

# CANADIAN MENNONITE

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## EDITORIAL

# A grand family reunion

DICK BENNER  
EDITOR/PUBLISHER

**O**n the surface, the Mennonite World Conference (MWC) assembly in Asunción, Paraguay, last month felt like a family reunion on a grand scale.

And for Canadians attending, it must have felt like a homecoming. For it was to the central Chaco that many Prussian and Russian Mennonites from Canada emigrated 82 years ago, primarily because this little-known country in South America offered them religious freedom and land.

Talk to any Canadian who grew up in the Chaco, or, conversely, anyone who has gone to the Chaco to spend time in study or with family, and you hear compelling stories of hardship and grueling isolation in the “green hell,” heart-warming anecdotes of mutual aid and agricultural development, or even some spine-tingling tales of romance.

And at a more serious and sophisticated level, Werner Franz, director of Centro Evangélico Mennonita de Teología in Asunción, writing in the 2009 *Journal of Mennonite Studies*, recommends the 3,100-farmer co-op, CODIPSA, as the business model for Anabaptist-owned commerce around the world.

Through this MEDA-assisted enterprise, Franz reports that violence and unrest in the region have been greatly reduced due to the improvement of the co-op owners’ farming techniques, the strengthening of community networks, and the representation of their interests

in the management of the company. The farmers “feel treated with justice and respect, having a new sense of dignity and empowerment,” he writes.

So, yes, this 15th annual gathering of nearly 6,000 Mennonites from four continents and 56 countries, was both a family reunion and a homecoming. Faith cousins came “home” from every ethnicity and political persuasion, the rich and the poor, the educated and uneducated, the young and the old. It was a virtual United Nations event, complete with earphones to hear the seven different translations of the official language of the assembly, Spanish.

It is now almost a cliché to say that we celebrated this diversity in song and dance, in drama, in poetry, in native dress (even a fashion show in the Global Village), and in theological exposition. It seemed that, at long last, this 500-year-old Anabaptist family, born of persecution and martyrdom, gladly shed its parochialism, its European pride and stubbornness, and its penchant for division and contention over deeply held distinctives, and with clasped hands and happy hearts greeted and conversed with one another with smiles and hugs.

Maybe it was the free-spirited Latino culture and music that gave impetus to this festivity. Paul Dueck, our inspired music leader, certainly tried his best to melt our hearts together in majestic and multi-language songs. Maybe it was the multiple spoken languages—the

“splendour of Pentecost,” as one church leader described it—that inspired us. Or just maybe it was a renewed commitment to Jesus Christ, around whom we “came together”—the conference theme.

At a deeper level, it was the coming of age of a religious movement, a creative minority on the world’s stage that has held to its core values in shaping a people committed to peace and justice, developing and sharing a unique compassion for its neighbours, and, in its latest innovation, adding the care of creation to its agenda.

Thanks to Larry Miller, MWC’s executive secretary, ecumenicity moved from the ideal to reality. It was not lost on me that one of the high moments was when MWC president Danisa Ndlovu embraced Ishmael Noko, general secretary of the Lutheran World Federation, after Noko spoke of Lutherans’ plans to renounce condemnations of Anabaptism in their 16th-century *Augsburg Confession*.

Lutherans’ persecution and execution of Anabaptists “is a wound we carry with us,” Noko said. “When you meet for your next assembly, we hope to be with you in a new relationship.”

Father Gregory Fairbanks, the Vatican’s representative to the assembly, didn’t go quite that far, but confessed that both the Roman Catholic and Anabaptist communions “have sinned” in keeping an historic division alive since the 16th century. Mennonites are on record, in recent years, as forgiving our persecutors for this sin.

When our historic persecutors come to our worldwide gathering to ask our forgiveness and to acknowledge their “sins,” is it too much to think that now we—a small 1.6-million-strong communion—have a place at the global faith table? And doesn’t it diminish the stereotype that we are somehow a “religious sect”?

Now that’s something to write home about, isn’t it?



## ABOUT THE COVER:

**Jonoine, an Ayoreo chief, holds the spear that he used to kill Mennonite missionary Kornelius Isaak a half-century ago as he awaits his turn to go on stage and hear a statement of forgiveness written and read by Helmut Isaak, brother to the slain missionary, at Paraguay 2009, the 15th Mennonite World Conference assembly held last month (see story on page 11).**

PHOTO: LOWELL BROWN, MEETINGHOUSE

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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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ASSEMBLY 2009 FEATURE ADDRESS

# Micah's warning

*Social justice is as important for today's Christians as it was when the prophet Micah warned the ancient Israelites to mend their ways if their worship was to be acceptable to God.*

BY NZUZI MUKAWA

*Nzuzi Mukawa is the academic dean and a professor at the missiology school in Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo, and associate pastor of Batela Mennonite Brethren Church of Kinshasa. Born and raised in a Mennonite family, where his father was a pastor and church leader, he began serving the church as a young man and later served as a youth leader, evangelist and church planter. Since 2004, he has travelled widely, especially in North America, for cross-cultural ministries. This article was condensed by Dick Benner, editor/publisher of Canadian Mennonite, from one of the major evening addresses at the Mennonite World Conference assembly in Paraguay last month.*

PHOTO BY RAY DIRKS



*Nzuzi Mukawa of the Democratic Republic of Congo challenged today's Mennonite Church to place as high a value on justice for the poor as God, through the prophet Micah, expected of the ancient Israelites.*

**T**onight, as we again consider our calling to follow in Jesus' footsteps, how can we claim to be genuine followers if we forget about, or ignore, our social calling?

In today's world, several races are despised, the poor are exploited in many places, several cultures are marginalized and there is still widespread discrimination against women. Can we pretend to follow Jesus and not pay heed to these issues that plague us?

The prophet Micah tells us we cannot worship God and forget about social justice. He was speaking to a people in the 8th century B.C. who, like us, were enjoying great prosperity and great wealth. Two classes had emerged: the wealthy and the poor. There was a huge gap between them.

Wealth and power were exclusively held by a small group of merchants and judges. This class exerted great oppression upon the lowly ones. In Micah 2:1-2, we are told the poor were deprived of their fields. Their houses and their own labour became the object of business transactions.

This exploitation had spread to northern Israel, too,



*Paraguay*  
2009

triggering the protest of the prophets Hosea and Isaiah, and, later, Jeremiah. The great imbalance amounted to nothing less than gross injustice.

What was happening was nothing less than a serious violation of the alliance that God, up to that point, had with his people, a great solidarity that was to prevent this exploitation of the poor by the powerful ones.

Micah critiques this emerging social structure and says it can't continue if the people want to live. He charges them with violating the Sinai Alliance, telling them how ungrateful they are for forgetting how God had delivered them out of Egypt, sheltering them from the curse.

God is fed up with their many offerings, their feigning of worship, which included the sacrificing of their own children. Micah calls them to repentance, specific-

ally asking them to practise justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with their God. the community of alliance, and, as such, are called to experience a great solidarity with others. Micah reminds them that Yahweh insists that his justice is practised to sustain this alliance. For everyone to belong to the community there must be social cohesion, a standard of justice between individuals.

Exploiting the poor breaks the community apart and violates the alliance. God is not happy about this, says Micah, because justice is the very nature of God. Justice is what God does. They need to restore their broken harmony.

In order to reverse this fragmented community, Micah calls for a renewal of "loving mercy," a new demonstration of grace and pardon. This calls for interaction with the poor. We all know that, biblically speaking, poverty is spiritual and physical. But this is all about

*The prophet Micah tells us we cannot worship God and forget about social justice.*

ally asking them to practise justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with their God.

What does Micah mean by practising justice? In that setting, it meant that everyone's interest had to be safeguarded for there to be harmony in the society. The fundamental rights of everyone must be respected. God's people all belong to

material poverty. According to the law (Deuteronomy), there shall be no poor among God's people.

Where there are poor people, all the others should try to lift them up from that condition. This implies that the poor should focus the attention of Israel. All necessary help should be brought to

PHOTO BY LOWELL BROWN



*Incoming Mennonite World Conference president Danisa Ndlovu of Zimbabwe.*

them. Micah tells both Judah and Israel that they have profited from the weakness of the poor by exploiting them. But

this is contrary to the harmony of the alliance. The poor should be protected. God insists they should not continue to be ignored, but be brought into the decision-making process of the society.

In turning from their exploitative ways, God's people are given a new standard of conduct within the community: walking humbly with their God. There has to be a new standard of compassion and humility that lifts up the poor, rather than forcing them into a lower class. Obeying this new standard equals walking with one's God, getting into lockstep with a God who is just and whose interest is in the betterment of all, particularly the poor.

So what does this mean for us as followers of Jesus in today's society? In a world that is very similar to Micah's Judah, the church must respond to the same call for repentance, for loving mercy and for walking humbly before God. We need to be reminded that God is still a God of justice, that he cannot tolerate exploitation of the poor. Like Judah, God opposes any religion that doesn't pay attention to injustice.

Following Jesus clearly means we have to follow his path of justice. Proclaiming God's justice must be a part of our worship, our discipleship and our mission. The church must practise justice from within. We tend to think justice is elsewhere, and often fail to see how it is falling short within our own structures.

For instance, in the succession of leadership, members not belonging to majority groups have a difficult

time acceding to leadership positions. Members from the lower class have a hard time being accepted in some congregations. Minorities often don't have access to the church's assets. In some churches, women cannot fully participate in all ministries, especially in pastoral leadership. This is contrary to God's Word; the Apostle Paul says that in Christ we are neither man nor woman, but one

with him.

The inequality in the distribution of resources globally is an issue the church should be concerned with, if it is to "love justice." We know that only 8 percent of the world's population utilizes 36 percent

*Rich countries should pay damages to poor countries because they are the ones who have greatly polluted the air and have destroyed the ozone layer.*

of all of the world's resources. This is to say that over half of the global population lacks basic items for living, such as water, electricity, health, education, lodging and employment.

Do we think that with such a disparity we can achieve God's harmony, especially when in the church there's a handful that lives in comparative wealth while the rest—the majority—lives in poverty?

Then there is the load of the international debt of poor countries. Several African countries are currently facing the option of either paying debts or supporting their population. My own homeland, the Democratic Republic of Congo, is required to pay \$50 million dollars monthly on its foreign deficit and finds itself unable to invest in health and education. This is injustice because it will foster pauperization of the debtor countries.

The international (global) trade system operates to the detriment of poor countries. Sometimes, only rich countries have access to international trade by means of imports and exports, whereas

poor countries must be subject to duties and quotas that keep them from gaining access to world commerce. This is unfair.

With the global warming issue, there are far greater consequences for poor countries. Rich countries can no longer exploit their green surfaces (forests). Rich countries should pay damages to poor countries because they are the ones who have greatly polluted the air and have

destroyed the ozone layer. Moreover, poor countries depend on these green surfaces for livelihood. Rich countries should be required to compensate for this loss of wealth.

There is the issue of homeless children,

estimated to be nearly 100 million living on the streets of major cities. Projections are that this number will climb to some 800 million by the year 2020. It is about time the church awakens to this social plight and stands up for these children.

With global injustice rampant on this global scale, I am calling the church, like Micah, to work alongside the poor in promoting resources such as drinkable water, vaccination of children, education in preventing recurring diseases, teaching agriculture, developing new technology and literacy programs.

It should continue to implement business projects with these micro-financing enterprises that help the poor support their families. The next step is to assist them in marketing their products.

There needs to be a change in lifestyle for Christians. Capitalism teaches people to spend their own money and become greater and greater consumers. The materialism of Northern Christians is marked by luxury, where, for instance, people want big mansions and big vehicles. By continuing this way of life, we are destroying the other social classes. The ideal would be to invest for oneself, but also for the others in order to achieve social equilibrium.

Finally, let's follow the path of him who loved us and who gave himself for us. He is the one who urges us to be salt of the earth and light to the world by living in justice and practising it. By so doing there will be peace, justice and mercy in the world. ☸



# Giant cooker assists feeding of the thousands

BY CATHLEEN HOCKMAN-WERT  
Mennonite World Conference Release

When Adelheid Thiessen agreed to head the mammoth task of preparing 10 meals for 5,800-plus assembly participants, she knew the menu would have to be simple. She'd also need an awfully big cooking pot.

Originally from Menno Colony, but living the last 25 years in Asunción, Thiessen found her mind turning to the big iron kettles her foremothers used in the Chaco. She envisioned a huge, propane-fueled cooking vat that would be custom-built at the assembly site. But there would be no time to test it with anything but water before the event began. It had to work.

Worried about the design, she gave a testimony at her congregation, Concordia Mennonite Brethren Church, expressing her concerns. After the service a man came forward with a new idea: to divide the oval-shaped vat into four chambers, with two half-moons on each end and

two rectangular sections in the middle. Rice and pasta could be cooked in the outer ends, while sauces would go in the middle.

The vat became the centrepiece of the tent-covered cooking area outside the Centro Familiar de Adoración facility. Additional food preparation, baking and meat roasting—more than a thousand kilograms of beef at a time—was done offsite.

“We had hoped to contract out the baking, but that didn’t work out at the last minute,” Thiessen said. “So we said, well, if Jesus closes one door, he will open another.” She called another local bakery, which offered its space for free.

In addition to her husband Edwin, who organized the dining area on the first parking level inside the large church, Thiessen was assisted by a host of volunteers, mostly from the Chaco. Businesspeople but not food service professionals, the Thiessens previously had never cooked for a group larger than their 500-member church.

With 12 serving stations staffed by 60-

PHOTOS BY RAY DIRKS



*More than 60 masked servers (to prevent the spread of swine flu) helped the nearly 6,000 assembly participants get their food quickly and then find a seat.*

plus volunteers, the entire assembly crowd could get their food in less than an hour. Seating was only available for some 2,000, so everyone was asked to spend no more than 20 minutes eating and then move elsewhere for extended conversation.

Most meals featured a sauce of chicken or ground beef served over rice or noodles, with crusty rolls, locally-sourced oranges or bananas, and bottled water, sometimes with a salad of shredded cabbage with cucumbers or carrots. Paraguayan Mennonites are famed for their beef and dairy production, and roast beef and yogurt also appeared during the week, as did *mandioca* (also known as manioc or yucca), a local staple root vegetable. Snacks included meat *empanadas* (turnovers), tea sandwiches and pastries. ☺



*The custom-designed cooking vat used by Adelheid Thiessen and her volunteers to feed nearly 6,000 Assembly 15 participants was constructed onsite.*



*With seating for only 2,000, assembly organizers asked participants to eat quickly (20 minutes) and then take their conversations elsewhere, so everyone could be fed in the space of an hour.*

# Singing each other's songs

BY DORA DUECK  
For Meetinghouse

For many people, singing together was one of their Assembly 15 highlights. For the man who led that singing, it was the highlight of his life.

"It's a dream come true," said Paul Dueck. Beyond the thrill of music-making, he said, was "the thrill of seeing our brothers and sisters from around the globe singing each other's songs."

Dueck is music minister at Leamington United Mennonite Church, Ont., and music teacher at United Mennonite Educational Institute, also in Leamington. He is also a harpist with three recordings to his credit.

A Canadian citizen, Dueck was born in Asunción to Mennonite missionary parents and lived there for 12 years. He returned to the country as an adult, with his wife Linda and their family, for two separate stints of



*Members of Grupo Ebenezer, musicians from the Paraguayan Chaco, play zampoña flutes and guitars. "Raise your hands, worship the Creator," they sang.*

teaching at CEMTA, a Mennonite seminary in Paraguay's capital city.

The energetic Dueck moved easily at Assembly 15 between the three languages he speaks fluently: Spanish, English and German. He also moved easily from leading on the stage front to leading behind the piano or harp.

As in several previous assemblies, the music committee had debated the merits of creating a songbook for the event, since many people do not read notes. They once again decided in favour, because a book collection can be enjoyed later at home. This assembly's songbook was smaller

than the previous one, however, with about half as many songs. As editor, Dueck made sure that, in addition to international representation and Mennonite World Conference favourites, a good portion of the 44 songs would be in Spanish.

Dueck's other main task was to put together the team of international singers, instrumentalists and composers that helped him lead the twice-daily worship sessions. He kept pushing for more time for singing, he said, because "that's where people get involved in the conference."

One slot was given him unexpectedly when the power went out in the windowless sanctuary during the morning service on July 16. Dueck and his team scrambled to the stage. The congregation joined them as they moved from one familiar song to the next, in several languages, until the house lights were restored. Applause and cheers concluded the spontaneous and beautiful singing in the dark.

Said Dueck of that experience later, "It was amazing." ☞



PHOTOS BY LOWELL BROWN



*Canadian Paul Dueck of Leamington United Mennonite Church, Ont., leads music at the MWC assembly. For him, it was a dream come true.*

## Getting the word out... in eight languages at once

*Mennonite Church Canada worker Rebecca Yoder Neufeld heads translation team at Assembly 15*

BY DOREEN MARTENS  
Mennonite World Conference Release

The dimly lit booth tucked into a balcony at the Centro Familiar de Adoración doesn't hold much: a table and chairs, a pair of microphones, a bottle of water, a few sticky notes stuck to the window, a bilingual Bible—and Carmen Epp listening intently through headphones to the sermon being delivered in Spanish down below. Few are aware she's there,

but hundreds of English-speakers are depending on her ability to listen, translate and talk at the same time, to make this a meaningful evening.

Epp was one of about 125 translators who volunteered to translate between Spanish and French, German, English, Portuguese, Nivaclé, Guarani and Enlhet on stage, in the booths, and at workshops



and meetings during Mennonite World Conference (MWC) Assembly 15.

"It's a high calling, but also a very humble ministry," said Rebecca Yoder Neufeld, a member of First Mennonite Church, Kitchener, Ont., of the vocally and mentally demanding job. "The better you do, the less you're noticed. If you're doing the job really well you fade into the background." Yet without it, "all the careful preparation done for this assembly would pretty much come to nothing," she added.

Yoder Neufeld, a Canadian born in France who is familiar with all four MWC official languages, coordinated the translators for Asunción and the last assembly in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe, as well as smaller gatherings in between.

Asunción was the first MWC assembly in memory at which English was not an official platform language, which meant that many North Americans and English-speaking Africans and Asians were learning for the first time what it's like to depend on headsets.

Equipment was obtained through a company in neighbouring Argentina and close to 2,400

headsets were dispensed before each session by young volunteers.

But for Yoder Neufeld and Paraguayan coordinator Jacob Lepp, the job began a year-and-a-half ago with recruiting, screening and sometimes—especially for the indigenous languages—training volunteers who had never translated simultaneously before.

Then came the big task of scheduling equipment and volunteers to cover not only the two daily mass meetings, but also dozens of daily workshops, three concurrent pre-assembly meetings and other gatherings at which translation, sometimes in several languages, would be required.

"It involves a lot of careful thinking and matching about who fits what kind of venues best, because of their experience, practice, the kind of vocabulary they're familiar with," Yoder Neufeld explained. Some feel quite comfortable translating sentence-by-sentence; others find doing so on stage in front of nearly 6,000 people too nerve-wracking, she said.

"I haven't done it often enough not to get nervous, but it's exciting," Epp said of translating English to Spanish, sentence-by-sentence, on stage. "I find it hard that

everyone has so little time so they have to write out almost every word they're saying.

"When it's something written that people read, it's dense," Epp said. "That's harder to do; you're almost translating from the paper because you don't want to miss out. When it's more conversational style, it's easier; you can speak freely and listen to what they say."

Coordinating her army of talkers kept Yoder Neufeld on the run all week, and brought some tense moments when interpreters took ill or otherwise missed their assigned times.

Why not just hire professionals? On a previous occasion when that was necessary, Yoder Neufeld said the pros didn't do so well because they didn't know "church language." Two German professional translators, however, were welcomed as volunteers this time.

Wherever possible, written texts were collected in advance so volunteers could prepare. Speakers were counselled on how to make their addresses translate easily; for example, by avoiding expressions that are too culture-specific. Translators, in turn, were cautioned to keep their voices neutral, avoid the temptation to soften speech that seemed politically incorrect, and as effectively as possible convey the speaker's tone and message.

All went through an orientation first. "Part of the point of that, in addition to practical suggestions, the ethics of interpreting and things like that, is trying to help people think about the meaning behind this task," said Yoder Neufeld.

Hanging in the translators' office was a colourful banner she commissioned for the Bulawayo assembly. It reflects the Pentecost story and Revelation, which picture a multitude of tribes and nations and languages praising God.

"Language isn't erased there, in that final picture of how God wants things to be," Yoder Neufeld said. "What we're aiming towards, these gatherings are a little glimpse. And we're part of that stream of helping each one hear on his or her own terms." ❧

Paraguay

PHOTO BY LOWELL BROWN



*Since Spanish was the platform language at Assembly 15, speakers and listeners alike were dependent on 125 volunteer translators to get the messages into French, German, English, Portuguese, Nivaclé, Guarani and Enlhet. Mennonite Church Canada staffer Rebecca Yoder Neufeld coordinated the translation team, as she did six years ago in Zimbabwe.*

# Paraguay's lessons in diversity

By PAUL SCHRAG  
For Meetinghouse

Experiencing the variety of Paraguay's Mennonites proved instructive for visitors and valuable for Paraguayans, too.

In the eight Paraguayan church bodies hosting the Mennonite World Conference (MWC) assembly—three Germanic, three indigenous and two Hispanic groups—MWC general secretary Larry Miller saw a reflection of the worldwide fellowship. “In your history, your diversity and your vitality, you incarnate the past, present and future of the global Anabaptist church,” he said during the evening worship service on July 18.

In interviews, assembly participants from Paraguay said the event made an impact by bringing the country's Mennonites closer together.

Jakob Warkentin saw benefits both for indigenous and German-speaking Mennonites. “It is important for the indigenous people to see that to be Mennonite is not to be white, but also black or brown,” he said. “It is a matter of belief, not of culture and heritage.”

And for German speakers, Warkentin said, worshipping in Spanish at the



conference meetings taught an important lesson. “Here we are in step with the indigenous people, because Spanish is not the mother tongue for either of us,” he said. “So we adjust to that, we learn from that.”

Walter Neufeld, speaking in Spanish, said the assembly “encourages the Mennonite churches to realize that we are part of a large body of people in the world, that the opportunities don't finish in Paraguay, that we can work together with others.”

In a workshop, indigenous Paraguayans told of being drawn to the Christian faith and later to a Mennonite identity. Since the first baptisms of seven Enlhet men in 1947, the indigenous churches have grown to include 8,300 members in three conferences: United Enlhet, Enlhet Mennonite Brethren and Nivaclé Mennonite Brethren.

“We're very grateful for the work of the missionaries and the courage they showed,”

said Cornelio Goossen, a Nivaclé whose parents worked for a Goossen family and adopted their name. He said his people learned to put their confidence in God rather than witch doctors. “There were many things we had to leave behind because of our faith in Christ,” Goossen said.

When the Enlhet first came in contact with the Mennonites in the 1930s, the nomadic hunter-gatherers were “very much afraid,” said Cesar Cabanas. “But the Mennonites said we could live together.”

The indigenous people began to learn the German language, and “the Word of God, like a seed, entered into hearts,” Cabanas said. “After the seed was growing, it gave new life. And the indigenous people decided to follow Jesus.”

Among the results of their new faith was an end to the practice of infanticide, which had been common when families felt they could not care for more children.

Today, many indigenous churches are third-generation congregations. Still, for some, a Mennonite identity is relatively new.

“No one told us we had to be Mennonites, so it's only in the last generation that we realized we are part of the Mennonite faith,” said Victor Perez. “‘Mennonite’ has less to do with the colour of your skin than your faith.” ☞



*Mennonites from across Paraguay and around the world celebrated communion together, bridging cultural, linguistic and racial barriers in the process.*

# Forgiving the murderer

BY DICK BENNER

Editor/Publisher

In a moving symbolic peace gesture towards the indigenous Ayoreo people of the Paraguayan Chaco, Helmut Isaak read a statement of forgiveness to the murderer of his brother, Kornelius Isaak, during the three-hour closing worship service on July 19.

Jonoine, now a chief of his tribe in the northern Chaco, came to the stage carrying the spear that that he used to kill Kornelius Isaak in 1958 when a delegation of Mennonite missionaries were trying to win over the Ayoreos. The fatal incident occurred, according to an account by Edgar Stoesz in his recent book, *Like a Mustard Seed*, following a presentation of gifts to the tribes people. Then a young warrior, he fatally speared Kornelius.

"More than 50 years ago, your clan and tribe were resisting us," said Helmut, "but now we aren't enemies anymore, but brothers in Christ. Brothers and sisters, this is a symbolic act of peace. In [Kornelius'] memory we are establishing a centre of studies for learning about the Christian faith," he said to the applause of some 8,500 worshippers, the largest gathering of the assembly.

According to Stoesz, some 300 Ayoreo members are now Christians, the result of efforts by the New Tribes Mission some years after the murder.

In his closing message to the assembly, Alfred Neufeld, dean of the theology faculty and a teacher at the Universidad Evangelica del Paraguay, and an ordained minister in the Concordia Mennonite Brethren congregation in Asunción, said, "Jesus needs you to love," clinching the conference theme, "Come together in the way of Jesus Christ." "Christians are not only members of the church of Christ," he further pushed, "we need to be lovers of the church of Christ."

Drawing from the animal world, he used the imagery of cats versus pigs when declaring that Christians need to be the "Lord's cats, not pigs," explaining that cats are constantly cleaning themselves to keep their identity, while pigs seek out mud puddles for their enjoyment and sense of worth.

Neufeld warned against trusting ideologies and politics, rather than Jesus Christ, to whom God has given all authority in heaven and on earth. But this is not easy, he insisted. Mennonites have to "work out our salvation with fear and trembling," he said, adding that this process is not magical, or a given, but an act of obedience, a labour of love that reaches out, like Jesus did, to the "most marginalized of our society."

He concluded with an appeal to attach this "working out one's personal salvation" to a congregation, a place of safety from

which the Christian can draw strength. "The world will know us by our helping of one another inside this community of faith," he said.

A delegate from Siberia brought greetings from a small 100-member Mennonite group located in a tiny Russian village where they converse in Low German. Arriving by way of Canada, he said, "I never knew there were so many Mennonites."

Swelling the numbers of those attending the final worship service were local Mennonites, who came rather than conduct their own Sunday services. The event was originally planned to be an outdoor service, but the threat of inclement weather kept the service inside the 10,000-seat assembly hall. ☞

PHOTOS BY LOWELL BROWN



*More than 50 years after he killed Mennonite missionary Kornelius Isaak, Jonoine, now the chief of the indigenous Ayoreo people of the Paraguayan Chaco, was invited to the closing worship service of MWC Assembly 15, where a statement of forgiveness was read by Isaak's brother, Helmut: "More than 50 years ago, your clan and tribe were resisting us, but now we aren't enemies anymore, but brothers in Christ."*



**One of hundreds of performers who graced the Global Village stage during Assembly 15.**

# The guest from 'Babylon'

PHOTO BY LOWELL BROWN

*Mennonites welcome church groups they now work with, including some whose history was antagonistic to Anabaptists*

BY DICK BENNER

Editor/Publisher

Both "Anabaptist" and "Catholic" were pejorative labels in their 16th century settings, the Vatican's representative for Promoting Christian Unity, Father Gregory Fairbanks, told a workshop at Mennonite World Conference (MWC) Assembly 15. He introduced himself jokingly as the guest from "Babylon."

Because of the two churches' contentious history, they are both sometimes stuck in the 1500s, he further claimed, while confessing that both communions have "sinned" over the intervening years by keeping this division alive. Rather, both should heed the words of Jesus when he prayed to the Father at the time of his betrayal: "May they [his disciples] be one so that the world will believe."

Fairbanks represented one of six groups introduced by MWC general secretary Larry Miller with whom Mennonites cooperate on the global scene. A theme of dropping differences and uniting in the common cause for peace and justice around the world resounded in all of their presentations.

Katherine Johnson, representing 68 million Lutherans worldwide as assistant general secretary for the Lutheran World Federation, claimed that while they were "proud of their theological distinctives," they would not be "celebrating" their 500th birthday next year due to the divisiveness of the Reformation. The federation's goal is to help shape the church for the 21st century, she said.

True to its roots in empowering local congregations, Raquel Contreras, vice-president of the Baptist World Alliance, said it was rediscovering its own Anabaptist roots and pointing to a new direction in the



*MWC general secretary Larry Miller, left, introduces Lutheran World Federation general secretary Ishmael Noko. Lutherans have announced plans to renounce condemnations of Anabaptism in their 16th-century Augsburg Confession.*

work of peace, especially with churches in Latin America and Africa. The alliance will be celebrating its 400th birthday next year with a worldwide meeting in a Mennonite church in Amsterdam, Holland.

Archbishop Daniel Okoh, president of the Organization of African Instituted Churches, reported a new alliance with Mennonites in the southern part of the continent, where both groups are helping local churches identify their African roots while developing new congregations.

Hansulrich Gerber from Argentina, coordinator for the Decade to Overcome Violence for the World Council of Churches, said the last decade has been "very stressful." He said member groups have wanted to move forward their distinctive agendas, but that the organization's primary role is to develop a "prophetic voice," especially in the North/South tension, where the northern communions, because of their greater power and advanced development, want to dominate

the southern communions.

Geoff Tunnicliffe, international director for the World Evangelical Alliance, said that it, too, was moving toward that "prophetic voice" in the forms of taking up the Micah Challenge to address poverty issues by evangelical churches and by becoming an advocate for human rights and the poor in the halls of government.

Eugene Hsu, representing 17 million Seventh Day Adventists, said his communion is moving away from its emphasis on prophecy and towards education and medical ministries, especially in poorer countries. In that regard, he is happy to partner with Mennonites in their service outreach around the world. ☸



# Multinational Anabaptists profiled

BY DICK BENNER  
Editor/Publisher

When sociologist-researcher Conrad Kanagy decided to do profiles on racial/ethnic congregations in three major U.S. cities, he was told by a conference leader from Chicago to throw out his models used in sampling the 250 congregations in the Mennonite mainstream.

"Whatever research model you used in profiling these historical, mainstream churches will not work here," Rodolfo Jimenez, told him. "And whatever you do, don't use the word Anabaptist because it will have little meaning in our circles." It was this advice that prepared Kanagy to tackle congregational profiling on the international scene, an ambitious project that seeks to gather comparative data on four continents.

Kanagy told a Mennonite World Conference (MWC) Assembly 15 workshop that what is called the "Multi-Nation Anabaptist Profile 1" has several objectives, foremost among them being to give a voice to the southern hemisphere churches. This proved to be a dominant theme in the worldwide gathering in Asunción.

While there has been conversation between the global North and South churches, this profile will increase "south to south" conversations, Kanagy said in spelling out more of his objectives: "It will give us a baseline against which to measure future growth and change among these churches."

That growth has been phenomenal in the last 20 years, observed Nathan Showalter, president of the Eastern Mennonite Board of Missions (EMM), the sole sponsor of the multi-nation study, who co-directed the assembly workshop. Showalter visited Indonesia and countries in East Africa and Central America as part of his orientation as president of EMM, saying he "was

pleasantly surprised to learn how much they were already a part of the Anabaptist story."

"These churches have much to teach us in North America," he said, noting that the northern churches need this data for their own development and self-awareness. "There has been more interconnectedness over the last years than we, in the North, have taken notice."

Galen Groff, working with the rural K'ekchi in Guatemala, told of some of the

rather than the individualism their northern neighbours reflect in answering questions.

Jumanne Migiri, representing 60,000 Mennonites in Tanzania scattered over a large area, told the workshop that the process in his country will not be easy since there are so many dialects of the Swahili language. He insisted, however, that the data will help them understand themselves better as a national church.

"Will there be any synthesis of the data when it is gathered and published?"

*'These churches have much to teach us in North America. There has been more interconnectedness over the last years than we, in the North, have taken notice.'*  
(Nathan Showalter)

problems in gathering data from people with a mostly oral history, half of whom are illiterate. "They have a different concept of what this is all about," he said. "The first thing they wanted to know is, 'What are we going to get for this?'"

To them, data-gathering was a commodity, Groff explained, something which they could use in daily living. They also spend a great deal of time coming to consensus on what information should be reported, reflecting their communal living values

a workshop attendee asked. Kanagy and Showalter said it was difficult to accomplish this due to the diversity of the churches, but rather it will point to the fact that all congregations are on a journey. It answers the question: Who are we as Anabaptists?

Another attendee from Lancaster County, Penn., said his congregation has already been on a "soul search" after seeing its profile. "It triggers the question of where we are in this journey and where we want to go," he said. ☺

PHOTO BY RAY DIRKS



The nearly 6,000 participants at Paraguay 2009 had an abundance of workshop options to choose from each day.

# A history of suffering

*Workshop and art show chronicle the history of Anabaptist trials and tribulations in the former Soviet Union during the last century*

BY DORA DUECK  
For Meetinghouse

Historical work on Mennonites in the Soviet Union from 1930-80 is adding new pages to the annals of Anabaptist suffering and martyrdom.

According to Walter Sawatsky, professor of church history at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, Ind., many people associate those themes only with the 16th century or with refugees who managed to escape from Russia.

Sawatsky hosted a workshop at Assembly 15 on “Recovering the History of Mennonites in the USSR: 1930-80,” that highlighted a complex and relatively recent story of almost unimaginable loss and dispersal during the Soviet state war on religion. This research and writing is being done by those from the “Aussiedler” groups

in Germany, who lived in, or originated from, the Soviet experience. Conservative estimates put the number of baptized Aussiedler members at about 80,000. “Many congregations in Germany want to do historical work now,” said Sawatsky, “to find their way.”

Katharina Neufeld, director of the Museum for German-Russian Cultural History in Detmold, Germany, gave an overview of the period, and Johannes P. Dyck presented his findings on one region—Kazakhstan, a state in the former Soviet Union—where many Mennonites eventually settled after World War II and re-established church life.

Neufeld chronicled waves of repression that stripped Mennonites of identity and



PHOTO BY RAY DIRKS

status, both on religious grounds and for being “German.” Strategies of adaptation included spiritual leadership by women, religious practices based on meager resources such as a Bible verse or hymn stanza written on a scrap of paper, and alliances among Christians of various confessions.

Art and artifacts from the Detmold museum displayed on the top floor of the Centro Familiar de Adoración in Asunción gave visual testimony to the workshop presentations. Particularly gripping were several works in bronze by Jakob Wedel (see above).

“Road of Suffering” depicts the farewell of conscripted women as they are torn from their children. The artist is an 11-year-old who tries to comfort his sister while covering his own face in despair. “I can still hear the crying and the sobbing,” the artist’s statement says. “I would like to forget about it, but my conscience pushes me again and again to tell people the truth about this horrible past.”

“The Very Last Bit of Strength” shows the artist’s mother in a Soviet work camp, her 30-year-old face that of an old woman. The piece is inscribed in memory of “the martyr’s death of our mothers and sisters.” ❧

PHOTO BY LOWELL BROWN



**Former Paraguayan president Nicanor Duarte Frutos and his wife, Gloria de Duarte, take part in the opening worship service of Mennonite World Conference Assembly 15. The Duartes attend Raíces Mennonite Brethren Church in Asunción.**



# What's new with MWC?

*General council, executive committee decisions from Assembly 15 many and varied*

BY FERNE BURKHARDT

Mennonite World Conference Release

Besides installing a new president and vice-president last month at its global gathering, other Mennonite World Conference (MWC) changes include a new general council and executive committee, with a woman representing Africans for the first time; new member churches, including the Mennonite Church in Vietnam; growing involvement of young people; a new treasurer from Paraguay; a revised constitution and four new commissions ready to work.

Danisa Ndlovu from Zimbabwe, who has been vice-president for six years and president-elect for three, was installed as MWC president for six years. He succeeds Nancy Heisey of the U.S., who served in various MWC-related roles since 1995 and as president since 2003.

Janet Plenert from Canada was elected vice-president for six years. Plenert chaired the Global Mission Fellowship for three years and worked with the fellowship and MWC in establishing what has become the MWC's Mission Commission.

The general council elected a new executive committee from its members. For the first time, the African caucus chose a woman, Mawangu Biavula Ibanda from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, as one of its representatives. The second African is Thuma Hamukang'andu from Zambia.

Other executive committee members are: Prem Prakash Bagh, India, and Adi Waludjo, Indonesia, representing Asia; Edgardo Sanchez, Argentina, and Felix Rafael Curbello Valle, Cuba, representing Latin America and the Caribbean; Rainer Burkart, Germany, and Markus Rediger, Switzerland, representing Europe; and Iris

de Leon-Hartshorn, U.S., and Ron Penner, Canada, representing North America.

## Other news

- The first action of the new executive committee, which met on July 19, was to accept by consensus a report from Amigos, the young adult team, and its nominations for a youth task force to operate for one year. Its mandate is to propose MWC youth programs and structures by 2010.
- Four national churches (conferences)

2008, with positive fund balances.

- Four commissions, which have been developing over several years, and appointments to them were approved by the general council. The commissions met for the first time in Asunción. Discussion between MWC and the Global Mission Fellowship concluded with the formation of the MWC Mission Commission, whose chair, Richard Showalter from the U.S., was elected in Asunción. Other commission chairs, named earlier, are: Deacons—

## *For the first time, management of MWC's finances has moved to the global South . . . .*

were accepted as full members of MWC. In addition to the Vietnam Mennonite Church, new members are the Brethren in Christ Church in Mozambique, the Gilgal Mission Trust (Mennonite Church) in India, and the Bible Missionary Church in Myanmar.

- For the first time, management of MWC's finances has moved to the global South, with the appointment of Ernst Bergen from Paraguay as treasurer. Paul Quiring from California concluded 11 years as treasurer at the Asunción meeting. During the past decade, MWC's income, investments and expenses have increased dramatically, to approximately \$1.2 million at the end of

Cynthia Peacock from India; Faith and Life—Alfred Neufeld from Paraguay; and Peace—Mulugeta Zewdie from Ethiopia.

- MWC is also looking into the future. Under consideration is reconfiguring its offices and staffing, intending to shift some administration to the global South, with MWC representative offices in each continent.
- There is strong support for continuing global assemblies. A study is underway to determine the time and place for the next global gathering. Already a major celebration is anticipated in Europe in 2025, the 500th anniversary year of the beginning of the Anabaptist movement and MWC's 100th anniversary. ☸

PHOTO BY LOWELL BROWN



*Nancy Heisey of the United States, left, passes the MWC presidency to Danisa Ndlovu of Zimbabwe, pictured with his wife Treziah.*

## VIEWPOINT

# What about the non-German Mennonites?

*After 80 years faith founders now outnumbered by indigenous and Latino Mennonite Christians*

BY SCOTT BERGEN

“I’m going to Paraguay to teach English,” I told curious friends and family last summer. “The Paraguayan Mennonite churches have invited young adults to teach English in their congregations to prepare for the Mennonite World Conference assembly.”

“That’s great,” they’d respond enthusiastically. “So you’re going to learn German, then?”

“Well, no,” I’d explain. “I’ll be working with Paraguay’s Spanish-speaking Latino Mennonite churches, living with a Latino Mennonite host family, and am going to learn Spanish, not German.”

It makes sense that we in Canada so often think of “Paraguayan Mennonites” as German-speaking, North American and European immigrants. After all, the first Mennonites to settle in Paraguay more than 80 years ago were German-speaking, Russian Mennonite settlers with names like Toews, Fast and Neufeld, and came from the Canadian Prairies. Today, many of these Germanic Mennonites (as I’ll refer to them in this article) come to Canada to study, work or to live permanently, and are, here in Canada, our fellow churchgoers, co-workers, pastors and friends. Of course we know who the Paraguayan Mennonites are.

## Not a complete picture

It may be surprising to learn that slightly less than half of all of the Mennonites in Paraguay are Germanic. The majority, in fact, are not immigrants or descendants of European or North

American Mennonites, but are Latino or indigenous.

The Mennonite church in Paraguay has approximately 28,000 members in total, about 13,600, or 49 percent, who are Germanic; 9,100, or 32 percent, who are indigenous; and about 5,300, or 19 percent, who are Latino.

There are about 204 Mennonite congregations in Paraguay, 39 of which are part of Germanic Mennonite conferences, 39 of which are part of indigenous conferences, and a whopping 126 of which are of Latino conferences. Clearly, in order to tell the story of today’s Paraguayan Mennonite Church, one must speak as much about the Spanish and indigenous Mennonite groups as the Germanic Mennonite ones.

## Unbalanced Information

Two of the most popular books published recently about the Paraguayan Mennonite church are Gerhard Ratzlaff’s *One Body, Many Parts: The Mennonite Churches in Paraguay* and Edgar Stoesz’s

*Like a Mustard Seed: Mennonites in Paraguay.*

Ratzlaff, a Germanic Paraguayan Mennonite, tells the story of the Paraguayan Mennonite church from its roots in the Old Testament through today, honestly and carefully discussing its triumphs and struggles. Stoesz, an American, is a former Mennonite Central Committee director to Latin America and a great writer who uses stories to help his North American audience connect with, and understand, the Mennonites of Paraguay.

At first, I was very excited about these new books. I had hope that they would add to our understanding of the Mennonite church in Paraguay, and that through them we would be blessed by knowing the stories not only of our German brothers and sisters in the faith, but our Latino, Guarani, Nivaclé, Lengua, Sanapaná, Toba, Angaité, Ayoreo, Mbyá and Enlhet Mennonite family as well. However, I was disappointed to learn that these books did not provide as much information about indigenous and Latino Mennonites as I had hoped.

Ratzlaff’s *One Body, Many Parts* starts off by talking about Mennonites in general before spending 146 pages detailing the story of Germanic Mennonites in Paraguay, 22 pages on the indigenous Mennonites, and a mere 10 pages on the Latino Mennonites. Information about the Germanic Mennonites outnumbers the other two Mennonite groups in Paraguay at a rate of over 4.5 to 1.

I held out hope for Stoesz’s

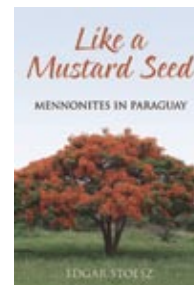
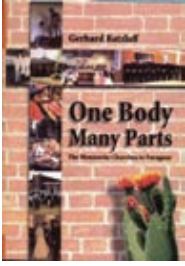


PHOTO BY LOWELL BROWN







*Like a Mustard Seed*, and while he wrote a bit more about the indigenous Mennonites, Latino Mennonites made an appearance in only 10 out of 289 pages.

### Who is a Mennonite?

In Paraguayan culture—both within the Mennonite church and in the larger society—the word “Mennonite” isn’t used to refer to someone who chooses to follow Jesus in the Anabaptist faith; rather, a Mennonite is someone of Russian or German Mennonite ancestry who speaks German.

Ratzlaff uses this same definition of “Mennonite” in his book. Sentences such as, “[b]ecoming increasingly popular with the Mennonites, beside rollkuchen, zwieback and [borscht], are guiso, chipa and sopa Paraguaya” (*One Body, Many Parts*, page 296), assume that to be Mennonite is to eat borscht (a traditional Russian Mennonite cabbage soup). This is odd, as most Mennonites in Paraguay probably couldn’t even tell you what borscht is, but eat the traditional Paraguayan

foods *guiso* (meat and vegetable stew) and *sopa Paraguaya* (cornbread) on a regular basis.

I was disappointed when I read these books. Where were all the stories about the indigenous Paraguayan Mennonites and my Latino Paraguayan faith community?

### Exclusivity in Canada

I’m not convinced that those of us with Russian or Swiss Mennonite ancestry in Canada do any better than those books at including Mennonites from non-Russian and non-Swiss backgrounds. I have come to the hard realization this past year—and I’m ashamed to admit this—that I know next to nothing about my fellow First Nations Mennonites, Vietnamese Mennonites and most others who do not define their heritage as coming from Russia or Switzerland, even though there are many Mennonites from these groups here in my own city in Canada.

We Russian and Swiss Mennonites still proudly declare that “Mennonites sing awesome four part harmony,” even though the majority of the world’s Mennonites can’t read music, have never heard “Praise God,” and are much more comfortable singing praise and worship songs.

We, as Russian Canadian Mennonites, still talk about “Mennonite food” being farmer sausage, paska and borscht, even though traditional dishes for people like my Latino Paraguayan Mennonite host family would include none of those, but rather *empanadas*, *guiso* and *asado*.

We cheerfully play “The Mennonite Game,” where two Russian or two Swiss Mennonites each trace their family trees far enough back to find a common link between them. It’s harmless enough to find out how two people are related to each other, but when we stick the title “Mennonite” onto it, it turns into an exclusive and dangerous ritual. When we call this game “Mennonite,” it reinforces the idea that to be part of the Anabaptist faith is to be born into a certain race as opposed to living out a faith commitment.

I by no means strive to diminish the story of the Germanic Mennonites in Paraguay or the Russian and Swiss Mennonites in Canada. One cannot help

but think that the incredible story of the Germanic Mennonite pioneers who arrived in Paraguay with nothing and are now prospering in so many ways is anything less than astounding, and theirs is certainly a story worth telling.

But the stories of the indigenous and Latino Mennonites are no less miraculous or amazing. Why should we limit ourselves to knowing the stories of only one group? If God is at work in all the many parts of the church, what’s stopping us from learning as much as we can about all of the various and diverse parts of the church and expanding our idea of what a Mennonite is—both in Paraguay and in Canada? ❧



*After completing his first three years of a bachelor of arts degree with majors in theology and music at Canadian Mennonite University in Winnipeg, Scott*

*Bergen spent 10 months living in San Lorenzo, Paraguay, fulfilling a practicum requirement by serving as a volunteer with Mennonite Church Canada Witness. He taught English in a Spanish Mennonite congregation and at CEMTA, a Mennonite seminary. He is part of Sterling Mennonite Fellowship in Winnipeg.*

### /// For discussion

1. What have been your experiences in listening to translation of another language? At the Mennonite World Conference in Paraguay, Spanish was the primary language and English-speakers needed translation. How do you think this changed the dynamics of the conference?
2. What are the advantages and disadvantages of having so many different cultures and languages represented at Mennonite World Conference? What role does music play in helping to bridge language and racial barriers?
3. Nzuzi Mukawa had a prophetic message for the North American Mennonite church. What does he identify to show that injustice is rampant in the global church? How do you respond to his message? Why might some North Americans respond with defensiveness rather than shame? What should churches in Canada be doing about global wealth disparity?
4. What is the most important thing that Mennonite World Conference does? What should it be working at in the future? How important are global assemblies? Is enough being done to give voice to the churches of the southern hemisphere?

TOP TWO PHOTOS BY LOWELL BROWN



*Mark Diller Harder, co-pastor of St. Jacobs Mennonite Church, Ont., second from right, joins other Mennonite World Conference participants in front of a sign at the Centro Familiar de Adoración, a church with a 10,000-seat sanctuary that hosted most assembly events. Of the 5,838 people who registered for the assembly, 3,109 came from Paraguay, 766 from the U.S. and 730 from Canada.*

*Lars Åkerson of Harrisonburg, Va., right, and Jonathan Spicher of Lancaster, Pa., arrive by bicycle on July 9 in Asunción, Paraguay, for the Global Youth Summit and Mennonite World Conference Assembly 15. The pair biked for six months, travelling more than 12,000 kilometres through 12 countries. They also raised money for the youth summit. The trip, known as BikeMovement Americas 2009, followed BikeMovement trips across the United States in 2006 and part of Asia in 2007.*



PHOTO BY RAY DIRKS



*Planting a Palo Santo (holy wood) tree in the courtyard of the local Roca Iglesia Menonita congregation in Asunción on the last day of Assembly 15 symbolized the importance of caring for creation—a major theme at the assembly. The native tree is used as a healing agent for cancer. Pictured from left to right: Wilfried Giesbrecht, a Mennonite born and raised in Paraguay, who is director of the Foundation for Sustainable Development of the South American Chaco; Carlos Ferrari, a member of the 80-member congregation who takes care of the garden; Gaston Guzman, pastor of Iglesia; Stuart Clark, senior policy advisor with the Canadian Foodgrains Bank, who, as a workshop convenor, headed the MWC International Planning Committee; and Luke Gascho, executive director of Merry Lea Environmental Learning Center of Goshen College, Ind. Clark sees the MWC workshop and tree-planting ceremony as opportunities to begin discussions on how Anabaptists can respond as individuals, congregations, and at national and international levels. He wonders, “Can Anabaptists be the ‘leaven’ for a Christian response to the ecological challenge, just as Christian Peacemaker Teams grew out of discussions instigated by Ron Sider at the Strasbourg, France, Mennonite World Conference assembly in 1984?”*

## 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](mailto: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.*

✉ **Whitewater remains an active congregation**

**I AM RESPONDING** to the "A church of grey hairs" article on page 20 of the April 13 issue concerning our congregation (Whitewater Mennonite Church). It mentions that we worshipped structure and had too much program instead of new life. I wonder if the writer really knows our past and present situation. Yes, we are an aging, declining membership and our committee has planned a year of jubilee.

Many of our members, such as myself, have been active members for over 65 years. Most of us served on many different committees with the blessing of the larger congregation. Our missions committee has worked to inspire mission outreach, our education committee has helped with biblical learning, and our service committee has been responsible for church structure and maintenance. We also have a person

## FROM OUR LEADERS

# Youth Farm a home to diverse seniors

MERVIN DYCK

**T**he mission of the Youth Farm Complex—which includes the Mennonite Nursing Home, Pineview enriched housing complex, and Country Gardens for independent seniors—is to provide the best emotional, intellectual, physical and spiritual care for our residents within a secure, stimulating Christian atmosphere. All of the programs run out of these buildings allow seniors to live with dignity and as independently as possible.



The day-to-day operations of the nursing home, which is home to 68 long-term-care residents, are governed by the Saskatoon Health Region, which includes participating in an accreditation process every three years.

Pineview housing, which includes 32 units, allows seniors to live on their own with assistance. Services like food,

laundry and housekeeping are supplied to residents who pay rent for their units. As well, six houses within the complex are rented to staffers.

Country Gardens is comprised of two buildings, each with four units for independent seniors. Half are rented at market value, while the others are subsidized for low-income seniors.

Farm land owned by Youth Farm is rented out to local farmers. Proceeds from the rent (after expenses) are sent to the MC Saskatchewan office for further use.

Also on the farm property is the Youth Farm Bible Camp, which is operated by a separate board.

Mennonite Youth Farm came into being back in 1943, when a federal experimental farm was closed and rented to a local farmer. Some of our forefathers had a vision for the future of our young people and made a proposal to the

federal government, which resulted in the purchase of this land. Over the years, the property has been home to many different programs and institutions.

Currently, the nursing home is the predominant building on the property. Although governed by regional policies and government standards, the Saskatoon Health Region supports us as a faith-based facility. This is important to many families who are looking for long-term care. Knowing that their senior family members are being cared for by staff with similar values as the residents themselves is comforting for families.

Myrna Rempel from Hague has her mother, Attie Huckabay, 92, and her mother-in-law, Katharina Rempel, 94, in the home, which she visits every afternoon. She and her husband chose it because of its proximity to Hague, but the faith-based focus of the home is important, too. She has been very pleased with the care both family members are receiving.

"When the staff see me coming, they get my mother up," she says appreciatively. "There's not one caregiver I don't like. There's always a smile on their face."

*Mervin Dyck is in his sixth year as a member of the MC Saskatchewan Youth Farm Complex board.*

or persons to inspire service for MCC and MDS. We also have a ministerial committee to support and give inspiration to the pastor and other spiritual leaders. We still have a vibrant ladies sewing group.

Maybe we were and are somewhat over-structured, but it has been for important reasons.

—JACOB J. UNGER, BOISSEVAIN, MAN.

### ✉ MCC Binational board chair clarifies editorial statements

MENNONITE CENTRAL COMMITTEE (MCC) is deeply appreciative of the support of Mennonite Church Canada and the interest of its members in MCC's ongoing reshaping process called New Wine/New Wineskins. We are grateful that *Canadian*

*Mennonite* chose to include information about this process in its July 6 issue ("MCC pours out 'new wine,'" page 14) and welcome further conversation. This letter clarifies several items that appeared in Dick Benner's editorial ("Unexamined generosity," page 2).

Arli Klassen does not "head U.S. operations in Akron." She is executive director of MCC Binational, which has programs and workers around the world.

The editorial indicated that within New Wineskins recommendations, Mennonite World Conference (MWC) would have responsibility to convene the global bodies of MCC under its umbrella and fashion both the vision and the structures of MCC. We want to clarify that MWC will convene and facilitate a potential global forum for all Anabaptist service agencies worldwide. It is not being asked to be the centre for

## OUTSIDE THE BOX

# A cry in the night

PHIL WAGLER

Over a number of summer nights I was shook from my sweet slumber by the same couple walking beneath my open bedroom window conversing in loud and inebriated tones. Over the course of a week or so they were like clockwork—very loud clockwork—and the conversations were a cornucopia of slurred, liquored chatter that was a convoluted combination of cursing and startlingly deep and thought-provoking sermon material.

On the last night of these mid-night visitations, the robust banter went all-out theological. God, Jack Daniels and John Labatt were stirred together in a curious mix, and the results whetted my appetite for more as they rounded the corner and drifted off into the darkness to disturb someone else.

The man was quoting Scripture, talking about life and the reality of God. The woman, consistently the more obnoxious of the two, was throwing a classic God-objection in his face. "I have prayed and tried to see him," she said. "I have gone to church," she claimed. She recounted some of the pain in her life, the disappointments and anxieties, and then

repeatedly called out to the Holy One: "Where is he? Where the %#&\* is he?"

How would you answer her cry in the night?

Elie Wiesel, in his famous little book, *Night*, tells of prisoners in Auschwitz asking the same troubling and very human question: Where is God? We must take this question seriously. We must be with those who ask it. We must admit that even we who believe ask it. Even the Scriptures wonder, "O my God, I cry by



*God respects our humanity in all its created beauty and sin-induced brokenness.*

day, but you do not answer, and by night, but I find no rest" (Psalm 22:2). We must have an answer for the seeming hiddenness of God or we're no longer human, let alone honest.

If you've ever walked with the frustrated, you know there are no pat answers. The fact that many rely on pat answers, clichés or Oprahisms is perhaps proof we've been far too asleep and in need of a midnight walk. Still, we must be able to point those crying in the night to hope, to some reason to believe, and the

hiddenness of God is actually one of the more beautiful aspects of the reality of a loving Redeemer.

In remaining hidden God acts in grace and holiness:

- First, he does not coerce us into belief. God respects our humanity in all its created beauty and sin-induced brokenness.
- Second, he heightens the joy of discovery. God both looks for us and waits to be found, so that our joy is complete, even in the midst of trial.
- Third, and uniquely Christian, God enters our suffering. God does not ignore us, but meets us in our pain, and we are awakened to a grace and love that would never have come into view otherwise.

God in Christ enters humanity's an-

guish and answers our question of where he is with a cross that flips the question around: "Where is humanity? Is this what you people do with love and grace? Who do you think you are? Do you crucify the Good and then blame the Good for not stopping you?"

Now there's a question or two that might keep us up at night.

*Phil Wagler is a pastor of the Kingsfield churches in Huron County, Ont. (phil@kingsfieldcommon.ca).*

MCC in the future. Rather, MCC wants to be part of such a forum and support it.

It is important to reiterate that MCC, at present and as envisioned in the future, does not operate alone. Our mission is focused on relationships with partners and constituents worldwide, and our programs emerge from these relationships. New Wineskins strengthens that approach by advocating for organizational structure and accountability that include Canada and the U.S., and beyond. We are searching for

the appropriate ways for MCC to be accountable to all of its constituencies.

We acknowledge that it will be difficult and complicated to implement change, but are committed to doing so in ways that reflect God's calling to us through the churches we represent. Our work "in the name of Christ" continues, and, with prayerful support, can increase.

**HERMAN BONTRAGER, AKRON, PA.**

*Herman Bontrager is chair of the MCC Binational board.*

#### NEW ORDER VOICE

# Important . . . in whose eyes?

WILL BRAUN

I'm attracted to importance. Subconsciously, I gravitate towards people who are smart, talented and influential. I'm not saying I have a knack for endearing myself to such people (I don't). I'm just confessing that if you look at the people I stop and talk with, those whom I invite for supper, and those whose emails I respond to quickest, you would see that I make more time for people who are "important."

That said, some small part of me knows the value of smallness, weakness and unimportance. That part of me won out—despite the odds—last year when I found out that an uncle of mine was terminally ill and would be in hospital for an extended period. This uncle was not an "important" person. He did poorly in school as a young person, suffered multiple physical disabilities throughout his life, and was, frankly, not the easiest person to be around. Although he certainly had a softer side, he tended to be more irritable than gracious, more opinionated than polite. As the pastor at his funeral put it, referring to my uncle's inter-personal relations, the roses were to be found among the thorns.

Over the years, I had infrequently visited my uncle, who lived alone. I learned

to work around his rough edges, and always appreciated the times together, but the many "important" obligations in my life left little time for him. However, when he ended up in hospital, I started visiting him regularly, partly because I was his nearest relative, partly because I couldn't tolerate the thought of him alone at such a difficult time, and partly because I recognized an obvious opportunity to experiment with putting aside my "important" obligations to attend to something "unimportant."

Over the course of the seven months



*It is not easy to pay tribute to someone who achieved nothing noteworthy in his life . . .*

my uncle was hospitalized, our visits became a valued part of my life. Not because I discovered he was actually an extraordinary person in unlikely disguise, but simply because I came to appreciate him as an ordinary person.

When my uncle died last spring, my relatives asked me to write a tribute for his funeral. It was both an honour and a tough assignment. It is not easy to pay tribute to someone who achieved nothing noteworthy in his life, and had only "12 good years" out of 76. How does one

mark such a life—a life that was not "full and rich," as they say? It was a question I had agonized over in previous months.

What I wrote is that in his weakness and simple existence my uncle was closer to "the least of these"—with whom Jesus identified—than most of us. He was closer to the blessed poor than most of us, although in a completely unromantic and non-dramatic way. And when we share in the lives of such people, I wrote, we discover something of God—something we cannot discover in our busyness, strength and accomplishment. We discover simplicity, relationship and the tenderness of struggle.

The broader issue for me is whether our Mennonite subculture is one enamoured with importance or drawn to simple, ordinary weakness? In my observation, too often we tend to follow the dominant culture in celebrating growth, achievement and success.

Do preachers and church publications tell stories that celebrate success

and achievement? Do people who never graduate, marry, have kids, get noteworthy jobs, buy houses or serve in official church functions ever receive official communal affirmation? Do our announcements, sermon anecdotes and special prayers of blessing (as for graduates or service workers heading overseas) reinforce a hierarchy of importance or radical inclusion of all?

*Will Braun attends Hope Mennonite Church in Winnipeg.*

## /// Milestones

### Births/Adoptions

- Billings**—Cody Robert (b. June 11, 2009), to Chris and Rochelle Billings, East Zorra Mennonite, Tavistock, Ont.
- Brenneman**—Ethan Bradley (b. June 27, 2009), to Brad and Jenny Brenneman, Maple View Mennonite, Wellesley, Ont.
- Crouch**—Isabella Payton (b. July 16, 2009), to James and Tiffany Crouch, Rosthern Mennonite, Sask.
- Driedger**—Liam David (b. June 29, 2009), to Allison and Grant Driedger, Elim Mennonite, Grunthal, Man.
- Enns**—Nora Claire (b. July 24, 2009), to Chris and Lori Enns, Glenlea Mennonite, Man.
- Friesen**—Cole Jacob (b. July 29, 2009), to Maria and Darryl Friesen, Carrot River Mennonite, Sask.
- Friesen**—Corban Glen (b. July 6, 2009), to Nancy and Ryan Friesen, North Star Mennonite, Drake, Sask.
- Gerber**—Hailey Morgan (b. April 10, 2009), to David and Laura Gerber, Poole Mennonite, Ont.
- Gerber**—Wyatt Michael (b. June 23, 2009), to Chad and Kaitlin Gerber, Maple View Mennonite, Wellesley, Ont.
- Gilmore**—Carson Michael (b. June 12, 2009), to Darolyn and Mike Gilmore, Cassel Mennonite, Tavistock, Ont.
- Hiebert**—Parker Reid (b. July 7, 2009), to Rachel and Stan Hiebert, Bergthaler Mennonite Church of Plum Coulee, Man.
- Laforme-Workman**—Austina Ann (b. July 21, 2009), to Sharon Laforme and Scott Workman, East Zorra Mennonite, Tavistock, Ont.
- Loewen**—Daniella Maria (b. July 23, 2009), to Andrew and Jennifer Loewen, Douglas Mennonite, Winnipeg.
- McMahon**—Connor Matthew (b. June 25, 2009), to Julie and Pat McMahon, Bergthaler Mennonite Church of Plum Coulee, Man.
- Mondue**—Donald Wesley (b. July 3, 2009), to Leah (North Star Mennonite, Drake, Sask.) and Don Mondue, in Saskatoon, Sask.
- Rodda**—Owen Robert (b. July 7, 2009), to Andrea (Neufeldt) and Chris Rodda, Nutana Park Mennonite, Saskatoon, Sask.

- Roes**—Naomi Lynette (b. June 16, 2009), to Tom and Lynette Roes, Zurich Mennonite, Ont.
- Roveri**—Nicolas Rodriguez (b. April 3, 2009), to Geisa Roveri and Nino Rodriguez, Toronto United Mennonite.
- Salese**—Eric Steven (b. July 23, 2009), to Karla and Steve Salese, East Zorra Mennonite, Tavistock, Ont.
- Schellenberg**—Luke Heinrich (b. June 25, 2009), to Harold and Shannon Schellenberg, Douglas Mennonite, Winnipeg.
- Schlegel**—Kaelynn Victoria (b. June 12, 2009), to Erin and Toby Schlegel, East Zorra Mennonite, Tavistock, Ont.
- Thiessen**—Joel David (b. June 30, 2009), to Debbie and Kendall Thiessen, Glenlea Mennonite, Man.
- Visser**—Connor Richard (b. July 19, 2009), to Jason and Leanne Visser, Bethany Mennonite, Virgil, Ont.

### Baptisms

- Kristin Friesen, Lori Pauls**—Carrot River Mennonite, Sask, May 31, 2009.
- Stephanie Eisan**—First Mennonite, Calgary, Alta., May 24, 2009.
- Caitlin Warkentin, Rob Schwartzberger**—Wildwood Mennonite, Saskatoon, Sask., July 19, 2009.
- David Doerksen, Andrea Fehr, Jacy Friesen, Jeremy Hildebrandt, Heidi Houle, Christine Nickel, Matthew Penner, Melissa Penner**—Blumenort Mennonite, Man., June 21, 2009.
- Olivia Siebert, Victoria Thorburn, Richard Strickland**—Vineland United Mennonite, Ont., May 31, 2009.
- Phyllis Ramer, Linda Hendrick, Samantha Mitton, Matt Relouw**—Zurich Mennonite, Ont., June 28, 2009.

### Marriages

- Bergen/Gifford**—Brittani Bergen and Jonathan Gifford, Zoar Mennonite, Waldheim, Sask., June 20, 2009.
- Bock/Tar**—Leah Bock (Douglas Mennonite, Winnipeg) and Ovunc Tar, July 17, 2009.

## Pontius' Puddle



**Boehlig/Pichette**—Harvey Boehlig and Patrica Pichette (Portage Mennonite, Portage la Prairie, Man.), near MacGregor, Man., July 25, 2009.

**Craddock/Warkentin**—Matthew Craddock and Amanda Warkentin, North Star Mennonite, Drake, Sask., July 18, 2009.

**Driedger/Nighswander**—David Karl Driedger and Gina Rachel Nighswander, Rouge Valley Mennonite, Markham, Ont., June 27, 2009.

**Jutzi/Kelley**—Jessica Jutzi and Stephen Kelley, Erb Street Mennonite, Waterloo, Ont., July 25, 2009.

**Klassen/Rachul**—Amy Klassen and Devon Rachul, Morden Mennonite, Man., July 18, 2009.

**Lichti/McKay**—Tim Lichti and Annie McKay, Tavistock Mennonite, Ont., at Calvary United, Tavistock, June 27, 2009.

**Peters/Roe**—Victor Peters (Glenlea Mennonite, Man.) and Kristina Roe, at Trinity Baptist Church, Winnipeg, May 9, 2009.

**Rogalsky/Steele**—Allan Rogalsky and Christine Steele, Erb Street Mennonite, Waterloo, Ont., May 23, 2009.

## Deaths

**Koop**—Jacob, 86 (b. June 18, 1923; d. July 2, 2009), Ottawa Mennonite.

**Lemky**—Sarah, 77 (b. Feb. 26, 1932; d. July 9, 2009), Carman Mennonite, Man.

**Neufeld**—Joyce, 74 (b. July 1, 1935; d. July 19, 2009), Waterloo-Kitchener United Mennonite, Waterloo, Ont.

**McAllister**—Roy, 68 (b. March 22, 1941; d. July 18, 2009), Steinmann Mennonite, Baden, Ont.

**Peters**—Mary, 95 (d. July 7, 2009), Zion Mennonite, Swift Current, Sask.

**Rempel**—Gerhard, 80 (b. Aug. 1, 1928; d. July 8, 2009), Winkler Bergthaler Mennonite, Man.

**Schachowskoj**—Arnold, 76 (b. April 28, 1933; d. July 24, 2009), Niagara United Mennonite, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ont.

**Schwarz**—Helene, 90 (b. Dec. 20, 1918; d. July 17, 2009), Waterloo-Kitchener United Mennonite, Waterloo, Ont.

**Siemens**—Margaret, 95 (b. Dec. 16, 1913; d. July 28, 2009), First Mennonite, Calgary, Alta.

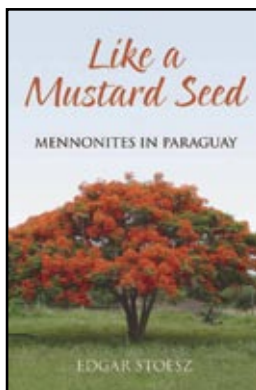
**Steinman**—Neil, 83 (d. July 11, 2009), Cassel Mennonite, Tavistock, Ont.

**Wiebe**—Anna B., 95 (b. June 3, 1913; d. May 11, 2009), Kelowna First Mennonite, B.C.

**Wilkinson**—Doreen (nee Braund), 85 (b. June 24, 1923; d. May 13, 2009), Danforth Mennonite, Toronto.

**Canadian Mennonite welcomes Milestones announcements within four months of the event.**

**Please send Milestones announcements by e-mail to [milestones@canadianmennonite.org](mailto:milestones@canadianmennonite.org), including the congregation name and location. When sending death notices, please include birth date and last name at birth if available.**



## Like a Mustard Seed Mennonites in Paraguay

Did you attend the Mennonite World Conference in Paraguay, or wish you'd gone? Want to know more about Mennonites in that country? Then *Like a Mustard Seed* by Edgar Stoesz is the book to read!

*"An important overview of the many dimensions to the Mennonite experience in Paraguay . . . a compendium of rich descriptions from the perspective of a first-person observer."*—Marlene Epp, Conrad Grebel University College

Paper, 312 pages, \$28.74. Call 1 800 631-6535 or visit [www.mpn.net/mustardseed](http://www.mpn.net/mustardseed)



## Reesor

*A play about Mennonite pioneers in northern Ontario  
in the early 20th century*  
by Erin Brandenburg and Lauren Taylor

Fri. Sept. 18, 8 p.m. • Sat. Sept. 19, 2 p.m. and 8 p.m.  
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St. Jacobs Church Theatre  
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General Admission: \$20 • Seniors/Students: \$15

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519-885-0220 x 24239 or x 24238  
Sam Steiner • [samsteiner@sympatico.ca](mailto:samsteiner@sympatico.ca)  
519-884-1040

*Sponsored by the  
Mennonite Historical Society of Ontario*

## VIEWPOINT

# Embracing violence ... in sports

BY CARL DEGURSE

**O**ur 15-year-old son Tom (pictured in his school uniform, below, and on the gridiron, right) is like many Mennonite teens. He attends church and Sunday school regularly. His closest friends come from his Friday night church youth group. Judging by his attitudes and actions, Tom seems on track to becoming a committed Christian.



But Tom also loves to hit people. As a linebacker on his high school football team, he sprints towards ball carriers and hurls himself like a missile, bashing them with all the strength in his well-conditioned, 90-kilogram body. He hits opponents with zeal, not reluctance.

As parents dedicated to nonviolence, we wince on the sidelines and ask, "How should Mennonite parents counsel a son who seems gifted at hitting?"

The issue is bigger than our family. We're not the only pacifists wondering whether to support sports that celebrate extreme body contact. If Mennonites like watching hockey, or martial arts competitions, must we discard our lapel buttons that say "Wage peace"?

I raise this tricky issue because I seek feedback from the greater church community that's linked by *Canadian Mennonite* magazine. This is an argument I am working out and I don't often forge original opinions. I usually adopt my opinions from sources including wise teachers and the Bible, but the

many biblical teachings about violence don't seem to apply directly to the weird category of sports, where the perceived violence is more like make-believe.

So here's why I believe we can follow the Prince of Peace and still in good conscience enjoy extreme-contact sports:

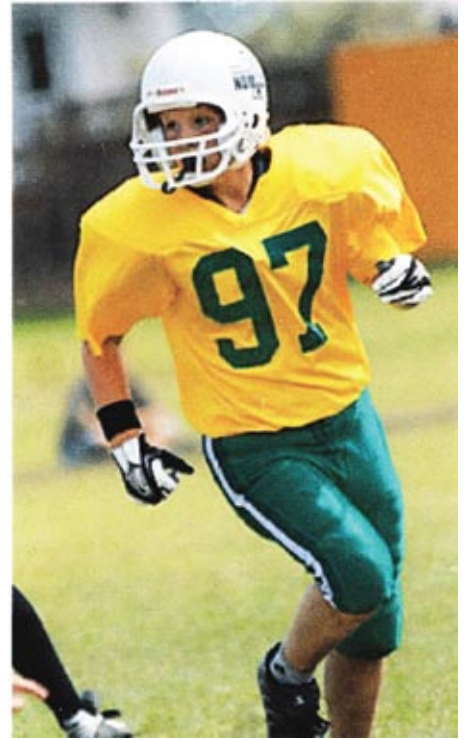
- One reason pacifists need not object to contact sports is because the participants volunteer to get hit. When boxers pummel each other at the Olympics, they are both willing. But if the same men punched strangers on the bus, their violence would be reprehensible because the victims didn't consent.
- Also, the dramatic collisions and blows in sports are often not as violent as they seem. It looks brutal when hockey players slam each other into the boards, and football players collide with impact that

*One reason pacifists need not object to contact sports is because the participants volunteer to get hit.*

rings throughout the stadium. But the players are protected by their pads and helmets, and they're in superb physical condition, which lets them absorb blows that would put us mere mortals on a stretcher bound for the emergency ward.

It's like contact sports are not violence. They're more like "pretend violence," enacted by armour-protected combatants within strict rules to minimize injuries. They're just playing.

• To include contact sports in the category of violence is to downplay real violence, such as random street attacks, schoolyard bullying, wife battering and "spanking" assaults on children by parents. This is real violence, despicable violence, soul-destroying violence that exploits the power imbalance, shatters



trust and robs victims of their dignity and respect that is their God-given due.

But in contact sports, no one loses dignity or respect. After a bruising game, opponents often shake hands, smile and sometimes socialize together. In fact, players often gain respect for opponents who "play with intensity." This is an important

clue that contact sports are not the type of violence that should concern pacifists.

As I write this, the CFL season is in full swing and NFL teams south of the border are preparing for their run at the Super Bowl. I submit that we Menno men can throw open our living room curtains and let the world see our TVs are tuned to the CFL on TSN. We can be practising pacifists and openly enjoy hard-hitting sports.

Or am I wrong? %



*Carl DeGurse is a member of Douglas Mennonite Church in Winnipeg.*



## GOD AT WORK IN THE CHURCH

# 'Ordinary radical' encourages youths to join the 'irresistible revolution'

STORY AND PHOTO BY DEBORAH FROESE

Mennonite Church Canada Release  
CARONPORT, SASK.

**"T**his conference is awesome!" enthused 15-year-old Brendan Murray of Peace Mennonite Church, Richmond B.C. "I came away . . . changed," he said after Mennonite Church Canada's youth assembly that ran from July 6 to 10 at Briercrest College in Caronport.

"Not at first," he admitted, "but over the next few days. I start to read [key-note speaker Shane] Claiborne's book *The Irresistible Revolution*, which encourages me to love others in Christ's name. Somehow reading about something that has nothing to do with me tells me something about God's love. I don't know what, but just by reading a few pages, a new, fresh relationship with Yahweh starts forming. And I love it. Praise Jesus that I went to this conference! I hope and pray that whoever went to this gathering will be changed dramatically by it."

For four days, more than 200 youths and their sponsors gathered to explore "Living inside out," the same theme used at the MC Canada adult assembly a month earlier. Based on Colossians 3:12-17, youths focussed on the call for God's chosen and beloved to live as Christ did, expressing internal values of faith and love through intentional living.

Of her experience, 18-year-old Aleta Martens of Hoffnungsfelder Mennonite Church, Rabbit Lake, Sask., said, "I grew in my faith as I learned how to put it into action. . . . Throughout our lives, our goal, whatever our occupation, should be to let others see the love of Jesus Christ shining through every aspect of our lives. As we share the joy Jesus has given us, it makes our lives more meaningful and creates a better world to live in.

"The church today is going through an image crisis," Martens noted, "and many

people outside of it do not see the power of God's love. Through our lifestyle and deeds it should be evident we are Christians."

The assembly began with a dramatized communiqué at the opening service by Michele Hershberger, an author, playwright and teacher. Addressing those gathered as an angelic bag lady, she delivered a message that "you always forget, but [it's] something that you need to get by in this world." Opening an imaginary envelope, she read four simple words: "I, God, love you."

Claiborne, a writer and self-proclaimed "ordinary radical," said that too many Christians have been taken in by the gospel of prosperity, which causes them to "lose the secret in the heart of Jesus." Faith demands action that may clash with societal "norms," he said, adding, "If you want to keep your life, you have to give it away."

Assembly workshops dealt with topics ranging from mental health issues to

forgiveness, date abuse and cautionary tales about social networking on sites such as Facebook.

Marijke Reesor of Community Mennonite Church, Stouffville, Ont., was particularly moved by the workshop on forgiveness led by Candace Green. "[Green's] father was murdered by these two guys and then in the end she forgave them," Reesor enthused. "She started going to church and she realized she needed to get closer to God and he helped her."

Service projects while in Caronport included a school kit challenge that had the youths assembling more than 5,000 kits destined for Cuba, as well helping out at a children's fair in Moose Jaw, the Regina Food Bank and Re-Store, and Shepherd's Gate Ministry, a group home near Caronport that helps children in crisis. A special youth assembly offering raised in excess of \$1,500 for Shepherd's Gate. ❧



Participants at this year's MC Canada youth assembly in Caronport, Sask., blew off steam competing in an old fashioned tractor pull.

# Vibrant ministry in India

STORY AND PHOTO  
BY EVELYN REMPEL PETKAU  
Manitoba Correspondent  
WINNIPEG

The story is told of two men walking along a beach dotted with stranded starfish. One of the men frequently stops to pick up a starfish and toss it back into the ocean. "What difference will that make when there are so many?" asks the other man. "It makes a difference to the one that is saved," was the response.

That is the way Das and Doris Maddimadugu of India view their work in the second-most-populous country in the world. Since 1991 the Maddimadugus have been trying to live out the biblical injunction of healing the sick, feeding the hungry and clothing the naked as they offer a growing number of ministries in their impoverished rural community about 100 kilometres from Hyderabad.

"Thirty years ago I stood here in fear and trembling when I was a second-year student at Canadian Mennonite Bible College," Das recently told a group of people gathered at Charleswood Mennonite Church. Together with Doris he was travelling across western Canada at the invitation of churches and individuals who have supported their ministry.

Das's journey to ministry began when he was seven years old and was rescued from bonded labour by a Mennonite Brethren missionary, Helen Warkentin from Winkler, Man. Being of the lowest caste, the "untouchables," he was destined to a life of slavery had it not been for this intervention. He became a Christian, attended Christian schools and the precursor to Canadian Mennonite University, and served with Mennonite Central Committee in Vietnam.

Although he was invited to stay in North America, he said, "I remembered as a child that I almost became a slave. So many of



*The ministry of Das and Doris Maddimadugu of India is supported by Larry and Jessie Kehler (behind) of Charleswood Mennonite Church, Winnipeg.*

my people are like that today. Doris and I felt we must go back to the people I came from. I felt a calling to release these children, to educate them and to teach them about Christ."

Although the government has tried to abolish the caste system and bonded labour practices, they still exist, explained the Maddimadugus, "because the landlords need cheap labour. The landlords want profit and do not provide health care or proper food. The change is slow and has to come from within the communities."

In 1991 Das and Doris established the Matilda Educational Society. It has grown to include a high school for 800 students, an upper primary school for 400 students, and the Bindu Home for 120 rescued children, "tribal orphans who would otherwise be sold into bonded labour because of poverty," said Das. They have also established Grace Children's Clinic that offers minor treatments and dental check-ups. In more recent years they have started night schools for children who are working in the fields. They have a sewing centre for young widows and single mothers, providing them with six months of training. Once they finish the program they are given a sewing machine. Several graduates have started their own tailoring business.

Das also gives ongoing support to 25 Christian pastors in the area. They represent different denominations or are independent pastors and are not educated. Das meets with them once a month for

sharing, Bible study and prayer. Twice a year he provides theological seminars for them. "This shows the many Hindus and Muslims that, as Christians, we are one."

After the devastating tsunami in 2004, they visited the destroyed communities about 300 kilometres away. They constructed 20 new homes, repaired boats and provided new nets for the fishermen. "We were asked to build a church there. That church was dedicated in April this year," said Das.

"Many Christians still suffer," he said. "In some areas, violence against Christian activity has escalated. Radical Hindus have asked us to shut down the school at times. We try to dialogue with them, but periodically we do have to shut down because they would turn to violence."

The Maddimadugus are still able to report "it is an exciting time. The Shanghai church has provided for much of the tsunami reconstruction work. The Calcutta church has given money for Sunday school supplies and the Taiwan International Church has provided support for the dental work, including supplies and staff. We are so grateful for all the support."

"God has given me a purpose and I still want to go strong," said Das, now 65. Their son Nathan has begun to take over the management of some of the ministries. "We are hoping that some of our alumni will come back to work as doctors and teachers," he said. ❧

# Centre for Mennonite studies established

*Historic agreement between university, Mennonite society*

STORY AND PHOTO BY RACHEL BERGEN

Special to *Canadian Mennonite*  
ABBOTSFORD, B.C.

The University of the Fraser Valley and the Mennonite community made incredible strides on June 24 when the university and the Mennonite Faith and Learning Society announced their partnership to establish a centre for Mennonite studies. The signing took place in an outdoor ceremony on the university campus.

The university will first offer a certificate in Mennonite studies that can be completed in a semester. Eventually, it hopes to add more classes and opportunities for growth. "This will create a foundation on which to develop more elaborate certificates and minors," said Eric Davis, the university's acting vice-president and provost.

Davis went on to say that the classes offered in the new centre could one day be combined with a variety of bachelor of arts majors, including conflict resolution, community service and international development. The university also hopes to create

a major and a chair in Mennonite studies.

Representatives from different Mennonite organizations spoke of their optimism about the centre.

Erna Friesen, founding president of the Pacific Centre for Discipleship, commended the university for being "cognizant of the components of the community," including aboriginals and Indo-Canadians, as well as Mennonites, who make up as much as 25 percent of the community.

John H. Redekop and Ed Janzen, co-presidents of the Mennonite society, expressed excitement for this historic day. Redekop noted that Mennonites were once persecuted and beaten for their nonviolent resistance to war, but that they have made their way up in the world since then to be unsung heroes. He said the creation of a centre for Mennonite studies "was a hope and a dream" for him. Seeing it come to life



*Signing the agreement to establish a centre for Mennonite studies at the University of the Fraser Valley are Ed Janzen, left, and John H. Redekop, right, of the Mennonite Faith and Learning Society, and university president Skip Bassford.*

is "more than [he] could have hoped for."

Wayne Bremner, executive director of Mennonite Central Committee B.C., shared that "every day [he sees] the work of the Mennonite community through MCC," but usually their work goes unseen. Bremner said he welcomes the day that the Mennonite community can be recognized for its work.

Harry Heidebrecht of the Mennonite Historical Society quoted Proverbs 78:3-4: "What we have heard and known, we will tell the next generation." Heidebrecht said this verse aligns with the goal of the centre, as this generation must pass on its knowledge of the good done to the next generation. ❧

## Reverence and mirth at arts festival

BY AMY DUECKMAN  
B.C. Correspondent  
HARRISON, B.C.

The literary café at the Harrison Festival of the Arts took on a West Coast Mennonite flavour on the evening of July 13, when three home-grown Mennonite authors took the stage to share their writings. The evening, entitled "Reverence and Mirth," was co-sponsored by the University of the Fraser Valley's continuing studies department.

First to read was Elsie K. Neufeld of Abbotsford, B.C., a first-generation Canadian poet who said she was greatly influenced by her Russian Mennonite mother's

stories. Neufeld's poems covered everyday topics such as "Potatoes" and "My Mother's Hollyhock."

Leonard Neufeldt of Gig Harbor, Wash., read a variety of poetry based on his formative years in Yarrow, B.C. His topics included "An afternoon at Cultus Lake in raspberry season," and the "First clear cut on Vedder Mountain."

The third writer was Andreas Schroeder of Roberts Creek, B.C., who credited the other two authors present for being on the forefront of the recent Mennonite literary movement. Schroeder's writing reflected his upbringing in Agassiz, B.C., where, he read, "duty came before pleasure, and, since duty was never done, there was little room for pleasure." Schroeder recently published *Renovating Heaven*, an account of growing up in the Fraser Valley.

# Mathies encourages Mennonites to think about themselves globally

STORY AND PHOTO BY DAVE ROGALSKY

Eastern Canada Correspondent  
WATERLOO, ONTARIO

**P**aul Mo, pastor of Markham Chinese Mennonite Church, and Noé Gonzalia, part of the pastoral team at First Mennonite, Kitchener, both noted that they had been attracted to the Mennonite Church because Mennonites both proclaim the gospel and work within society.

Speaking at the annual Ralph and Eileen Lebold Endowment for Leadership Training fundraising banquet at Conrad Grebel University College on June 11, Gonzalia noted that simply asking the question about how MC Eastern Canada can become a global community of faith was a very positive step. Canadian society is becoming more diverse and the church needs to use that diversity to spread its message, he said. Mo challenged Mennonites to proclaim the good news in their society, to stop keeping such a low profile, and to be more clear that they care.

Their sharing was followed by keynote speaker Ron Mathies, Grebel's acting president during Henry Paetkau's sabbatical. Mathies, former executive director of Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Binational, spoke about "Extending the table: Becoming a global community of faith." A key idea in his encyclopedic history of MCC is the increasing convergence between MCC and Mennonite World Conference (MWC). Repeatedly, he noted that MWC has a "global mandate" and MCC has a "global infrastructure."

Reminding the audience of the recent move by MCC to move towards globalization of its governance structure he reviewed MWC's increasing role among Mennonites internationally, moving from strictly fellowship of mostly European and North American Mennonites to gatherings in Asia, Africa and South America, where the majority of participants are not white.

With the publication of *What We Believe Together*, MWC is moving to define who Mennonites are, not by Western speakers

alone, but by gathering together belief statements from around the world. The underlying assumption of Mathies' presentation was that globalization of the Mennonite Church is good, but he cautioned that "we need to be careful to not have North America drive the agenda even now."

David Martin, MC Eastern Canada executive minister, noted that the Lebold Endowment has now reached two-thirds of its goal of \$1 million and is already funding aspects of the leadership portion

of Grebel's master of theological studies program. ❧



Paul Mo, left, and Noé Gonzalia, centre, address the Lebold Endowment fundraising dinner audience.

## ❧ Briefly noted

### Mennonite Publishing Network enjoys successful convention sales

Canadian Mennonites are thinking about a flu pandemic, American Mennonites want to sing. At least that's one conclusion that can be drawn from sales of books from Mennonite Publishing Network at the national conventions of MC Canada and MC USA this summer. The top two books sold in June in Saskatoon, Sask., at the MC Canada convention were *Don't Be Afraid* and *Beyond Our Fears*, both of which deal with preparing for a pandemic and other natural disasters. The top two at the MC USA convention in July in Columbus, Ohio, were used copies of *Hymnal: A Worship Book* and the new book *Words for Worship 2*. Rounding out the Top Ten for Canadian sales were *Jesus Matters*, *Walk in Peace*, *Reasoning Together*, *Dark Night*, *What is Iran*, *Plant a Seed of Peace*, *Sing the Journey* and *Sing the Story*. In the U.S., the rest of the Top Ten MPN books sold were *Jesus Matters*, *Sing the Story*, *Pax Avalon*, *The Mennonite Handbook*, *Dark Night*, *Practices: Mennonite Worship and Witness*, the *Sing the Story CD* and *Simply in Season*. Altogether, MPN sold more than \$56,000 worth of books, curricula and other items at the two national conventions.

—Mennonite Publishing Network Release

### Amy Gingerich appointed editorial director for MPN

Amy Gingerich, a member of Summit Mennonite Church in Barberton, Ohio, has been appointed to the newly created position of Herald Press editorial director at Mennonite Publishing Network (MPN). She is presently the managing editor of "Gather 'Round," the Christian education curricula published by MPN and Brethren Press. From 1998-2004 she worked for the South Bend, Ind., *Tribune* and the Vacaville, Calif., *Reporter*. Gingerich has a master of divinity degree from the Pacific School of Religion in Berkeley, Calif., and a B.A. in communication and Bible-religion from Goshen College. She also studied at Eastern Mennonite Seminary.

—Mennonite Publishing Network/Mennonite Church Canada Joint Release

# Waterloo-Kitchener women's group celebrates 50 years

By DAVE ROGALSKY

Eastern Canada Correspondent  
WATERLOO, ONT.

Fifty years ago a group of young singles, homemakers and professional women wanted a women's group of their own. They were Russian Mennonites and "English" (women from non-Mennonite backgrounds who "married in"). Many had mothers or mothers-in-law in the existing women's group—the *Verein*—which met during the day. In the younger group those who worked as nurses or teachers, or in offices, could not meet during the day.

Erna Unrau, a long-time member, says, "Some of us didn't want to belong to our mother's group."

So the Servettes were born in 1959, meeting in homes in the evening for fellowship and socializing with Christian women. The focus of those early years changed as many of the women started staying home to raise families.

Many projects were done through the years, including bazaars, lunches, dinners, three cookbooks to raise money, and beautification and upkeep of Waterloo-Kitchener United Mennonite Church, as

well as support for Mennonite Central Committee and the local House of Friendship. In later years, as many of the women retired after returning to their careers, the group again focused primarily on fellowship.

"We're tired," says Unrau, laughing.

While the group continues to meet, it has also spawned a "Lunch Bunch," a daytime quilt-tying group, and a book club.

At the Servettes' May 2 celebration, Hedy Sawadsky, a founding member who later moved away to work for peace and justice issues, and as a Christian Peacemaker Teams member overseas, spoke about the long chain of women—from the Old and New Testaments, to the early Anabaptist martyrs, and up to the Servettes themselves—who served God in their own way. ❧

PHOTOS COURTESY OF WATERLOO-KITCHENER UNITED MENNONITE CHURCH SERVETTES



*Servettes in 1974.*



*Servettes in 1990.*

## /// Briefly noted

### Kelowna Mennonites safe from fire

Raging wildfires in the Kelowna area of British Columbia this summer have been making national news, but no members of First Mennonite Church of Kelowna have had to evacuate their homes, reports pastor Clare Neufeld. In a phone conversation with *Canadian Mennonite* on Aug. 4, Neufeld said, "At this stage our congregation is not that badly affected," although he noted that there were some members on evacuation alert (where notice is given to get ready to leave quickly if necessary). With the fires across Okanagan Lake about 20 to 25 kilometres from the church, Neufeld said air quality varied from day to day, making breathing particularly difficult for older people. "We have persistent heavy smoke in the air, and we do have to be careful. You can smell [the smoke], you can taste it." He added that the previous day, visibility in the city was only about six to seven blocks.

—BY AMY DUECKMAN

# Church snapshots

PHOTO COURTESY OF ST. CATHARINES UNITED MENNONITE CHURCH



*Rev. Kenneth C. Gazley, kneeling, was ordained into Mennonite Church Eastern Canada on May 31, at St. Catharines United Mennonite Church, where he is lead pastor. Also pictured, from left to right: MC Eastern Canada conference minister Muriel Bechtel; Mieke Gazley; council chair Peter Huebert; daughter Shannon Hamill; area minister Al Rempel; and Charles Byer, pastor of Erie View Mennonite Church, Port Rowan, Ont.*

PHOTO BY BILL HEAVENER



*Hunta Mennonite Church in northern Ontario held its annual outreach picnic on July 26 at the home of Ian and Angel Carney, who took over from Bob and Esther Landis, who had hosted the event since 1975. Despite the weather, a good time was had by all.*

LEAMINGTON MENNONITE HOME PHOTO



*Mark Vickers, Gregg Charlton, Neil Adamson and Marilyn Ribble display the Thomson Guardian Drugs new platinum sponsorship at Leamington Mennonite Home's seventh charity golf tournament. An overnight downpour of seven centimetres made the Erie Shores Golf & Country Club course in Leamington, Ont., unplayable on June 20, so organizers quickly changed the format and invited the 142 registered golfers to a noon meal. The tournament raised a record \$29,000.*

PHOTO BY MARYVEL FRIESEN



*Robert and Rachel Roth were among 70 or so congregants who put their backs into the sod-turning ceremony at Saskatchewan's Eigenheim Mennonite Church on June 13. Three days before the sod-turning, the congregation had decided to proceed with the construction of a \$1.2 million, 854-square-metre facility. The church decided a new building was necessary after high water levels in 2007 destroyed the interior of the church basement and compromised the foundations of the current sanctuary.*

PHOTO BY HENRY NIKKEL

*"For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone. The flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come" Song of Solomon 2:12. Such was the case this spring, when more than 100 species of birds were seen during the Mennonite Church Manitoba Camps with Meaning birding retreat at Camp Moose Lake. More than 20 birders, many of them novices, spent three days in May with retreat director Ron Dueck marvelling at God's creatures, including 21 species of warblers, as well as blue jays, goldfinches, grosbeaks, blue birds, tanagers, a Baltimore oriole, great blue herons and sand hill cranes, among many others. Besides bird watching, the retreat also included a "night owl" session listening to the sounds of the forest after dark, times for making and building friendships, and a worship service.*



PHOTO COURTESY OF LEN AND KATHY ANDRES



*Following a fundraiser put on by Saskatchewan churches—Mount Royal Mennonite, Saskatoon; Pleasant Point Mennonite, Clavet; North Star Mennonite, Drake; and Superb Mennonite—Congolesse refugee Leonie Lwamba (a member of Mount Royal Mennonite), centre, was not only able to burn her refugee travel debt document, but buy a new washer and dryer, and put money aside to begin the process of sponsoring her husband and two other children who are still in a refugee camp in Congo through the Canadian government's family reunification program.*

## GOD AT WORK IN THE WORLD

# Plautdietsch scholar wins prestigious Trudeau Scholarship Award

BY DONITA WIEBE-NEUFELD

Alberta Correspondent

EDMONTON

The call was, in Chris Cox's words, "very unexpected." In March, Cox was at a linguistics conference when a call came inviting him to Montreal for the annual Pierre Elliot Trudeau Foundation scholarship interviews.

"I was beside myself, I just couldn't believe it. I thought this had to be the thank you for applying phone call," he said.

On May 1, though, during a conference in Banff, the University of Alberta linguistic professor's cell phone vibrated. Quietly he slipped into a hallway to learn he had, in fact, been chosen as one of 15 Trudeau Scholars. "Sounds might have escaped from my throat into the air," he said, noting that lecturers in nearby rooms gave him dirty looks for creating a disturbance.

The foundation scholarship fund was established in 2001 by family and friends of the former prime minister as a living memorial to promote research in the humanities and social sciences. Fifteen outstanding scholars, nominated by their universities, are selected annually. For three years Cox will receive approximately \$40,000 plus travel expenses annually to advance his doctoral studies in linguistics. His research involves creating permanent digital records of disappearing languages, including

his efforts to document Mennonite *Plautdietsch*, or Low German.

"It fits into this broader picture of language endangerment," he said. "I think the last estimate . . . is something in the order of half the world's languages are expected to disappear in the next 100 years. . . . We only have adequate documentation for maybe a third of those. There are a lot of communities, especially in Canada, where Low German seems to be on its last legs. . . . If people are interested in having a spoken record of how Low German is spoken, or how Low German was spoken, now is really the time to do that."

Personal interest influences Cox's research. As a young teenager, he heard a Low German poem at a history event in his hometown of Warman, Sask. When a relative translated, Cox was shocked. "I asked, 'How is it possible you can translate this foreign language for me?' They said it's not a foreign language, it's Low German. . . . I had to find out more."

Cox's Grade 8 teacher instructed him one on one and members of the community started teaching him words. "People



Cox

weren't expecting someone to want to learn Low German," he said, adding, "Things kind of grew from there into linguistics. . . . There's always been that interest there."

Cox is also documenting the Tsuut'ina language, a unique and endangered aboriginal language in southern Alberta. "There's one community on earth that speaks this language, the Tsuut'ina First Nations," he explained. "Theirs is a very different situation than Low German. In the case of Low German you still have a lot of speakers. . . . This [Tsuut'ina] is the only community that speaks this language. At last estimate there are about 40 to 70 speakers left and the youngest speaker, I think, just turned 61 or 62. It's a very different situation. The community has a tie to this language, it's culturally and historically important. . . . I feel pretty lucky to be involved in that."

The scholarship gives Cox the ability to purchase equipment, travel to study with experts, negotiate access to archived recordings, and to collect and collate scattered materials. "It allows me to look at things in a larger scale," he said. "In the case of Low German, there are tons of recordings out there. . . . It's just that these materials haven't been brought together."

He dreams of making language collections readily available to scholars as well as to the communities that value the language and its stories.

Cox explained why this work is important. "Languages really are stores of cultural information," he said. "This is collective memory. The language embeds a lot of the stuff that people have accrued over hundreds, sometimes even thousands, of years. . . . When you lose a language, it's a tremendous loss of knowledge. . . . Languages don't always speak for themselves; sometimes we have to speak for them. . . . It's something I feel passionately about." ❧

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# Canadian MCCs prepare for budget shortfall, cutbacks

BY GLADYS TERICHOW

Mennonite Central Committee Release  
WINNIPEG

Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) is behind budget for the first nine months of the 2008-09 fiscal year ending Aug. 31.

“Two months ago there were hopeful signs that cash donations to MCC were increasing, but our current financial reports indicate a budget shortfall that could be as high as \$1.5 million,” says MCC Canada executive director Don Peters.

When MCC Canada and the five provincial MCC offices planned their budgets in early 2008, staff optimistically predicted that giving would continue to grow as in previous years, and so budgeted for an overall increase of 10 percent.

Economic experiences vary among the regions in Canada. In general, donations in the Prairie provinces are steady and close to budget, while donations on the West Coast and in Eastern Canada reflect the downturn in the Canadian economy and are well below budget. Although there has been an overall decline in cash donations from last year, there has been an increase in revenue from thrift shops, relief sales and non-cash revenues from contributions to material aid resources (relief kits, blankets).

“When I’m in a circle with other non-government organizations, my sense is that we are doing well and that MCC’s constituency has been faithful,” says Peters.

“But the fact is that we have lower revenues than projected and that translates to less work that we can do,” he adds. “We want our constituency to know that.”

Working collectively, the MCCs in Canada are addressing this budget shortfall through “sharing the pain” of reducing administrative and local programming costs by 5.5 percent for the remainder of the fiscal year, spending down reserve funds and increasing efforts to raise funds, says Peters. These efforts make it possible for the Canadian MCCs to meet the financial commitments approved in the current

budget for MCC international programs.

MCC’s work in developing countries is budgeted in U.S. funds. Although the

MCCs in Canada are meeting financial commitments for international programs, the fluctuations in exchange rates affect the amount of money that is forwarded from Canada for international programs.

The budgets for the 2009-10 fiscal year have been finalized and further reductions of 6.4 percent for administrative and local programming costs have been approved. There could also be reductions in the amount allocated for international programs in 2009-10. ☛

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE EDEN FOUNDATION



**The second annual Eden Foundation Tractor Trek, held on July 25, raised more than \$40,000 for the programs of Eden Health Care Services in southern Manitoba. Forty-one tractors, 40 years or older, travelled 40 kilometres from Reinland to Neuenberg, stopping at Schoenweise, Gnadenenthal, the Blumengart Hutterite Colony and Friedensruh along the way. In Neuenberg, a 1957 Massey-Harris 444 won the race to determine the slowest tractor without the use of a brake or clutch. Ryan Braun, 15, and John L. Friesen, 85, were the youngest and oldest drivers, respectively.**

# Rally spotlights social justice issues

BY RACHEL BERGEN

Special to *Canadian Mennonite*  
ABBOTSFORD, B.C.

**S**ocial justice brought together a diverse group of people for a rally at the House of James, a Christian coffeehouse in Abbotsford, on July 6. Those involved in the rally hope to raise awareness of the Christian community's vision of taking more responsibility in the community for issues such as homelessness, a shortage of aid for the food bank, and other issues facing the citizens of Abbotsford.

The language of social justice is an "umbrella" term that covers a wide variety of topics, according to Ron Dart, coordinator of City of Refuge, a group that envisions Abbotsford as a better place to live, and a professor of philosophy and

political science at the University of the Fraser Valley. It means different things to different people, he said.

The first commitment of City of Refuge is to double the amount of money that churches give to the local food bank and ensure that its "shelves are never empty," said Jim Burkinshaw of Abbotsford Christian Leadership Network.

Its second commitment is to provide 30 beds for Abbotsford shelters within the next year. Burkinshaw hopes that City of Refuge will prove to be "a model for other churches giving."

The third commitment is to present volunteer opportunities to fill the gaps in the ministries so that everyone "moves more as a coordinated force," Burkinshaw added.

According to Dart, what the world truly needs are "women and men on the forefront of society, intellectually, who really think through these issues." Poverty and social injustice cannot be minimized, he said. City of Refuge is coming together to be a team at the forefront of change and to tackle issues that are often daunting to society.

City of Refuge and others involved in the rally hope to "identify the gaps [in society] and build in to them," said Burkinshaw. According to him, there should be no homelessness or inmates requesting Christians to come visit them in prison. Nor should there be human trafficking or people going hungry because there is no food available at the food bank, especially because there are so many churches in Abbotsford.

In the spirit of coming together and talking about social justice, there will be future meetings at the House of James on Monday nights. Each month will focus on a different social justice issue. ❧

## ❧ Briefly noted

### Tim Collins released from Stony Mountain Prison

Tim Collins, who was sent back to prison this spring for alleged parole violations ("A second chance at redemption?" June 8, page 20), has been released from Stony Mountain Prison. According to a July 18 *Winnipeg Free Press* article, Collins, who formerly worked as a fundraising manager and consultant for Mennonite Central Committee Manitoba and as manager of Sam's Place, a downtown café and used book store, "is back on the streets after federal prison officials agreed to give him another shot at parole following a pattern of questionable behaviour." His release came with an official "reprimand" and "a stern warning that he is being watched closely," the *Free Press* reported, noting that Collins "has assured [parole board] officials he has made plans to pay off his debts" to a woman and her husband as the result of a failed marketing plan the three entered into. In an earlier *Free Press* story, Collins berated Correctional Services Canada officials for revoking his parole, claiming that that couple he owed about \$12,000 had "threatened them with newspaper articles saying they were being soft on criminals." Of the couple, he said, "It was stupid to get involved with them in the first place."

—BY ROSS W. MUIR

## OBERAMMERGAU PASSION PLAY 2010

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LUTHERAN HOLY LAND TOUR (May 8-19)  
EUROPEAN HERITAGE I with JOHN RUTH (June 1-14)  
SPECTACULAR SCANDINAVIA  
and ITS FJORDS (June 13-28)  
PENNSYLVANIA to EUROPE (June 19 - July 2)  
ISRAEL/PALESTINE (June 24 - July 5)  
EUROPEAN HERITAGE II  
with JOHN SHARP (June 29 - July 12)  
ITALY, AUSTRIA and GERMANY (July 7-17)  
ENGLAND and SCOTLAND (July 23 - August 4)  
SWISS GLACIER EXPRESS (July 29 - August 11)  
EUROPEAN HERITAGE III  
with PAUL ZEHR (September 5-18)  
THE ROAD to JERUSALEM (September 11-22)  
EUROPEAN HERITAGE IV (September 16-29)

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# M2/W2 seeks to reduce wait times

*Ministry needs more prison volunteers*

BY RACHEL BERGEN

Special to *Canadian Mennonite*  
FRASER VALLEY, B.C.

**M**an to Man/Woman to Woman (M2/W2), a restorative Christian ministry organization, is attempting to reduce the wait times to zero for prisoners seeking a Christian man or woman to develop a relationship with them while they are incarcerated.

According to Bernie Martens, a part-time coordinator of recruitment and volunteer training, supervision, and placement in the Fraser Valley, the number of prisoners requesting help has “mushroomed” over the last few years. M2/W2 is having a hard time keeping up with them.

The number of prisoners requesting relationships with men and women is growing even though the program is not publicized. It grows through word of mouth between inmates.

Martens says inmates often ask why they have to wait if the Fraser Valley is considered the “Bible Belt” of Canada. They wonder why more people are not volunteering with M2/W2.

In order to reduce the wait times for prisoners requesting help, Martens says that M2/W2 will look to various Christian denominations for aid, speak in various churches to spread the word about the organization, send out its newsletter to raise awareness, and ask current volunteers to recruit their friends.

Pascal Adam, another M2/W2

coordinator for volunteer training, supervision and placement at four different prisons in Mission, Matsqui, Ferndale and Chilliwack, B.C., says that in order to accomplish this goal, M2/W2 must “make [current volunteers] aware that we need more people.” Adam has done nine presentations at various churches in the area since his move from Kamloops, B.C., and has two more coming up.



**Martens**



**Adam**

Adam and Martens agree that people are often fearful of prisons, and therefore decline volunteer positions, as Hollywood has conditioned people to believe that prisons are terrible places unsafe for the public.

To dispel that idea, Martens says that “we [at M2/W2] are as comfortable in the prisons as we are in our own living rooms,” because the inmates are desperate for relationships and would not want to cause an incident that would cause their friends to cease to visit.

Adam hopes that people understand that “the majority of the people that apply to have [someone] visit them in prison are usually the ones who have tried to make changes in their lives,” therefore a small time commitment can help a great deal.

“The inmates are motivated to turn their life around,” Martens says, otherwise they would not apply. ☸

PHOTO BY AARON EPP



**Danielle Kasdorf, Maria Dueck and Ruth Bruinooge of Douglas Mennonite Church in Winnipeg price and sell items (including golf balls) in the used items tent at Mennonite Central Committee Manitoba's 2009 Festival and Relief Sale. The event, held June 19-20 in Winnipeg, raised approximately \$105,000 to help people in southern Sudan recover from years of civil war.**

# Calgary church says fond farewell to pastoral intern

By ROSE KLASSEN

Special to *Canadian Mennonite*  
CALGARY, ALTA.

A year ago Joseph Kiranto said goodbye to his family, his fiancée and his Masai tribe in the Rift Valley of Kenya to live in Canada as part of the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) International Visitor Exchange Program. While in Canada, he divided his time between MCC Alberta, promoting awareness of the Generations at Risk program, and working as a pastoral intern at Foothills Mennonite Church in Calgary.

On June 21, the worship service at Foothills Mennonite included a farewell for Kiranto, who had become an integral part of life at the church and at MCC. The music for the morning contained a wide variety of global worship music, including a Swahili worship song that Kiranto taught

from the guitar he learned to play during his time in Canada.

During the service, Kiranto spoke of the many experiences he had during his year with the Calgary community: watching children grow, witnessing wedding celebrations, celebrating the lives of those who had gone to be in heaven, and seeing new children born and dedicated into the community. He remembered how his community in Africa suffered a severe drought during the past year, and how his caring and loving community in Canada provided much-needed financial support to send to his village to get it through this

difficult time, and how very grateful he was for that support. Referring to Psalm 113, he said that “from the rising to the setting of the sun, I will praise God for this opportunity.”

Abe Janzen, director of MCC Alberta, met Kiranto three years ago during a trip to Africa, and was very impressed with his wisdom and subtle leadership. Janzen spoke of how the Holy Spirit led Kiranto to Calgary, and compared his call to North America to a passage from Acts 10. To Kiranto he said, “While you lived among us, the Holy Spirit came down upon us. Thank you so much for coming.”

Doug Klassen, senior pastor at Foothills Mennonite, spoke of the gift Kiranto’s parents and his community gave the church in releasing him to serve this year. He reminded the congregation of what wonderful opportunities to serve God can be missed when parents don’t release their children.

Upon his return to Kenya, Kiranto will continue to operate the Generations at Risk program in his home community. He will also be preparing for an October visit from an MCC delegation, during which time Kim Thiessen and Darryl Neustaedter Barg will record a fourth CD with his community church choir.

Following that, he will be finalizing plans for his marriage in December. As a wedding gift from Foothills Mennonite, Kiranto received a handmade quilt covered with messages of blessing and thanksgiving. ☸

PHOTO BY DOUG UNRAU



*Joseph Kiranto learned to play the guitar while a pastoral intern at Foothills Mennonite Church, Calgary. He taught the congregation a Swahili worship song at his farewell service.*



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# Prisoners use artwork, poetry to break down stereotypes

STORY AND PHOTO BY AMANDA THORSTEINSSON

Mennonite Central Committee Manitoba Release  
WINNIPEG

If art is truly a window into the soul, then the works presented at the Open Circle art show reveal a side of ex-offenders most people refuse to consider.

"When someone finds out I've been in prison, their whole facial expression changes," says Gerald Herron. Herron is a poet who gave a reading from a selection of his works at the opening of this annual event organized by Open Circle, the prisoner visitation and community integration program of Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Manitoba.

New for the annual event is an exhibition of prisoner artwork entitled "Beyond Walls: On the road home..." now on

display until Sept. 12 at the Mennonite Heritage Centre Gallery. Much of the artwork centres around aboriginal images and carvings.

"It's an unusual opportunity to see so much art work from prison," says gallery curator Ray Dirks. "Whatever these people have done, they are human beings. It is good for us to see them as artists with hopes and dreams."

One of the main goals of Open Circle is to help inmates eventually integrate into the community upon release. That includes working with a society that often prefers to define ex-offenders only by the crimes they have committed. The art show is a way of

positively impacting the public's perception of prisoners and ex-prisoners.

"It forces the audience to confront some of their preconceived notions about this often-feared segment of society," says art show coordinator Adam Klassen.

Indeed, it is reactions such as those experienced by Herron that make integration into the community a difficult journey for ex-offenders. After his wife died of cancer, Herron turned to a life of drugs and crime. However, he refuses to let his past crimes define who he is and what the future holds for him.

"We've all made mistakes," he says. "In Rockwood Prison, I started writing poetry. I thought I'd take a chance. It started out as a personal way to process the things around me." And in that chance, Herron found a new direction. "I'd like to teach high school poetry," he says. "Right now, I am at the University of Manitoba studying English," he says, adding, "I don't want to force anyone to like poetry, but hopefully help them appreciate it." ❧

## 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. 24-Jan. 3:** "A Common Thread: Textiles from Sto:lo First Nation, South Asian and Mennonite Communities" exhibition at the Reach Gallery, Abbotsford.
- Sept. 26:** Mennonite Fall Fair, Prince George Civic Centre.
- 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.
- Oct. 17:** Mennonite Historical Society

of B.C. annual banquet, "An Evening in Paraguay," with Jacob Warkentin, at Eben-Ezer Mennonite Church, Abbotsford. For tickets, call 604-853-6177 or pick them up at the archives after Sept. 1.

### 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

- Sept. 11-13:** Junior youth retreat at Shekinah Retreat Centre.
- Oct. 14-18:** MC Canada IMPaCT.
- Oct. 16:** Canadian Foodgrains Bank "Fast for Change" on World Food Day.
- Oct. 16-17:** MC Saskatchewan Women in Mission retreat at Shekinah Retreat Centre.
- Oct. 24:** MC Saskatchewan Equipping Day at Osler Mennonite Church.

### 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; evening of reminiscing 7 p.m. (3), Thanksgiving service, 10:30 a.m. and evening of music 7 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 Bergthaler (25).

### Ontario

- Sept. 5:** Corn Festival at Wanner Mennonite Church, Cambridge, 5:30 p.m., featuring local corn, sausages, hotdogs, dessert, drinks and a

- campfire. Admission by non-perishable food item or cash donations to the Cambridge Self-Help Food Bank. For more information, call 519-658-4902.
- 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*, a play about Mennonite pioneers in northern Ont., at St. Jacobs Church Theatre sponsored by Mennonite Historical Society of Ontario, 8 p.m. (18, 19), 2 p.m. (19, 20). Tickets available at Conrad Griebel or MSCU.
- Sept. 18, 20:** Maple View Mennonite Church, Wellesley, celebrates its 150th anniversary. Evening program at Faith Mennonite Church, Kingwood, at 7:30

p.m. (18); morning worship service at 10:45 a.m., afternoon program at 2 p.m. and potluck supper to follow (20). For more information, call 519-656-2579 or e-mail mvchurch@cyg.net.

**Oct. 10-11:** Ottawa Mennonite Church 50th anniversary celebration. Meet and greet at 3:30 (10), to be followed by a dinner and program; Worship service at 11 a.m. (11), followed by a lunch and program. For details, visit ottawamennonite.ca or call 613-733-6729.

**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.

**U.S.A.**

**Sept. 17-19:** Christian Peacemaker Congress X (Restoring Balance: Peace through right relationships), at Illif School of Theology, Denver, Col. Through worship, workshops and prophetic public witness, the congress invites participants to "get in the way" of Jesus to bring healing, transformation and long-term competent strategy to peacemaking. For more information, visit cpt.org and click on the "Restoring Balance" link.

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

/// **Classifieds**

**For Rent**

For Rent: Sleepy Hollow Cottage. All-season, 3-bedroom home in a peaceful wooded valley in the heart of the Niagara region. Small retreat centre or family accommodations. Bruce Trail, Shaw Festival, Wine tours. Phone: 416-534-6047 or e-mail: shcottage@sympatico.ca for complete brochure.

**Winnipeg House For Rent.** Walk to great bus connections and shopping. Available December 2009 - June 2010. Call Sandra or Dieter Schonwetter at (204) 475-4270.

**Announcement**

**Parent Support Group:** Announcing a bimonthly support group for Mennonite parents of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered (GLBT) persons in Southwestern Ontario. We provide confidential support, fellowship, resources and opportunities for dialogue in the Spirit of Christ. For more information please contact the following: rvfast@rogers.com, pmsnyderangel@rogers.com, or Roy and Mary Gascho, 519-742-1850.

**Wanted**

I'm a McMaster Divinity College student writing my MA thesis on Canadian Mennonite combatants in WWII. I'd like to interview Mennonites who fought in WWII or have letters/journals from someone who did. Confidentiality will be respected. Contact me at: Nathan Dirks, 258 Niven Rd., Niagara-on-the-Lake, ON L0S 1J0, 905-468-8809, dirksnr@univmail.cis.mcmaster.ca.

**Announcement**

**ABNER MARTIN MUSIC SCHOLARSHIP**

This annual scholarship is awarded by Menno Singers to a student who is affiliated with Mennonite Church Eastern Canada and is in a full-time program of music study, graduate or undergraduate.

Applications must be mailed by Sept. 15, 2009. For application documents or further information, contact:

Lewis Brubacher, 16 Euclid Avenue, Waterloo, ON N2L 6L9. Phone: 519-884-3072. E-mail: Lbrubacher@sympatico.ca.

**Employment Opportunities**

**Calgary First Mennonite Church**, located in central Calgary, invites applications for a full-time **LEAD PASTOR** position available for Fall 2009. Our warm, intergenerational congregation of approximately 180 people seeks an applicant with a commitment to Mennonite theology and to the practices of the Mennonite Church. We seek a spiritual leader with gifts of preaching, teaching and pastoral care to nurture a meaningful worship life for our congregation. Related education and experience in pastoral leadership is a priority.

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



**BRUBACHER HOUSE MUSEUM HOSTS**

**Conrad Grebel University College** and the **Mennonite Historical Society of Ontario** are seeking host(s) for the Brubacher House Museum beginning immediately. Located on the beautiful north campus of the University of Waterloo, this historical home (ca. 1855) requires host(s) who are willing to live on site in a furnished 2-bedroom apartment and provide tours during the summer months. Rent and utilities are free in exchange for performance of duties. Applicants should be responsible and able to relate to a broad range of people. Preference will be given to persons who have a familiarity with the history of Waterloo County.

For more information, contact E. Paul Penner, CGUC Director of Operations, at (519) 885-0220, x24231 or eppenner@uwaterloo.ca. Application deadline is August 29, 2009.

**WIDEMAN MENNONITE CHURCH**

Wideman Mennonite Church located in Markham, Ont., invites applications for a **LEAD PASTOR**. This position has the potential for full-time responsibilities. Duties could begin in January 2010. The starting date is negotiable.

The composition of our intergenerational/multicultural congregation of approximately 60 to 70 members continues to change. This is the result of the church being located close to a new growth area in the Markham–Stouffville area, with a large multicultural population. We view this as an outreach opportunity.

The successful applicant should:

- Possess a commitment to an Anabaptist/Mennonite theology and the practices of the Mennonite Church.
- Function as a spiritual leader, with gifts in preaching, teaching and pastoral care
- Nurture and support a team leadership model involving lay personnel.
- Possess related education (such as a Master of Divinity degree) and experience in pastoral leadership would be preferred.
- Experience and/or interest in multicultural outreach would be an asset.

Direct inquiries and applications to:

Wideman Mennonite Church  
10530 Hwy. 48,  
Markham, ON, L3P 3J3  
c/o Howard Burkholder, Chairperson of Search Committee  
or email: myrnaburk@rogers.com



### PRESIDENT

Bethany College is a Bible College committed to *nurturing disciples* and *training leaders* to serve. Bethany's Board of Directors invites nominations, applications and expressions of interest for the position of **President**. Founded in 1927, and situated in Hepburn, Saskatchewan, Bethany offers a range of undergraduate Bible College programs.

The President, who serves as CEO, will have a proven record of respected leadership, be committed to excellence in **discipleship** and transformative education, understand and embrace the mission of **Bethany College**, and possess the ability to represent Bethany effectively on provincial and national levels to our alumni, donor and church constituencies.

For a full job description, please visit: [www.bethany.sk.ca](http://www.bethany.sk.ca).



### DIRECTOR OF HUMAN RESOURCES

Due to a retirement we have an exciting opportunity on the Canadian Mennonite University leadership team. The Director of Human Resources is responsible for the delivery of all Human Resource activities within CMU. The individual will have applicable education and experience in order to administer all human resource functions, including salary and benefit administration, as well as developing and implementing policies and practices.

For more information, please check the CMU web page at [www.cmu.ca](http://www.cmu.ca), or contact Susan Warkentin at [swarkentin@cmu.ca](mailto:swarkentin@cmu.ca) or by telephone at (204) 487-3300 ext 663.



### DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR

Westgate Mennonite Collegiate has recently celebrated 50 years of fulfilling a deep sense of purpose and dedication to fostering excellence in education in the context of a nurturing faith community. Westgate is a Christian school grounded in the Anabaptist tradition with a student body of 320 students from grades 7-12. We are centrally located in Winnipeg, MB.

The Development Director will work closely with the Principal and the Board to create opportunities which engage all members of the Westgate community to support the mission and vision as we look ahead to the next 50 years.

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](http://www.westgatemennonite.ca)

Qualified applicants please e-mail your resume by  
September 11, 2009 to:  
Mr. Bob Hummelt, Principal  
at [BHummelt@westgatemennonite.ca](mailto:BHummelt@westgatemennonite.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](mailto:camps@mennochurch.mb.ca). Further information at [www.campswithmeaning.org](http://www.campswithmeaning.org).



### 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](http://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.

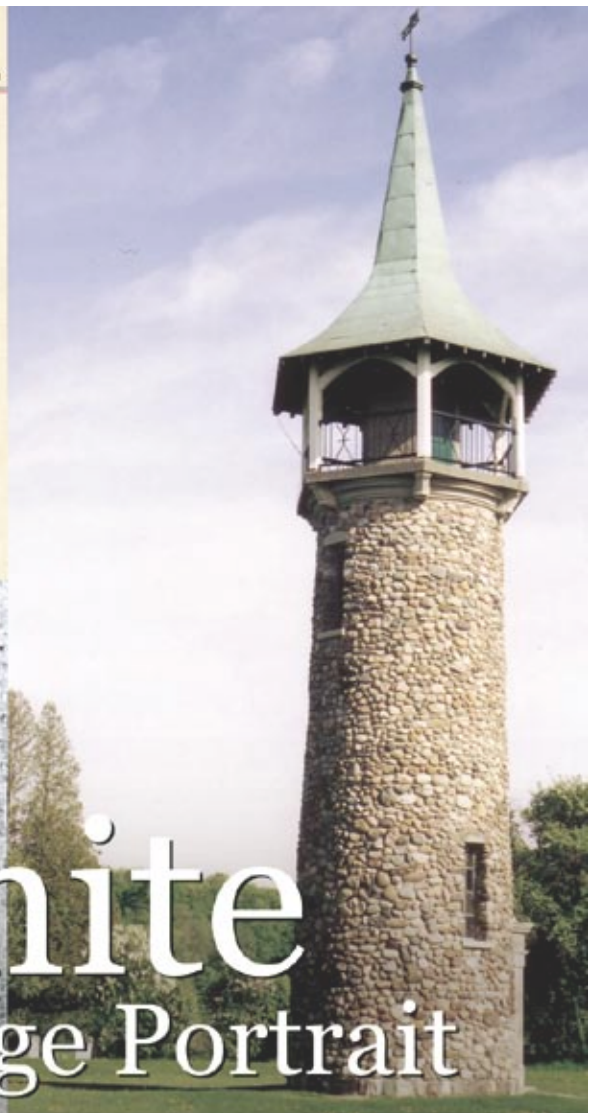
As the ideal candidate you will:

- ◆ Have demonstrated success in leading and managing a growing organization
- ◆ Possess excellent public relations and communication skills
- ◆ Be experienced in directing and guiding staff to accomplish the organization's goals
- ◆ Possess excellent administrative and organizational skills
- ◆ 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 31<sup>st</sup>, 2009 to: Personnel Committee, 12-1325 Markham Road, Winnipeg, MB R3T 4J6 or [edsearch@mennofoundation.ca](mailto:edsearch@mennofoundation.ca).



<i>Wanner Families</i>	<i>Members</i>
Abraham Snyder	2
Levi Witmer	2
Peter Reist	2
Abraham Snyder Senior	2
Levi Snyder	2
Henry Witmer	1
Henry Strickler	2
Joseph Schantz	3
Daniel Schantz	2
Isaac Groh	2
Ansam Groh	3
John Albert	4
Joseph Bechtel	2
Edward Spetz	2
Daniel ...	1



# Mennonite Heritage Portrait

**It's about you: your connection with Mennonite and Mennonite Brethren heritage and culture.**

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The Mennonite Heritage Portrait is an archive with a life of its own - it will grow continually, as new collections and historical documents are added to the fully searchable database, and as individuals contribute stories, digital artifacts, and photographs.

**Explore the Mennonite Heritage Portrait.**

Use it. Learn from it. Contribute to it. Help build this accessible, authoritative, flexible heritage model.

[www.MennoniteHeritagePortrait.ca](http://www.MennoniteHeritagePortrait.ca)

