

CANADIAN MENNONITE

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that mourn

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EDITORIAL

Bethlehem lies peacefully?

DICK BENNER
EDITOR/PUBLISHER

“O little town of Bethlehem, how still we see thee lie,” didn’t—and doesn’t—square with reality, despite the peaceful sentiments hymn writer Phillip Brooks wanted to bring to his Anglican parish in Philadelphia, Pa., during Advent in the mid-19th century.

His was the tourist’s view, having just returned from a short visit to the place that gets our special attention during this season of the year. While we sing this beloved hymn today, we in the western world can so blithely fall into the “tourist’s myth” of a peaceful birthing place for the Christ child.

At the time of Jesus’ birth, Bethlehem, under the heavy hand of Roman occupation, was not the place to go for a quiet family vacation. It was the place where Caesar Augustus wanted all of the citizenry to enrol in the local tax office. It would have been chaos for all of his Jewish subjects to pay up in their hometowns. So, with the assistance of Pilate, the governor, and Herod, the Judean monarch, the “occupied” were reminded again to whom they owed their allegiance.

Fast forward to Bethlehem in 2009. A majority of the residents are still under occupation. Ironically, the “occupied” are now the “occupiers.”

Most Westerners forget, Bishara Awad, president of Bethlehem Bible

College, recently told an overflow crowd at Rockway Mennonite Collegiate, Kitchener, Ont., that before the State of Israel was created in 1948, “[Palestine] was fully populated by Arabs, Muslims and Christians. In order to create a Jewish homeland for the Jews fleeing persecution in Europe, large portions of the indigenous people had to be forcefully replaced and never allowed to return.”

Very little has changed since 6 AD. Taxes are still central to political control. Israel, aided annually by some tax-funded \$3 billion from the United States and benefiting to the tune of \$1.25 billion from free trade agreements with both the U.S. and Canada, is not satisfied with control of 88 percent of the land on which it has been building settlements, but is now constructing a wall as a means of security.

In order to tamp down negative world opinion about the wall, Israel calls it a “fence,” a euphemism Awad rejects out of hand as a lie: “Yes, walls can be used to protect, but they can also be used to enclose and imprison the other group, with few doors in the wall controlled by the jailer so that he and the Jewish population can move at free will.”

Awad, a gentle man with a vision to deliver his people, is running out of patience. Everyone says they want peace in this never-ending conflict, he gestured with a raised hand, even the Israeli government.



“All peaceful solutions have failed and the cycle of failure continues,” he said. “Negotiations have always ended in no results.”

As with the Berlin Wall, he pleaded with his audience that this wall must come down. In its place should be a bridge—a bridge that can transcend the centuries-old enmity that has held two suffering peoples hostage, a bridge that can span the hostility and fears of people who both claim the ancient patriarch Abraham as their spiritual father.

The hymn writer Brooks had one of his scores right: “the hopes and fears of all the years, are met in thee tonight.”

May it be so in the year of our Lord, 2010.

Meet your board member

Doris Daley of Turner Valley, Alta., is *Canadian Mennonite’s* cowboy poet as well as a representative of MC Alberta on our



12-member board. As a writer of western poetry, who performs at private and corporate events and at festivals all over North America, she was recently recognized by the Western Music Association as the “best female cowboy poet,” as well as the “best cowboy poet” for her CD entitled *Beneath a Western Sky*. She worked for Ten Thousand Villages in Akron, Pa., and New Hamburg, Ont., for 15 years before moving back home to Alberta. She and her husband, Bob Haysom, are members of Trinity Mennonite Church near Calgary, where she has served on the worship committee and church council. She can be reached via e-mail at ddaley@telusplanet.net or by phone at 403-933-4434. More information about her as a poet can be found on her website dorisdaley.com.

ABOUT THE COVER:

A Ukrainian child ponders the memorial to 30,000 victims of Soviet terror, oppression and tribulation that was unveiled in Zaporizhya, Ukraine, on Oct. 10. For story and more photos, see pages 16-17.

PHOTO: T. DYCK, SPECIAL TO CANADIAN MENNONITE

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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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So often, our Christmases are defined by our bathrobe pageants and the Hallmark card sentimentality we offer to friends and family. This year, we present two articles and a poem that, in the words of Dan Epp-Tiessen, declare:

'Christmas is not about Jesus being born into perfect stables or perfect families or a perfect world. Christmas is about Jesus being born into a world that is deeply broken and hurting, a world in need of healing and redemption.'

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Three-week schedule

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New blog postings

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

Mully children's family: **PAUL LOEWEN**

After virtue Part III: Seeing the end: **DAVID DRIEDGER**

Humans and their needs: **CHERYL WOELK**

Christmas unsanitized

Our two seasonal articles and poem all have one thing in common: they make it quite clear that North American culture—and Christianity—have often sanitized Christmas, to make it more acceptable to our society and parishioners. And all three authors, in their own way, attempt to demythologize the events surrounding the birth of Jesus Christ two millennia ago. Dan Epp-Tiessen takes the newborn baby out of the saccharine-sweet Christmas card scenes and Sunday school pageants, and places him instead in a dung- and fly-infested stable, where the poor and hurting of this world can identify him as their own. In a similar vein, John Longhurst, in his “Exonerating that ‘mean old innkeeper” article, suggests that a Middle Eastern take on the story makes the treatment of Mary and Joseph in Bethlehem, as we have come to know it, implausible. Finally, Leona Dueck Penner’s poem, “Mary’s Lament,” brushes off the “gentle Mary laid her child in a manger” persona and invests her with the grittiness of an AIDS activist. Be prepared, gentle reader, to have your blinkers removed.

Think of how the typical Christmas cards portray the story: Beautiful sentimental scenes of a confident and calm Joseph, a radiant Mary and a peacefully sleeping baby Jesus, all surrounded by cute and cuddly animals.

Christmas is good news, isn't it?

But don't believe the greeting card depictions

BY DAN EPP-TIESSEN

Christmas is good news, isn't it? Yet 1994 was the most painful Christmas season of my life. That year, as Dec. 25 drew nearer, my wife Esther and I found our pain and sorrow growing deeper and deeper. Almost every evening after we got our two young boys in bed we would collapse exhausted on the living-room couch. We would light a candle to remember Tim, our dear eight-year-old son who had died of a brain tumour less than two months before, and then we would weep, abundant tears flowing down our cheeks. After an hour or so when we were even more exhausted we would climb into bed.

Christmas is good news, isn't it? Yet a friend of mine who used to work at an inner-city Christian men's hostel observed that, as

Christmas approached, the mood in the hostel would become more and more foul, as the men would become more mean and nasty to each other and to the staff.

Christmas is good news, isn't it? Yet I remember a man who was able to live and function on his own, but he experienced great difficulty in connecting with people and so he had few friends. He hated the Christmas season and he especially hated Christmas Day. He received no gifts and he had no one to spend the day with. Not even a coffee shop was open so that he could escape from his loneliness.

Christmas is good news, isn't it? But have you ever talked to someone who has just gone through a marriage break-up, lost a job, went bankrupt or lost a dear loved one, and asked them how they feel about the Advent/Christmas season?

Misrepresenting Christmas

If Christmas is good news, why then do so many people experience it as such a difficult and painful time? There are probably numerous reasons for this, but one of them has to do with what we have done with the Christmas season.

Every Advent, I remember an article by Maynard Shelly that I read more than 30 years ago now. The article is provocatively entitled "Do Christmas cards tell the truth?" Shelly concludes that they don't. Think of how the typical Christmas cards portray the story: Beautiful sentimental scenes of a confident and calm Joseph, a radiant Mary and a peacefully sleeping baby Jesus, all surrounded by cute and cuddly animals. Is this the truth about Christmas?

According to popular tradition based on the Gospel of Luke, Jesus was born in a stable. A stable is a place where animals are kept. Stables come complete with certain animal byproducts and the annoying flies these byproducts attract and the pungent odours they give off. But where in the Hallmark cards do we see the manure, the flies, the cobwebs, the stench?

In the Hallmark version of Christmas, the stable has been pressure-washed, the animals have all showered recently, and Mary looks absolutely nothing like an

exhausted young woman who has just gone through hard labour after a long journey and given birth to her first baby in a barn far from the familiarity of home and family.

It is easy to see why Christmas cards don't tell the truth. Realistic portrayals of the birth of Jesus are not likely to sell very well. And so we sentimentalize and ro-



Christmas is not about Jesus being born into perfect stables or perfect families or a perfect world. Christmas is about Jesus being born into a world that is deeply broken and hurting, a world in need of healing and redemption.

manticize Christmas, and turn the story of Jesus' birth into a perfect event that lacks the pain, agony and unpleasantness that characterize the story as told in the New Testament.

Maybe it is precisely this false perfection that prevents many people from experiencing Christmas as good news. Christmas in our society has become about perfection. Christmas cards give us a perfect stable, a perfect Mary and perfect animals. Television commercials promise us the perfect gift received in the context of a perfect family. No wonder Christmas is not experienced as good news by many people.

No wonder the men at the hostel feel their loneliness and alienation all the more intensely at Christmas. No wonder poor and marginalized people feel

their poverty and marginalization all the more acutely at Christmas. No wonder grieving people feel overwhelmed by the waves of pain. When there is deep pain and brokenness in your life, there is not much good news in a perfect Christmas. People who are hurting are not likely to find themselves at home in a perfect Christmas.

The real good news

But the real good news of Christmas is that Jesus was born in a barn. The Lord of this universe came to us as love incarnate in the form of a baby born to poor peasants. This baby was born in a dark, stinky, fly-infested stable. If you want to contemporize the story, imagine Jesus born in a back alley behind the Safeway store, where Joseph has made a bed for Mary and Jesus in the dumpster.

And that is good news. God comes to us not in and through perfection. Jesus the Christ was born into a world where there is manure, obnoxious disease-spreading flies, and where far too often life stinks. And that is good news.

Christmas is not about Jesus being born into perfect stables or perfect families or a perfect world. Christmas is about Jesus being born into a world that is deeply broken and hurting, a world in need of healing and redemption. Our Christmas cards, malls and TV commercials want us to deny, or at least turn away from, the pain, suffering and brokenness of our world. But there is not much good news in that, because if we dare to be honest with ourselves we know that many forms of brokenness are all too real in our world.

The good news of Christmas is that God does not turn away from precisely such a world, but God decides to become immersed in it. God sends Jesus the Christ to enter into the world's pain, and to bring light and hope and joy and peace and new life. The good news of Christmas can be summarized by the words of John 1:5: "*The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.*"

A light to shine for all time

Christ is the light that shone into the darkness of first-century Palestine dominated by an oppressive Roman Empire that ruled with an iron grip and taxed the life-blood out of the Jewish peasants. Christ came as light to heal the sick, cast out life-destroying demons, and to proclaim the good news that God's kingdom had arrived. Therefore, people could receive the marvellous grace of God and repent. They could leave behind sinful and destructive beliefs and ways of living. They could embrace the joy of God's reign, experience kingdom grace and forgiveness, and begin to live in the life-giving kingdom ways of peace, love, justice and righteousness now even in the midst of darkness.

Christmas is also about Jesus Christ entering the darkness of every other time and place (including ours), to bring light, healing, forgiveness, renewal and abundant life. Christmas is about Jesus coming into the darkness with God's promise that some day all of creation will be bathed and illuminated and renewed by the healing light of God, and that we can receive and walk in that light today.

Indeed, Christmas is good news, isn't it! ❧

Dan Epp-Tiessen, an associate professor of Bible at Canadian Mennonite University, Winnipeg, preached this Advent meditation at a CMU chapel service, Nov. 27, 2007. It was subsequently published in the

December 2008 issue of the Evangelical Mennonite Church Messenger and the Spring 2009 issue of Vision: A Journal for Church and Theology. Reprinted with permission of Vision.

ANOTHER VIEW OF JESUS' BIRTH

Exonerating that 'mean old innkeeper'

BY JOHN LONGHURST

People in the Middle East are legendary for their hospitality. During my travels in Israel, Jordan, Syria, Palestine and Egypt, I was invited into many homes, served coffee, sweets and sumptuous meals. Even the poorest of the poor offered what they could. To fail to show hospitality to a stranger would be unthinkable and a grave offence.

What's true today was also true in the biblical world, where the arid desert climate and distance between towns and cities made hospitality even more

important. Access to food, shelter and water could mean the difference between life and death. To not extend hospitality was considered an insult, or even an act of hostility.

What was customary for strangers went double for families. It would be unimaginable for people not to extend hospitality to relatives, especially those who had travelled considerable distances. Which is why the traditional interpretation of the nativity story—played out in countless churches this and every other Christmas season—rings so false. It's a

Mary's Lament

BY LEONA DUECK PENNER

Last night,
you came to me again,
head bowed, face veiled, birth-
fresh body robed in brown

stepping softly out of the shadows
into my midnight slumber,
you smelled faintly of blood
and of straw

And I, in my sleepy stupor,
expected to see the Christ-
child as you lifted a babe

from the folds of your robe

Instead

(your eyes glittering with grief
and sharp pain) you held out
one life-
less infant,
then another,
saying:

HIV/AIDS is to blame
for this
and for this!

Two thousand years later,
you cried,

the slaughter of children continues
and mothers in Ramah still weep!

Wide awake now,
(and pierced to the heart),
I quavered,
but what can I do?

You paused
(while tenderly enswathing
the dead babies)
then said as you
melded into the shadows:

Write this poem for a start
and see where it leads. . . .

moving story. But, says Ken E. Bailey, a Presbyterian theologian and Middle Eastern scholar, there's simply no way it could be true.

In his article, "The manger and the inn: A Middle Eastern view of the birth story of Jesus," in the Dec. 21, 2006, issue of the *Presbyterian Record*, Bailey notes that what our Bibles translate as "inn" is, in the Greek, the word *kataluma*, which means literally "guest room" and not "hotel." In other words, Joseph and Mary did not go hunting for a room at the Bethlehem Holiday Inn; they went to the home of a relative, where they naturally expected to be invited to stay. But when they got there, they found that the house was full with other relatives who, like them, had returned to Bethlehem for the census.

It's sort of like what might be happening at your house this Christmas. Your house is full when cousin Joe and his pregnant wife Mary show up unannounced late on Christmas Eve. You wouldn't tell them to go to a hotel, and you certainly wouldn't put them in a barn.

And neither did Joseph and Mary's relatives, says Bailey. He notes that it was common for animals to be kept inside a traditional Palestinian home at night for safety. The homes, he says, had two levels: the larger upper level was where the family ate, lived and slept; the smaller lower level was for the animals. The two levels were connected by a short set of stairs, and a manger—a feed trough—was built into the edge of the upper level so the animals could stand up and feed at night if they were hungry.

And it was on the edge of that upper level, says Bailey, where Joseph and Mary slept and Jesus was born. Not in a smelly stable, but in the comfort of a home surrounded by loving relatives.

What does this version of the nativity scene do to our understanding of the biblical story?

First, says Bailey, it takes terrible weight off that "mean old innkeeper" and all the cruel inhabitants of first-century



Bethlehem. "Is the entire village of Bethlehem so hard-hearted that no home is open to a pregnant woman about to give birth?" he asks, adding, "Our western tradition has, across the years, invented details that do not fit our Middle Eastern world as a real story about real people in a real village."

Second, he says, it makes the incarnation "more authentic." Over time, he observes, the birth of Jesus has become so mythologized that it hardly seems real. "The traditional inn-and-stable scene succeeds only in distancing Jesus. It makes it all so far away and long ago,

the make-believe world of Christmas cards and medieval carols. If he had been born in Caesar Augustus' palace he could hardly be more remote from real life."

The birth of Jesus, he concludes, is moving, life-giving and transforming because it took place "not in exceptional circumstances, but in a very ordinary setting. We may picture him surrounded by the laughter and bustle and family goodwill of a comfortable, if not palatial, home.

"Of course, there are the smells and noises of the animals—but that is part of normal village life, and no one would wish it otherwise. . . . Jesus is born in a real, live, warm, loving, crowded home, just as any other Jewish boy might expect to have been. In other words, he is one of us." ❧

John Longhurst is the director of marketing and sales for Mennonite Publishing Network, and a columnist for the Winnipeg Free Press and the Steinbach (Man.) Carillon, which both ran this piece a few years ago. Reprinted with permission of the author.

/// For discussion

1. Dan Epp-Tiessen writes that "Christmas in our society has become about perfection." Do you agree? How much do we strive for perfection when it comes to decorations, activities and food? Does an image of a "perfect" Christmas make it impossible to achieve? How can we reduce the pressure for perfection in our families?

2. Have you experienced pain or disappointment in the Christmas season? How does your family compare to the image of the loving family getting together at Christmas? Are there times when you have almost hated Christmas?

3. What are some examples of how we sentimentalize or romanticize this season? If you imagine "Jesus born in a back alley behind the Safeway store, where Joseph made a bed for Mary and Jesus in a dumpster," how does that change the story? How is the figure of Mary in Leona Dueck Penner's poem different from the Mary depicted on a Hallmark card?

4. John Longhurst says Jesus was not born in the stable of an inn, but in a crowded house. How does this change our interpretation of Jesus' birth? What would your family do to accommodate cousin Joe and his pregnant wife if they showed up unannounced at your house?

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.

✉ Take the Bible truthfully, just not literally

THE LETTER FROM Anne Millar ("Laity, clergy need to be on the same page," Nov. 2, page 8) commented on the "communication gap between the pulpit and the pew." Her letter ended with the quote, "*unless you become like little children. . .*"

Yes, we can learn from little children.

A five-year-old assured me that Santa is real. "I believe in Santa," he said with sincere, fervent conviction. Children eventually no longer believe in the literal Santa. They move from the literalism of the childhood story to the greater message behind the story. Children make this transition without experiencing trauma or losing trust in their parents. If children can do this so easily with the Santa story, why are many adults so fearful of speaking of the deeper meaning of

the biblical stories (myths)?

Many civilizations have stories that parallel biblical stories. Modern-thinking people cannot accept some of these stories literally. They can, however, eagerly embrace these stories as "true" but not literal. When these stories are understood literally, we greatly diminish their spiritual significance and life-transforming power.

BERTHA LANDERS, WATERLOO, ONT.

✉ Peace button 'a respectful addition' to the poppy

I FOUND THE "To remember is to work for peace" article on the creation and evolution of the peace button interesting (Nov. 2, page 18).

However, I also note that the peace button is viewed as an "an alternative to the poppy."

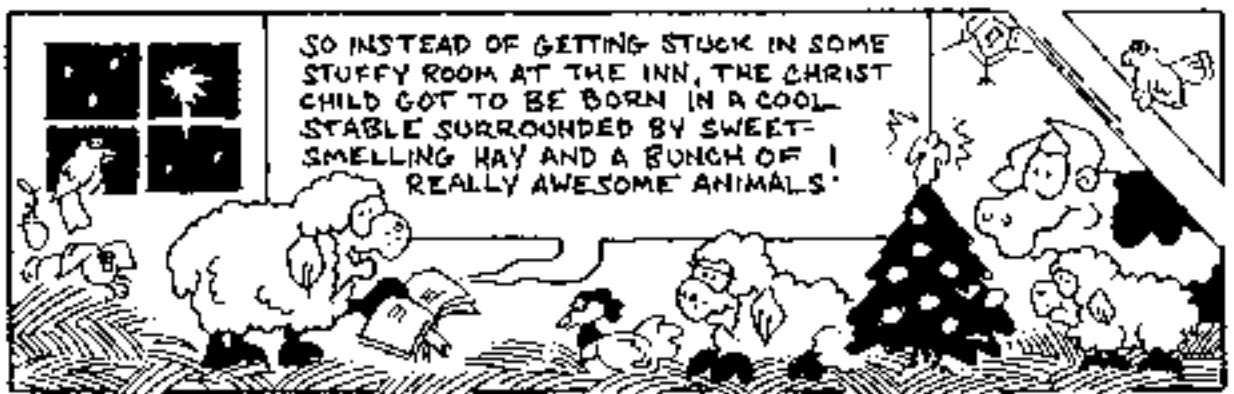
I work in a seniors facility owned and operated by Mennonite churches, which is home to many different faiths and perspectives, including both conscientious objectors and veterans. This presents a particular challenge on Remembrance Day, with some feeling strongly one way or the other.

This challenge was met by creating a Remembrance Day service that has both veterans and objectors from past wars and conflicts sitting next to each other and sharing their stories. They are, at an advanced age, learning to respect each other for doing what they believed was right.

It is an absolute honour to attend these services where different beliefs stand shoulder to shoulder and sing the Canadian anthem. We have both the poppy and the peace button in our lobbies. We do not view the peace button as an alternative to the poppy but as a respectful addition, and many of us wear them both.

WALLY BAERGEN, WINNIPEG

Pontius' Puddle



✉ 'Holmesers' has a historic, geographic meaning

RE: "FROM AMISH to Mennonite, Mapleview builds for the future," Nov. 2, page 15. Thanks for the article on Mapleview's 150th anniversary. I have many friends and relatives in the congregations mentioned and enjoyed reading about their celebration.

May I offer one correction to your article? At the time of the division in 1886, you say that the group that preferred to worship in homes were called the

"Homesers." I grew up hearing that word, but the actual spelling and interpretation is different than your article suggests. The spelling of the term is "Holmesers" and it has a historic and geographic meaning. At the time of the division, all the Amish Mennonite bishops based here in Ontario supported the building of meetinghouses. The non-meeting-house group needed bishopric leadership from elsewhere and received it from Holmes County, Ohio. Thus, they were nicknamed the "Holmesers."

FRED LICHTY, LISTOWEL, ONT.

OUTSIDE THE BOX

A pastor's dirty little secret

PHIL WAGLER

There is a dirty little secret we pastors want you to know, but are reticent to share because we're afraid. We're afraid the flock will hysterically charge the fences if we're honest. We know how woolly a sheep stampede can be. Mutton hits the fan, usually ours. So we keep quiet.

Enough fear already! You need to know this dirty little secret, so here it is: We need to be reminded what it is we're supposed to be doing.

Let me explain. We like you and love you, and we want you to like and love us. We know you do, we think. Actually, to be truthful, we're not always sure

you do. And since we're so skittish, and because we're very human

sheep, we are prone to hedge on what we're supposed to be doing.

Now don't start thinking we're a gaggle of hyper-active, insecure tweens desperately searching for acceptance! It's just that as much as we serve because of God's call, we can be easily seduced by the call to please God's people—and there's a fine but distinct line between the two. See, you pay our way, or at least

some of it. You can vote us out if you don't approve and we know that what we're really supposed to be doing will not always receive your approval.

This is the minister's great conundrum. And so to fan into flame what burns—or should burn—in us requires a few of you courageously calling us back to our primary call. It's what we really know we must do, yet we need you, our sisters and brothers, to lead us to lead you to follow our Leader. You must ask and expect us to stay on task despite well-reasoned arguments and cultural pressure to focus elsewhere. If you don't, many of us will cave in and then we'll contribute to the

caving in of the very church we all love.

Careful, though! You're as sheepish as we are, don't forget. Tempted as we are to please you, you are equally tempted to want us to please you. You'd like us to be therapists, bureaucrats, CEOs, social workers, social conveners, politicians of the left or right, and religious managers, while spouting theology that tickles ears and won't put you to sleep, but won't

wake you up either!

So the secret is, we need you to remind us of what we're supposed to be doing, but are you really willing to do it? See, if we reorient, it's going to require your reorientation too.

Here's what we need to be called back to, loud, clear and often: "[D]o not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord . . . but share in suffering for the gospel by the power of God who saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began, and which now has been manifested through the appearing of our Saviour Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel . . ." (II Timothy 1:8-10).

We must be unashamed lead witnesses among you of the person and power of Jesus. You must be unashamed in expecting us to focus on this task for your

You must ask and expect us to stay on task despite well-reasoned arguments and cultural pressure to focus elsewhere.



sake and for the world's sake. It really is what we're supposed to do.

Phil Wagler is author of the book, Kingdom Culture, and loves being asked to unashamedly hold the good news of the Saviour before Kingsfield-Zurich Mennonite and Kingsfield-Clinton churches in Ontario (phil@kingsfieldcommon.ca).

✉ Retelling the Pharisee and tax collector parable for a peace audience

IN RESPONSE TO David Wiebe's "Who needs salvation if we have peace and justice?" letter, Nov. 16, page 8, hear this modern paraphrase of Christ's parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector (Luke 18:9-14):

"To some who felt that they could gain salvation through working for peace and justice, this parable was told:

"Two men lay down to rest after a hard day's work. One was a religious man and the other a soldier on active duty in Afghanistan.

"As he relaxed, the religious man thought, 'I'm glad I'm not like some others I know. I attend church regularly. I've served on several church boards. I've gone on a Mennonite Disaster Service assignment and I support the work of Mennonite Central Committee. I have actively protested my government's involvement in Afghanistan and I am chair of my community's

NEW ORDER VOICE

A spirituality beyond generosity

WILL BRAUN

My Grade 12 English teacher made us study junk mail and magazine ads. Whether these forms of communication were noble or not, Mr. Danielson wanted us to learn from the considerable skill and craft that went into writing them. I suspect he also wanted us to learn how to analyze the many media messages we would encounter in life.

He was one of the finest teachers I ever had, so I took the rather unorthodox assignment seriously. And the lesson stuck. Perhaps too well. Since Grade 12, I've developed the geeky habit of scrutinizing promotional materials. I'm particularly interested in materials put out by faith-based development organizations. So this time of year, with its many fundraising appeals, provides plenty of glossy grist. I scan them not only for the quality of writing and design, but also for content and method. My underlying question is: What sort of spirituality is being nurtured? What sentiment, value or impulse in me do they appeal to?

This season, one brochure stands out. It has poor photos, cheesy design, an all-around amateur feel and a spiritual depth

that made something within me shift. It is from the Missionaries of the Poor, a monastic order based in Jamaica. It was sent by a friend who has visited them.

The main message of the brochure is simple: "We meet Christ in the poor . . . in the crippled, in the street children, in the mentally challenged, in the orphaned, in the homeless and abandoned. . . . You can meet him too!" Each phrase is accompanied by a photo of one of the monks with someone from each group mentioned. Some images are heart-

warming, some are disturbing; all show deep, simple love.

The pamphlet includes information for donors, but the bigger appeal is an invitation to make a pilgrimage to Jamaica to pray at the monastery, work among the poor and "encounter Jesus Christ among the homeless and the destitute."

The brochure stands out both because it enlivens something deep within me and because it stands in contrast to the typical promo narrative of many other church charities. Such materials are usually less about discovering the mystery of Christ's love in unpleasant places than discovering

our own rewarding virtuousness. The standard message is that "you can make a difference." The implication is that you will feel good if you help the ever-so-appreciative child pictured. You are a good person if you give. You. You. You.

This is not all bad—generosity is important—but it is a different spirituality than that of discovering the unity of Christ's body by patiently feeding the body of a deformed and abandoned baby. One could say it is the difference between an advance pat on the back and a bold invitation to deep transformation.

Although I think our Mennonite organizations are less you-centred in their materials than the likes of World Vision, they are drifting in that direction. Our organizations, which play a vital role in communicating to us the messages arising from the pain of the world, too often seem more eager to tickle the fancy of donors than to invite spiritual quest. And yes, of course, money is needed if they

You are a good person if you give. You. You. You.

are to remain serving among the least of these. But if the only thing Christ is saying to us from the margins is that we should write cheques, then perhaps we've missed something.

The monks in Jamaica point to something more profound than my own self-satisfying feelings about the difference I can make. They point to an encounter not with my own perceived goodness, but with the disturbing, loving, unifying Christ.

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



peace and justice committee.

"But the soldier wept as he rested his head upon his pillow and recalled all he had seen and experienced that day. 'Why can't there be peace in the world?' he wondered. 'I so much desire peace, so that those young Afghan girls I saw can go to school and not live in fear, so that the Afghan people can finally experience life without strife and warfare, so I can go home and spend time with my family. It's almost Christmas. Don't they say that Jesus is the Prince of Peace? Why, then, is there no peace? God, if you exist, forgive me. My efforts are too feeble to account for much. Have mercy on us.'

"I tell you that God sees the heart and hears the cry of those who humble themselves, but the righteous shall perish."

In conclusion, Jesus said in John 3:3, that "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again.

EMERY ENS, LANGHAM, SASK.

✉ Peace and justice just not enough

RE: "WHO NEEDS salvation if you have peace and justice" letter, Nov. 16, page 8.

David Wiebe's letter reminded me of the speech of humanist Dan Barker at the World Religions Conference in Waterloo, Ont., on Oct. 24. His words were rational and made a lot of sense, basically arguing that all that is good in many religions are really just the human values of doing good, helping others, and ensuring justice and peace.

Wiebe's words seem to echo these sentiments when he wrote, "Who needs salvation if you have peace and justice?" I think this is like saying, since I'm married and have three healthy children, then who needs love? I can look at the many rational reasons that a good marriage and a peaceful, fair family are good things, but I'm afraid I don't see that as enough. I also need the mutual, unconditional love of my family and the many amazing "irrational" things that happen in loving relationships.

That's how I see salvation and mutual love for God. Justice and peace are great goals, but they are not enough. God didn't just say to love each other, but first we are to love God. Salvation, God's unconditional love and our relationship with God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit, are all part of God's kingdom plan that will also bring peace and justice for all. I can't fully explain all the aspects of my faith anymore than I can fully explain all the ways or reasons I love my wife and family, but I know it's about more than peace and justice.

BRENT HORST, ST. JACOBS, ONT.

✉ Former pastor forgives Mennonites for unfriendliness

RE: "THE (UN)FRIENDLINESS factor" editorial, Nov. 30, page 2.

I was moved while reading Dick Benner's editorial. I have ordination credentials with the General Conference Mennonite Church from the 1980s. I was a pastor within the conference for two decades.

Neither I nor my spouse are of ethnic/cultural Mennonite background. The unfriendliness factor was a definite part of our decision to no longer be in Mennonite ministry. We were never part of "our people," as we were told regularly. Our name is not "Mennonite" and we were reminded of this very often. Some could not believe I was a Mennonite pastor. I was made to feel I was a liar by others.

My prayer is that Mennonite churches would realize they need to be friendly and embracing to all who come, as they are looking for the Lord and we are his body. But when his body is not acting like Jesus, then how are these new people to find him?

Given the obsession to maintain Mennonite identity based upon family and history, I wonder if it is even possible.

The Mennonite church has so much to offer, so it makes me sad to see it limited by its attitudes. I commend you for writing boldly and hope it helps the Mennonite church.

I have let it go and have forgiven those who do not see their ways are hurtful and harmful.

NAME WITHHELD BY REQUEST

✉ Mennonites need to work to get Bill C-447 passed into law

THANK YOU FOR the "Principles of peace gaining broader recognition" article, Nov. 2, page 19.

Never in Canadian parliamentary history have politicians come up with a piece of legislation that touches so many things that Christians and millions of peace-loving citizens hold dear. As the article indicated, the bill will have a difficult time to become law and therefore it's imperative for us to demonstrate a groundswell of support for it.

A Member of Parliament that I discussed this bill with suggested the following:

- Let your local MP know that you support this bill.
- Encourage your local MP to do the same.
- Copy all party leaders in your correspondence.
- Collect petitions and send them to your MP.
- Write to your local newspaper.

GERHARD NEUFELD, WINNIPEG

/// Milestones

Births/Adoptions

Cressman—Katelynn Ann (b. Nov. 2, 2009), to Kristen and Daryl Cressman, East Zorra Mennonite, Tavistock, Ont.

Davis—Archer Bradley (b. Nov. 29, 2009), to Bradley Davis and Martha Buckwalter-Davis, Sherbrooke Mennonite, Vancouver, B.C.

Derksen—Preston Zade (b. Sept. 27, 2009), to Michael Derksen and Megan Hubbard, Hague Mennonite, Sask.

Enns—Tayo Jacob (b. Nov. 12, 2009), to Kimberly (Glenlea Mennonite, Man.) and Daniel Enns of Winnipeg.

Falk—Nicole Carolyn (b. Nov. 11, 2009), to Trevor and Stephanie Falk, Bethany Mennonite, Virgil, Ont.

Fehr—Rylyn Mark (b. Nov. 10, 2009), to Lyndon and Carol Fehr, Morden Mennonite, Man.

Fischer—Emerson Ann (b. Nov. 4, 2009), to Blake and Tricia Fischer, North Leamington United Mennonite, Leamington, Ont.

Kelley—Sam (b. Nov. 1, 2009), to Jessica and Stephen Kelley, Erb Street Mennonite, Waterloo, Ont.

Konrad—Braidan (b. Sept. 30, 2006; adopted March 28, 2009), by Jeff and Terril Konrad, North Leamington United Mennonite, Leamington, Ont.

McLauchlan—Braden Michael (b. Sept. 11, 2009), to Daryl and Krista McLauchlan, Douglas Mennonite, Winnipeg. Correction to Oct. 5 Milestones announcement.

Moussa—Sophia and Zineddine Ali (b. Nov. 1, 2009), to Ali and Christine Moussa, North Leamington United Mennonite, Leamington, Ont.

Nighswander—Nicholas Daniel Rempel (b. Oct. 3, 2009), to Heidi and Stephen Nighswander-Rempel, Hope Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Neufeld—Avery Maelyn (b. Aug. 19, 2009), to Tom and Melissa Neufeld, North Leamington United Mennonite, Leamington, Ont.

Rahn—Noah Jacob Israel (b. Sept. 30, 2009), to Erwin and Rachelanne Rahn, Leamington United Mennonite, Ont.

Sawatzky—Connor Brian Martin (b. Sept. 21, 2009), to Jason and Andrea Sawatzky, Bergthal Mennonite, Didsbury, Alta.

Schlegel—Nicholas James (b. Sept. 17, 2009), to James Schlegel and Juliane Shantz, Stirling Avenue Mennonite, Kitchener, Ont.

Sinnock—Jack Jeffery (b. Sept. 12, 2009), to Jeff and Marie Sinnock, Douglas Mennonite, Winnipeg.

Wiens—Meredith Kathleen (b. Oct. 23, 2009), to Devin and Jimmee Wiens, Ebenfeld Mennonite, Herschel, Sask.

Williams—Jackson Robert (b. March 1, 2009), to Michael and Samantha Williams, North Leamington United Mennonite, Leamington, Ont.

Baptisms

Dustin Parker, Mike Witzel—Cassel Mennonite, Tavistock, Ont. Nov. 22, 2009

Candice Blyde—Kingsfield-Zurich Mennonite, Ont., Nov. 15, 2009.

Alex Albrecht, Braden Gerber, Vanessa Gerber, Nikki Gray—Mapleview Mennonite, Wellesley, Ont., Nov. 1, 2009.

Bradley Edward Bergen—North Star Mennonite, Drake, Sask., Nov. 1, 2009.

Devon Howie, Tony Do—Sherbrooke Mennonite, Vancouver, B.C., Nov. 29, 2009.

Marriages

Dick/Dyck—Jonathan Dick and Sandra Dyck, North Leamington United Mennonite, Leamington, Ont., Aug. 1, 2009.

Driedger/Hazlehurst—Rachel Driedger and Barry Hazlehurst, North Leamington United Mennonite, Leamington, Ont., May 16, 2009.

Dueck/Hoff—Jacqueline Dueck and Peter Hoff, Vineland United Mennonite, Ont., Oct. 10, 2009.

Enns/Hogeterp—Tom Enns and Leanne Hogeterp, North Leamington United Mennonite, Leamington, Ont., Sept. 26, 2009.

Gouden/Pettapiece—Kensi Gouden and Jennifer Pettapiece, North Leamington United Mennonite, Leamington, Ont., July 6, 2009.

Lehn/Stevenson—Craig Lehn and Danielle Stevenson, North Leamington United Mennonite, Leamington, Ont., July 18, 2009.

Mogk/Zehr—Dustin Mogk and Naomi Zehr, at East Zorra Mennonite, Tavistock, Ont., Oct. 17, 2009.

Deaths

Bender—Aaron Timothy, 22 months (b. Dec. 21, 2007; d. Nov. 3, 2009), East Zorra Mennonite, Tavistock, Ont.

Dyck—George, 83 (b. Feb. 26, 1926; d. Oct. 27, 2009), Winkler Bergthaler Mennonite, Man.

Dyck—John N., 96 (b. Feb. 13, 1913; d. Nov. 19, 2009), Rosthern Mennonite, Sask.

Epp—Justina, 94 (d. Nov. 18, 2009), Zoar Mennonite, Waldheim, Sask.

Giesbrecht—Bill, 88 (b. Feb. 19, 1921; d. Oct. 15, 2009), Winkler Bergthaler Mennonite, Man.

Hunsberger—Amy, 82 (b. July 1, 1927; d. Nov. 24, 2009), Shantz Mennonite, Baden, Ont.

Iutzi—Lester, 80 (d. Nov. 7, 2009), Tavistock Mennonite, 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.

GOD AT WORK IN THE CHURCH

Future of Camp Assiniboia Forest under evaluation

Budget, lack of consultation with churches also on MC Manitoba fall delegate session agenda

STORY AND PHOTO BY EVELYN REMPEL PETKAU

Manitoba Correspondent
STEINBACH, MAN.

The future of the Camp Assiniboia Forest, a budget increase that is a decline in “real dollars,” and the lack of progress made in visiting all 50 congregations topped the list of items discussed at the 2009 Mennonite Church Manitoba fall delegate session, held on Nov. 16 in Steinbach.

Attendance just met quorum requirements, with 110 delegates present. Only 32 of the 50 congregations were represented at the meeting.

After nearly two years of work, the Camp Assiniboia Property Task Force delivered its report that calls for committing “to the long-term protection and careful environmental management” of the forest, and for pursuing “a partnership with the Manitoba Habitat Heritage Corporation” in order to best carry out such protection and management.

The task force sought the help of Harv Sawatzky Consulting to do a baseline environmental assessment during the summer of 2009.

“Given what [the Camp Assiniboia Forest has] been through the last 100 years, it’s in remarkable condition,” task force chair Hugo Peters noted from the assessment. “It is not unique, in that there are other environments like this in the Assiniboine Valley, but not many are left,” he added.

The delegates did not take issue with the first part of the recommendation, but they wanted more discussion on the partnership proposal.

A week before the meeting, outgoing executive director Edgar Rempel and moderator Hans Werner sent churches a list of other considerations to ponder, including possibly “developing the property, more

specifically the forest, for program-related buildings and activities.” Such actions give “us the opportunity to optimize the commercial value of the land for possible sale, should that become necessary,” their letter noted.

Treading water financially

The board presented a 1 percent increase in congregational giving for 2010.

Treasurer Tom Seals outlined how the proposed church budget donations of \$691,779 would be allocated between the four ministries:

- Church community-building ministries, which includes media ministries (35 percent);
- Camping (29 percent);
- Leadership (20 percent); and
- Evangelism and service (16 percent).

“We aren’t sure if we are on track with the 2009 budget yet,” Seals admitted,

reporting that only about 60 percent of this year’s congregational budget had been received as of the meeting date.

Board chair Hans Werner pointed out that the 1 percent increase “would enable us to just keep doing what we are doing. In real dollars it is a decline.”

The delegates accepted a total spending budget of \$1.67 million for 2010.

‘Busy people’

Frustrations with such a packed agenda and yet so little discussion time were also evident following a report by Werner on the constituency dialogue process.

At the February annual general meeting, the board committed itself to trying to visit each of the 50 MC Manitoba congregations by June, “to invite dialogue for future direction . . . and how we might structure our activities to align with that vision.”

When questioned why it had only been able to visit 14 of the congregations to date, Werner responded, “You are busy people.” Although he said the visits had been a “fair” representation of the conference, “absent from this report are perspectives from our more recent immigrant and aboriginal congregations.”

Werner noted that many of the visits touched on the theme of MC Manitoba’s identity and lack of vision.

With a revised deadline for dialogue moved to the end of 2009, the board plans to present the implications of what it has heard at the Feb. 19-20 annual general meeting in Winnipeg. ❧



David Hogue, left, manager of Camp Assiniboia, and Hugo Peters, chair of camp’s property report task force, ham it up for the camera despite divergent opinions on Camp Assiniboia Forest recommendations. Feelings towards this issue run deep.

Ministering in a post-apartheid world

Canadian couple works to strengthen the bonds between Canadian and South African churches

BY RACHEL BERGEN
National Correspondent

Andrew and Karen Suderman may only have been in Pietermaritzburg, South Africa, for four months, but they can already tell that their work with Mennonite Church Canada Witness is having an effect on the people there.

One Sunday, when the Sudermans attended a church in one of the largest townships in South Africa near Cape Town, an older woman asked why they had come to her country. When they explained that they were from MC Canada sent to walk alongside them and participate in how God works in their local church, the woman embraced them with “one of the warmest and most exuberant hugs I have ever received,” Karen says.

Townships are poor city districts on the periphery of urban areas where non-whites were forced to live during the apartheid era and where many still reside. According to Karen, they now struggle with unemployment rates as high as 90 percent, and high rates of HIV/AIDS, crime and violence.

The echoes of apartheid are still audible in South Africa, according to Karen, who formerly worked as the ad rep for *Canadian Mennonite*, as “many face daily struggles reminiscent of that era. . . . The system was carefully constructed as it systematically and efficiently squeezed basic human dignity out of a large percentage of the people.”

This is where MC Canada can make a difference. Hippolyto Tshimanga, mission partnership facilitator for Africa and Europe, explains that the goal is to form a network of people “who share a common belief and a message of healing, reconciliation and hope. We want to sustain churches to work through these issues.”

For the Sudermans, this means that they will teach theological classes from

an Anabaptist perspective. As well, they will be involved in the creation of an Anabaptist network and centre, peace and reconciliation ministries, and in supporting local congregational ministries, including HIV/AIDS and community-building programs.

South Africans are working to “re-imagine and re-identify themselves post-apartheid,” Karen says, adding that a network of people and churches will hopefully support this metamorphosis.

Tshimanga believes the Sudermans have “the qualities and the skills needed for that mission. We want to bring our gifts and resources to help sister churches . . . and be an organ to do ministry abroad,” he says of MC Canada Witness’s efforts.

This will be difficult, though, according to Tim Froese, MC Canada Witness’s executive director of international ministries. There is still “a lot of work to do in South Africa and . . . Andrew and Karen will live this reality” over the next three years, he says.

According to Froese, the challenges



Karen and Andrew Suderman, MC Canada's new Witness workers in South Africa, relax in front of their home in Pietermaritzburg, near Durban.

that face the Sudermans include the 11 languages that are spoken there, the incredible economic diversity and the fact that “the post-apartheid aspect is still a challenge.”

Despite these complexities, “it is inspiring to see, learn and walk with those who are witnessing to the world what it means to embody the good news in their different contexts—creating communities that embody peace, hope and reconciliation in the way they interact with their neighbours and their enemies,” Andrew said in a Conrad Grebel University College press release. Andrew is a graduate of Grebel’s master of theological studies program. ❧

/// Briefly noted

MC Eastern Canada honours pastoral mentors with workshop on mentoring

Mennonite Church Eastern Canada wanted to say thank you to those who give freely of their time to mentor new pastors and pastors new to MC Eastern Canada, so, with the help of an anonymous gift, it offered current and potential mentors a free two-day workshop on mentoring. Nancy Sayer, a counsellor and leadership coach from Illinois, led the 40 pastors in practical skills and self-awareness exercises. The presence of Bok Ki Kim and Richard Kim, two Korean pastors, enlivened the discussion of the Chinese symbol for listening. Richard noted that the symbol is made up of four parts: in the first column an ear is over a king, since a good king listens to his people; in the second column, an eye and heart round out the idea of listening as a holistic effort.

—BY DAVE ROGALSKY

'Jesus is calling your name'

Eastern Canada women enriched by day with their peers

COMPILED FROM A REPORT
BY DARLENE CULP
LISTOWEL, ONT.

When Barbara Martens first stepped out of a Palestinian home as a Christian Peacemaker Teams (CPT) member and walked with a child to get food during a 24-hour curfew, she was terrified at the machine guns pointing at her.

Martens, one of two speakers to address some 175 women gathered at Listowel Mennonite Church for the Women of Mennonite Church Eastern Canada's Fall Enrichment Day on Oct. 24, explained that Palestinian children were assigned the task of getting food because the Israeli soldiers were less likely to harm a child. Even though frightened, she kept a few steps behind the child. When they arrived at the food distribution area, the child looked up at her and said, "Well done!"

As a psychologist and registered massage therapist from Ruthven, Ont., Martens has served several times with CPT, most recently in Hebron this past summer. This story was only one narrative showing the hardships created for the Palestinian people by the Israeli occupation.

For her presentation entitled "Tears and triumph," Martens wore a beautifully designed dress with lovely handwork purchased from a Palestinian family, so they could pay their bills. The average Palestinian lives on \$2 a day.

She told more stories of injustices, one of the most dramatic about an owner of a productive piece of land where cisterns were used to water the crops. He asked her to photograph the demolition of the cisterns by the Israelis. She got only a little footage, fearing that it would be confiscated and that she would be arrested.

Hedy Sawadsky of Vineland Ont., spoke passionately in the morning session on the theme, "With Jesus on the way."



Hedy Sawadsky, left, and Barbara Martens spoke about their work with Christian Peacemaker Teams at this fall's Women of Mennonite Church Eastern Canada's Enrichment Day.

Sawadsky has served with Mennonite Central Committee in Jordan, Jerusalem, Manitoba and Ontario, and also with CPT in the Middle East and Haiti. In her presentation, she drew four examples from the Bible of women who had significant encounters with Jesus and who were then divinely obedient. She suggested that "the

path truly is discovered by walking it." Her challenge to the women was, "Jesus is now calling your name."

A candle was lit at the conclusion of each biblical example, with the women responding, "Lord Jesus, bring healing and hope." ❧

CAPTURING THE SPIRIT OF THE EARLY CHURCH

Have you ever wondered what it would be like to visit churches that reflect the nature of first century believers? After spending several weeks visiting Chinese churches, Pastor Jim Loepp-Thiessen of Kitchener discovered the "kind of spirit that needs to be recaptured in North America...calling on God, instead of ourselves." We are offering an opportunity for pastors and church leaders to connect with Chinese pastors and believers, to experience first-hand the vibrancy of a church that is emerging from a difficult past while ministering in a fast-changing society.

For information on participation in this April, 2010 learning visit, contact us at meyler@mpc.mennonite.net or visit www.mennonitepartnerschina.org and click on the "Church in China Tour".



MENNONITE PARTNERS IN CHINA

COVER STORY



Seen from behind the monument in Zaporizhyya, Ukraine, 300 Ukrainians and visiting Mennonites from around the world were on hand on Oct. 10 for the unveiling of a memorial to the 30,000 Mennonites who died or were killed primarily during the 1920s and '30s in the former Soviet Union.

'Blessed are they that mourn'

Monument to victims of Stalinist terror, oppression and tribulation unveiled

BY ANNE KONRAD

Special to *Canadian Mennonite*
ZAPORIZHYYA, UKRAINE

Susanna Hildebrand's husband disappeared in 1929. During the 1933 famine, she picked up a few cobs of corn on the road and was arrested. Sentenced to seven years in jail, she died in prison.

Paul, son of Helena Ens of Khortitsa, was home, recovering from an operation in 1937 when he was arrested at 3 in the morning. Hustled onto a truck filled with arrested Mennonite men, he was never seen again.

They are just two of 30,000 Mennonites who perished in similar ways, victims of tribulation, Stalinist terror and religious oppression in the former Soviet Union during the last century. But on Oct. 10, in Zaporizhyya, 300 local Ukrainians and

foreign visitors solemnly dedicated a major monument to their memory.

The memorial consists of three life-size silhouettes: a woman, a man and two children. Etched into the base are Jesus' words, "Blessed are those who mourn," in English, German, Russian and Ukrainian.

The monument, a powerful symbol of the heartache and emptiness of a generation of survivors, is a significant marker in the worldwide commemoration of the Soviet Mennonite tragedy. It is the first within the former Soviet Union to memorialize all Soviet Mennonites. A place where Mennonites can mourn and contemplate, it draws attention to the human cost of a totalitarian system and tells the larger story

of tyranny, suffering and oblivion.

After a decade of planning, the monument was erected by the International Mennonite Memorial Committee for the Former Soviet Union. The city of Zaporizhyya was a full partner in the installation. Others assisting were the B.C. Mennonite Historical Society and Mennonite Heritage Cruise. The memorial was funded by donations from Mennonite conferences, historical societies, private individuals and groups.

The memorial is in a public park with a newly built children's playground, tall trees and paths radiating from the monument site. Symbolically, it is in the heart of the one-time Mennonite village of Khortitsa, the cradle of Mennonite life in Tsarist Russia. In 1789, Mennonites from today's Poland, invited to settle there by Catherine the Great, founded the village.

Mennonite visitors participated in a poignant candle-lighting ceremony, at which Paul Toews of California recalled Mennonite ancestors who came to the Ukrainian Steppes full of hope, seeking a refuge. Almost none remain, but many

COVER STORY

lie in nameless graves in nameless places. Visitors lit candles for grandfathers and uncles killed during the Purge Years of 1937-38. One man at the ceremony told of 14 missing relatives.

For 140 years, Mennonites spread into villages, towns and farms across the Russian empire. After the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917, Mennonites came under increasingly harsh persecution because of their active religious life, German language and steadfast resistance to Soviet rule and state-approved atheism.

In the 1920s, many immigrated to Canada, but thousands remained to be treated as hostile enemies of the state, religious fanatics, counter-revolutionaries and fascists. Preachers and religious leaders were arrested. Families were dispossessed, exiled, forced into collective farms and prison labour camps. Many died of starvation, disease and overwork. Many others were executed.

Actively participating in the event were members of Mennonite churches in Zaporizhya and Kutuzovka (Molochna), the Ukrainian Tokmak Rhapsody Chamber Choir, a Mennonite Heritage Cruise choir, local city officials, residents and guests.

"This monument bears enduring witness to the suffering of many thousands who cannot speak for themselves," said Peter Klassen of Fresno, Calif., co-chair of the memorial committee, in opening the ceremony.

Harvey Dyck, the other committee co-chair and main project organizer, recalled Anabaptist Thieleman van Braght's admonition that the lives of 4,000 martyrs in *The Martyrs Mirror* should always be remembered. Equally, Dyck said, "The story of 30,000 Soviet Mennonites should not be lost."

In a prayer of consecration, Jacob Tiessen, now pastor of Mennonite Kutuzovka Church, said, "Let those who see this monument remember the paths of faith and suffering of the Mennonites of the U.S.S.R."

Prominent Ukrainian historian Fedor Turchenko spoke of a "sacred duty of remembering the past . . . ensuring it never happens again." ❧

Prayer for the departed

Carol Penner, pastor of The First Mennonite Church of Vineland, Ont., spoke the following prayer at the Oct. 10 memorial unveiling:

God of grace,
in the shelter of your wings of caring
we gather together.
It is you who has brought us here,
across political boundaries,
across oceans,
across culture and language,
across all that has and would divide us.
We stand here as one in solemn witness.
We thank you for memories which,
though sown in turmoil
and watered with tears,
were preserved and tended
across the decades.
These seeds of memory here, today,
before us,
blossom in a rich harvest of peace.
This is your doing.
The victims of violence, bloodshed
and hatred

find, at last, their perfect consolation.
Under this peaceful sky,
across great divides,
against all odds, we meet as brothers
and sisters,
remembering
and shedding tears together.
Together we say, "Never again."
May the memories we share today
be planted in our hearts
to bear good fruit
for generations yet unborn.
This monument will forever remind us
of our great sorrow.
Let it also remind us of
your monumental healing power,
the power of the Prince of Peace,
in whose name we pray,
Amen.

PHOTOS BY T. DYCK



It was a solemn occasion for those who gathered to witness the unveiling of the memorial.

Assembly 15 ends up in the black

MWC officers also discuss future assemblies, forgiving Lutherans

BY FERNE BURKHARDT

Mennonite World Conference Release
ST. JACOBS, ONT.

At their first meeting since Assembly 15 in Paraguay in July, Mennonite World Conference (MWC) officers learned in early November that the closing financial figures for the assembly were positive, with a balance of \$325,340 in the assembly fund as of Oct. 31.

Executive secretary Larry Miller attributed this result to strong international registration, robust donations from Paraguayan Mennonites and careful cost control by staff.

Officers decided to set aside \$125,340 of the balance for costs related to preparing for the next assembly, and to give a \$50,000 gift to Paraguayan member churches in gratitude for their hospitality and generosity in hosting the global church this summer.

An additional \$150,000 is to be held in reserve for use in building the capacity of the Africa, Asia and Latin America continental caucuses, and the development of MWC representation on each continent.

Assembly offerings totalled \$27,824. As announced at Assembly Gathered in Paraguay, these funds have been placed in the Global Church Sharing Fund. MWC dispenses money from this fund to help member churches, primarily in the global South, with special needs or approved projects.

Future assemblies

Discussion around future assemblies continues to percolate. There is anxiety in some quarters about holding assemblies less frequently, officers noted.

New MWC treasurer Ernst Bergen of Paraguay said that he hears that assemblies are important, and that the frequency—every six years—should be continued. Some voices have raised concerns, though, about the high cost and significant carbon footprint left by so much travel.

“There is a push that something be done

to know where and when the next assembly will be,” advised president Danisa Ndlovu of Zimbabwe.

Miller proposed three possible options:

- Keep the current pattern (every six years);
- Gather every nine years; or
- Gather every eight years, with general council meetings held every four, instead of three. Continental meetings could be held in intervening years.

A comparative staffing, financial and environmental cost analysis of all meeting options is to be completed by the end of May 2010, as called for previously by the Future of Assemblies Task Group. A recommendation on the future of assemblies, including when and where the next assembly should be held, will be discussed by the executive committee at its meeting in July 2010.

Inter-church relations

Officers heard that the International Lutheran Council—three million people who are not part of the 69-million-member Lutheran World Federation—has shown interest in joining with the federation in asking forgiveness of Mennonites for the 16th century Lutheran persecution of Anabaptists (see “Lutherans called to recant,” Nov. 16, page 12). The Lutheran federation will act on a recommendation at its assembly in July 2010.

How will MWC respond should the Lutherans take the recommended action?

“In the spirit of biblical forgiveness, it is important that we offer forgiveness when asked,” said Bergen.

The goal is mutual forgiveness, Miller added. “We need to address our stereotypical treatment of Lutherans and our continuing sense of victimization.”

Officers affirmed the proposal of the Mennonite members of the joint Lutheran-Mennonite International Study Commission to send its joint report to

member churches for discussion and response. It was agreed that MWC needs to be ready to offer forgiveness to the Lutherans when asked to do so. Officers also affirmed undertaking further dialogue and discernment of issues raised by the joint report, especially regarding baptism, and church and state relations. ❧

/// Briefly noted

Pastors study leadership in the ‘appreciative way’

WATERLOO, ONT.—When asked why another seminar on Appreciative Inquiry after the first evening of a three-day seminar on the topic in early October, Renee Sauder, interim conference minister for Mennonite Church Eastern Canada, said, “Appreciative Inquiry is an important tool for the churches in helping us find a new way of thinking, communicating and resolving conflict in a way that celebrates our unity and calls us to identify what we value and love.” Rob Voyle, an Episcopal priest, counsellor and leadership coach from Oregon, teaches the Appreciative Way, which is a mixture of Appreciative Inquiry, results-based counselling and contemplative spirituality. Voyle told the pastors that it was their job to help congregations clarify what they want in their future and to help them find the resources to make the change. His approach is overwhelmingly positive, focussing on strengths, values and resilience. Maurice Martin, an MC Eastern Canada regional minister, said, “The one thing that I take away from [the seminar] is to learn to pay attention to what is working, rather than always focussing on what is not.”

—BY DAVE ROGALSKY

The positive IMPaCT of fellowship

STORY AND PHOTO
BY KARIN FEHDERAU
Saskatchewan Correspondent
SASKATOON, SASK.

“The two weeks together is an opportunity to experience God’s presence,” said Karen Martens Zimmerly, Mennonite Church Canada conference minister, during her opening remarks at this year’s International Mennonite Pastors Coming Together (IMPaCT) event.

For about two weeks in mid-October, local and international pastors came together to encourage and challenge each other.

This year, Saskatchewan pastors met with five pastors from Spanish-speaking countries around the world. Coming from places like Chile, Colombia, Mexico and the Philippines, the three men and two women travelled long distances to experience Prairie hospitality. Most, but not all, came with some knowledge of English, and several local pastors were able to help overcome the language barrier.

The visitors mingled with local congregations, took a daylong trip to a sheep farm, and spent four days of intensive fellowship together at the Shekinah Retreat Centre, where MC Canada staff were on hand to give input.

Local pastors who were invited to be part of IMPaCT were usually those who had little or no travel or cross-cultural experiences.

Bruce Jantzen, the Laird Mennonite Church pastor, initially declined the invitation. “It was outside my comfort zone,” he admitted, but then he later changed his mind after a friend urged him to reconsider. In the end, Jantzen was glad he attended. “It was a wonderful experience,” he enthused, explaining that, for him, the time spent was about relationships, “not just with the international pastors, but local ones, too.”

Jantzen hosted Cornelio Schmitt, a pastor from the Burwalde Gemeinde Mexican Church. He said that Schmitt remarked after the event that he had “something worthwhile to take back, to aid in his

preaching.”

Another rural pastor, Margaret Ewen Peters, was positive about the time she invested. “The highlight for me during the group gathering was the intimacy that grew as we shared stories, ate together, laughed together, played together,” she said.

She took special notice of the sacrifice that pastors in other countries are forced to make when they choose to go into the ministry. “They deal with more poverty, violence,” she said, adding that she was impressed with “their own economic vulnerability they take on themselves when going into ministry.”

Ewen Peters was paired with Maryanna Alvarez, a youth pastor from Chile. Although Alvarez is from a Baptist conference, she was urged to attend as part of a recent movement among Baptists to rediscover their Mennonite roots. As a woman in ministry, Alvarez was interested in how Canadian Mennonites deal with the issue. At the same time, she was also encouraged in her own faith walk. “She was impressed with the emphasis on living out faith in types of service,” said Ewen Peters.

Ben Pauls, pastor of Carrot River Mennonite Church in northern Saskatchewan, came to IMPaCT to learn, but he also helped with translation. He felt



Garth Ewert Fisher, pastor of Herschel and Fiske Mennonite churches in rural Saskatchewan, speaks with Philippine pastor Johnny Dalisay at this year's IMPaCT.

at times that the constant need for translation detracted from the experience. “The challenges were certainly communication,” he said, calling the continual back-and-forth between the two languages “cumbersome.”

However, he saw many good things come from the experience as well. “One of the dynamics—it was absolutely wonderful—was living together in the camp setting. You learn to know each other. And the bonding that happened was really quite amazing,” Pauls said. ☸

/// Briefly noted

Golden anniversary for women’s mission circle

WINNIPEG—The Morija Mission Circle at Winnipeg’s First Mennonite Church celebrated its 50th anniversary on Oct. 20 with a full day of events. The name of the organization was chosen for its association with being willing to sacrifice and beginning to build something for the glory of God found in Genesis and II Chronicles; its motto, “We are labourers together with God,” was chosen from I Corinthians 3:1. When it was founded in 1959, the original focus of the mission circle was on foreign missions: Belgian Congo Inland Mission and Champa Leper Hospital in India. Shortly afterwards, Kilometre 81, a hospital for lepers in Paraguay, was chosen as a project, one that is still supported today. Although records from the first 25 years weren’t available, during the past 25 years Morija Mission Circle has raised more than \$110,000 for mission work. Of the seven founding members, Anna Penner and Charlotte Wall were able to attend the celebration. The day included visual presentations, meditations and reflections, and, of course, food.

—Morija Mission Circle Release by Anne Unruh



Church Snapshots

PHOTO BY WAYNE LEIS



Scott Zehr, centre, was installed as the quarter-time youth minister of four Youth Ignited congregations in Wilmot Township, west of Kitchener, Ont. on Oct. 18. Youth Ignited is a joint youth program modified from a similar one practised by congregations in the Markham area, north of Toronto. Zehr, who comes to the position with extensive experience working with children and youths, is flanked by the pastors of the four congregations; from left: Matthew Isert Bender, Nith Valley Mennonite, New Hamburg; Doug Snyder, St. Agatha Mennonite; Ruth Ann Laverty, Mannheim Mennonite, Petersburg; and Dave Rogalsky, Wilmot Mennonite, New Hamburg.

PHOTO BY DOREEN MARTENS



Marilyn Zehr kneels as members of Toronto United Mennonite Church, her parents and Renee Sauder, Mennonite Church Eastern Canada interim conference minister, surround her with a prayer of blessing during the installation ceremony on Nov. 1. Zehr holds an M.Div. degree and is completing a master's degree in theology at Regis College, as well as a diploma in spiritual direction. She previously served for six years as chaplain at Toronto's St. Clair O'Connor Mennonite Community, a multigenerational residential complex and nursing home. Zehr follows Gary Harder, who retired in 2007 after 20 years with the urban congregation, and David Brubacher, who helped guide the church through a visioning process during a 22-month interim pastorate.

PHOTO BY ANDREA EPP



Niagara United Mennonite Church in Niagara-on-the-Lake, offered congregants a Spiritual Practices Advent Calendar as part of the church's year-long focus on listening to God through various spiritual practices. Sharon Dirks, left, minister of visitation, and admin assistant Cheryl Schmidt, who designed the calendar, said, "A spiritual treat for each day, that's our thinking. . . . We're pushing our congregation to expand their idea of what the Christmas season can, or should, involve." Suggested practices included a women's spiritual retreat, shopping with the pastors, watching online devotional videos and making a food bank donation.

GOD AT WORK IN THE WORLD

'I was a stranger'

CMU students take part in United Nations seminar on displaced persons

BY RACHEL BERGEN

National Correspondent
WINNIPEG

Wanting to readjust her “biased and unrealistic” lenses about the United Nations (UN) and how it relates to millions of displaced persons in the world, Anna-Marie Janzen, a peace and conflict transformation studies major at Canadian Mennonite University (CMU), came away

PHOTO COURTESY OF ANNA-MARIE JANZEN



Canadian Mennonite University students Lisa Obirek, Caryn Wheeler and Anna-Marie Janzen visited the United Nations headquarters in New York City this fall for a seminar on displaced persons around the world.

from a three-day UN seminar in New York City in October seeing these persons not as statistics but as “regular people caught in really bad situations.”

Janzen also wanted to see first-hand how “Mennonite Central Committee is bringing their pacifist view to the UN and the [UN’s] so-called peacekeeping mission.”

Janzen, one of three students chosen by CMU, joined other students from around the world to learn about the 26 million internally displaced persons worldwide under the title “I was a stranger: Displacement in Congo, Colombia and Iraq.” The other CMU students were Caryn Wheeler, an international development studies major, and Lisa Obirek, a double major in business and economics and peace and conflict transformation studies.

Wheeler experienced working with displaced Sudanese people in Cairo, Egypt, this summer, and she said this experience “sparked her interest in refugees, internally displaced peoples and situations with different people around the world.”

“I got more information that I wouldn’t

have known unless I spoke to the UN representatives and the different organizations there,” she said of her time in New York.

Obirek most enjoyed meeting other students who are passionate about social justice and who are involved in grassroots projects. “It was inspiring and encouraging,” she said. “It was a sort of relational learning, and I really enjoyed that.”

Wheeler said she and Obirek both learned that “intentions are what matter the most.”

“Policies don’t make the change. It’s people’s hearts and what they do with their convictions,” Obirek added.

Janzen and Wheeler were most impacted by John Filson of the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Washington advocacy office because “he had a point of view we could relate to,” Janzen said.

The three-day conference featured speakers from various offices in the UN, Oxfam International, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, MCC, and from Colombia, Iraq and Congo.

While the information given by the highly ranked people in these organizations was valuable and important, all three CMU students felt that it was most helpful to learn about the people at the very bottom.

“The problem is so person-oriented; it’s not just about the four million displaced people in Colombia, it’s that they are people,” Janzen said.

By the end of the seminar, the students learned what they can do is to be aware, to advocate for change, and to try to be of assistance in the world. ❧

By the numbers

According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, currently in the world there are:

- 15 million refugees
- 26 million internally displaced people
- 42 million displaced or uprooted people
- 1.02 billion people suffering from chronic hunger
- 1.4 billion suffering from extreme poverty (living on less than \$1.25 a day)

Colombian pacifists closer to opting out of military service

BY RACHEL BERGEN

National Correspondent
WINNIPEG

In a country that is torn by several different civil wars and once-obligatory military service, a significant turn in direction occurred this fall. On Oct. 16, the Supreme Court of Colombia decided to uphold the right to conscientious objection as it is broadly stated in the country's constitution. The court has since advised congress to make a law to regulate conscientious objection in Colombia.

This decision is a step forward for conscientious objectors (COs), according to Bonnie Klassen, the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) representative in Colombia, because "they will have the political support of the constitutional court."

This decision has been a long time coming. In 1991, the Colombian constitution was changed to include the "freedom of conscience" article. The Mennonite Church of Colombia, as well as many other national churches, worked to have that right applied to the military. Until now, the court had rebuffed the churches by ruling that the duty to the military supersedes the individual right to freedom of conscience.

"The option was there [for CO status], but it took a great deal of work for those who wanted to obtain the permission," says Janet Plenert, executive secretary of Mennonite Church Canada Witness.

According to Klassen, before 1991, only

those training to be priests in the Roman Catholic Church were considered legal COs. When Colombian Mennonites developed a seminary program and wanted their students to be able to opt out of military service because of religious, moral and philosophical objections, they took the case to court in 1995.

'Selective conscientious objection'

MC Canada joins call to eliminate global stockpile of nuclear weapons

BY RACHEL BERGEN

National Correspondent
WINNIPEG

With the flip of a switch—or by the lighting of a fuse—the world could be in imminent danger of annihilation from the 25,000 nuclear weapons in the global arsenal, 95 percent of them in the hands of the U.S. or Russia.

In response to this possible threat, churches all over the world joined together on Oct. 29 to send a letter to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), European Union, U.S. President Barack Obama and Russian President Dmitry Medvedev, calling for nuclear disarmament.

Three years later, "after considerable difficulty and the closing down of the seminary," the court ruled that any person studying at any religious seminary had the right to be exempt from the military, Klassen said.

But "until there is a law that states [that any person studying at a religious seminary in Colombia is exempt from military service], we can still not talk about a formal full recognition of conscientious objection," Klassen said, adding, "This [decision] takes us further along the road than we have ever been before."

MCC has been supporting the Colombian Mennonite Church in this matter since 1989. ❧

The letter urges Obama and Medvedev to "take an important early step towards the goal" of creating a world free of nuclear weapons, as the German government recently did when it removed all nuclear weapons from its soil. "Now is the time to carry on the trend," the letter says.

According to Dan Dyck, Mennonite Church Canada's communications director, "it is terrific to see such a huge demonstration of cooperation on a subject that we [at MC Canada] support."

"It demonstrates to world leaders that churches need not be quiet and acquiesce to national policies. . . . I hope that more global church bodies will see this as a model for collaboration on church issues" Dyck says.

MC Canada's understanding as a Peace Church sees this letter as one step on a long journey to helping the world leaders understand that violence is not a viable way to bring about peace. Ridding the world of weapons of mass destruction is only "selective conscientious objection," Dyck says, adding that there are many more forms of violence that must be brought to the attention of the world leaders by the wider church, and stopped. ❧

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The cost of living the 'good life'

BY KARIN FEHDERAU
Saskatchewan Correspondent
SASKATOON, SASK.

In an age of over-consumption and an assumed right to the “good life,” Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Saskatchewan offered church leaders a glimpse into what that life is costing others during a prelude to the organization’s annual general meeting on Nov. 6-7.

And that involved a long, hard, often uncomfortable look at personal spending habits as well as an even-more-uneasy stare into the eyes of aboriginal people affected by such consumer-driven initiatives as the tar sands development in northern Alberta.

Esther Epp-Tiessen, MCC Canada peace ministries coordinator, dove in using questions that forced listeners to ponder. “How do we consume in ways that are faithful to Christ?” she asked, pointing out that “our consumption patterns are detrimental to our relationships with brothers and sisters around the world.”

MCC Canada executive director Don Peters agreed. “We care too little about things, where they come from, who made them, what were they paid,” he observed.

“The problem is not material things, but corporate sin,” Epp-Tiessen suggested. The urge to buy, if left unchecked, can gradually overtake the spiritual part of our lives. “Consumerism distorts relationships,” she said.

Perhaps most significant in the discussion of how to survive in a society mad over money is the suggestion to support one another.

“We need each other to be strong against this culture of ‘gimme.’ . . . We need to be accountable to each other,” Peters said, arguing that “consumerism creates individualists instead of community.”

At its most basic level, Epp-Tiessen said that consuming is mostly done without much thought. “The problem is uncritical consumption,” she said.

Peters later spoke at length about the Alberta tar sands, uncovering some painful truths about justice being denied First

Nations communities that live in the area of the massive development that has taken place in recent years.

As part of a Kairos-led tour through northern Alberta, Peters had a chance to listen to their concerns, one of which is the safety of the tailings ponds. The Fort Chippewyan community lives downstream from the ponds and people there

are getting sick. “I heard stories of people dying from cancer, feeling unsafe in their environment [and] being afraid to eat the fish and the game,” he said, adding, “People in Fort Chippewyan believe they’re losing their lives because of this development.”

Upon meeting with industry contacts, Peters was again surprised to see a genuine willingness to uphold standards of safety. The difficulty comes, he said, when there is no one specific governing body to step in and set those limits. He sensed uncertainty over which jurisdiction—federal or provincial—would set those limits. ❧

GRAYSVILLE MENNONITE CHURCH PHOTO



Graysville Mennonite Church, a small, rural Manitoba congregation with an average attendance of 35 worshippers, four Kindergarten-age youngsters and one youth came up big this year, raising nearly \$1,000 for the Gospel for Asia organization. The money will be used to purchase bikes for missionaries who serve the Dalit people of India, who are considered outcasts by Indian society. Fundraising initiatives included a penny race between the guys and gals, selling cookies for a dime each during fellowship coffee Sundays once a month, two secret envelope challenges and a barbecue. In total, \$962.35 was raised for the purchase of eight bicycles. Holding the cheque is church member Carol Brown. Graysville challenges other small congregations to strive to make a difference, as every effort becomes a blessing a hundred-fold.

/// Briefly noted

Lack of biblical peace teaching lamented by EAF

WINKLER, MAN.—On Nov. 21, the Evangelical Anabaptist Fellowship (EAF) sponsored a gathering of nearly 80 conscientious objectors, including spouses and widows, from across Manitoba. The group visited the Wall of Remembrance that has been erected in Winkler Heritage Park. The wall has been completed except for a bronze plaque that will be in place next summer, when the park officially opens. The event included the sharing of stories, experiences and questions, reports fellowship chair Bernie Loeppky. “They share a real concern about the lack of biblical peace teaching in our churches,” he says. Some discussion also centred on the introduction of Bill C-447, the creation of a new Minister of Peace post in the federal Cabinet (see “Principles of peace gaining broader recognition,” Nov. 2, page 19).

—BY EVELYN REMPEL PETKAU

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GOD AT WORK IN US

Meet Danisa Ndlovu

New MWC president stresses importance of global assemblies

STORY AND PHOTO BY DORIS PENNER

Mennonite World Conference Release

The new president of Mennonite World Conference (MWC) got a quick introduction to Mennonites in Canada as he travelled west after attending meetings in Winnipeg in November.

Danisa Ndlovu of Zimbabwe, who took over the role from Nancy Heisey of the United States during MWC Assembly 15 in Paraguay in July, is convinced that there are huge blessings and benefits in nurturing the fellowship of Mennonites scattered around the globe.

“We can’t afford to be alone,” said Ndlovu in an interview in Steinbach, Man., hosted by Reg Toews and MWC executive committee member Ron Penner. “We need to come together to hear each other’s heartbeat. Rubbing shoulders removes barriers.”

The possibility that MWC may not be convening every five or six years, as has been the case since the first assembly in 1925, was addressed at the gathering in Asunción in July, and will be an ongoing matter of discussion until the general council meets in 2012. One of the reasons why the global gathering of Mennonites is being assessed is the cost incurred in flying delegates around the world, and the disparity that exists between the wealthier western countries and African and Asian peoples, which makes it easier for some to travel than for others.

While Ndlovu understands the problems, he sees the benefits of worshipping with diverse parts of the Mennonite family. “If we extend the timing to, say, every seven or eight years, we might lose donor support,” he mused. “And we can’t afford to lose the energy we saw among the youth in Paraguay.”

Ndlovu sensed a lot of interest in MWC assemblies among participants in Paraguay, and he feels confident the enthusiasm will

spread as people go back to their home churches and communities and tell stories. “As the message goes out, we need to harness that energy,” he said.

He noted that the assemblies, which are held in different parts of the world, give the hosts the opportunity to showcase their culture, including food, art and music, and it allows visitors a chance to see how Christians in far-off and sometimes impoverished countries live, work and worship.

Other issues to attend to

However, while Ndlovu will be part of discussions on the future of global assemblies, there are many other facets to his job. He is aware he needs to ensure MWC—which is in the broad sense a communion of Anabaptist-related churches linked to one another on a worldwide fellowship, and thus engaged in various projects and encounters—remains on track and carries out its goals. Four commissions have recently been established as part of restructuring, and while each one has its own leader and mandate, Ndlovu will relate to all of them.

The Deacons Commission looks after the needs of churches and calls for prayer on certain issues; the Faith and Life Commission deals with Mennonite beliefs and how they work themselves out in practical ways; the Mission Commission looks at witness; and the Peace Commission carries on an agenda related to working for peace.

Ndlovu noted that another important aspect of his job is relating to other global church bodies. Currently, there is an ongoing dialogue with the governing body of the Lutheran World Federation, which has issued a statement expressing deep regret over the violent persecution of Anabaptists during the Reformation and the theological arguments put forth by Reformers to endorse that persecution.

While Ndlovu’s vision for MWC is not crystal clear at present, after restructuring is complete and he has learned more about what his role as president entails, he will move ahead with the help of God.

He credits his grandmother and mother—both devout women—for his coming to faith as a child. As a young man he felt a call to ministry and was able to attend Bible school in Zimbabwe first, then finish a master’s degree in theology in the United States.

Over the years he has taught in Bible colleges and has played a variety of critical roles in the Brethren in Christ Church, including as an evangelist, youth worker, lecturer and administrator. He became vice-president of MWC in 2003.

Doris Penner is a writer for The Carillon newspaper, Steinbach, Man.



Danisa Ndlovu, the new president of Mennonite World Conference, is hosted in Steinbach, Man., by Ron Penner, representative of the Evangelical Mennonite Conference on the MWC general council and a member of the MWC executive committee.

ARTBEAT

Photo exhibit features 75 years of Mennonites in the Fraser Valley

STORY AND PHOTO BY AMY DUECKMAN

B.C. Correspondent
ABBOTSFORD, B.C.

The Reach Gallery Museum of Abbotsford opened a new exhibit on Nov. 19 with a photo collection entitled “Mennonites: People of Faith and Action.” A display of images capturing the 75-year history of Mennonites in the Fraser Valley, the photo exhibit was one of three that opened the same night.

Beginning in the 1930s, many Mennonites came to Abbotsford and the surrounding area as farmers and businesspeople. Today, there are more than 7,000 people attending Mennonite churches in the area and many others with Mennonite roots.

“The Mennonites’ strong commitment to service has led them to be involved in efforts to help those who are in need in our own city, and in mission and service opportunities around the world,” says the gallery’s brochure describing the exhibit.

According to Dave Giesbrecht of the Mennonite Historical Society of B.C., the photo exhibit came about after discussions with Reach curator Scott Marsden and other gallery staff. Giesbrecht and fellow historical society members Hugo Friesen and Harry Heidebrecht collected and submitted photos from their archives featuring early and present images of such sites as Mennonite Educational Institute, Columbia Bible College and several local Mennonite churches. Also included were images of Mennonites serving today at home and abroad in mission work and through Mennonite Central Committee (MCC).

“We wanted to provide a cross-section of both the historical and contemporary,” Giesbrecht told *Canadian Mennonite*.

The exhibit runs until Jan. 3. ☞



Viewing the “Mennonites: People of Faith and Action” photo exhibit at the Reach gallery in Abbotsford are Dave Loewen, Vange Thiessen and Angelika Dawson.

Musicians raise funds to feed the hungry

BY EVELYN REMPEL PETKAU

Manitoba Correspondent

When Loren Hiebert and Rosemary Siemens were planning a weekend of concerts to release their new CD, *Gospel*, Hiebert says, “we were also looking for an honorable and worthy cause to fundraise for. Both of us have rural roots and feeding the hungry is close to our hearts.”

Canadian Foodgrains Bank seemed a natural choice.

“Music and food have often been compared,” says Hiebert. “While food nourishes the body, music feeds the soul.”

Hiebert and Siemens brought their musical talents together for three fundraising concerts on Nov. 21 and 22 at Winkler,

Steinbach and Winnipeg churches, delighting listeners with improvised renditions of familiar hymns and songs.

The concerts raised more than \$33,000 to provide food for people who need help in getting through difficult times.

Siemens, on violin, and Hiebert, on piano, have collaborated for concerts, church services and recordings before.

Siemens, who makes Vancouver, B.C., her home, began her early musical training in Altona, Man. She is an internationally acclaimed concert violinist who has performed in dozens of countries and in such venues as Carnegie Hall, St. Peters

PHOTO COURTESY OF LOREN HIEBERT AND ROSEMARY SIEMENS

Basilica at the Vatican, and at Donald Trump's private estate. Hiebert, a musician, educator and music adjudicator from southern Manitoba, appears in more than 50 concerts a year.

Gospel, their fourth collaborative recording, is available through shorelinesongs@hotmail.com.

"We simply take familiar gospel tunes and improvise them," says Hiebert of the new CD. ☸

Musicians Rosemary Siemens and Loren Hiebert raised more than \$33,000 for the Canadian Foodgrains Bank through three Manitoba performances that featured works from their fourth collaborative effort, Gospel.



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MUSIC REVIEW

Choir director finds 'missing' scores

Healey Willan: Missa Brevis X, The Reproaches, Mass XII.

Gallery Choir of the Church of Saint Mary Magdalene, Toronto. Director: Stephanie Martin.

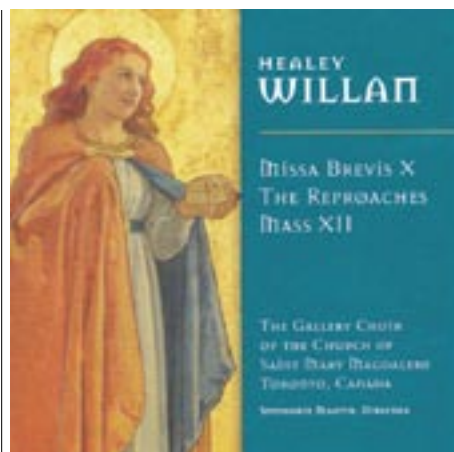
REVIEWED BY DAVE ROGALSKY

Healey Willan directed music, played the organ and wrote music familiar to many choirs and conductors across Canada and around the world in his more than 40 years at the Church of Saint Mary Magdalene (Anglican) in Toronto.

Stephanie Martin now holds down Willan's old post, as well as conducting the Pax Christi Chorale in Toronto. This CD, recorded at the church by the congregation's Gallery Choir, includes two Willan pieces never before performed or published. The "Gloria" and "Credo" of *Mass XII* lay in Willan's papers in the Library and Archives Canada in Ottawa, leaving "Mass XII" incomplete until now. The work is Willan's only full-length English mass.

As Martin put it, "It's a music researcher's dream" to find such significant scores by so important a composer.

The mass is an order of worship, including, in the Anglican ritual, five musical settings: Kyrie (Lord have mercy), Gloria (Glory to the Father . . .), Credo (I believe), Sanctus and Benedictus (Holy is the Lord God), and Agnus Dei (Lamb of God). These elements of worship have been sung by many Mennonite choirs and are becoming part of congregations across Canada that are choosing more liturgical settings for their worship. This trend is part of the increased variety of worship across and outside of denominations in the postmodern era.



Sung a cappella, with clear diction in the sanctuary for which it was written, these pieces move listeners into contemplation and worship as they enter imaginatively into the works. Martin not only "found" the material, but has brought it to life in the way and place for which it was composed.

The Gallery Choir leads worship at St. Mary Magdalene's Sunday morning traditional service. ❧

Dave Rogalsky is the Eastern Canada correspondent for Canadian Mennonite.

Pax Christi Chorale performs winning hymns

BY DENISE REESOR

Special to *Canadian Mennonite*
TORONTO

The tradition of richness and beauty in hymns is carried on by Canadian composers. This was brought to light at Pax Christi Chorale's inaugural Canadian Hymn Competition held this past October.

Stephanie Martin, Pax Christi's conductor and a composer herself, came up with the idea for the contest. From a total of 68 submissions, 18 were chosen for a performance by the chorale at a concert in Toronto on Oct. 25. And from these 18, the three best were chosen by the chorale singers themselves.

Hosted by CBC producer Eric Friesen, the inaugural Fanfare of Canadian Hymns Competition was woven together with commentary and insights into each

composer and an audience hymn sing-along. With the majority of composers present at the event, an authentic sense of accomplishment and celebration was tangible. The three winning hymns were performed as the finale to the evening.

Composer and music director Henry Boon took first place with his hymn, "I Heard That God Was Power." Described by Martin as a "piece that offers a little bit of edge—something refreshing and new," it also incorporates a "beautifully crafted and not-predictable harmony." The lyrics, written by Boon's wife Susan (a member of Harrow Mennonite Church near Windsor, Ont.), who based them on the story of Elijah, resonate with the Mennonite

PAX CHRISTI CHORALE PHOTO BY TAY MOSS



From left to right, front row, the winners of Pax Christi Chorale's inaugural Canadian Hymn Competition are: Scott Bastien, third; Henry Boon, first; and Judith Snowdon, second.

tradition of hearing God in the quiet and stillness.

Second and third place, respectively,

went to Judith Snowdon of New Brunswick for "Do You Not Know, Have You Not Seen?" and Scott Bastien of Windsor for "God Of All Nations." ❧


WINNING HYMN

'I Heard That God Was Power'

HENRY BOON, COMPOSER
SUSAN BOON, TEXT

I heard that God was power,
so into the storm I went,
Waiting for this thund'rous voice,
but soon the storm was spent.
Yet in my silent, quiet heart,
when noise and clamour ceased,
I heard a calm and still small voice
that brought me joy and peace.

I heard that God was in the sky,
remote and far away,
I searched the clouds and distant stars
through many a lonely day.
No, God is not the thunder,
nor mountain or distant star;
God is the inner loving voice
that dwells within the heart.



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Calendar

British Columbia

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

Until Jan. 3: "Mennonites: People of Faith and Action" exhibit at the Reach Gallery, Abbotsford. The collection of images captures the 75-year history of the Mennonites who pioneered in the Abbotsford area.

Jan. 15-16: "FaithQwest 2010: Found in Translation," Peace Mennonite Church, Richmond. Speakers: Jeanette Hanson, Pat and Rad Houmphan and Vic Thiessen from MC Canada Witness, and Jonathan Neufeld of Seattle, Wash.

Saskatchewan

Jan. 15-16: Prairie Winds worship and music retreat, "Encountering the unsung Jesus" at Shekinah Retreat Centre with Marlene Kropf and Ken Nafziger. Contact www.shekinahretreatcentre.org for information.

Feb. 12-13: MDS all unit meeting and gathering. Focus is on MDS's 60th anniversary through stories and worship. Visit mds.mennonite.net to register after Nov. 15, or call 1-866-261-1274. Daytime meetings at Warman Bergthaler Mennonite Church; banquet and program at Valley Christian Academy, Osler (12).

Manitoba

Jan. 15-17: MMYO senior youth retreat at Camp Koinonia.

Until Jan. 16: "Congregational Fantasies" art exhibit by Ruth Maendel is on display at the Mennonite Heritage

Gallery, Winnipeg.

Jan. 22-24: MMYO junior youth retreat at Camp Moose Lake.

Jan. 28-29: Westgate Mennonite Collegiate junior high presentation of three one-act plays, at the Franco-Manitoban Centre, Winnipeg.

Feb. 3: Westgate Mennonite Collegiate open house, 7 p.m.

Feb. 5: Westgate Mennonite Collegiate and Mennonite Collegiate Institute gala event, at Westminster United Church, Winnipeg.

Feb. 5-7: MMYO junior youth retreat at Camp Koinonia.

Feb. 7: Westgate Mennonite Collegiate and Mennonite Collegiate Institute gala event, at Buhler Hall, Gretna.

Feb. 12-14, 2010: Young adult retreat at Camp Koinonia.

Feb. 15-17: Winter retreat for adults with disabilities at Camp Koinonia.

Feb. 19-20: MC Manitoba annual delegate meeting, Douglas Mennonite Church, Winnipeg.

Ontario

Jan. 16: Grand Philharmonic Choir present Elgar's *The Dream of Gerontius*; Centre in the Square, Kitchener; 7:30 p.m.

Jan. 26: MCC Thrift Shop and Waterloo Generations present "Suit up for Sudan: A fashion show" in support of the MCC Sudan: Coming Home project, Glencairn MB Church, Kitchener; 7 p.m. Tickets available at MCC Ontario office, Kitchener and Waterloo MSCU branches, Waterloo Ten Thousand Villages, the MCC Thrift Shop and Generations, or by calling 519-745-8458.

Feb. 3: MC Eastern Canada and the Mennonite Spiritual Directors of Eastern Canada present "A day of quiet prayer," Erb Street Mennonite Church, Waterloo, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. For more

information, call 519-880-9684 or e-mail mennospiritdire@gmail.com.

Feb. 7: Menno Singers presents a gospel hymn sing, Elmira Mennonite Church.

March 5-6: Engaged workshop for all engaged or newly married couples, Riverdale Mennonite Church, Millbank. For more information, e-mail denise_bender@yahoo.com.

March 6: Menno Singers present Rachmaninoff's "Vespers," St. Matthew's Lutheran Church, Kitchener, 8 p.m. For more information, visit mennosingers.com.

March 20: Grand Philharmonic Choir presents "A Springtime Choral Potpourri" with the Grand Philharmonic

Chamber Singers; St. George Hall, Waterloo; 7:30 p.m.

March 25-26: Bechtel Lectures in Anabaptist-Mennonite Studies; Conrad Grebel Great Hall; 7:30 p.m. each evening. Keynote speaker: James Harder, Bluffton College, Ohio, president. Topic: "Mennonites and development: The impact of the current economic crisis on our communities, countries and churches."

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

Announcements

Aberdeen Mennonite Church, Aberdeen, Sask., is planning a **100th Anniversary Celebration** June 5 & 6, 2010. Join us for music, sharing and tours as we celebrate God's goodness to us over this century. For more details, contact Harvey Klassen, Box 207, Aberdeen, SK S0K 0A0, or by e-mail at kathy@bitlink.ca.

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.

For Sale

HOUSE FOR SALE - ARCADIA, FLORIDA. Fully furnished 4-year-old Mobile Home, 3bed/2bath. Double lot with citrus/palm trees. Part of Sunnybreeze Christian Fellowship community, founded by the Hallman family. \$100,000 USD. For information and photos, call 705-444-5107.

Rare Gerhard Hamm Clock, made in Cortitza, 1853. Excellent working condition. Descendants of Aeltester Isaac Dyck (1847-1929) and Margaretha Hamm (1850-1931) may be interested in acquiring this family heirloom. Contact Henry or Rita Koop: 905-682-4080; e-mail: greatgrapefarm@wirelessworks.ca.

Employment Opportunities



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To apply or view a complete job posting, please visit: <http://www.peaceworks.ca> or e-mail: jobs@peaceworks.ca.

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LEAD PASTOR

Altona Mennonite Church (AMC), located 100 km southwest of Winnipeg, Man., invites applications for a full-time Pastor starting September 2010. AMC is a progressive and caring congregation of 100, in a rural community of approximately 4,000. The candidate to be considered needs to be committed to Mennonite Anabaptism, educated in a conference school, and have gifts as a preacher, spiritual leader, teacher, and in pastoral care.

Please see our website - www.altonamennonitechurch.ca - for contact information. Direct resumes to:

Altona Mennonite Church
c/o The Pastoral Search Committee
Box 1237
Altona, MB R0G 0B0



Mennonite Central Committee (Ontario) invites applications for the position of:

TOOLS COORDINATOR/ LAZARUS RISING STREET PASTOR, TORONTO

This position requires a person with a commitment to Christian faith, active church membership and nonviolent peacemaking.

MCCO is seeking an individual who has a passion for providing youth groups with inner city experiences that will broaden their worldview, their understanding of marginalization and their faith. This person will also walk with those who live on the streets of Toronto, developing pastoral and advocacy relationships with them.

This person will have the ability to walk with people from diverse experiences, using pastoral skills along with the capacity to do socio-economic analysis with biblical and theological lenses. S/he will also have excellent organizational, communication and facilitation skills, especially in interactions with youth.

Complete job description available at mcc.org/serve.

This 65% to 75% position is available on a salaried basis. Application deadline is Jan. 8, 2010. Cover letter and resume may be sent to Cath Woolner at cathw@mennonitecc.on.ca.

**ASSISTANT DIRECTOR SILVER LAKE MENNONITE CAMP**

Silver Lake Mennonite Camp is a children's summer camp located in Hepworth, Ont. The Assistant Director will work in cooperation with the Director to prepare, supervise and facilitate the summer camp program, taking a leadership role in developing strong program areas as well as directing and supervising the summer staff.

This role is part-time February through April and September, and full-time May through August, 2010.

Qualifications: Mature person with proven leadership abilities in the church and/or other organizations. Possess excellent communication skills, both oral and written. Some post-secondary education.

Apply by Dec. 31, 2009, with cover letter, resume and references to Silver Lake Mennonite Camp, RR1, Hepworth, ON N0H 1P0, or silverlake@slmc.on.ca. Interviews in January with Feb. 1, 2010, start date. For more information, contact David Erb, Director, at 519-422-1401 or silverlake@slmc.on.ca.



Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary

DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT

Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary seeks a full-time **Director of Development**, beginning no later than July 1, 2010, to manage the planning and work of the seminary Development Office, with primary focus on raising funds for the annual operational budget and promoting strong church-seminary relations.

Qualifications include commitment to Jesus Christ, passion for the role of theological education in the church, ability to communicate well, proven record in development or marketing, and proven supervisory and organizational skills. AMBS does not discriminate with regard to race, sex, colour, national origin, age or disability. Commitment to AMBS's mission and support of its Anabaptist, evangelical and ecumenical vision is important. See job description at www.ambs.edu/employment.

Send letter of application, resume and three references by Feb. 15 to Ron Ringenberg, vice-president, AMBS, 3003 Benham Ave., Elkhart, IN 46517, or rRINGENB@AMBS.EDU.



Mennonite Church Canada invites applications for the position of **GENERAL SECRETARY**.

The General Secretary is the Chief Executive Officer of Mennonite Church Canada, accountable to

the General Board, and responsible for the total program of Mennonite Church Canada.

The successful candidate is a person of vision with a strong Mennonite-Anabaptist ecclesiology; demonstrates strong leadership qualities with the ability to balance competing responsibilities; is able to relate effectively with a diverse constituency; can oversee the management of financial, human and physical resources; and demonstrates excellent oral, written and interpersonal communication skills. Education, work experience and computer skills suitable to the responsibilities of this ministry are required.

This is a full-time position, located at the Winnipeg, Man., denominational offices, and requires considerable travel within Canada, as well as occasional travel outside of Canada. The preferred starting date is in late summer or early fall of 2010.

All staff are expected to exhibit a personal faith commitment to Christ as Saviour and Lord, uphold the *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective* and the vision of Mennonite Church Canada as a missional church.

The job description is posted at <http://www.mennonitechurch.ca/getinvolved/jobs/>. Inquiries, nominations and applications can be directed to Andrew Reesor-McDowell, Moderator, c/o Mennonite Church Canada, 600 Shaftesbury Blvd., Winnipeg, MB R3P 0M4; (ph. 204-888-6781; toll-free 1-866-888-6785); or e-mail moderator@mennonitechurch.ca.

Upcoming Advertising Dates

Issue Date	Ads Due
Jan. 25	Jan. 12
<i>Focus on Post-Secondary Education</i>	
Feb. 8	Jan. 26
<i>Focus on Elementary and Secondary Education</i>	
Feb. 22	Feb. 9

Snapshots

Artbeat



On Nov. 6, *Hope Rising* launched its third CD, *Climbing Up*, at Hamilton Mennonite Church, Ont. The CD raises funds for the restorative justice programs of Mennonite Central Committee Ontario. Pictured from left to right: Paul Tuck (bass); Justin Coombs (percussion); Rick Pauw (composer/songwriter); Susan Dueckman (vocals and percussion); and Jessie Hetherington, Lauren Pauw and Karen Sheil (vocals).



Jan Fretz, painter, printmaker and instructor, and a member of Waterloo North Mennonite Church, is showing work of her own and of her students at the Kuntz House Gallery in uptown Waterloo, Ont. until Jan. 8. Fretz uses artist Edward Hoppers' statement, "If I could say it with words, there would be no reason to paint," as her own. She is shown here with "Amaryllis Blooms 1," the key work in the exhibit.

PHOTOS BY DAVE ROGALSKY



Leonard Enns, with his back to the camera, leads the DaCapo Choir during its season-opening concert, "Cryout: Music of lament and the struggle for hope," at St. John the Evangelist Church in Kitchener, Ont. on Nov. 15. The occasion coincided with the release of the choir's second CD, the aptly named *Shadowland*, and included performances from several of the selections, including "Nocturne" by Enns himself. The CD is available online at dacapochamberchoir.ca.