

CANADIAN METHODIST MONTHLY

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EDITORIAL

Redemption through suffering

LAST IN A SERIES
DICK BENNER
EDITOR/PUBLISHER

How can Mennonites, who belong to a religious and ethnic community with a long history of being persecuted and murdered in the name of religion, work to “mainstream” a man who has incited genocidal religious hostility against Jews in the Middle East? Dexter Van Zile, the passionate critic of what he thinks Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) and Christian Peacemaker Teams are doing to promote anti-Semitism in the Middle East, wants to know.

This charge refers, of course, to the Iranian president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, who in recent weeks has again made headlines for his harsh rhetoric at the United Nations, calling for the annihilation of Israel.

Van Zile, who bills himself as the Christian outreach director and member of the executive committee for Christians for Fair Witness on the Middle East, is outraged that MCC is “defending Ahmadinejad and helping to rehabilitate his reputation” by calling together Christian and Muslim leaders on three different occasions to discuss with the outspoken leader possibilities for reversing the conflict between the United States and Iran, especially at it relates to the various religious factions.

In Van Zile’s well-known Zionist view, “talking” is tantamount to “tacit

approval” of a person’s stance and political views. This is where our critic is dead wrong. The fact is that the meetings with Ahmadinejad were for the precise purpose of toning down his rhetoric and to point out how his reckless language was indeed fanning the flames of a centuries-old conflict.

“MCC’s goal in these meetings was to pursue respectful, peacebuilding dialogue,” says Paul Heidebrecht, MCC’s Ottawa director, “not to honour or ‘mainstream’ the Iranian president. On all three occasions Ahmadinejad was directly confronted for his views on Israel.”

We highlight this episode to show how deeply entrenched are hearts and minds on both sides of this never-ending conflict, which can be boiled down to the tragedy of personal suffering in a tiny piece of God’s earth, where a country of nearly six million Jews is holding hostage some four million Arabs in occupied territory (2.5 million in the West Bank and 1.5 million in the Gaza Strip).

It is, in the words of the late Israeli social critic Amos Elon, “a place where Israel holds the wolf by his ears, and can neither hold him down nor safely let him go.” In their “fear and fury,” both captor and captive have “irrevocably resorted to tragic choices—rooted in the disastrous struggle between two rights, a clash



between two irresistible compulsions.”

We got a glimpse of this epic tragedy recently when Izzeldin Abuelaish, a Palestinian physician and peace advocate who lost three of his daughters and a niece when Israeli tank shells shattered his house earlier this year, spoke to an overflow crowd of students and community members at Conrad Grebel University College. He said, “We share 98 percent of our DNA. We [Jews and Arabs] are cousins. We need to focus on what we have in common and work at the differences later.” (See story on page 22.)

How amazing! The sufferer, who has every right for revenge, takes the initiative for a path to peace. This should be us all on our knees seeking redemption, not at the podium hurling theological and political insults at each other.

Meet your board member

Tobi Thiessen from Toronto is treasurer of Canadian Mennonite Publishing Service, and a member-at-large for the board. Mostly a stay-at-home mom raising three pre-teen sons, she has done part-time writing on topics related to Canada-Japan trade under contract for Canadian and Japanese business or government organizations. She holds an MBA degree from York University’s Schulich School of Business. Also spending many hours in volunteer positions within the church, she and her husband Harold are members of Toronto United Mennonite Church. In addition to her board duties, she is on the Mennonite Church Eastern Canada administrative and services council and is a member of her congregation’s personnel committee. She can be reached at 416-622-7850 or via e-mail at tobi.thiessen@sympatico.ca.



ABOUT THE COVER:

Paige Handscomb, a fourth-year Columbia Bible College student in the youth work program, spent a year in Hawaii with Surf the Nations doing humanitarian work . . . and catching some waves. “It sounds crazy, but maybe this is what God made me to be,” she says. Focus on Travel section begins on page 26.

PHOTO: COURTESY OF PAIGE HANDSCOMB, COLUMBIA BIBLE COLLEGE

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Mission statement: *Canadian Mennonite (CM)* is a bi-weekly Anabaptist/Mennonite-oriented periodical which seeks to promote covenantal relationships within the church (Hebrews 10:23-25). It provides channels for sharing accurate and fair information, faith profiles, inspirational/educational materials, and news and analyses of issues facing the church. In fulfilling its mission, the primary constituency of *CM* is the people and churches of Mennonite Church Canada and its five related area churches. *CM* also welcomes readers from the broader inter-Mennonite and inter-church scene. Editorial freedom is expressed through seeking and speaking the truth in love and by providing a balance of perspectives in news and commentary. *CM* will be a vehicle through which mutual accountability can be exercised within the community of believers; the paper also encourages its readers to have open hearts and minds in the process of discerning God's will.

Let us hold fast to the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who has promised is faithful. And let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day approaching (Hebrews 10:23-25, NRSV).

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In this second of two feature interviews about faith and life in Mennonite Church Canada, managing editor Ross W. Muir questions general secretary **ROBERT J. SUDERMAN** about our denomination's involvement in two ecumenical organizations: the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada (EFC) and the Canadian Council of Churches (CCC). Plus, the CCC and EFC provide some perspective on how we fit in to these national organizations.



Paraguay: Part III 16

Our coverage of the Mennonite World Conference (MWC) assembly in Paraguay concludes with a story about **ERNST BERGEN**, the first South American treasurer of MWC. Plus, read reflections of trips beyond Asunción by **PETER DUECK**, **HENRY KIEWER** and **JANET PLENERT**, and an Indian view of Anabaptist life and faith beyond Paraguay.

'Nothing bad from God' 22

On World Peace Day, Sept. 21, Palestinian physician Izzeldin Abuelaish tells Conrad Grebel University College audiences about dealing with the death of three daughters and a niece as the result of an Israeli tank attack on the Gaza Strip earlier this year. 'Don't deal with the dead,' he advises. 'As a doctor, that is a waste of time and energy. Deal with the living.'



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ANDREA YKEMA of Columbia Bible College declares that travel brings education to a new level in our cover story, 'On a Hawaiian mission.' Plus, read about TourMagination's 40 years of building bridges around the world by encouraging Christians to travel.

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New blog postings

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Wandering the ethical wilderness: **DAVID DRIEDGER**
Season 1 of 'The Candidate': **WILL LOEWEN**

Belonging to the wider church

It was five years ago in July—at the 2004 assembly in Winkler, Man.—that Mennonite Church Canada agreed to seek membership in the Canadian Council of Churches (CCC) and the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada (EFC). To examine and celebrate the past, present and future of these ecumenical relationships, Canadian Mennonite managing editor Ross W. Muir interviews general secretary Robert J. Suderman and representatives of the EFC and CCC.

By agreeing beforehand that we would join both or none, we spoke both to the bridge-building witness we wished to have beyond our denomination and to the concern for consensus within our denomination.

CM: *When MC Canada delegates decided to seek membership in the Canadian Council of Churches and the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada, the motion was to join both or neither. Why was that?*

Suderman: MC Canada had always understood that one very significant element of ecumenical involvement and collaboration was bridge-building, rather than fragmentation. Often this is talked about as “unity” or “unifying the body of Christ.” This concern to bring things together, rather than keep things apart, was at the heart of our desire to join both or none.

Unfortunately, in Canada, “ecumenical” initiatives are still characterized by division—i.e. CCC and EFC. By joining only one, our ecumenical world would still be fragmented, and, potentially, the internal MC Canada world would be stressed, given that there were some among us who favoured one organization over the other. By agreeing beforehand that we would join both or none, we spoke both to the bridge-building witness we wished to have beyond our denomination and to the concern for consensus within our denomination.

CM: *What did MC Canada hope to get out of membership in these two national church organizations at that time? Conversely, what did it hope to offer in return?*

Suderman: MC Canada understood that it has things to learn from and to share with the broader ecclesial world. We hoped to be able to do both.

Inter-Christian collaboration is one of those powerful tools of testimony we have for the broader world that extends the credibility of our understanding of the gospel of Christ. Fragmentation and inter-Christian non-collaboration are targets of jest and ridicule that generate non-confidence in our message of peace,

MC CANADA FILE PHOTOS BY DAN DYCK

reconciliation, forgiveness and unity.

Collaboration in ministry and partnership in witness, along with the symbolic signals of unity in Christ, were some of the things we hoped to foster by joining both of these organizations. In these ways we both give and get from this partnership.

CM: When MC Canada joined the EFC and CCC, it attached some conditions. What were they and why were they deemed necessary?

Suderman: I don't have this information in front of me, so I'm not sure what the conditions are that you are referring to. The only one I remember is that there was reluctance to join either group by basing our membership on its statement of faith when it was felt that we should function according to ours.

I understand that a request was made to base our membership on our commitment to our *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective*, and that this was acceptable to both. Also, by doing it this way, then our membership commitment, in terms of confession, would be congruent in both cases.

I am not aware of other "conditions," but I was not intimately involved in the conversations at that time.

CM: How would you characterize the past five years as members of both these organizations? How have MC Canada's theological positions and beliefs complemented and, conversely, challenged the



Karen Hamilton, general secretary of the Canadian Council of Churches, makes a presentation to MC Canada staff while general secretary Robert J. Suderman looks on.

CCC and EFC and their other denominational members?

Suderman: Our participation has been very positively welcomed and received by the other member bodies in these organizations.

One very significant step that has happened is that those six church bodies that have dual membership (both CCC and EFC) have indeed already functioned as a bridge to help those two groups have more regular and deeper connections with each other. Every year now, those six church bodies meet for a whole day with the executives and presidents of the CCC and EFC to share about what it means

to be members of both, how we can cooperate more fully, and how this can indeed foster greater ecumenical harmony and cooperation. And this small group receives substantial attention now on the agendas of both the organizations, to the point where some other church bodies are considering following our model.

On the CCC, we have been requested to help it think through the implications of being a Peace Church, and what that may mean for the CCC and its membership. We have had two significant and lengthy discussions about this, responding to a paper I have written that addresses these concerns.

Pontius' Puddle



A product of that has been a request from the Christian Reformed Church of America to engage us in a day-long symposium about our mutual perspectives on war and peace, violence and nonviolence. (*The symposium was planned for Oct. 17 in Winnipeg.*)

We have also been invited to share a day of reflection with the United Church of Canada around the topic of R2P (the Responsibility to Protect doctrine), a topic that has gained considerable traction and formal approval in the United

Church, in the United Nations and in the World Council of Churches. More recently, two of our people have been invited to another initiative by the United Church to share perspectives of peace and pacifism with them.

We also participate with representation on the Faith and Witness Commission of the CCC, as well as on its communications team. We are heavily involved in helping to organize a global inter-religious leaders gathering that meets simultaneously with the G8 nations leadership

gathering. This religious leaders event will be in Winnipeg in May 2010.

We have not had the same level of interaction, conversation and involvement with the EFC. From them, however, we have gained substantial help from its research department, and they have helped us get some data that helps us understand the finances of the MC Canada system.

In a sense, the EFC involvement, thus far, is more of an involvement in which they attempt to resource us, rather than

How others see us

Canadian Mennonite also questioned Linda Milke, director of ministry advancement with the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada, and Rev. Karen Hamilton, general secretary of the Canadian Council of Churches, about the process Mennonite Church Canada went through to join their organizations and our denomination's contributions to them over the past five years.

CM: *When MC Canada delegates decided to seek membership in the CCC and EFC, what was the process your organization went through in considering the application?*

Milke: The application was reviewed by the EFC president, who has been given authority by the EFC board to approve affiliation applications unless he has any reason to question the application, in which case he would seek wisdom and guidance by the board.

The EFC requires three things before an application can be considered: signed agreement with the EFC's statement of faith, Canadian Revenue Agency charitable status, and an annual fee. In the case of MC Canada, there was not an issue.

Hamilton: Mennonite Church Canada was an observer at the CCC governing board table for a number of years, participating, through its general secretary, at governing board meetings and at other opportunities of council work and witness. After a number of years like that, the CCC went through the formal, constitutional process normally followed for the admittance of any denomination to membership.

CM: *What types of questions do applicants get asked?*

Hamilton: It is not so much a process of asking questions, but of exploring together the particular witness to the unity in diversity of God's vision that is the ecumenical reality of the CCC.

Milke: An application is attached. Unless there are questions that cause concern, the approval process is based

on the application.

CM: *In both applications, MC Canada included a copy of the Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective as a framework for its participation in your organization. Is this a normal part of the process?*

Milke: No, but we appreciated receiving it and considered it carefully.

Hamilton: Since member denominations of the CCC self-define and self-present, the copy of the *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective* would not be a normal thing to present in an application for membership, but neither would it not be normal.

The key to membership in the CCC is an affirmation of Trinitarian theology, something that Mennonite Church Canada would, of course, easily proclaim. Some denominations have such kinds of documents as the *Confession* and some do not. Denominations present who they are according to their own criteria.

CM: *MC Canada had observer status in your organizations before formal membership in 2004. What did that involve?*

Milke: Observer status [in EFC] simply requires a request from the organization. Though we value this relationship, it is seen as a service to our observers rather than a closely held relationship.

CM: *Over the past five years, how has MC Canada fit into your organization? What has it brought to the table?*

participation on its boards and committees. In such encounters, our objectives to both learn and share are addressed. It is a very rich experience to do so.

CM: At any time have individual Mennonite congregants, congregations or area churches expressed concerns or consternation over membership in these two groups, or decisions or pronouncements made by either the CCC or EFC? If so, what were they and how did MC Canada work through these concerns?

Suderman: I am not aware that there have been any significant concerns expressed by our constituency about our membership in these two organizations.

Perhaps one small caveat to that does need to be mentioned. I think some unease has been felt and expressed about the manner in which the EFC speaks on behalf of its membership (in political advocacy and media pronouncements).

Perhaps the best way to explain this is to point to how it differs from the way the CCC speaks on behalf of its members. The

CCC does not send a letter of advocacy on its letterhead unless it has received 22 out of 22 signatures of its member churches. We feel positive about that.

The EFC, on the other hand, postulates from the general ethos of “Evangelicals” what the advocacy should be and speaks without checking whether its members are in full agreement. This has generated some levels of dis-ease at times within our constituents.

CM: After five years, does MC Canada

Hamilton: In the past five years, Mennonite Church Canada has been an active participant in the work and witness of the CCC, contributing to discussions and actions on such subjects as Afghanistan, health care, suffering and hope, and, of course, peace.

Milke: Jack Suderman has been present at annual Presidents Day events, and at the Denominational Leaders Gathering, which takes place the day following. Both events feature opportunity for networking and dialogue with peers.

CM: Have there been topics—like MC Canada’s peace position—that have challenged your organization or its other members?

Milke: We have not had specific topics like MC Canada’s peace position as a theme for Presidents Day or Denominational Leaders Gathering events. However, Jack Suderman has had opportunity to speak out of MC Canada’s unique theological background, including its peace position, on different occasions.

Hamilton: The current general secretary of MC Canada gave a major presentation on peace to the CCC governing board, a presentation that engendered much challenged and challenging conversation. The conversation was considered to be so significant to the board that it was continued at the next meeting with presentations from a number of other CCC denominations.

Currently, discussions are underway in terms of bringing that Mennonite perspective to the 2010 Assembly of the National Churches of Christ in the United States.

CM: Conversely, how has MC Canada complemented the other denominations in your organization? And how have your organizations and other member denominations been able to complement/challenge MC Canada?

Hamilton: Of substantive note is the fact that Mennonite Church Canada is one of six member denominations of the CCC that also belong to the Evangelical Fellowship

of Canada. With 22 member denominations, this means that almost one-third of the council’s member denominations live out this dual membership and contribute to the broadness of the CCC.

Milke: One of the purposes of the EFC is to provide a forum in which an open exchange of ideas can take place. Having an MC Canada representative participate in these forums provides opportunity for MC Canada’s positions to be considered by other denominational leaders and for MC Canada’s representative to consider, in turn, the positions represented by his peers.

Specific ministry partnerships have not been developed on the basis of these conversations, but having a fuller representation of the spectrum of Christianity in these forums is of benefit to all who participate. Open and frank dialogue may indeed lead to ministry partnerships in future.

CM: What future roles do you see MC Canada playing in your organization?

Milke: MC Canada commissioned research on the part of the EFC’s Centre for Research on Canadian Evangelicalism, which may well benefit, albeit indirectly, other denominations that are affiliated with the EFC.

At this point, the EFC has not taken a stand on military issues because a consensus on such matters has not yet been developed within Evangelicalism in Canada. However, if and when the EFC determines that it wishes to comment on Canadian military activity, it would approach MC Canada representatives for input into a consultative process with its affiliates.

Hamilton: The future is in God’s hands, but it is more than likely that Mennonite Church Canada will continue its distinctive role and voice in the CCC, which is the broadest and most inclusive church council in the world, continuing to interact with the other denominations from the Anglican, Protestant, Roman Catholic, Evangelical, and Eastern and Oriental traditions.

see any need to revisit membership in these organizations with assembly delegates?

Suderman: No, we do not feel any need to revisit the fundamental decision made about membership.

In the 2008 MC Canada assembly, both of these organizations were given time on the delegate floor to greet the delegates and provide relevant comments and information. Both Paul Johnson (vice-president of the CCC) and Bruce Clemenger (CEO of the EFC) were very warmly received by our delegates, and much appreciation was expressed.

A point that needs to be raised, however, is the question of the cost of membership. We do need to discover a better way to contribute our fair share of membership costs than what we do presently.

Related to this is the inevitable discus-

I think the cost of membership in good organizations such as these needs further debate and discussion.

sion about “how much is it worth to us” in terms of budget dollars. Would it be fair to request membership fees from our congregations to cover the costs of membership in the three organizations that MC Canada is a member of (CCC, EFC and Mennonite World Conference [MWC])? I think the cost of membership in good organizations such as these needs further debate and discussion.

CM: *How much is membership in these organizations, and what are their fees based on?*

Suderman: There are not set fees, but there are expectations. The CCC would like to see a denomination our size pay about \$12,000 to \$15,000. The EFC has a suggested membership fee of 20 cents per member, which, in our case, would work out to about \$6,600 or so.

In terms of MWC, they work on a “fair-share formula,” which is based on the gross national income of the country of the member church, the membership size of the member church and the core budget of MWC. In our case, “fair share” works out to about \$90,000 to \$100,000 per year.

CM: *So what is MC Canada actually contributing to these organizations annually? In any of the years it has been a member, has it met their expectations?*

Suderman: One part of the question is more difficult to answer than the other.

Our contribution to each of CCC and EFC has been about \$3,500 per year since we joined.

The MWC part is more difficult to answer. We have contributed \$38,000 via our central budget, but congregations and area churches have also been contributing, and their contributions are also included in the “fair share” amount coming out of MC Canada. I don’t have the exact figures on that, but we have been striving corporately to meet our “fair share.” In a conference year like this one, in Paraguay, I think we likely meet the amount all together. In other years, we have not.

CM: *What does the future hold for MC Canada as members of the CCC and EFC?*

Suderman: The Mennonite presence in these organizations is a highly coveted commodity by the ecumenical church table. Without a doubt, we represent a



Evangelical Fellowship of Canada president Bruce Clemenger, left, visits MC Canada general secretary Robert J. Suderman in Winnipeg in 2007.

strong and highly respected voice in areas that are often largely—not entirely—silent. As such, our membership is highly valued.

I think increasingly it is also highly valued by our own constituents. Ecumenical involvement does not mean giving up what we believe. Rather, the ecumenical movement is strongest when the legitimate and compelling biblical perspectives are present in debate and in ministry with each other, and all this within genuine relationship.

The Mennonite contribution to these organizations is rapidly increasing. And our learning from these brothers and sisters is also increasing. We trust that we can find good ways to continue to nurture and foster our involvements in these ways. ❧

/// For discussion

1. How does your church get involved with churches of other denominations in your community? How recent has this ecumenical involvement been? What have been some positive or negative outcomes of this involvement?
2. Info about the EFC and the CCC is available at evangelicalfellowship.ca and ccc-ccc.ca. What are the differences between these two organizations? Which one do you feel more comfortable with? Should MC Canada to belong to both?
3. Suderman says that Christian fragmentation and non-collaboration have been “targets of jest and ridicule.” Have you experienced a church split or serious disagreement within a congregation? Are there times when differences of opinion simply cannot be bridged? Is tolerance a virtue when Christians disagree? Why/why not?
4. What role should MC Canada play in broader ecumenical organizations and how should we pay for it? If the Christian Church continues to decline in Canada, will cooperation with other Christians become more imperative?

VIEWPOINTS

/// Readers write

We welcome your comments and publish most letters sent by subscribers intended for publication. Respecting our theology of the priesthood of all believers and of the importance of the faith community discernment process, this section is a largely open forum for the sharing of views. Letters are the opinion of the writer only—publication does not mean endorsement by the magazine or the church. Letters should be brief and address issues rather than individuals.

Please send letters to be considered for publication to letters@canadianmennonite.org or by postal mail or fax, marked "Attn: Readers Write" (our address is on page 3). Letters should include the author's contact information and mailing address. Letters are edited for length, style and adherence to editorial guidelines.

✉ A time to speak or a time to keep quiet?

RE: "MENNONITE ANTI-ZIONISM?," Sept. 21, page 2, and "Justice at the expense of peace?," July 27, page 22.

Dick Benner felt surprised and blindsided by Zexter Van Zile's criticism of Mennonite work in the Middle East, including our promotion of nonviolence and a one-state solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict. Mennonite responses to Benner in the Oct. 5 issue emphasized the pursuit of justice and peace, acknowledgement of the problem of the two-kingdom stance, and eye-to-eye communication.

I shared Benner's reaction when Iranian-Canadians, one of my professors among them, challenged Mennonite dialogues with conservative Iranian clerics in the summer of 2007. Incidentally, Van Zile's criticism extended to Mennonite dialogues with Iranian president Ahmadinejad in 2007 and 2008.

In light of our past dialogues, I wonder whether our present lapse into silence and traditional responses is serving peace, justice or the truth necessary for either in the case of Iran.

In May, we participated in a dialogue with Iranian clerics on the theme of peace and justice, including the contemporary context and the role of the state. In June, Iran's allegedly fraudulent elections sparked the largest protests in the Islamic republic's 30-year history. The authorities responded with arrests, torture and death.

Mennonite Central Committee responded to what it characterized as "intense debate and sporadic violence" with a call to prayer for peace and justice for the people of Iran, healing for the nations, and faithfulness

in our own commitments. In the July 27 coverage of the May dialogue, there was no mention of the June events.

In September, for the first time since 2006, we did not participate in a dialogue with Ahmadinejad during the UN General Assembly in New York. MCC gave no explanation, but the Quakers offered that "Americans meddling in the post-election situation [would] not be helpful"

Meanwhile, the people of Iran are pressing, still nonviolently, on human rights issues, and the international community is pressing, still diplomatically, on nuclear issues.

Ecclesiastes teaches that there is a time to keep silent and a time to speak. We may not always have the wisdom to know which is which. But if we speak, let us speak truth to power, and not let power silence truth. And if we keep silent, let us be clear for what reasons and in whose interests we are doing so. Otherwise, dialogue—or no dialogue—risks advancing neither kingdom, and peace and justice risk retreating into apsement and justification.

STEPHANIE JONES, OTTAWA

✉ Fire story criticized for being too Mennonite-minded

RE: "KELOWNA MENNONITES safe from fire," Aug. 17, page 29.

While I believe the intent of the report to be genuine, albeit naïve, something about it is just plain wrong. To lead with "Raging wildfires in the Kelowna area of British Columbia this summer have been making national news" is an attention-grabbing ploy, while further reporting that "no members of First Mennonite Church of Kelowna have had to evacuate," and "our congregation is not that badly affected," is neither newsworthy nor necessary. It's like saying that a hurricane went through New Orleans a few years ago killing hundreds, displacing thousands and resulting in billions of dollars in damage, but fortunately no Mennonites were affected. Or that long-weekend traffic accidents across the country caused several fatalities, luckily none of which were Mennonites. Or that severe, record-cold temperatures last winter on the Prairies were the direct cause of at least two deaths, but, thank God, neither of them were Mennonites.

My point? Sometimes it seems we're just too much about "us," playing the "Mennonite name game." In my humble opinion at least, it's this narrow-minded, even selfish attitude of some of us that is perhaps a major reason why our churches are so hard to penetrate.

GLADE PENNER, SASKATOON, SASK.

✉ Manitoba churches urged to consider future of Camp Assiniboia forest

AS A MENNONITE farm kid growing up near Austin, Man., I overheard many an enthusiastic conversation about “breaking up bush land, draining sloughs and eradicating pesky wildlife.” It was a world of “man vs. nature,” and the sooner nature got “tamed,” the better.

Come to think of it, Mennonites, the consummate farmers, have been taming the land ever since Menno: in the polder lands of Holland, in the Vistula Delta in Poland, on the semi-arid Steppes of Russia, in the

Paraguayan Chaco, and right here in the tall grass prairie of Manitoba.

But over the decades, as wild spaces everywhere become scarce, and as we observe some less-than-desirable side effects of our conquest, many in our community, both younger and older, are calling certain aspects of our “having dominion” into question. They assign a much higher value to the preservation of remaining natural areas, both for its own sake and for its faith testimony. Their reading of God’s commission to Adam has much more of a caregiver/steward ring to it.

So a resolution from the 2007 Mennonite Church

OUTSIDE THE BOX

Question. Period.

PHIL WAGLER

I sat in a century-old church building surrounded by grandmas. I had been invited by a denomination I really didn’t know well, to talk with a women’s group about the kingdom of God and how we live that out. I began by asking questions to understand the way these faithful saints perceived the life of the church these days. Their answers were questions themselves: Where are the young people? How do we compete with the busy work and recreation schedules of people? What can we do to make church effective and alive again?

I understand their quandary. Many churches in my own denomination, I assured them, would ask similar questions given the opportunity.

We trip and stutter our way towards answers to those queries. Try as we may, this search only leads to more questions and plenty of opinions, many of them polarizing. There were even some sparks in that room full of grandmas!

It’s not that the conversation was heated; desperation would more describe the mood. Hanging in the air was the hoped-for wish that something we could do would change things. That was quickly followed with the despair of trying to figure out what that happy pill would be. I

began to see that I was supposed to have brought the prescription along. Yet the further into the answers we plunged, the deeper the pit became.

Throughout the conversation a renewed insight came into view for me. It seems to me that we spend a lot of time asking the wrong question and then end up wasting time seeking answers that



The question is . . . whether we produce people who look increasingly like Jesus.

only leave us more confused, bewildered and befuddled. We become like a young child trying to undo a knot in his shoes by pulling in the wrong direction.

I am convinced that while many of us, legitimately and with right motives, seek to re-imagine the life of the church for a new day by asking the question, “What can the church do better?” we are actually posing a self-defeating question. Without fail, this leads to endless conversations, meetings and opinions that tend to go nowhere in the long run. The knot just becomes a frustration. Instead of discovering new freedom, we end up with schism and parties that resemble question period in the House of Commons.

We’re all present for the same reason and purpose, but an outsider would surely begin to wonder what all the noise is about and how anything ever gets done.

Instead of the non-starter, “What can the church do better?” we need to begin with a truly kingdom of God shaped question: “What will bring glory to God?”

At least in my feeble mind, this question reshapes the discussion. It takes our eyes off ourselves and places it where it belongs: on our Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer. The question is not, what can we do, but who is God? The question is not whether we can produce more people who think like us, but whether we

produce people who look increasingly like Jesus.

The question is not whether people think our church is cool, effective, tolerant or relevant, but whether or not we bring God glory. What will make God great among us and through us? That is the question. Period. That is the question out of which re-imagination begins, biblical thirst re-emerges and new creations are made.

Phil Wagler is lead pastor of the Kingsfield churches in southwestern Ontario. Ad laudem nominis tui (“to the glory of your name”) is his prayer. Reach him at phil@kingsfieldcommon.ca.

Manitoba delegate session triggers a whole spectrum of perspectives about the “value” of the relatively unspoiled 36-hectare forest at Camp Assiniboia, located a mere 20 kilometres west of Winnipeg.

The task force appointed to follow up on the resolution will soon be tabling its recommendations for the care and management of this unique old-forest/

riverside environment. An information package is being distributed to each MC Manitoba congregation this fall. It is hoped that good discussion within each congregation can inform the delegates who will process these recommendations at the November and February sessions.

HUGO PETERS, WINNIPEG

NEW ORDER VOICE

In defence of the institutional church

BY WILL BRAUN

It is tempting these days to say, as many others are saying, “I am spiritual but not religious.” To join this increasingly fashionable group is to be open to spirituality in a broad sense, but to spurn “organized religion” and “the institutional church.” This sentiment is not uncommon in Mennonite circles.



Let's face it, church can be hard to take. Many of us have, at times, felt frustrated, disappointed, infuriated, hurt or alienated by circumstances or events in our home congregations or in the broader church. What are we to do with these sentiments?

The temptation for some, including myself, is to gravitate towards a spiritual-but-not-religious stance. This might mean going for a hike or reading a good book instead of going to church on Sunday morning. It might mean yoga instead of small group meetings. It might mean simply drifting bitterly away from church without really replacing it with anything other than a vague spiritual longing.

But, ultimately, I believe the spiritual-but-not-religious path is something of a mirage. It looks good from a distance, when one is fed up with church, but ultimately the expectations it creates prove

illusory.

The problem is that this path tends towards an individualization of spirituality, with everyone just doing their own

[T]he act of going to church, aside from what actually happens there, is the most important spiritual discipline.

“unorganized” thing. Sure, some activities may be done with others, but the emphasis is on doing whatever is “right for you,” not on commitment to community. Of course, there are exceptions to these generalizations, but I think the generalizations stand.

As appealing as it may seem to follow one's individualized path, I believe that spirituality is, by nature, a collective endeavour. Meaning and God are found collectively—where two or more are gathered. In some sense, individualized spirituality is not spirituality at all. Of course, there is a deeply personal dimension to spiritual quest and experience, but ultimately it must lead us not away from others but towards them. The complications and conflicts that arise from that coming together are an essential element of spiritual growth.

A spiritual advisor once told me that the act of going to church, aside from what actually happens there, is the most

important spiritual discipline. I come back to this counsel often. I think about the value of choosing to spend time with people of various backgrounds, ages and viewpoints. In the intersection of our lives I believe I can find something that I cannot find alone. It's nothing spectacular, just a (hopefully) humble sense of the wealth of diversity and fellowship. For me, this applies to Sunday morning as well as broader church involvements, including writing for this magazine.

Rather than spurning organized

religion, I am trying—with occasional lapses—to embrace it. That is not to deny or downplay the frustrations, but to accept them as a humbling spiritual discipline. The words of Carlo Caretto, an Italian church worker who left all to live as a monk in the Sahara Desert, capture something of my effort to remain spiritual and religious:

“How baffling you are, o Church, and yet how I love you! . . . You have given me so much scandal and yet you have made me understand sanctity. I have seen nothing in the world more devoted to obscurity, more compromised, more false, and I have touched nothing more pure, more generous, more beautiful. . . . No, I cannot free myself from you, because I am you, although not completely. And where should I go?”

Will Braun attends Hope Mennonite Church, Winnipeg. He can be reached at wbraun@inbox.com.

✉ **Bullying pamphlet available from Mennonite Publishing Network**

THANKS TO ELSIE Rempel for her “Fight back against schoolyard bullying” article in the Sept. 21 issue, page 4.

Further to it, readers should be aware of a pastoral care pamphlet for which Rempel was a consultant. “Dealing with Bullying” is part of the Mennonite Publishing Network’s “Close to Home” series on hard-to-talk-about issues like abuse, mental health, and addictions. More information and free study guides are available at www.mpn.net/closetohome.

—BYRON REMPEL-BURKHOLDER,
WINNIPEG

Byron Rempel-Burkholder is the editor of Faith & Life Resources/Mennonite Publishing Network.

✉ **Colonialism, wealth disempower non-Germanic-Swiss Mennonites**

RE: “WHAT ABOUT the non-German Mennonites?” Aug. 17, page 16.

In a similar line of thinking as Scott Bergen, I have realized that the way some Mennonite historians approach their history is very much like those who write about Christian history. Authors such as Scott Latourette and Williston Walker write from the perspective of white Christianity, emphasizing the Protestant view while not taking into account the view of Christianity that comes from the margins (the real Christianity, the one that Jesus lived out).

Mennonites, unfortunately, have acquired power the same way others have done in the past, due to colonialism and their wealth. Germanic-Swiss Mennonites

FROM OUR LEADERS

Rediscovering God’s call

LORIN BERGEN

I am in the midst of planning for a sabbatical in 2010. In the middle of answering some questions on a funding application, God spoke to me about my heart condition.

As I began pastoral ministry 20-some years ago, I remember saying to the Lord, “I always want to minister out of flowing streams in my heart and not stagnant pools; I never want to go through the motions. I want to serve out of a deep sense of calling and a life-giving relationship with you, my Saviour.”

Much water goes under the bridge of a life in two decades. In it all God has shown the truth of Psalm 37:25, in which David says, “*I was young and now I am old, yet I have never seen the righteous forsaken.*”

I know that I rejoice in that, yet in the midst of it I realize that my heart has been growing harder, my soul is parched and at times I come dangerously close to going through the motions of ministry.

In the early years of ministry, everything seemed so simple. I preached, prayed, visited, cared for people and shared Jesus with those who did not know him. I was thrilled to be engaged in what I fully believed God had called me to and gifted me for.

Over the years, ministry has changed and so have the expectations. Most pas-



I need to rediscover the ability to pull away and listen to God on a regular basis.

tors I know are running an organization in addition to their more usual pastoral responsibilities. I manage, supervise, cast visions, strategize and plan. There is nothing wrong with these things, all of them are necessary.

But I need to rediscover the ability to pull away and listen to God on a regular basis. I cannot lead and minister the way God calls me to without a deep

connection with my Heavenly Father. Neglecting this critical area causes a loss of perspective and results in my serving out of my own strength. I need to fulfill all my responsibilities out of a sense of call and after listening to the voice of God. All of my tasks must be viewed as opportunities to allow God to use me. I must allow the people that God has graciously placed around me in the church to hold up my arms in those areas where my joy and vitality are sapped, and allow them to experience the fulfillment of using their gifts in their areas of passion.

Ministry is too high a calling, the church too valuable, the stakes too costly, to not invest wholeheartedly in this wonderful privilege of pastoring. It is my prayer that the people who drink from

my ministry and the people who drink from yours will enjoy the freshness of springs of water welling up from a spirit-filled servant of God. That is the kind of spiritual leadership God calls us to, and the kind of spiritual leadership that the church desperately needs.

Lorin Bergen is pastor of Living Hope Christian Fellowship, Surrey, B.C.

have become powerful and wealthy, and have used these things to disempower others.

And this is just the tip of the iceberg. Whether they like it or not, ethnicity has played a big role in how they live their faith. This is why we see Mennonite institutions only made up of people with Germanic-Swiss Mennonite names; at the same time, they become over-protectionist when looking at how they hire people to run these institutions.

I am glad someone has been courageous enough to point out this issue.

But for many Mennonites, this is a non-issue. "We are ethnic Mennonites, where religion and tradition meet," some would say. Yes, it is true, but for many "tradition" takes precedence over faith.

While studying at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary, I approached a retired professor who wrote a book on the history of Mennonites. I asked him why there was not more information about Spanish-speaking Mennonites from Latin America. He actually apologized and said that he knew that the one page he gave to the subject was not enough. But his book is still used in Mennonite colleges and universities in Canada and the United States.

A second experience happened while working at Canadian Mennonite University. I realized that there was one class called "Mennonites in Latin America," which I was very excited about because I thought that finally someone was going to teach the hidden history of Mennonites in Latin America, of those who spoke Spanish, Guarani and other languages. However, I was very disappointed when I looked at the syllabus and realized that there was nothing about Mennonites of "my kind." The professor was using these same two books that Bergen mentioned in his article.

I have had to explain to many people that Mennonites in Colombia are not from a Germanic background, that we are a mission church committed to the Anabaptist teachings on peace and justice, and that they are lived out every day, simply as part of life. I ask myself: Why is it difficult for Mennonites in Canada to empower minority groups?

NESTOR RAUL BOGOYA, WINNIPEG

Nestor Raul Bogoya is originally from the Mennonite Church of Colombia.

✉ Relationship with Jesus—not service projects—the core of Christianity

AS I READ Lisa Carr-Pries' "Laying the Foundation" article, Sept. 7, page 10, living waters began stirring within me.

The emphasis in her discourse was Mennonite, Mennonite, Mennonite. Mennonite Christian

education is important to her, but there is more to Christianity than service projects, travelling choirs, sports teams, and local and international trips. Mennonite education is limiting when it comes to the deep things of Christianity.

The foundation of our faith is not, and must not be, Mennonitism. It must be Jesus. The stories of Jesus provide great Sunday school material, but we are not being told that we must have a relationship with him. We must first have sufficient intellectual light on Christ's redemptive work and then confess him as Lord (Romans 10:10). Jesus said in John 17:3: "*And this is eternal life, that they know thee, the only true God, and Jesus the Christ whom thou has sent.*"

The next step is receiving the Holy Spirit. There are three facts about God:

- God for us;
- God with us; and
- God in us, the divine indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

In the baptism with water, we surrender our sins; in the baptism of the Spirit, we surrender ourselves. In the new birth, we have the Holy Spirit; in the fullness, the Holy Spirit has us.

The greatest thing that any of us can do is not to live for Christ, but to live Christ. We cannot do that without the Holy Spirit. That is what we must teach our children. "Let the children come to me," Jesus said.
WES EPP, CALGARY, ALTA.

✉ Who do we really worship?

RE: THE SEPT. 7 back page photograph of North American aboriginal Mennonites "raising their hands in prayer to the eastern sun," I would like to know if we have become sun worshippers.
ANNE EWERT, RYLEY, ALTA.

✉ Native Ministry leaders respond to worship question

WE ARE VERY concerned that the caption to the Sept. 7 back page photograph that Anne Ewert questioned gives a very wrong impression of what was happening when the picture was taken. While the prayer of thanks being used at the time acknowledges the gifts and people groups from the far corners of the world, the prayer is totally being made to God and Jesus Christ alone. At one point in the prayer we raised our hands to the heavens to recognize God's gifts to us, and that is when the picture was taken.

NEILL AND EDITH VON GUNTEN, WINNIPEG

The von Guntens are co-directors of Mennonite Church Canada Native Ministry.

✉ Call to prayer and action for Honduras

GIVEN THE POLITICAL turmoil in Honduras, the Latin America and the Caribbean program department of Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) urgently asks that people everywhere pray for true justice and peace for the Honduran people, and call on their own governments to pressure Honduran authorities to act in ways that will bring peace.

We are concerned about the June 28 military-led coup that deposed president Jose Manuel Zelaya on June 28 and the subsequent actions of both the de facto government headed by Roberto Micheletti and the ousted president. These actions have polarized the people of Honduras and deepened social conflict.

As the Iglesia Evangélica Menonita Hondureña (Honduran Evangelical Mennonite Church) said in a July 3 public statement, “What remains after the events of June 28 is a divided and polarized Honduran society, living in a climate of uncertainty, insecurity and violence.”

We echo the call of our partners and the church in Honduras for dialogue and reconciliation among political leaders and within Honduran society.

We denounce the violations to human dignity by the de facto Micheletti government, including mass detentions, suspension of constitutional rights, and violent repression of opposition.

We recognize that the reinstatement of Zelaya to the presidency is not a sufficient response to the growing polarization of Honduran society, nor will it respond to the urgent needs of the majority of the population, which lives in poverty. We ask the international community to recognize the long-term response needed to bring sustainable justice and human security to Honduras, one of the poorest countries in the Western Hemisphere.

We call you to:

- Pray for all Hondurans living within a frightening, unfolding reality; and
- Write to your government representative, asking for increased pressure on both sides of the political divide in Honduras to agree to the San Jose Accord, a proposal to end the country’s ongoing political crisis. Exhort your representative to pressure the Micheletti government to immediately end all human rights violations and political repression.

REBECCA BARTEL AND DARYL YODER-BONTRAGER, AKRON, PA.

Rebecca Bartel is a policy analyst with the MCC’s Latin America and the Caribbean Department, and Daryl Yoder-Bontrager is the department director.

✉ Caught between a warning and forgiveness

RE: MENNONITE WORLD Conference assembly coverage, Aug. 17.

I read Nzuzi Mukawa’s sermon, “Micah’s warning,” page 4, and Dick Benner’s article, “Forgiving the murderer,” page 11, back to back.

The emotional impact of the two was miles apart. Mukawa’s words were not comforting to those of us in the middle class and higher. The closing session with Helmut Isaak extending forgiveness to the Ayoreo people who murdered his brother decades ago was moving and heartwarming. I would have had tears in my eyes had I been a part of that. It must have been a truly “feel good” way to close the assembly.

But who needs to forgive whom for what? It feels much better to be the one who forgives; that is, the gracious one. And in that transaction I am sure we identified with Isaak, for we, after all, are not the Ayoreos. We were—and are—the carriers of the good news.

Isn’t there a burden of forgiveness on the part of the indigenous peoples, not only in the Chaco, but in North America, where many of us live on land that formerly was their home? How many murders were committed in that land-clearing?

Mukawa addressed us, not the Ayoreos. The injustices he listed are global, and therefore generate a feeling that we are less able to do anything, and by some sort of axiom are also less responsible. But who will forgive us? Who can speak the word of absolution?

BILL BLOCK, WINNIPEG

✉ Use stock photographs sparingly, please

I HAVE SO appreciated *Canadian Mennonite’s* use of photographs that arise out of the faith community, rather than dependence of stock photos. I understand that bullying is a difficult subject to document pictorially (“Is your school bully-free?” Sept. 7, front page and page 4), but I hope that such stock photos will be the exception.

Thank you for yet another good read.

MURIEL T. STACKLEY, KANSAS CITY, KAN.

/// Milestones

Births/Adoptions

Bender—Mackenzie Elyce (b. Sept. 25, 2009), to Kris and Don Bender, Cassel Mennonite, Tavistock, Ont.

Bender—Violet Anne (b. Sept. 9, 2009), to Rodrick and Becky Bender, Tavistock Mennonite, Ont.

Cressman—Lydia Kate (b. Aug. 13, 2009), to Daniel and Kathryn Cressman, Nith Valley Mennonite, New Hamburg, Ont.

Derksen—Claire (b. Aug. 6, 2009), to Chris and Ana Derksen, Wanner Mennonite, Ont.

Dyck—Ashley Margret (b. Aug. 20, 2009), to Kevin and Karen Dyck, Sargent Avenue Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Hoepfner—Aaron Rhys Hoepfner (b. Sept. 10, 2009), to Garth and Christine Hoepfner, Morden Mennonite, Man.

Orosz—Lauryn Elise Sophia (b. Sept. 14, 2009), to Myles and Jackie Orosz, Foothills Mennonite, Calgary, Alta.

Schyff—Claire Emily (b. June 6, 2009), to Chris and Angela Schyff, Poole Mennonite, Ont.

Baptisms

Stacey Friesen, Joanna Lim, Elvira Kroeker, Ellen Wiens, Nicole Wiens—Bethel Mennonite, Winnipeg, May 31, 2009.

Sonya Dyck, Ryan Erb, Christopher Gascho, Kyle Gascho, Scott Ropp, Danielle Schultz, Mitchell Schultz—Poole Mennonite, Milverton, Ont.

Mary Castello—Stirling Avenue Mennonite, Kitchener, Ont., May 24, 2009.

Marriages

Allen/Wiebe—Krista Allen and Theo Wiebe (Zion Mennonite, Swift Current, Sask.), at Camp Elim, Sask., Aug. 22, 2009.

Bell/Harder—Jon Bell and Kimberly Harder, Rouge Valley Mennonite, Markham, Ont., in Stouffville, Ont., Sept. 12, 2009.

Bender/Mitchell—Dan Bender and Tanya Mitchell, Tavistock Mennonite, Ont., Sept. 26, 2009.

Binks/Mavor—Sarah Binks and Kevin Mavor, Rouge Valley Mennonite, Markham, Ont., in Ajax, Ont., Sept. 19, 2009.

Dueck/Enns—Candace Dueck and Darryl Enns, Gretna Bergthaler Mennonite, Man., Sept. 13, 2009.

Erb/Wagner—Emily Erb (Crosshill Mennonite, Ont.) and Lawrence Wagner, at Crosshill Mennonite, Sept. 5, 2009.

Foord/Voth—Stephen Foord and Sherry Voth (Altona Bergthaler Mennonite, Man.), at Altona Bergthaler Mennonite, Aug. 22, 2009.

Gerber/Leis—Jesse Gerber and Emmalene Leis, Maple View Mennonite, Wellesley, Ont., Oct. 3, 2009.

Kift/Roth—Tiffany Kift and Jason Roth (Crosshill Mennonite, Ont.), at Crosshill Mennonite, Aug. 29, 2009.

Okabe/Schroeder—Etsuko Okabe and Alan Schroeder (Avon Mennonite, Stratford, Ont.), at Avon Mennonite, Sept. 12, 2009.

Post/Zehr—Avelea Post and Matthew Zehr, Tavistock Mennonite, Ont., Aug. 8, 2009.

Rolleman/Roulston—Rick Rolleman and Heidi Roulston, Avon Mennonite, Stratford, Ont., in Bayfield, Ont., July 4, 2009.

Deaths

Dick—Mary, 81 (b. May 4, 1928; d. Aug. 29, 2009), Stirling Avenue Mennonite, Kitchener, Ont.

Friesen—Nettie (nee Martens), 92 (b. Jan. 18, 1917; d. Sept. 10, 2009), Altona Bergthaler Mennonite, Man.

Neufeld—Elfriede (nee Vogt), 91 (b. Jan. 28, 1918; Aug. 22, 2009), Waterloo-Kitchener United Mennonite, Waterloo, Ont.

Peters—Ed, 63 (b. Oct. 14, 1945; d. Aug. 26, 2009), Stirling Avenue Mennonite, Kitchener, Ont.

Roth—Lloyd, 66 (b. May 23, 1943; d. Sept. 29, 2009), Riverdale Mennonite, Millbank, Ont.

Schroeder—Marie, 80 (b. June 30, 1929; d. Sept. 18, 2009), Gretna Bergthaler Mennonite, Man.

Seifert—Jacob (Jake), 83 (b. May 23, 1928; d. Aug. 26, 2009), North Kildonan Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Stauffer—Witold, 91 (b. April 11, 1918; d. Aug. 17, 2009), St. Catharines United Mennonite, Ont.

Steinman—Wilfred, 85 (b. Dec. 13, 1923; d. Sept. 21, 2009), Cassel Mennonite, Tavistock, Ont.

Thiessen—Henry, 89 (b. Aug. 4, 1920; d. Sept. 10, 2009), Vineland United Mennonite, Ont.

Waldner—Frieda Marie, 65 (b. Aug. 27, 1944; d. Sept. 21, 2009), Zoar Mennonite, Langham, Sask.

Wiebe—Peter, 80 (b. Dec. 3, 1928; d. Aug. 4, 2009), Carman Mennonite, Man.

Yantzi—Ruth (nee Zehr), 79 (b. Apr. 29, 1930; d. Aug. 13, 2009), East Zorra Mennonite, Tavistock, Ont.

Zehr—Jean, 77 (b. Oct. 12, 1931; d. Sept. 15, 2009), Stirling Avenue Mennonite, Kitchener, Ont.

Canadian Mennonite welcomes Milestones

announcements within four months of the event.

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

/// Clarification

While Ben Pauls conducted Faith and Life Male Choir of Winnipeg during some performances at the Mennonite World Conference assembly in Paraguay this summer, one of which was pictured on the back page of the Sept 7 issue, the conductor of the choir was, and still is, Henry Engbrecht. *Canadian Mennonite* regrets any confusion that might have been caused by the caption.

PARAGUAY: PART III

GOD AT WORK IN THE CHURCH

From north to south, the torch is passed

Ernst Bergen of Paraguay assumes role of MWC treasurer

BY PHYLLIS PELLMAN GOOD

Mennonite World Conference Release
ASUNCIÓN, PARAGUAY

Think twice if you assume that either the outgoing or incoming Mennonite World Conference (MWC) treasurer is concerned only with the organization's balance sheet.

American Paul Quiring wrapped up his 11-year tenure as treasurer at this summer's MWC assembly. In his final days, he wanted to talk only about MWC's future and how that is already affecting its finances.



Quiring

"Mennonite World Conference is not a maintenance operation," he said. "It's a growing, visioning operation. Ernst Bergen, the newly appointed treasurer, is right for that. A whole new chapter is opening in MWC.

"Many North American agencies are dealing with their own pasts," Quiring continued. "This organization isn't concerned with that. It's about the future, about young people and their vision. The treasurer's responsibilities are going into hands of the highest calibre."

Bergen became MWC's newest treasurer at the close of the 2009 MWC assembly, and its first from the global South. In his mid-40s, Bergen has served in Paraguay's presidential cabinet and is now an advisor to a variety of Paraguayan businesses.

"The invitation to this responsibility was a complete surprise," he said. "I started praying; I talked with my family; I talked

to my pastor; I placed the matter before our church conference leadership. They all advised and encouraged me to do it. I do have enthusiasm for this and a deep internal peace about it.

"I see that the churches have a considerable love of MWC," Bergen said, adding, "The challenge for us in leadership is to be in tune with God and to be willing to act in

accord with what we perceive God wants us to do. It is also our task to help our members to understand MWC's work, to go to them and to ask for their support."

One of Bergen's personal projects is "Good Governance," which offers chaplaincy services to Paraguayans in public office. Upon observing Bergen's involvement with this program, MWC's general secretary Larry Miller commented, "This guy knows how to lead from behind."

Bergen believes that the provision within MWC's new constitution, which encourages the development of continental MWC offices, is an effort where growth and effective accompaniment can happen. "MWC is financially sustainable and absolutely viable," he said. "I am convinced that both MWC and its funding can grow. Finances must stay in balance and proportion with MWC's activities. Money will follow MWC's presence and life." ❧

ASSEMBLY SCATTERED

Panamanians host German visitors

BY ALINA ITUCAMA AND OBDULIO ISARAMÁ

Mennonite World Conference Release

When the Mennonite World Conference (MWC) office contacted us about our churches hosting Mennonite visitors, we had no idea what it was all about. We knew for sure only that people from Germany would come to visit us and our churches in the jungle and we felt happy.

Having a brother and sisters from far away come to visit our little churches in Panama . . . helped us to understand how big a family we are in Jesus Christ.

Many of our church members could not be at the MWC assembly in Paraguay, but the opportunity of having the Mennonites from Germany share with us all the good experiences from the assembly was a blessing.

We have a better understanding now

of how important it is for our churches to commit to pray for all our faith family around the world in Jesus' name. As family, we have different needs, blessings, difficult times and happenings. It is good to know each other and talk to our eternal Father about the situations in different countries and churches.

Thanks to the brother and sisters from Germany for sharing their time and experiences with us. It was a blessed time. Even though we have different languages and cultures, we were happy to have them with us. Thanks be to God! ❧

Alina Itucama and Obdulio Isaramá are national conference leaders of the Mennonite Brethren Church in Panama.



Bergen

PARAGUAY: PART III

PERSONAL REFLECTION

Choir member recalls assembly highlights

BY HENRY KLIEWER

SPECIAL TO CANADIAN MENNONITE

For two weeks, 39 men and women were transported to a land of palm and bottle trees, fresh grapefruit and papaya, the grand waterfall at Foz do Iguacu and dust storms in the Chaco, Mercedes Benz cars in Asunción, and horse-drawn carts and ploughs in the country.

The Mennonite World Conference assembly gave rise to worship and ministry for Mennonite Church Manitoba's Faith and Life Male Choir. Singing in Spanish, Guarani, German, English, Russian and Zulu, our choir offered a vehicle for bridge-building among the nearly 6,000 participants at Mennonite World Conference. Performing for the large Assembly Gathered, and for smaller audiences in hospitals, churches and care homes of the Chaco colonies, the choir's mission merged with the MWC theme: "Come together in the way of Jesus Christ."

Most of the highlights for our choir emerged from our experiences in the colonies before and after the assembly:

- Spontaneous singing for a dozen staff and residents at Km. 81, the leprosy station along the road to the Chaco, was heartening to both them and us.
- There was a sense of being among brothers and sisters in the colonies: We wanted to be there; they wanted to be with us. Singing united and encouraged us all.

- We gained a better grasp of the meaning of Mennonites' early years in the Chaco. Particularly moving was the Neuland story of how primarily widowed women persevered with God's help in building up this colony.
- We witnessed the advanced life in the co-op and church in the colonies.

The colonies' efforts to work with local indigenous peoples was inspiring. Their efforts to move beyond survival mode towards their mission in their setting pushed us to consider what our role in bringing Jesus into our culture is: What of our culture do we absorb? What do we work to change?

- Particularly moving was the tribute given by Henry Loewen to one of our former choir members from Loma Plata, Paraguay, who had passed away in Canada during the assembly and whose family was in the audience at the Loma Plata concert. The choir concluded the

tribute with "Die Zeit ist Kurz" ("The Time is Short").

As the only choir representing North America, one might say we did our continent proud, although that would be a biased opinion. Yet glory be to God who brought us through safely and gave us voices and reason to honour him in song. ☼

Henry Kliewer is director of leadership ministries for MC Manitoba.



PHOTO BY RAY DIRKS

The MC Manitoba Faith and Life Male Choir performed both as Assembly Gathered and Assembly Scattered events in Paraguay.

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PARAGUAY: PART III

ASSEMBLY SCATTERED

What I learned in Friesland

BY PETER DUECK

This report was presented to the Vancouver First United Mennonite Church congregation by Peter Dueck after he and his wife Dina visited Friesland, where she was born.

I want to talk about Friesland and what I think we can learn about—and from—the colonies. After a four-day visit, I obviously qualify as an expert!

Our visit was very interesting and enjoyable. We stayed with Dina's cousin, and I immediately renewed my appreciation for farm life, roads (or lack thereof) and dislike for roosters. I offered to help make soup if we could use the rooster, who got us up at 4 in the morning.

I found the visit to Friesland very thought-provoking and relevant to my interest in where Mennonites come

Our historical propensity for experiments in colonization has as much to do with “circling the cultural wagon” as anything else. Historically, we have looked to land, community and language for religious and cultural independence and serenity. Throughout our history—and particularly in places like Russia, Mexico and Paraguay—we have moved from real and apparent oppression to less oppression as people living in community.

It is almost as though we had invented the classic definition of cultural cohesion. The interplay between “material” and

apparent little difficulty in maintaining their unique brand and extending it to the next generation.

Traditionally, education and religion have been minimal socializing forces; these generally work together. In the colony, they have these forces and more! Is it not rather amazing that in our urban churches, as secular and individualistic influences have increased, we have decreased our traditional socializing institutions such as religious and language education?

What can we learn, broadly speaking?

- We need to return to the land, figuratively and actually. Our tradition as land-lovers, subsistence farmers and colonizers should help us articulate a new theology of ecology with a Mennonite twist.

- Related, but somewhat different, we need a revised theology of sufficiency (or economics). This recession, together with dialogue with the colonies, should help with this.

More practical suggestions include:

- Less church planting and more community planting;
- Less peacemaking and more peaceful living;
- Having more children;
- Less programming to solve problems and more living in community;
- Staying closer to our individual roots;
- More church-supported education;
- A formal student exchange program with the colonies;
- And finally, the challenge is to keep looking for the “good soil.” It is not the avoidance of the birds and thorns, but the quality of the soil, that will bring people to God. ☸

Historically, we have looked to land, community and language for religious and cultural independence and serenity.

from, what our future is, what we can learn from our diversity and our constant search for nirvana.

In thinking about all this, I have come to realize that we, as Mennonites, have our own parable, also known as the Parable of the Sower (Matthew 13:1-8): “A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he scattered the seed, some fell along the way, and the birds came and ate it up. Some fell in rocky places, where it did not have much soil . . . and the plants were scorched . . . some fell among thorns . . . Still other seed fell on good soil, where it produced a crop . . .”

The Mennonite story (including the colonies) is about looking for “good soil” to a large extent, although upon further reflection I am of the view that we have often been more enamoured with avoiding the birds, rocky places and thorns than in looking for that “good soil.”

“non-material” cultural and religious characteristics has been truly amazing. In other words, the land, the community, the chicken noodle soup and our distinctive language have been requisite complements to our faith.

This, of course, is no longer our story!

We are more pluralistic Christians, urban and very individualistic in our faith and lifestyle. We no longer need the traditional cultural tools of our forefathers. What is left is our beliefs. This is enough to qualify as Christian, but may not be enough to continue as Mennonites. Even our current urban distinctives of “pacifism” and “service” are primarily belief-oriented and fragile—and not very distinctive when compared with other Christian groups.

Friesland offered a refreshing and nostalgic perspective of Mennonites as distinctive and egalitarian, and with

PARAGUAY: PART III

PERSONAL REFLECTION

Ashamed, but hopeful in Christ

BY JANET PLENERT

MENNONITE CHURCH CANADA RELEASE

Usually I take pride in being a Christian. But occasionally I hang my head in utter shame and even horror at what the church has done, and I plead with God to never again allow us, the church today, to make some of the world-changing mistakes we have made in the past.

The aboriginal learning tour following the Mennonite World Conference assembly in Paraguay was such an experience. It was an incredibly unique, diverse and intergenerational group. Métis, Ojibway, Cheyenne, Cree, Shawnee and Lakota from North America joined different tribal groups from Guatemala, Panama and Peru. This group—communicating bilingually in English and Spanish—was hosted by the Enlhet, Nivaclé and Guarani indigenous Mennonites in Paraguay, and Toba Qom and Mocoví Christians from Argentina.

As the conversations deepened between cultures, common themes

emerged. This is where I found myself both impressed by the consistently gracious spirit of all the groups, and increasingly sickened by the role of the church in committing what some have come to call cultural genocide. The church has had a huge role, both as accomplice and perpetrator, of the systematic degradation, devaluation and near obliteration of indigenous cultures, traditions and sense of peoplehood of Aboriginal Peoples in all of the Americas.

It was clear that every single group represented continues to experience the effects of this attempted obliteration of their cultures. While not every group has experienced a residential school type policy, each actively struggles with its sense of peoplehood; of being the victims of broad sweeping repression and overt oppression, and specific laws that marginalize them; as well as resultant effects of all forms of abuse at the hands of colonizers, governments, and, yes, the church.

In Canada, government-funded,

their homes, families and communities, and required to attend residential schools in order to educate them in English, instill “Christian” values in them, and systematically remove their culture, values, traditions and languages from them. In effect, significant, sustained effort was made to force aboriginal Canadians to be less than they are as children created in the image of God.

Yet as I sat with aboriginal brothers and sisters, listening to their conversations, I was in awe at the hope they showed, and the grace and forgiveness they embodied. In spite of the church, here we were at a global church event. In spite of the degrading treatment and abuse administered at the hands of the church, we all joined hands to pray and sing praises to God. In spite of the fact that they all are struggling to pass on their language and music, they welcomed and accepted us as non-aboriginal brothers and sisters in their midst.

In the closing session, several people stated that this encounter made them realize that they can be proud to be Métis, Toba or Quechua. One South American brother challenged the others to claim a healthy attitude in Christ, looking to Christ as our Creator, accepting that we are made in the image of God and thus can be proud and strong in Christ, rather than feeling poor, victimized and without opportunity.

I hung my head in shame at what the

I was in awe at the hope they showed, and the grace and forgiveness they embodied.

church-run residential schools were, in the words of Deputy Superintendent of Indian Affairs Duncan Campbell Scott (1923-32), a key strategy to getting rid “of the Indian problem.” After working in the Canadian civil service since 1879, Scott summed up over a century of past and future policy when, in 1920, he stated that “our objective is to continue until there is not a single Indian in Canada that has not been absorbed into the body politic, and there is no Indian question and no Indian department.”

In all, 150,000 Canadian aboriginal children were forcibly removed from

church has done and the pain it has inflicted. And then I raised my head, as if Christ himself were lifting my chin. And I looked into the eyes of my Peruvian aboriginal brother. As we ate a meal together, and shared bread, and he offered to fill my glass, I felt the hope that I saw demonstrated in the participants of this tour.

Lord, forgive us, for we know not what we do. May your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. ✎

Janet Plenert is executive secretary of Mennonite Church Canada Witness.

MC CANADA PHOTO



MC Canada Witness executive secretary Janet Plenert witnessed this baptism into the faith while on an indigenous peoples tour this summer, organized by Witness and MC USA's Mennonite Mission Network. The event followed the Mennonite World Conference assembly in Paraguay in July.

PARAGUAY: PART III

Beyond Paraguay

Where 'Mennonite' has little meaning

BY DICK BENNER

Editor/Publisher
WATERLOO, ONT.

The word "Mennonite" has less and less meaning in India, where Cynthia Peacock, a female leader from Kolkata, has been working for the past 38 years. "In the multiplicity of Christian denominations there, the name has more of a cultural identity than a spiritual or religious one," she said.

Peacock, a self-assured woman wrapped in a beautifully woven teal sari, is in my office reflecting on the Mennonite World Conference (MWC) assembly in Paraguay. With visits to the local tourist village of St. Jacobs and an exchange with members of the 50-Plus group at Waterloo North



Peacock

Mennonite Church, she had just gotten a huge dose of Mennonite culture in a short time.

Her next stop was joining some 30 international partners of Mennonite Central Committee from around the world, as they continued deliberations about the "new wineskins" structure.

There, she would probably overdose on how established Mennonite institutions work.

Perhaps that is why her observations were so pointed. At a pivotal point in her own life, she was quick to point out that, even though "Mennonite" has very little meaning to new Christians in India, these

new people of faith are very anxious to "live out" the teachings of Anabaptism as its founders sought to follow Christ's example.

Especially among women and young people, she said, the Mennonite name—without a lot of explanation—is almost a stumbling block to growing churches. A product of an earlier missionary movement in India, Peacock said, "I know who I am—an Anabaptist—but it is the younger generation that will have to engage in more dialogue before they feel comfortable with this identity."

"I understand your own young people in North America are not too thrilled with that identity, either, are they?" she asked with a mischievous grin.

MWC global advocate Bert Lobe, who accompanied her to *Canadian Mennonite's* office, asked pointedly, "Would you say that these new questions developed after the missionary movement of the '50s and '60s began to ebb?"

Peacock agreed. She wasn't attempting to separate the Indian churches from a Mennonite identity, but only trying to convey to North America that the enthusiasm evident in Paraguay about the Anabaptist belief system is not necessarily shared with her Indian sisters and brothers.

Ray Brubacher, the logistics planner for MWC, observed that the Indian perception stands in contrast to the indigenous Mennonites in Latin America, where the association of "Mennonite" with "German, blue-eyed, blonde cultural identity is expected and accepted."

In India, that cultural identity is not historical and does not permeate the Mennonite culture there, he said, more as a statement than a question. Peacock nodded in agreement.

I was satisfied that this single mother, church planter, women-in-leadership activist—gifted with the wisdom of her years—knew whereof she spoke. When she talked painfully of women's struggle for leadership in her country, I also sensed that she was, as I tried to delicately put it, "a church leader without the title."

She blushed and nodded. I knew what that meant. ❧

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From generation to generation

As new Camp Squeah lodges are dedicated, the torch is passed from those who have gone before to those still to enjoy this 'place of refuge'

STORY AND PHOTO BY AMY DUECKMAN

B.C. Correspondent
HOPE, B.C.

In a service that began with drumming and singing and concluded with a tree-planting ceremony, the two newest buildings at Camp Squeah were officially dedicated for use on the afternoon of Sept. 13.

The grand opening celebration service for the Emory and Fraser lodges took place exactly 53 weeks after the broken ground had been blessed and construction started in September 2008. The two lodging and retreat centres, named for the nearby Fraser River and Emory Creek, were built with motel-style accommodations with seniors and the mobility-challenged especially in mind.

Mennonite Church B.C. chair Gerd Bartel recalled the first days of Camp Squeah some 48 years ago. He acknowledged several people present who had been there when Camp Squeah opened, and how this building project had resulted from a desire on the part of many in MC B.C. "The dream of the people was supported by the dream of individuals," he said.

A theme of "From generation to generation" highlighted the legacy of several generations' involvement through the years at the camp. Pastor Dan Rempel of Cedar Valley Mennonite Church in Mission gave a short meditation on passing on a legacy from one generation to the next. Reflecting on the meaning of the word "Squeah" as "place of refuge," Rempel called Camp Squeah, "our place to find renewal, to stop and find an opportunity to reflect."

Concluding the service, participants read a litany together while a sapling was planted beside Emory Lodge and watered by several children (*see back cover photo*). This ceremony combined dirt collected at the groundbreaking service last year with water drawn from Emory Creek and Fraser River.

The new buildings were then open for a walk-through, showcasing in Fraser Lodge 11 suites containing queen-sized beds, one featuring a kitchenette for pastors or couples who might wish to retreat here for an extended period of time. A beautiful

apiece, reserved for seasonal staff quarters in spring and fall. The Raven's Nest is a spacious room containing a full kitchen and common living area, serving in spring as seasonal staff lounge, and ideal for a group of eight to 12 for a cozy and intimate self-catered winter retreat.

A special feature of the Emory Lodge lounge is the Legacy Wall, where a tree stands, its many leaves acknowledging the project's donors. Rob Tiessen, Camp Squeah's executive director, describes it as "a space where the next generation of campers will be able to come and be reminded of the many visionaries it took to invest their resources into transforming a dream into reality, a reality to be shared

Reflecting on the meaning of the word 'Squeah' as 'place of refuge,' Rempel called Camp Squeah, 'our place to find renewal, to stop and find an opportunity to reflect.'

lounge provides the perfect space for 15 to 20 guests to meet, visit and relax.

Emory Lodge, a two-storey building between the camp's main lodge and gym, has 18 rooms, including three wheelchair-accessible suites and two suites with kitchenettes. The second floor includes three rooms containing six bunk beds

and realized well into the future."

Tiessen and Bartel both reminded those at the dedication that, although the building phase of the project is complete, there is still ample opportunity to participate in the Generation to Generation campaign: "Partner with us as we aim to pay off the remaining \$300,000 loan before year's end." ❧



Visitors tour the new lodges at Camp Squeah following a dedication ceremony on Sept. 13.

GOD AT WORK IN THE WORLD

'Nothing bad from God'

Palestinian doctor speaks of justice and forgiveness on World Peace Day

STORY AND PHOTO
BY DAVE ROGALSKY

Eastern Canada Correspondent
WATERLOO, ONT.

“Just seconds after I left the room, the first shell struck,” Dr. Izzeldin Abuellaish, a Palestinian physician from Gaza’s Jabalaia refugee camp, told three different Waterloo audiences on World Peace Day, Sept. 21.

As a doctor of obstetrics and gynecology, the Israeli-trained doctor had left his home on Jan. 16 to speak live to Israeli television journalists about women’s health issues. The journalists were waiting nearby to interview him, but turned instead to the devastation being wrought by the Israeli military during their much-criticized incursion into Palestine at the beginning of the year. Their live coverage captured for the first time the lethal toll being taken by Gaza’s civilian population.

Abuellaish, now a public health professor at the University of Toronto, first spoke to 56 Grade 11 students from Rockway Mennonite Collegiate in Kitchener and the United Mennonite Educational Institute (UMEI) in Leamington at Conrad Grebel University College, then to one of the college’s peace and conflict studies classes in the afternoon, before addressing a public meeting that evening at the University of Waterloo.

“Nothing bad from God. Bad comes from human beings,” was Abuellaish’s frequent refrain as he described finding the bodies of three of his six daughters and a niece after the second shell hit his home.

He screamed in anguish, but quickly moved on. “Don’t deal with the dead. As a doctor that is a waste of time and energy. Deal with the living,” he said.

So he went back and spoke to the journalists. The next day Israel declared a unilateral ceasefire.

Abuellaish is convinced his daughters’ deaths saved many other lives. Both before and after this event he worked for mutuality and understanding between Israelis and Palestinians. “We share 98 percent of our DNA,” he said. “We need to focus on what we have in common and work at the differences later.”

When asked at the evening lecture whether he supported a one- or two-state solution in Palestine, he answered, “First get the baby born, then worry about their future.”

People’s needs repeatedly were his focus. “Justice is when I want for you what I also want for myself,” was his response to a question. About the tank commander who shelled his house he asked rhetorically, “What goes on in his mind thinking about whom he has killed?”

He does not seek revenge, but rather healing.

Abuellaish worked in Tel Aviv with his Jewish medical peers and managed to have his wounded daughters moved there for care. The hospitals in Gaza, the most

densely populated place on earth, were overwhelmed with more than 6,000 other wounded civilians. The doctors there managed to save one daughter’s eye and reattach the fingers of her hand.

Vanessa Snyder-Penner, a Rockway student, was impressed by Abuellaish’s bridge building between Israelis and Palestinians, his ability to find humanity in every person.

Mat Suta of UMEI was impressed that

*‘Why me? Why my daughters? For good. Lives were saved through my loss.’
(Dr. Izzeldin Abuellaish)*

Israelis recognize Abuellaish’s contributions in Israel and that, at the same time, Palestinians are proud of him.

As a practising Muslim, Abuellaish says, “Faith has a positive impact in my life. Thanks be to God. Why me? Why my daughters? For good. Lives were saved through my loss.”

Nominated for the 2009 Nobel Peace Prize, Abuellaish is the inspiration behind the Daughters for Life Foundation that develops programs promoting education, health and leadership for the women and girls throughout Gaza and the Middle East. ❧



Conrad Grebel University College academic dean James Pankratz, left, prepares for the evening lecture with Dr. Izzeldin Abuellaish and Dr. Rita Karakas, who chairs the Daughters for Life Foundation, inspired by Abuellaish’s vision for peace.

You can Help us Tighten the Bonds of Faith



Dear Canadian Mennonite Reader:

As the new editor/publisher of the *Canadian Mennonite*, I was privileged to attend the 15th Mennonite World Conference in Asuncion, Paraguay in July where I joined some 732 fellow Canadian registrants in celebrating our faith.

I came away from that inspiring event a changed person. In my life-long journey as a Christian, I thought I had a pretty good grasp on the wide-ranging expressions of faith from my small Anabaptist corner of the world.

Not after this experience!

The spirited singing, the multi-national choirs sounding those praises, the diversity of races blending into one joyful fellowship, the eight different spoken tongues, the rallying around the theme “Coming together in the way of Jesus Christ”—all added up to what one of my friends described as the “splendour of Pentecost.”

In an odd, even ironic way, it freed me of my parochialism for those six dramatic days while at the same time strengthening my resolve to tighten the bonds of faith in my sphere of influence, namely among Canadian Mennonites.

You might say I picked up the torch in Asuncion. I want to carry its flame to give even greater light and warmth to you, our readers.

To do that, we will continue to bring you the news of our congregations, the guiding, creative thoughts of our leaders, your letters offering both affirmation and critique and the pushing of the edges by our columnists.

And to make sure we are appealing to our sometimes questioning, sometimes fleeing young people, we are planning new ways of delivering the product electronically and in the venues those under age 30 are more likely to traverse.

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/// Briefly noted

Suspected Bolivian rapist killed by colony members

One of eight members of the Manitoba Colony in Bolivia, who was suspected of taking part in a mass rape of women and girls in the community over a period of two years, died in hospital on Sept. 16 after being punished by 22 of his brethren. According to reports from The Associated Press and *El Deber* newspaper, Franz Wieler Kloss, 37, a father of nine, was tied to a pole for nine hours in early September. When he was taken down, his arms were paralyzed. He was taken to hospital, where he was later placed on a respirator and died. "The Mennonites punished Kloss according to their customs and that punishment killed him," Col. Miguel Gonzales, a special crime unit director, is quoted as saying. Kloss had been previously locked in a cage as punishment for such previous community offences as mistreating his wife and children, drinking alcohol and "slacking off on his farm work," according to *El Deber*.

—By Canadian Mennonite Staff

PHOTO POSTED ON
DEMOCRATICUNDERGROUND.COM



Members of the rural Manitoba Mennonite Colony in Bolivia are pictured after their arrest in June for allegedly drugging and raping at least 60 women and children over a period of two years.

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REFLECTION BY ANDREA YKEMA

COLUMBIA BIBLE COLLEGE RELEASE

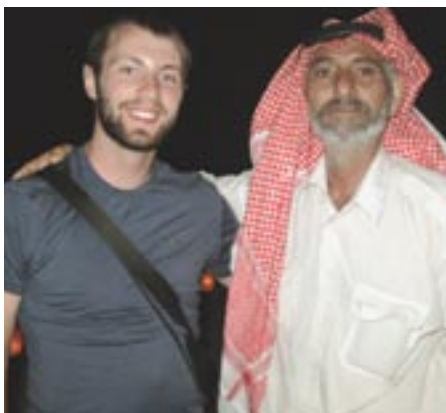
COLUMBIA BIBLE COLLEGE PHOTO

As a member of the youth work program at Columbia Bible College, Abbotsford B.C., Paige Handscomb, a fourth-year student, spent her entire third year in Hawaii working for Surf the Nations doing humanitarian outreach.

Christian Pye, a biblical studies major, travelled to Israel for three weeks over the summer to study at Jerusalem University College, capping off his time overseas with a backpacking trip along the Jordan River.

And Jamison Dyck, who is completing his fourth year of a worship arts degree, spent his most recent spring semester in Europe in order to expose himself to the ancient roots and modern manifestations of the Christian faith there.

They are different from most students who spend their entire scholastic lives in a classroom. From Kindergarten to college, they spend the majority of their days in a chair staring at a blackboard. And they learn. By the end of it they are



“When I was reading the Old Testament and came across the name of a place like Hebron, I felt fairly removed,” says Christian Pye, left, a biblical studies major. “Being in Israel changed that.”

cut it? One of the most effective ways to empower students for engaging the vastness of the global village around them is to drop them right in the middle of it. Suddenly, ideas, theories, emotions and fears all become real. Philosophies smash

Watching others has made her realize that far too many people lay down their ‘crazy’ dreams and passions at the feet of employment, marriage and authority figures.

able to comprehend, analyze, retain and regurgitate information presented to them in all the ways that classrooms allow. Thankfully, though, life is a bit more interesting than that.

So how can a college help students prepare for the real world if classrooms won’t

up against pain and poor communication. But unlike life after graduation, professors and students have each other’s back covered. What better circumstances in which to take risks and explore?

Why not pick internships closer to home than Hawaii, Israel or Europe,

though? Or better yet for the environment, why not watch documentaries about Israel, or satisfy your curiosity with stories told by other world travellers?

“When I was reading the Old Testament and came across the name of a place like Hebron, I felt fairly removed,” Pye replies. “Being in Israel changed that.”

Discovering first-hand the overwhelming heat, 10,000-year-old buildings, the scarcity of water sources, bartering and the value of shade have added life and body to the Scripture for Pye that no documentary or textbook could have offered.

“It’s a physical and a cerebral experience,” Dyck adds. “I’d be walking down the streets in Munich, looking for a place to eat, and then I would realize I was studying and I hadn’t even known.”

Psychologically, there is much to be said for pushing oneself out of zones of comfort in order to internalize learning. There is also much to be said for this spiritually.

“This is how I’ve been made,” says Handscomb. “This is what my heart is for.”

Watching others has made her realize that far too many people lay down their “crazy” dreams and passions at the feet of employment, marriage and authority figures. “At the end of the day, passions are never going to go away,” she says. “It’s really easy to think, let’s be realistic, that’s not going to happen. . . . For me, I had to realize that these things were not going to go away unless God takes them away. But until then I’m just going to keep pursuing them. It sounds crazy, but maybe this is what God made me to be.”

It is certainly a risk to step outside of one’s comfort zone. But the benefits of taking theoretical studies and applying them in a practical context on the other side of the ocean for a significant period of time are unparalleled.

So try taking that wild idea in the corner of your mind, and feed it. Give it some time, some space to expand, and watch where it takes you. Because, as Handscomb says, “What’s going to satisfy you is what you’ve been designed to do.”

Andrea Ykema is preparing to graduate from Columbia Bible College with a B.A. degree in outdoor leadership next spring.

ADVERTORIAL

TourMagination celebrates 40 years of building bridges



Janet and Wilmer Martin are pictured on a TourMagination trip to Ayers Rock in the Australian outback.

By **SUSAN FISH**

TourMagination Release

In the late 1960s, Jan Gleysteen and Arnold Cressman were both working for the Mennonite Publishing House in Scottsdale, Pa. Cressman knew that Gleysteen, whose father owned a bookstore in Amsterdam and who had sheltered Jewish people during the Second World War, had cycled around Europe and had been to many sites that had been important in Anabaptist history. So one day Cressman suggested to Gleysteen that they organize a tour of Mennonites eager to recover connections with the roots of Anabaptism in Europe.

Interest in this tour was strong, and in 1970 a group of people from Ontario, Virginia, Pennsylvania and Indiana toured various sites in Europe in an attempt to retrieve the original Mennonite vision and to have fellowship with Mennonites in these places.

Soon the tours became regular events, allowing people to blend their faith with an opportunity to see the world. Gleysteen and Cressman called their fledgling Mennonite

tour company, TourMagination.

TourMagination has expanded during its 40-year history. By 1976, TourMagination alumni were asking the company to lead tours to other parts of the world, while Mennonite World Conference (MWC) and mission boards were seeking ways to help Mennonites visit other Mennonites around the world to offer encouragement to local churches. TourMagination's first tours to Australia/New Zealand and Siberia came about as a result of requests from Mennonite agencies. To date, TourMagination has brought the largest number of tour participants to the global assemblies of MWC.

Wilmer Martin was a young Mennonite pastor originally from Pennsylvania and serving in Tavistock, Ont., when he was invited to join a TourMagination tour in 1973, to help promote the vision in Canada. Martin, who shared Gleysteen and Cressman's vision, became a part-owner of the tour company in 1982, helping to plan a variety of tours.

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or
Google Mennonite Heritage Cruise

Gleysteen and Cressman left the company in the 1990s, and Henry Landes was involved for a number of years as a part-owner and tour leader. Today, Wilmer and Janet Martin assume sole ownership of the company.

TourMagination has led tours to more than 50 countries worldwide, on all seven continents. New and classic tours—including

Faith continues to be part of each tour, through daily devotionals, regular worship and fellowship with local believers.

the Anabaptist heritage tour—continue to be offered. Tour leaders are gifted storytellers who bring history and culture to life, while taking care of all the details of travel. Faith continues to be part of each tour, through daily devotionals, regular

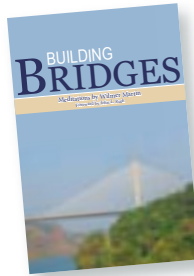
worship and fellowship with local believers. TourMagination's mission is to "build bridges among Mennonites and other Christians and faiths around the world through custom-designed travel."

Wilmer is passionate about leading tours, including planning more than a dozen that involve a visit to the world-famous Oberammergau Passion Play in 2010. But he says that for him, "a highlight is always the people. Janet and I have been blessed by the people we meet as we travel, by the friends who travel with our company. It has been a life-changing experience for us—and has enriched our churches." ❧

PHOTOS COURTESY OF TOURMAGINATION



Pictured at a TourMagination planning meeting in 1984 are, from left, to right: co-founder Jan Gleysteen, current owners Wilmer and Janet Martin, Rhonda Cressman, co-founder Arnold Cressman and Barbara Gleysteen.



BUILDING BRIDGES

Meditations by Wilmer Martin

Take a virtual world trip with an experienced traveler who adds his own faith-building insights. President of TourMagination, Wilmer Martin shares lessons learned leading tours around the world, and in his work as a Mennonite minister. Part devotional, part memoir, **Building Bridges** will encourage faithful readers to consider how they live in the world today.

Building Bridges appeals to people of faith, those who enjoy travel, and those interested in building bridges with others of different faiths and cultures.

To purchase a copy for yourself or as a gift, call 1-800-565-0451.

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- 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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- VISIT MEXICO and ITS COPPER CANYON (March 5-14)
- ALASKA CRUISE TOUR (September 6-18)
- TM MYSTERY TOUR (October 15-23)

2011

- THE AMAZON RAIN FOREST and the GALAPAGOS ISLANDS (January 5-16)
- ICELAND COUNTRY TOUR (June 14-23)



"Building bridges among Mennonites and other Christians and faiths around the world through custom-designed travel."

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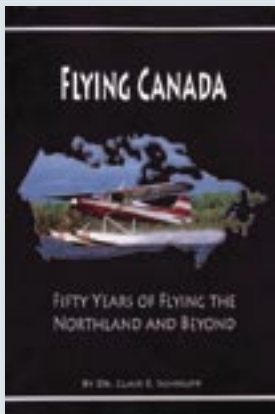
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Calendar

British Columbia

Nov. 12-15: MCC Arts and Peace Festival at Columbia Bible College, Abbotsford.

Nov. 14: MCC B.C. annual conference at Cullogen Mennonite Brethren Church, Vancouver.

Nov. 20-22: Youth Impact retreat at Camp Squeah.

Dec. 5,6: Advent Vespers with Abendmusik Choir; Emmanuel Free Reformed Church, Abbotsford, 8 p.m. (5); Knox United Church, Vancouver, 8 p.m. (6). Donations to Menno Simons Centre.

Until Jan. 3, 2010: "A Common Thread: Textiles from Sto:lo First Nation, South Asian and Mennonite Communities" exhibition at the Reach Gallery, Abbotsford.

Alberta

Nov. 7-9: Pathway to Renewal seminar at Trinity Mennonite Church, Calgary. For more information, contact Jim Shantz at 780-668-0851 or jimshantz@live.com.

Nov. 17-20: Church Planting Congress at Center Street Church, Calgary. MC Canada Witness encourages congregations to send reps; MC Alberta Missions Committee can help subsidize church costs. For more information, e-mail info@churchplantingcanada.ca.

Saskatchewan

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

Nov. 1: Louella Klassen Friesen Christmas with Family and Friends CD launch party, 7 p.m., Zoar Mennonite Church, Waldheim. All proceeds to MCC's Food For All campaign.

Nov. 6-7: MCC Saskatchewan Encounter (annual general meeting) at Mount Royal Mennonite, Saskatoon.

Nov. 7: RJC annual fundraising banquet, 6 p.m. Keynote speaker: Billy Morgan, a Hurricane Katrina survivor.

Nov. 10: MC Saskatchewan Pastors' Gathering at Rosthern Junior College, 9:30 a.m. registration.

Nov. 21: MC Saskatchewan leadership assembly.

Manitoba

Oct. 31: "The Great Emergence," a day-long seminar with Phyllis Tickle, author of *The Great Emergence: How Christianity is Changing and Why*, at Booth College, Winnipeg; 8:30 a.m. to 4:45 p.m. For more information, visit faithforum.ca and click on "Events."

Oct. 31: Camp Moose Lake workday. Volunteers welcome to help cut wood, rake, clean, etc.

Nov. 1: Camps with Meaning celebration banquet at Douglas Mennonite Church, Winnipeg.

Nov. 2: Mennonite Collegiate Institute soup and pie supper/fall concert.

Nov. 6-8: Quilting retreat at Camp Moose Lake.

Nov. 8: Join MCC Manitoba at Sam's Place, 159 Henderson Hwy, Winnipeg presentation and discussion, "Militarization of Canada," 7 p.m.

Nov. 7: One-day "Parenting Adult Children" workshop, Steinbach Mennonite Church. Resource person: Ruth. B.Z. Thomson, older adult issues specialist. For more information, or to register, call 204-326-2293.

Nov. 7: "New Songs for Worship IV," a half-day workshop with Christine Longhurst and the CMU Worship Band, exploring a wide variety of new congregational songs for worship, at CMU; 9:45 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. For more information, visit faithforum.ca and click on "Events."

Nov. 9: Westgate Mennonite Collegiate annual general meeting, at Westgate, 7 p.m.

Nov. 9: Mennonite Collegiate Institute annual general meeting.

Nov. 13-14: Mennonite Collegiate Institute presents *Oliver Twist*.

Nov. 13-14: MCC Manitoba annual general meeting, "Caring in the Name of Christ for our Neighbours and God's Creation" at Canadian Mennonite University, Winnipeg.

Nov. 13-15: Mini-quilting retreat at Camp Assiniboia.

Nov. 16: MC Manitoba fall delegate meeting, at Grace Mennonite Church, Steinbach, from 7 to 9 p.m.

Nov. 18-21: Meat canning for MCC in Winkler.

Nov. 22: North Kildonan Mennonite Church Quartet presents its Advent concert, at the church, 7 p.m. *Near to the Heart of God* CD will be available at

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UPCOMING DAY TOURS

- Nov. 13...Royal Winter Fair & Horse Show
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- Nov 20....Dead Seas Scrolls at the ROM.....\$ 99.
- Nov. 22...Christmas Music Extravaganza
Larry Mercey Trio - O/S.....\$107.
- Nov 30...Niagara Winter Festival of Lights,
Featuring The Gatling Brothers.....\$135.
- Dec. 3....Geritol Christmas Follies - Hamilton Place.....\$ 98.
- Dec. 4....Walters Family Country Christmas.....\$107.
- Dec.12...Living Singing Christmas Tree
Chapel at Cross Point, Buffalo.....\$ 94.

UPCOMING MULTI DAY TOURS

- **Festival of Lights ~ Niagara Falls ~ 3 Days**
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- **Nashville Country Christmas ~ 6 Days**
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the concert.

Dec. 3-5: Westgate Mennonite Collegiate senior high drama.

Dec. 7: Westgate Mennonite Collegiate Christmas concert, at Westminster United Church, Winnipeg, 7 p.m.

Dec. 13: Join MCC Manitoba at Sam's Place, 159 Henderson Hwy, Winnipeg, for presentation and discussion "Christmas around the World."

Dec. 17,18: Mennonite Collegiate Institute Christmas concert, (17) 7: 30 p.m.; (18) 1:30 p.m.

Ontario

Oct. 27: MSCU regional meeting for Elmira, Kitchener and Waterloo branches, at Elmira Mennonite Church; registration begins at 6:45 p.m.; meeting at 7 p.m.

Oct. 30: MDS fundraising dessert evening at Crosshill Mennonite Church, Millbank, at 7 p.m. Guest speaker: Jerry Klassen. Music by Five on the Floor.

Nov. 4-7: Ten Thousand Villages Festival sale at Vineland United Mennonite Church, 10 a.m. – 8 p.m. (4-6), 10 a.m. – 3 p.m. (7). Tea and lunch room open each day.

Nov. 6: CD release concert for Hope Rising's third recording, Climbing Up; at Hamilton Mennonite Church, 7:30 p.m. Proceeds from CD sales to MCC Ontario's restorative justice ministries.

Nov. 7: Menno Singers present Bloch's "Sacred Service" and Ager's "Mass," St. Peter's Lutheran Church, Kitchener, 8 p.m. With guest artist Cantor Maissner. For more information, visit mennosingers.com.

Nov. 10-14: Ten Thousand Villages sale, Old Town Hall, Aylmer; 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. (10, 11), 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. (12, 13), 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. (14). For more information, call 519-765-3020 or e-mail anni@mccsno.org.

Nov. 14: MCC Ontario annual meeting at Eden High School, 535 Lake St., St. Catharines. 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Colombia fundraising dinner at St. Catharines United Mennonite Church, 6:30 p.m. To register visit mcc.org/ontario or call 905-646-3161.

Nov. 14: Marriage Encounter annual meeting, Kitchener Mennonite Brethren Church, 5 p.m. Potluck supper.

Nov. 21: Nithview Auxiliary annual Christmas Tea and Bake Sale, Nithview Home, New Hamburg; 2 to 4 p.m. Features include tea room, crafts, home baking and apple dumplings.

Dec. 5, 6: Pax Christi Chorale presents "Christmas Splendour" at Grace Church-on-the-Hill, Toronto, 7:30 p.m. (5), 3 p.m. (6).

Dec. 6: Steve Bell performs with the Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony Orchestra, Centre in the Square, 6 p.m. Featuring music from Bell's *Symphony Sessions* CD and new arrangements of songs for Advent and Christmas.

Dec. 13: Menno Singers present "Christmas: Lessons and Carols," St. Peter's Lutheran Church, Kitchener, 3 p.m. For more information, visit mennosingers.com.

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

House for rent: Winnipeg, Wolsley neighbourhood. Great location on quiet street near major bus routes. Available January 2010 – April 2011. Call Nathan or Ang Gerbrandt, (204) 996-5807.

Advertising Information

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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.

The **Salem Mennonite Congregation** near Tofield Alberta is planning a **100th Anniversary Celebration**, July 24 & 25, 2010. Come and join us for a time of fellowship, inspiration, and challenge. We will be reviewing how God has blessed us in the past, as we envision what the Lord will call us to in the future. For more details you may contact Joe & Elaine Kauffman at Box 212 Tofield Alberta Canada T0B 4J0 or by e-mail at Jolane72@gmail.com.

Employment Opportunities



Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) is accepting applications for the position of **PEACE PROGRAM COORDINATOR**

The coordinator serves all international programs through work with peace projects. She/he also serves Canadian and U.S. MCCs by providing support to the peace networks and educating constituents.

Extensive knowledge of contemporary peacebuilding theory and trends, a master's degree in peace/conflict studies or related field required.

The assignment is based in Akron, Pa., or Winnipeg, Man., and it includes regular travel to country programs and to MCC regions and provinces.

A complete job description is available online at www.mcc.org/serve. Resume and letter of interest can be directed to Prem Dick via e-mail at psd@mcc.org or call (717) 859-1151 by Oct. 23, 2009.



YOUTH WORKER

Feeling called to a new challenge in ministry? Interested in the rewards of interacting with youth and leading youth activities?

Looking for an opportunity to work in a supportive environment with an experienced lead pastor?

Our congregation in Floradale, Ont. is a mix of rural and urban people who have recently moved into new, larger facilities just 15 minutes from Waterloo. We are seeking a half-time **YOUTH WORKER** for one year to cover a maternity leave.

See www.floramc.org for more details on this position. Interested applicants should contact Yvonne Martin, Search Committee Chairperson, at 519-669-8307, or ymartin@rogers.com.

LEAD PASTOR

Calgary First Mennonite Church, located in central Calgary, invites applications for a full-time **Lead Pastor** position. Our congregation seeks an applicant with a commitment to Mennonite theology and to the practices of the Mennonite Church. We seek a spiritual leader with the gifts of preaching, teaching and pastoral care. Related education and experience in pastoral leadership is a priority.

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



Director of Braintree Creation Care Centre

CANADIAN MENNONITE UNIVERSITY is seeking a Director for its exciting new Braintree Creation Care Centre (BCCC) venture program. This is a half-time position. The Director manages a remarkable 725 acre property consisting of pristine woodlands, peat bog, and limited arable land.

Braintree Creation Care Centre has the mandate to work at the following:

- To be a wetlands and boreal forest research station
- To be an undergraduate learning centre
- To be a centre for church and community programs
- To be a retreat centre
- To provide rental opportunities for private events

To find out more about this exciting opportunity, please visit our website:

www.cmu.ca/employment.html



PRINCIPAL

UMEI Christian High School has a 65-year history as an accredited, independent high school providing Christian education (with an Anabaptist/Mennonite perspective). The school welcomes students from many faith backgrounds and teaches those students the Ontario curriculum using a holistic approach that incorporates physical, social and spiritual growth for students, as well as the development of strong academics.

The Board of UMEI Christian invites applications for the position of **Principal**. As a leader with vision and commitment to the mission of the school, the successful applicant will participate in the continuing growth and development of the school, as well as supervise the school program. Duties to commence Sept. 1, 2010. Applications should be sent to:

Janice Huntingford Wagner, Personnel Chair
UMEI Christian High School
614 Mersea Road 6
Leamington, ON N8H 3V8
or e-mail cats6dr@aol.com



DEAN OF THE SEMINARY AND UNIVERSITY VICE-PRESIDENT

Eastern Mennonite University seeks qualified candidates for the position of **Dean of the Seminary and University Vice-President** to provide leadership and oversight for all seminary programs and faculty. Eastern Mennonite Seminary is an accredited member of the Association of Theological Schools. It offers the three-year Master of Divinity degree, the two-year Master of Arts in Church Leadership and Master of Arts in Religion degrees, Clinical Pastoral Education and a one-year certificate program. The seminary is a member of the Council of Mennonite Seminaries, and is approved by the United Methodist Church for the training of its candidates for ordination.

The successful candidate will promote the philosophy, program quality and objectives of the seminary in maintaining academic standards, advancing institutional purposes and leading faculty recruitment. The Seminary Dean supervises all administrative staff in the seminary, either directly or through delegation. As University Vice-President, the Dean is a member of the President's Cabinet and represents the seminary in administrative matters through the regular channels of EMU. The Seminary Dean, along with the President, represents the seminary to the church constituencies and in theological education circles.

Qualifications include leadership and administrative expertise; a doctoral degree in a discipline related to theological education; experience in church ministry and teaching in higher education; creative leadership in curriculum development; membership in a Mennonite church; and a commitment to the mission of Mennonite/Anabaptist higher education.

To apply, send a letter of application and resume to Fred L. Kniss, Provost, Eastern Mennonite University, 1200 Park Road, Harrisonburg, VA 22802, or e-mail to provost@emu.edu. For more information, visit our website: www.emu.edu/humanresources.

Position begins on July 1, 2010. Review of applications will begin on Nov. 1, 2009, and continue until the position is filled. EMU is an equal opportunity employer with a strong commitment to diversification of its faculty, staff and administration.



Mennonite Central Committee Canada (MCCC)

MCCC is recruiting for the following salaried position:

* **DIRECTOR OF NATIONAL PROGRAMS – MCC Canada**

The Director of National Programs will direct the Coordinators for the following MCC Canada programs: Aboriginal Neighbours, Peace Ministries, Refugee Assistance, Restorative Justice, Victims' Voice, the Ottawa Office, the Low German Program and Canadian IVEP. The Director of MCC Canada's programs in Eastern Canada also reports to the Director of National Programs. The successful candidate will take the lead in developing a strong and effective partnership with provincial MCCs with respect to programs across Canada. In response to anticipated new initiatives, the Director of National Programs must be flexible, adaptable, open to and inviting of change. He/she will participate as a member of the MCC Canada Management Team. Fluency in French is an asset.

Application deadline: Nov. 16, 2009

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

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

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

Watering the future at Camp Squeah

PHOTO BY AMY DUECKMAN



Griffin Larson, foreground, son of Camp Squeah program director Tim Larson, and Eli Tiessen, son of Rob Tiessen, the camp's executive director, water a newly planted sapling beside Squeah's new Emory Lodge using a combination of water from the nearby Fraser River and Emory Creek. (See story on page 21.)