things, something he describes as “scary.” And Indonesian food, which sometimes includes frogs, dogs or snakes, he says was “really shocking. . . . I never thought I would eat [frog] in my lifetime!” ❧

Motivated by faith in God

Meat canning remains strong in spite of a difficult economy

BY CATHRYN CLINTON

Mennonite Central Committee Release

In times of economic difficulty, the production of the Mennonite Central Committee's (MCC) mobile meat canner has historically stayed strong. The 2008-09 season was no exception. Between October and the end of April, the canning crew travelled to two Canadian provinces and 13 U.S. states, working with volunteers to can more than 566,000 cans of meat, up from about 550,000 last season.

Members of this year's meat canning crew were Peter Reimer of Tolstoi, Man.; Steven Bricker of Chambersburg, Pa.; Viktor Schwendich of Huenfeld, Germany; and Josh Voth of Goessel, Kan.

At different times throughout the season, the canning volunteers were joined by people who work with the distribution of MCC meat in their respective countries. Adil Pezerovic and Hajrudin Sahic who work for Merhamet, an MCC partner organization in Bosnia-Herzegovina, visited the canning sites in Chambersburg and Kirkwood, Pa. Their organization uses the canned turkey to prepare 10,000 meals

a day in soup kitchens. As they worked, they asked the volunteers what motivated them. According to Tim Friesen, canning coordinator, the volunteers each responded in their own way that they were motivated by their faith in God.

In addition to emergency relief for people affected by war and disaster, the meat is used in orphanages and seniors centres and for specialized food-for-work programs that organize communities to build roads, plant trees and respond to other local needs. ❧

MCC PHOTO BY TIM FRIESEN



Hajrudin Sahic, left, and Adil Pezerovic, right, of Merhamet, an MCC partner organization in Bosnia-Herzegovina, join MCC worker Randy Puljek-Shank in canning meat at the Cumberland Valley Relief Center in Chambersburg, Pa.

ARTBEAT

Secondhandpants surprised by popularity

BY AARON EPP

National Correspondent
WINNIPEG, MAN.

Move over, House of Doc, there's another set of Mennonite siblings creating a buzz in Winnipeg's music scene. Instead of songs about faith and grandparents, they sing about space, robots and wild Saskatchewan prairie goats. Sound silly? It is. But it's also serious.

Curtis and Marlon Wiebe formed The Secondhandpants in August 2004 when Curtis, an artist by profession who attends Hope Mennonite Church, wanted to write and record an entire album of songs in just one weekend. Using cheap computer software, a \$10 microphone, guitars, banjos, ukuleles, penny whistles and a gutbucket bass, Curtis and Marlon created songs with titles like "Confessions of a Prehistoric Man Brought Back to Life in the Twenty-First Century Through Unorthodox Scientific

PHOTO COURTESY OF MARLON WIEBE



Curtis Wiebe (as Francis Leonard) and Marlon Wiebe (as Wyll Maynard) are The Secondhandpants. They are pictured with Space Robot, who frequently collaborates with the band.

and Technological Means." They dubbed the finished recording, *Featuring Space Robot* and began circulating it to family and friends.

"We didn't think it would go any further than that," Curtis explains, "But then we were asked to perform at Mennofolk Manitoba." The unexpected gig at the annual festival celebrating Mennonite music and art gave the brothers the chance to develop the mythology surrounding The Secondhandpants.

When they take the stage, Curtis adopts an alter ego named Francis Leonard, while Marlon adopts an alter ego named Wyll Maynard. The story goes that Maynard grew up in deep space as part of an "alien adoption" after being orphaned on earth. Leonard, meanwhile, was also orphaned, but raised by the very last two wild Saskatchewan prairie goats in existence. After leaving their respective homes to find out more about their biological origins, the duo met each other at a secondhand store where Maynard was buying a pair of pants Leonard donated a month earlier. Having bonded over the pants and their similar adoption stories, the duo decided to form a band with one goal: to spread "science folktion" music throughout the world.

Since that first recording, The Secondhandpants have released two more: *Random Adventures in Space* and *Space Radio Mission*. They've also filmed a handful of videos explaining the mythology surrounding The Secondhandpants and posted them on YouTube. The Wiebe brothers' wildly inventive props, costumes and music, combined with their excellent sense of humour, have made them a hit. Curtis and Marlon have also performed for the past few years at the popular Winnipeg Folk Festival with their Science-Folktion Jukebox Sideshow. The

name pretty much says it all: Curtis created a jukebox large enough for the duo to fit inside. Concertgoers insert a quarter and the duo plays the song of their choice. Being able to participate in a festival that draws more than 40,000 people each year is surreal, Marlon says, considering The Secondhandpants were never meant to be long-term.

"It's mostly just for fun," he says. "It's not intended to be too serious."

That said, Curtis adds that the brothers have spent more and more time on the project as its gained popularity. Visit www.secondhandpants.com. ☼

Wiebe wins award for film

BY AARON EPP

National Correspondent
WINNIPEG

With a surname near the end of the alphabet, Curtis Wiebe was expecting his to be one of the last names called at the University of Manitoba's convocation for Fine Arts students in May. Imagine his surprise when it was called first. The distinction was for two awards. Graduating with a four-year honours degree, Wiebe earned the U of M Governor General's gold medal for highest standing in the school of fine arts. He also won a gold medal for his thesis project, a short film titled *The Devil Wears a Paper Hat*.

Combining live action and animation, the 15-minute film draws from disparate influences like Spaghetti Westerns and Alice in Wonderland. It tells the story of a young girl who falls out of a moving vehicle into a fantasy world, where she confronts eccentric characters like a giant tree man and a cowboy dressed in clothes made of paper.

In addition to writing, directing and editing the film, Wiebe played the titular character, wrote and performed all of the music, animated various parts of the film and created the sound effects. He says *The Devil Wears a Paper Hat* is about imagination.

You can watch the film at www.youtube.com/phantomplanetfilms. ☼

MUSIC REVIEW

Country music with left-of-centre edge

Stringer Lake.

By Stringer Lake (Andrew Reesor-McDowell and Aiden Boyd, and others).
Self-produced, 2009.

REVIEWED BY DAVE ROGALSKY

Stringer Lake is urban country music with urban subject matter.

Aiden Boyd and Allan Reesor-McDowell sing the requisite songs of loss and longing to an accomplished background of music reminiscent of 1970s rock. One review has called them “a unique folk, country, bluegrass sound in the spirit of James Taylor

and Crosby, Stills and Nash.”

But unlike the right-of-centre politics that much current country music (except perhaps the Texas-based Dixie Chicks) espouses, songs like “Ain’t It Crazy” paint a picture of the falsehoods of commuting to, and working in, the big city: “Then I’m joinin’ in fast food for mealtime; then two hours a day at the gym; a half dozen lies in the blink of an eye; homeless on the street—we blame and call them lazy, could we ever be so wrong?”

But not all is longing and politics. The album closes with Big Round Eyes, an upbeat song of love found and a hopeful future.



Stringer Lake recently performed at Breslau Mennonite Church, just outside Kitchener, Ont., in support of Fraser Lake Mennonite Camp.

Reesor-McDowell is the Youth & Young Adult, Toronto Ontario Opportunities for Learning and Service, and International Visitor Exchange Program coordinator for Mennonite Central Committee Ontario.

Stringer Lake is available for order by calling 416-832-0211 or by e-mail at music@stringerlake.com.

Dave Rogalsky is Eastern Canada correspondent for Canadian Mennonite.

PHOTO COURTESY OF PHIL WAGLER



Phil Wagler, right, *Canadian Mennonite* columnist and pastor of Kingsfield-Zurich and Kingfield-Clinton Mennonite churches near Lake Huron, launched his book *Kingdom Culture* at a party at Zurich Mennonite Church in early June. He is pictured at a pastors conference he led at Emmanuel Bible College, Kitchener, Ont., on June 9, that included ministers from various denominations and Mennonite Foundation of Canada staff. Watch for a review *Kingdom Culture* in an upcoming issue of *Canadian Mennonite*.



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BOOK REVIEW

When the outside world intrudes

Renovating Heaven.

Andreas Schroeder. Oolichan Books, 2008, 204 pages.

REVIEWED BY ROBERT MARTENS

“Letters like the one my father received on Sept. 8, 1956, always caused consternation in the family. For one thing, the address was typed, not handwritten. For another, the return address—BAL-LISTER, CLARK, MARSHALL & ROBSON—was printed in gilt-coloured ink. Only “the English” sent letters like that. . . . Such letters almost always meant trouble.”

These opening lines of Andreas Schroeder’s novel, *Renovating Heaven*, delineate the distinctiveness of traditional Mennonite culture with affection, humour and perhaps a hint of tragedy. In the end, Schroeder’s electrifying narrative arrives at a kind of integration of bleakness, gratitude and understanding—all driven by the breaking of an insular Mennonite upbringing.

The novel is in three parts. The first, “Eating My Father’s Island,” tells the story of Peter Niebuhr’s childhood in Agassiz, B.C. The mother, Margarete, is the glue that holds the family together. Reinhard, the father, is a gloomy, defeated man whose one break in life, announced in the letter from “the English,” is winning an island in a contest. For once, Father’s pessimism is overcome by hope for the future: He purchases a car; he constructs a boat, dubbed the John 3:16, that turns out to be entirely unseaworthy; and he is even invited to sit on the church fundraising committee.

Despite Father’s very Mennonite work ethic, the family’s finances deteriorate to the point of desperation. The family moves to Vancouver and sells the island, which is celebrated with a dinner, a kind of family communion, an “eating of the island.”

In Part II, “Renovating Heaven” Peter grows away from his Mennonite culture and his relationship with his father gradually crumbles. “The fact was that city life had been ploughing through our family



cohesion like a bulldozer,” Peter states.

The title refers to the father’s obsessive and painfully slow renovation of the Niebuhr home. After decades of meticulous labour, the house is proudly sold. The ultimate twist in the plot, however, says more about hell than heaven.

In Part III, “Toccata in D,” the sudden change to a novelistic style is almost shocking. Two narratives—the courtship of Reinhard and Margarete during World War II, and the journey of Peter, now an adult, to Germany in a quest to learn about his past—are intertwined. Schroeder’s novel seems autobiographical here.

Renovating Heaven ends with the uncovering of a secret that turns the entire book upside down. Peter is faced with an appalling comprehension, a confession that runs up against the harshest aspects of the Mennonite story. His journey through the pain and laughter seems to reach, not a conclusion, as that is impossible, but a certain ineffable completeness. ❧

Robert Martens is a writer and editor.

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Families and friends of the 3,021 young men in Manitoba who chose to do alternative service over military engagement during World War II are invited to donate one or more bricks to this proposed Wall of Remembrance, a commemoration of this peace witness by those who served as conscientious objectors. "If you served as a C.O. or have a father, an uncle, a brother or a friend who served, or if you believe that the followers of Jesus (the Prince of Peace) are called to be peacemakers, you are invited to donate," say the organizers from the Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society, the Ad Hoc Committee of C.O.'s, and the Evangelical Anabaptist Fellowship, sponsors of the project.

—From the *Voice*, newsletter of Evangelical Anabaptist Fellowship



Practices: Mennonite Worship and Witness

John D. Roth examines the traditions of Anabaptist-Mennonite worship and reflects on how distinctive Mennonite practices such as baptism, communion, foot washing, and common meals extend beyond the church as a witness to the world.

"Roth's easy, storytelling writing style, his use of Scripture, and his insights into the Anabaptist-Mennonite tradition give *Practices* depth and breadth."

—Irma Fast Dueck, *Canadian Mennonite University*

Paper, 226 pages, \$14.94



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Calendar

British Columbia

Sept. 13: Grand opening at Camp Squeah for Emory and Fraser lodges.

Sept. 14-16: First Mennonite Kelowna annual retreat at Camp Squeah, "Anabaptist-Mennonite faith and life" with speakers Harry Loewen and John H. Redekop. For information contact Helen Wieler at 250-762-9497 or lhwieler@shaw.ca.

Sept. 18-19: MCC Festival, Relief Sale and Auction at Tradex, Abbotsford.

Sept. 26: Mennonite Fall Fair, Prince George.

Oct. 3-4: Thanksgiving Vespers with Abendmusik Choir at Emmanuel Free Reformed Church, Abbotsford (3) and Knox United Church, Vancouver (4), 8:00 p.m. Donations to Menno Simons Centre.

Oct. 16-18: Women's retreat at Camp Squeah.

Alberta

Sept. 18-19: Mennopalooza! A music, worship and social gathering hosted by Trinity Mennonite Church, Calgary. All MC Alberta churches and people of all ages welcome. Battle of the Bands,

baseball, arts and crafts gallery, and more. For information, call 403-256-7157.

Saskatchewan

Aug. 16: "A taste of China" event at RJC.

Oct. 14-18: MC Canada IMPaCT.

Oct. 16-17: MC Saskatchewan women's retreat, Shekinah Retreat Centre.

Oct. 30-Nov. 1: Quilting and scrapbooking retreat, Shekinah Retreat Centre.

Manitoba

Sept. 11-14: Camp Moose Lake work days.

Sept. 12: Camp Assiniboia workathon.

Oct. 3: Inter-Mennonite Chaplaincy Association coffee house at Fort Garry EMC Church to support U. of Manitoba chaplain program. Matt Schellenberg and Bucky Driedger of the Liptonians performing, 7:30 p.m.

Oct. 3-4: Sargent Avenue Mennonite Church 60th anniversary celebration; 7 p.m. (3), and 10:30 a.m. and 6:30 p.m. (4).

Oct. 16-18: Scrapbooking retreat at Camp Moose Lake.

Oct. 24: Camp Koinonia work day.

Oct. 24, 25: Camps with Meaning celebration banquets at Whitewater Mennonite, Boissevain (24) and Winkler Berghthaler (25).

Ontario

Aug. 8: Cornstock Music Festival at Willowgrove, Stouffville; 1 to 9 p.m. Connected to the Anabaptist community, the festival showcases young and emerging talent. Rain or shine. For more information, visit myspace.com/cornstockontario.

Aug. 9: The annual Reesor picnic at Backus Mill Heritage Conservation Area Park, Port Rowan. Worship service at 11 a.m., followed by lunch and a social time. All Reesorites welcome.

Aug. 9-23: Community Tent Crusade with Gospel Express Ministries of North Carolina, featuring evangelist Nelson Coblenz and associates; in Millbank; 7:30 p.m. each evening. For more information, call Riverdale Mennonite pastor Jim Brown at 519-595-4055.

Aug. 14-16: Stratford Summer Music presents J.S. Bach's Coffee Cantata at Stratford's Balzac's Coffee Roastery; 10 a.m. shows each day. Starring Daniel Licht, bass baritone. For more

information, call 519-271-2101.

Aug. 15: Somali students and staff and Mennonite Mission reunion at Toronto United Mennonite Church/New Life Centre, 10 a.m.-3 p.m. Contact Shirley (Dorsch) Sherk at smsherk@hotmail.com or 416-362-0077 or Ahmed Geddi at geddiabaabu@yahoo.ca.

Aug. 20: Deadline for entries in the Pax Christi Chorale's Great Canadian Hymn Competition. Canadian composers are invited to submit original compositions set to a hymn text. For rules and entry forms, visit paxchristichorale.org.

Sept. 11-13: Building Community retreat at Hidden Acres Mennonite Retreat Centre for people with disabilities and supporters. Kathleen Cleland-Moyer will speak on "Healthy approaches to conflict." Volunteers needed. For information contact Mariette at (519) 569-8723 or professor_flatbread@yahoo.ca.

Sept. 13: 175th anniversary celebration at Breslau Mennonite. Worship at 9:45 a.m. with Erwin Wiens followed

by lunch, historical displays, tours, storytelling and music. For information call 519-648-2501.

Sept. 18-20: Reesor play at St. Jacobs Church Theatre sponsored by Mennonite Historical Society of Ontario, 8 p.m. (18, 19), 2 p.m. (19, 20).

Oct. 16: Shalom Counselling Services will host Mary Wiens, CBC producer and reporter, "Facing Challenges: Stories of Resilience and Growth" at Waterloo Mennonite Brethren Church, Lexington Rd., 7:30 p.m.

Oct. 25: Pax Christi Chorale's Fanfare of Canadian Hymns II with guest host Eric Friesen, featuring winners of the Great Canadian Hymns Competition, at Grace Church-on-the-Hill, Toronto, 3:00 p.m.

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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Please direct inquiries and resumes to our Pastor Search Committee Contact: Marguerite Jack - mjack@netkaster.ca.

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The Development Director's role is to maintain donor, alumni and church relations through various activities and communications. S/he will be responsible for all fundraising strategies and events including a capital campaign and ongoing donation programs. The Development Director will manage all communications and marketing strategies. The position also includes administrative responsibilities relating to the donor database and development budgets and policies.

A complete job description and qualifications is posted on our website at www.westgatemennonite.ca

Qualified applicants please e-mail your resume by
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APPLICATIONS (with resume and references), inquiries or nominations by July 31, 2009 to:

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Mennonite Central Committee West Coast office, located in Fresno, California, has an immediate opening for a **HUMAN RESOURCES AND GENERAL COMMUNICATIONS COORDINATOR**.

The position will manage the human resources systems and coordinate regional communications and serve as the regional connecting point for West Coast constituency, alumni and people in service with MCC. Qualified candidates will have a minimum of an associates degree in Human Resources with at least five years of experience in the Human Resources field and a demonstrated knowledge of California employment law. Knowledge of MCC, good relational skills and the ability to relate to diverse constituencies and produce and publish communications materials is required.

A complete job description and application is available online at www.mcc.org/serve. Resume and letter of interest can be directed to Tim Croyle, Director of Human Resources MCC US via e-mail tcroyle@mcc.org or by mail to MCC Great Lakes, 1013 Division Street, Goshen, IN 46528 by August 1, 2009.



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St. Clair O'Connor Community Inc. (SCOC) is a non-profit partnership between the broader community and Danforth Mennonite and Toronto United Mennonite Churches providing a range of accommodation and care, a variety of life-affirming activities and programs for seniors in the surrounding neighborhoods. SCOC seeks to be a caring, intergenerational community, which nurtures the health and well-being of its residents.

SCOC is presently inviting applications for a Part-time Chaplain. This position is 25 hours a week, (with attractive benefits), beginning September 2009. The applicant will be expected to work with an interdisciplinary team and be committed to the SCOC Mission and Philosophy of care. Reporting to the Executive Director, the Chaplain conducts religious services, Devotions and Bible study and provides spiritual guidance as needed to the nursing home and apartment residents and their families. Previous work experience with older adults, coping with serious illness and advanced aging and bereavement will be an asset.

Qualifications:

- Masters of Divinity degree from a recognized university
- Membership in CAPPE and completed at least two units of chaplaincy training
- Experience on a Palliative support team and/or Ethics Committee
- Excellent communication skills, both oral and written
- Excellent interpersonal skills
- Ability to work effectively within a multi-disciplinary team
- Experience in a long term care setting would be an asset

Compensation commensurate with qualifications and experience.

Please send resume and cover letter by August 14, 2009 to:

Chaplain Search Committee
Attention: Susan Gallant, Executive Director
St. Clair O'Connor Community Inc.
2701 St. Clair Avenue East, Toronto, ON M4B 3M3
E-MAIL: s.gallant@scoc.ca FAX: 416-751-7315

Thank you for your interest, however, only applicants selected for an interview will be contacted.



Executive Director

Mennonite Foundation of Canada (MFC) is a donor-advised charitable foundation established in 1973 to promote financial stewardship from a Christian perspective. We create opportunities for people to be generous with their financial resources and provide stewardship education for churches and their members. MFC is committed to socially responsible investing and a significant portion of our investment portfolio is loans to our constituent churches and related charitable organizations.

We are a growing and dynamic organization with over \$100 million dollars under management. Our head office is in Winnipeg with four other offices across Canada. We have 17 employees and an operating budget of \$1.9 million. Further information can be found at Mennofoundation.ca.

The Executive Director is accountable to the MFC Board and will provide strategic leadership to MFC, directing and managing the overall operation. The candidate must be a member in a church of one of MFC's six supporting conferences.

As the ideal candidate you will:

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- ♦ Possess excellent public relations and communication skills
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- ♦ Be fully aligned with the values of MFC and the faith-based constituency we serve.

MFC offers a competitive salary and benefits package. Resumes should be submitted by August 31st, 2009 to: Personnel Committee, 12-1325 Markham Road, Winnipeg, MB R3T 4J6 or edsearch@mennofoundation.ca.

CUSTODIAN/MAINTENANCE ASSISTANT (1.0) required for Camp Assiniboia, near Winnipeg, one of three camps operated by Mennonite Church Manitoba. Skills required include building cleaning; grounds, barn/corral, equipment maintenance; snow removal; tractor operation; minor repair; group hosting. Position available fall 09. Applicants must affirm Mennonite faith statement. On site housing and benefits package available. Contact (204) 895-2267 or camps@mennochurch.mb.ca. Further information at www.campswithmeaning.org.

Raising money for MCC, saving the environment

BY EVELYN REMPEL PETKAU

Manitoba Correspondent
WINNIPEG, MAN.

PHOTOS BY JOHN ENNS



Ruth Schroeder and Dorothy Friesen sewing bags in the Craft Room at Lindenwood Estates.



Ruth Schroeder sells bags at the MCC relief sale in Winnipeg.

When Ruth Schroeder spots a piece of fabric in the Selkirk Avenue Mennonite Central Committee Thrift Shop where she volunteers, she immediately pictures a bag. When MCC Resource Centre volunteer, Dorothy Friesen, looks at the bolts of rip-stop nylon on the Centre's shelves she knows they would make perfect grocery bags. Schroeder and Friesen are residents at Lindenwood Estates, a Life Lease retirement community, and together they came up with a plan to have fellow residents make bags to sell at the 2008 MCC Relief Sale in Winnipeg. In three weeks last year they made 140 bags and by Saturday morning of the sale they were sold out.

"This year nobody was doing bags again," said Schroeder and so a group of 16 women at Lindenwood Estates took up the task and in assembly-line fashion made 360 bags in time for the June 12-13, 2009 Winnipeg MCC Relief Sale. For 14 Mondays this spring the women reclaimed the craft room that had become a storage place for golf clubs and home to a scroll saw business. The men happily pitched in, building shelves and cleaning up the room. It became a community effort.

Some of the bags didn't make it to the Relief Sale as they sold about \$600 worth of bags beforehand.

Most of the bags sold for \$3. "Just about as much work goes into making a big bag as a little bag," said Schroeder. Depending on the type and design of the fabric, they sewed gift bags, grocery bags and tote bags.

In total the bags raised \$1140 for MCC. Visitors from Germany, India and the U.S.A. took bags home with them.

"We'll certainly continue to make bags," said Schroeder, who has been sewing and giving away bags since the early 1970s out of a concern for the environment, "hoping to reduce some of the plastic bags around."

"Some of the women have already asked about next year." In the meantime fabric continues to come in and be set aside in the Thrift Shop where she volunteers. "More Safeway mesh bags should be worn out by next year," Schroeder laughs. ☺