

# CANADIAN MENNONITE

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Pain of a murdered family member 'indescribable'  
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## EDITORIAL

# Evangelism redefined

DICK BENNER  
EDITOR/PUBLISHER

“True evangelical faith is of such a nature it cannot lie dormant, but spreads itself out in all kinds of righteousness and fruits of love; it dies to flesh and blood; it destroys all lusts and forbidden desires; it seeks, serves and fears God in its inmost soul; it clothes the naked; it feeds the hungry; it comforts the sorrowful; it shelters the destitute; it aids and consoles the sad; it does good to those who do it harm; it serves those that harm it; it prays for those who persecute it; it teaches, admonishes and judges us with the Word of the Lord; it seeks those who are lost; it binds up what is wounded; it heals the sick; it saves what is strong [sound]; it becomes all things to all people. The persecution, suffering and anguish that come to it for the sake of the Lord’s truth have become a glorious joy and comfort to it.” (Menno Simons)

In my recent travels to area church gatherings of Mennonite Church Canada, I pick up from conversations something of a divide between those who consider themselves “peace people” and those who loosely identify with “evangelicals,” with the attendant emphasis on personal salvation and piety, a more literal interpretation of Scripture and an agenda that has come to be popularly known as socially conservative.

The so-called “peace people” are more concerned about an increasingly violent world and the threat that leads “empires”—especially in North America—to spend trillions of dollars on military might for security, are alarmed at the growing public rhetoric that feeds the flames of discrimination and hate against non-Christians, and are concerned about creation care in a degraded environment. They lift out of the biblical narrative Jesus’ “love of neighbour” command and make the prophetic call to “love kindness, seek justice and walk humbly with your God” (Micah 6:8) their consuming



mantra.

Both of these groups develop suspicions of the other, accusing each other of not practising the whole gospel. Let me suggest that this is an artificial construct,

influenced first of all by our different Mennonite historical experiences and then enhanced in the present era by an increasingly polarized political environment in which “conservative” and “liberal” labels serve well the interests and goals of political parties.

As the sons and daughters of Menno, we have been caught up in this divide shamelessly and to no good end. It has fragmented us over and over again. The gap, even in a more enlightened age, is ever widening. That’s why it’s time to take a look again at just what Menno Simons said about “true evangelism.” Yes, he used that word “evangelical”—that label that has accrued lots of baggage for us over the past 500 years.

If you look closely at the text above, you will note that “evangelism” and “peacemaking” go hand in hand. They are

an integrated whole in its dying to “flesh and blood” and destroying “all lust and forbidden desires” (personal piety), at the same time as it “spreads itself out in all kinds of righteousness and fruits of love” (peacemaking)—comforting, consoling, sheltering, healing, praying for enemies and persecutors—all for the “sake of the Lord’s truth.”

This was the original Anabaptist vision, forming a movement that, according to Stuart Murray, seems to be the perfect fit in today’s post-Christendom era. He is calling us back to our radical roots of making Jesus central to our theology and peacemaking the hallmark of our life in Christ. “Peace and evangelism go hand in hand,” he told pastors meeting in Abbotsford, B.C., recently. In fact, he chided, “You have been too passive about peace.”

To get away from the polarizing labels of the culture wars, he suggested a new name for peacemakers: “Shalom activists.” He noted the good work of Christian Peacemaker Teams (CPT) and those working at restorative justice, in aboriginal work, and with the prison system. He called for a new language regarding our witness in this modern era, a time he characterized as “shifting values” since the Iraq war, in which a whole generation of young people have become disillusioned to the ways of war.

A new language, to be sure. But changing the label or the divisive branding only works at the symptoms of this religious divide among us. What we need is a change of heart, a change of attitude towards each other, an intentional turning away from old ways and irresponsible talk. It’s known as repentance, a turning around and walking together in a new life. Are we up to it?

## ABOUT THE COVER:

‘6.5 Weeks’ by Cliff Derksen (clay with patina finish). The artist tried to sculpt his murdered daughter’s bound hands, but couldn’t bear to. Instead, he sculpted his own because he wishes they would have been his hands bound, instead of hers. See story and more photos of the exhibition at the Mennonite Heritage Centre Gallery, Winnipeg, on page 30.

PHOTO: RACHEL BERGEN, CANADIAN MENNONITE

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**Guiding values:**

*Hebrews 10:23-25 • Accuracy, fairness, balance • Editorial freedom • Seeking and speaking the truth in love • Open hearts and minds in discerning God's will • Covenantal relationships and mutual accountability*

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# An uncommon welcome

*As the government gets even tougher on crime, how should the church respond to people who commit even the most troubling offences?*

BY WILL BRAUN  
SENIOR WRITER



*Having worked hard at rehabilitation while in prison, [Joe] Patterson was eager to start over. But it has not been easy. After his release, any venture out among the public, including attending church, made him nervous.*

“A s part of my probation conditions, I have to stay away from places where there are families,” says Joe Patterson, “so that made finding a church hard.”

It didn't help that when he was released from prison, he stepped into a society primed to fear and revile people like him. Politicians of all parties talk tough about crime, often fuelling shadowy public sentiments in the process. And the media tend to play along. When Patterson got out of prison, a local newspaper printed a full-page photo of him along with his record of sexual offences against minors. The paper's online comment section teemed with vitriol.

Sitting at the kitchen table of his modest Winnipeg apartment, Patterson speaks without pretension, like someone who does not take for granted a second chance at life.

Having worked hard at rehabilitation while in prison, Patterson was eager to start over. But it has not been easy. After his release, any venture out among the public, including attending church, made him nervous. “Part of the challenge in reintegrating is facing the fear that no one is gonna want to have anything to do with me,” he says. But he ventured out and was fortunate to find people of faith who chose courage over fear and welcome over demonization, while still taking seriously the realities of evil.

“We're not here to judge or condemn anyone,” says Pastor John Woodman of Grace Community Chapel. *(Names have been changed and dates omitted to protect privacy.)* So when Patterson showed up at the medium-sized Winnipeg church, Woodman

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ILLUSTRATION BY DAN JOHNSON





**Continued from page 4**

considered it a “wonderful” chance to do what the church is called to do: Welcome people. Woodman notes that Jesus was a “friend of sinners.”

Patterson chose the congregation based on the recommendation of a prison chaplain, who accompanied him on his first visit to the church and disclosed his past to the pastor. Although Woodman was immediately open to having Patterson in the pew, the decision to include him—ultimately made by the church council in consultation with parents—took a couple of months. One concern was the desire to show sensitivity to victims of sexual assault. The larger concern was that of the parents.

One parent said initially that he wanted to either “combat” the inclusion of Patterson or find a new church. But over time he realized that everyone needs community. Now he says he is “completely at ease” with Patterson’s attendance and the “healthy boundaries” that have been created. Correctional Service Canada required that two church members obtain approval to supervise Patterson. One of the two has to maintain visual contact with Patterson when children are present.

While he feels like a different person than the one who committed the offences, Patterson says he still chooses to avoid children in the church, partly out of regard for the sensitivities of parents and partly because of his utter determination not to “have any more victims.” He says a broken childhood and a then-unacknowledged mental illness contributed to his offences, but he quickly adds that he takes full responsibility for his actions.

In prison, Patterson recognized that most of his fellow inmates had also suffered deep rejection in life. Their need for love, intimacy and belonging were not met in “normal” ways, he says, so they turned elsewhere. The societal rejection they experience when released makes them more likely to slip into old patterns. That’s why the acceptance of Grace church means so much to Patterson.

**A welcome rooted in the gospel**

The welcome offered by Grace chapel is

rooted in the gospel, not in a need to be politically correct. Woodman says that his congregation is rooted in an evangelical tradition that has long been concerned with drawing lines between who is “in” and who is not. But Woodman asks: “Who gives [us] the right to draw a line? . . . If you’ve come here, you’ve already turned your face toward God,” and—quoting Jesus—“*He who comes to me I will in no wise cast out.*”

Grace chapel is not alone. In Manitoba, for example, a handful of congregations, including Mennonite ones, knowingly welcome people who have criminal histories. The posture of these churches contrasts with the tough talk favoured by the current Canadian government.

**Canada, U.S. moving in opposite directions**

In the U.S., the birthplace of the tough-on-crime approach, there are 762 inmates per 100,000 citizens, more than any other country; Canada’s rate is 108 per 100,000. But Americans are slowly realizing that the punitive approach cripples government budgets without making society safer. A 2010 *New York Times* editorial called America’s tough approach a “failure . . . shaped by fear-driven ideology.”

Even some Republicans, led by Newt Gingrich, a candidate for the Republican presidential nomination, are questioning the “lock ‘em up and throw away the key” approach that hard-nosed conservatives have long advocated. The website of Gingrich’s Right on Crime initiative states, “An ideal criminal justice system works to reform amenable offenders.” Recognizing that prison often exacerbates, rather than breaks, the cycle of crime, the initiative emphasizes flexible sentencing and treatment programs for offenders.

This new approach is visible in Texas, where officials hope to have 15,000 fewer people behind bars in 2012 than in 2007.

Not only will this save Texas a projected \$2 billion, it has already contributed to the lowest crime rates in the state since 1973.

Canada, however, is headed in the opposite direction. Since the federal Conservatives took office in 2006, spending on Correctional Service Canada jumped from \$1.6 billion to \$2.98 billion, an increase of 87 percent. The figure is expected to rise to \$3.15 billion by 2013-14, as Bill C-10, the omnibus crime bill, is expected to put an additional 3,600 people in prison. All of this despite the fact that, from 1998 to 2007, the crime rate dropped by 15 percent and the severity of crime by 21 percent, although nearly half of Canadians believe the opposite to be true.

**The Circles of Support and Accountability alternative**

But what exactly is the alternative to fear-driven ideology? While Grace chapel exhibits a radically merciful attitude towards offenders, that alone is not enough to address what one expert calls “long-term, entrenched patterns of violent behaviour.”

For over 12 years Joan Carolyn has helped people deemed at high-risk to reoffend—including Joe Patterson—make the transition back into society. She offers no easy answers, but a courageous and thorough approach that has proven helpful in some cases.

Carolyn heads the Winnipeg office of Circles of Support and Accountability (COSA), a gutsy little non-profit organization that works primarily with men who have sex-offence histories. Upon release from prison, each of the men, known as “core members,” is surrounded with a “circle” of four to six supporters—mostly volunteers—who meet weekly. To qualify for a “circle,” a core member must show remorse and a desire for help.

The Winnipeg COSA office, which used to be part of Mennonite Central

*Canada, however, is headed in the opposite direction. Since the federal Conservatives took office in 2006, spending on Correctional Service Canada jumped from \$1.6 billion to \$2.98 billion, an increase of 87 percent.*

*While the common fear of sex offenders, and the desire to lock up people who pose a risk is understandable, ultimately this approach may be counterproductive.*

Committee (MCC) Manitoba, now operates as part of Initiatives for Just Communities, with continued funding and board representation from MCC Manitoba. About 30 volunteers—a quarter of them from Mennonite churches—keep the seven Winnipeg “circles” going. One core member has even become a member of a Mennonite congregation.

Weekly “circle” meetings are designed to nurture healthy relationships—something that may otherwise be absent—through activities like bowling, camping and birthday parties. Sessions also involve candid discussions in which the core member has to own up to the damage he has done, put his “darkest secrets” on the table and face constant accountability, none of which necessarily happens in prison. Volunteers are trained both to be supportive and to identify and report warning signs.

“I feel able to talk about anything,” says Patterson of his weekly “circle” sessions. For him, the basic affirmation provided by his “circle” is invaluable. “You get that negative message from society: ‘I don’t want you,’” he says, adding, “COSA has been the opposite.”

Carolyn emphasizes the need to work along side victim-services agencies. The fundamental goal of COSA is, “no new victims,” she says.

Carolyn says the COSA model—which took shape in Ontario in 1994, and has since led to the development of another 15 independent offices across the country—includes collaboration with parole workers, police, treatment professionals, social assistance networks and neighbourhood groups. COSA offices have faith roots, although some have expanded beyond that.

### **Roots in restorative justice**

The COSA approach is based on the philosophy of restorative justice, which was developed largely by Howard Zehr, a professor at Eastern Mennonite University, Harrisonburg, Va. In his groundbreaking

1990 book, *Changing Lenses: A New Focus for Crime and Justice*, Zehr contrasts retributive justice, which focuses on blame and punishment, with an approach that involves all stakeholders in a process to restore wholeness to victims, offenders and communities.

Although steeped in the restorative approach, Carolyn is quick to point out that the “formal” retributive justice system and alternative systems must work together. In fact, a significant portion of her budget comes from Correctional Service Canada.

A Correctional Service Canada survey found that two-thirds of COSA core members felt they would have returned to crime without the program. And yet some core members do re-offend. “Never underestimate the power of evil,” Carolyn says, while also asserting her belief in the superior power of good.

While COSA is not soft on crime, its toughness respects the inherent worth and dignity of every person. When Carolyn says everyone is “created in God’s image,” she means it.

While the common fear of sex offenders, and the desire to lock up people who pose a risk is understandable, ultimately this approach may be counterproductive. Making a similar point in theological terms, one member of Grace chapel says that, while “isolating and scapegoating” people like Patterson may make us feel better, “it doesn’t raise us, or them, to the potential God sees in us.”

Zehr emphasizes the importance of having a positive, constructive vision in addressing crime, something he says the punitive approach lacks. In an updated edition of *Changing Lenses*, he writes that restorative justice is an expression of the respect, humility and interconnectedness of all people, as well as an appreciation “of mystery, of ambiguity, of paradox, even of contradictions.”

That mystery is made real every Sunday at the communion table of Grace chapel, where everyone can partake in the broken body of Christ, and where Patterson’s offence matters less than his presence.

“We don’t want to be famous as the church for ex-cons,” says Woodman. “We just want to be the church.”

That’s good news, both for Joe Patterson and for society as a whole. ☼

### **For discussion**

1. How would your church react if a known sex offender wanted to attend regularly? Is this a simple struggle between fear and love—between the realities of evil and the church’s mandate to be welcoming? How can we balance the need to be welcoming and the fear of evil?
2. How would you explain the concept of restorative justice? What role do Circles of Support and Accountability play in restorative justice? What are the advantages and the risks of this approach to wrongdoing?
3. Why do you think the number of inmates per population is so much higher in the U.S. than in other countries? Why do so many Canadians believe the crime rate is increasing in spite of the statistics that show it is dropping? Is the Canadian attitude towards crime changing?
4. How could the church help to foster a more positive attitude towards former inmates? How important is it that they show remorse and a desire for help? How might we encourage more of our congregations to be involved in the work of restorative justice? What would it take for our society to have a restorative justice approach to crime?

## VIEWPOINTS

## /// Readers write

We welcome your comments and publish most letters sent by subscribers intended for publication. This section is largely an 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. Keep letters to 400 words or less and address issues rather than individuals. We do not countenance rancour or animosity. Personal attacks are inappropriate and will not see the light of print. Please send letters to be considered for publication to [letters@canadianmennonite.org](mailto:letters@canadianmennonite.org) or by postal mail or fax, marked "Attn: Readers Write" (our address is on page 3). Letters should include the author's contact information and mailing address. Letters are edited for length, style and adherence to editorial guidelines. Preference will be given to letters from MC Canada congregants.

## ✉ Can churches be sustained by a commitment to questioning?

RE: "QUESTION-SHAPED FAITH," Feb. 6, page 13.

I resonated with much of what Troy Watson wrote in his column. I agree that questions are an essential dimension of the life of faith. In line with his premise, the article raised several questions for me:

- Can a vibrant Mennonite church ultimately be sustained by an openness and commitment to questioning?
- Watson asks, "What if it is God that holds us together—not our answers about God." But how does God hold us together if the very notion of God is uncertain and under question?
- What are the basic Christian convictions that faith communities should insist upon when people seek to join as members?

I am not critiquing Watson's column. He raises very important issues for our churches today. I believe, however, that our challenge is to nurture true conviction and identity while at the same time being open to insights and questions from science, secular culture and other religions. How can we do this?

SCOTT BRUBAKER-ZEHR,  
KITCHENER, ONT.

## ✉ Person of Interest is not a peaceful crime drama

RE: "PROMOTING PEACE" review, Jan. 23, page 30.

Recommending *Person of Interest* as the latest Anabaptist witness to peace in troubled times deserves

a response, and hopefully you are getting many?

My private and secret hobby is watching crime and legal dramas of all sorts, and I certainly had to follow up on this lead. I have been reading *Canadian Mennonite* and *The Mennonite Reporter* for its full 45 years and can't remember network television being recommended to us before.

Unfortunately, *Person of Interest* promotes vigilantism, self-righteousness, conspiracies and lawlessness, none of which I find entertaining or theologically satisfying. Good old *Law and Order* does more to understand and resist evil than *Person of Interest* ever imagined.

Do encourage your reviewer and your readers to widen their viewing if they are truly interested in finding Anabaptist qualities in popular television. Indeed, since you still carry "Canadian" on your masthead, they might be reminded of *Street Legal*, *Cold Squad* and the current *Flashpoint* as worth watching for their latent peacenik messages. They certainly all have more complex and useful understandings of evil than the single-minded perspective of *Person of Interest*.

So I do hope that this is the beginning of *Canadian Mennonite* looking for Mennonite messages in popular culture and look forward to this discussion continuing.

ERNEST J. DICK, GRANVILLE FERRY, N.S.

## ✉ Reader takes biblical injunctions seriously

I WAS STIMULATED by Gareth Brandt's letter in the Feb. 6 issue of *Canadian Mennonite*, "Delight in the reading and hearing of Scripture," page 11.

It was in 2007 when I decided to read, copy and memorize Scripture. The benefits have been most salutary.

I no longer need to take lithium. My pill is Psalm 119:93: "I will never forget your commandments for you have used them to restore my health and joy." Not to disparage medical help, but no more depression since I claimed this truth.

"Thy word have I hid in my heart that I might not sin against thee" (Psalm 119:11) and many more passages like it have significantly reduced my levels of greed, lust and envy.

Psalm 141:5 has encouraged me to invite and encourage my friends to practise King David's wisdom on me: "Let the godly strike me! It will be a kindness! If they reprove me, it is soothing medicine. Don't let me refuse it." Sadly, my brothers and sisters have largely not practised that rebuke/admonition on me as they should. Now that I asked for it, it may happen. Please do!



In Job 34:4, Elihu gives this counsel to Job: “So let us discern for ourselves what is right and learn together what is good.” This would greatly promote community—an antidote to our privacy—by sharing what the Holy Spirit has taught us privately and then sharing it and being open to correction and applying the ethics.

I was humoured in discovering that the Berean Christians “examined the scriptures every day to see whether these things were so” (Acts 17:11). And notice

the results in verse 12. Wow!

The Meserete [Mennonite] elders of Ethiopia practised this sharing of insights and applying them, which resulted in that Mennonite church increasing from some 5,000 members to about 150,000 during the 10 years of communist rule.

A scripture which tells how unique and significant each individual is in God’s economy is Revelation 2:17: “I will give each one a white stone and on it will

## NEW ORDER VOICE

# Come alive, step away from the screen

AIDEN ENNS

I know how to make biscotti. I follow a recipe and it turns out fine. I like to add extra cranberries or raisins to make it chewy and give it a little tang. This is something I can make with confidence.

So why did I sit through a 10-minute Internet video on how to make biscotti? Part of it was to see if I was making it “right.” After all, I’ve never had lessons in making biscotti. The person on the screen was my virtual mother in the kitchen, teaching me how to cook. I guess it felt maternal, comforting.

I also like being able to replay parts I don’t understand, or turn it off if I want. In this case I got bored when

she was cutting up the log of dough into slices and, one by one, placing them on the parchment paper on her cookie sheet. I skimmed ahead to see how they looked when they came out of the oven.

I admit I was fascinated as I watched this person make biscotti. Her counters were so clean! It was so quiet and calm; the glass bowl clinked when she set it on the slab of dark granite. It was all so easy and smooth.

Then I entered my kitchen and looked at our wooden counter loaded with a

telephone, radio, note pad, pen, stray notes, kettle, cutting board, sugar bowl and dishes of salt and pepper. Suddenly my unmediated life felt flat and heavy. Burdensome.

I thought it too daunting to make biscotti. I wanted to make a coffee and sit around instead. But that was stupid thinking! I had made biscotti several times before and it was easy.

I trudged through the inertia of inactivity and got out the ingredients. I set out the bowls, mixer and spatula. After

whipping the sugar and eggs into a yellow froth, I added the mix of dry ingredients, then finally folded in the nuts and berries, sprinkled some flour on the counter and formed the dough.

I thought my “mother” on the computer was silly when she used a ruler to measure the length of the log. But when I got to that point I wondered if this was 30 centimetres? I got my tape from the shop; it was close enough. I set the log on a greased cookie sheet and put it in the oven. I let it cool, then sliced and baked it

further on each side, to make it dry and crunchy.

When I placed the 20 slices one by one on the rack to cool, I was not bored like I was watching that step on the video. On the contrary, I was excited. Indeed, I was proud of what I had made. Or maybe I was proud that I had actually made something.

This unmediated, do-it-yourself approach to life is experiencing a welcome resurgence. Some, like Michael Powers, author of *Hamlet’s Blackberry*, take a techno Sabbath and unplug the Internet every weekend. Others, like the folks at *Adbusters* magazine, promote a digital detox week.

The reasons are several: philosophical (Cyber reality is inferior), psychological (I want my life back), social (We’re alienated from each other), and economic (They

profit from our distractions).

For me, it’s also a spiritual practice. To step away from the barrage of mediated messages requires intention, focus and effort. I feel more alive. Perhaps that’s because I’m reconnecting with the ineffable, with “life itself.”

*Aiden Enns welcomes your feedback and ideas. He is a member of Hope Mennonite Church, Winnipeg, and co-editor of Geez magazine. He can be reached at [aiden@geezmagazine.org](mailto:aiden@geezmagazine.org).*



*So why did I sit through a 10-minute Internet video on how to make biscotti?*

*be engraved a new name that no one knows except the person who receives it.*" This is not to make a case for individualism. It is the nurture and faithful care exercised by the gifts God has given each of us to help us arrive at reception.

GEORGE H. EPP, CHILLIWACK, B.C.

## ✉ 'Consider me an Anabaptist who is countercultural'

THE YOUNG VOICES articles, "I am from the Mennonites" and "Mennonite: culture or denomination?"; Feb. 6, pages 34 to 36, reflect different experiences.

Elise Epp is finding richness in her culture and community, and I am glad. However, when Mennonite is used as a single word for both faith and culture, it

## OUTSIDE THE BOX

# Good news and bad news

PHIL WAGLER

I can read newspapers from different parts of the world every day on my smartphone! I jump from city to city with a few taps to find out what's moving and shaking, what's being interpreted and what's making headlines.

I can read my Bible the same way. The version of good King James is 400 years old, took seven years to translate and is now downloadable in seconds. The labour intensity behind any translation of the Bible is lost on us as we scroll swiftly.

So now, ironically, I have ancient good news and contemporary bad news in hand simultaneously.

Theologian Karl Barth warned against slumbering through our handling of the Scripture and at the same time being dead to the world regarding the

realities of the day. Where this is the case, we see the Bible as drudgingly irrelevant and the news as entertainment. This indifference and sleepy missing of the point must be avoided if the followers of Jesus are to speak with any clarity and authority into the cultural milieu.

The Bible is revelation and the

newspaper is revealing. In the Scriptures we hear the voice of God, the *Deus dixit*, as Barth called it. God has spoken, someone captured it and centuries of wide-awake people have accepted the unquenchable authority in the collection we call God's Word.

This is a phenomenal claim. What is interesting of both testaments is that the *Deus dixit* is heard loudly as the subplot as the news of the day is unfolding. The faith of Abraham emerges in the midst of tribal tensions. The deliverance of the Hebrews is the victory of the underdog in the face of a superpower. The courage of Esther is revelation amidst ethnic cleansing. Israel's royal politics is more sordid

than sponsorship or robocall scandals.

The early church emerges in a time of Rome's dominance. The bad news and the good news are happening simultaneously, hand in hand. That which has been received as the Word of God and ultimately as the Word made flesh in Jesus Christ was revealed in time and

circumstance, but not everyone noticed or even cared.

Yet all these years later we know the name of a fisherman named Peter because his life became part of God's speech, while the guy who would have been front page news and pundit-fodder, Pontius Pilate, received only enough press to ground the *Deus dixit* in real history and to reveal the cross as the treasonous act of the ages perpetrated against God's Word by both Jew and Gentile.

The Bible is revelation and the newspaper is revealing. The danger comes when we treat the newspaper as revelation—some final word about what is ultimate truth—and the Bible as merely revealing information about times past.

So scroll through *The Globe and Mail*, *La Presse* or *Lakeshore Advance*, but scroll the Scriptures with it. God still speaks and redefines headlines. As those who look to Jesus as the Word made flesh, the Bible must be received as revelation by which we interpret the headlines, while pointing beyond them. "The world is speaking," that's what the



*The danger comes when we treat the newspaper as revelation . . . and the Bible as merely revealing information about times past.*

newspapers reveal. And into this current reality God has spoken; that's the word of hope we boldly proclaim.

*Phil Wagler (phil\_wagler@yahoo.ca) is the author of Kingdom Culture and a pastor who loves that holy moment when good news and bad news collide.*



is less helpful than Ukrainian Catholic, which brings together faith and culture while separating them.

Karen Allen writes of seeking to fit in while respecting her South African roots. I wish her well! After 30 years in a Mennonite conference, I clearly hitched my horse to the wrong cultural cart. Discomfort is common, yet Anabaptist theology remains attractive.

What is ironic, though, is that a tradition loudly claiming to be part of the Believers' Church is often willing to overlook how seriously it has veered from its early theology, early Anabaptist history and Scripture,

when it is content to consider Mennonite a culture or an ethnicity.

Since when can members of a Believers' Church be identified by their last name? Since when should servants of the Word also become keepers of a particular culture? We can enjoy the richness of Dutch-German-Russian culture, but when it comes to equating Mennonite and culture, consider me an Anabaptist who is countercultural.

**REV. TERRY M. SMITH, MITCHELL, MAN.**

## /// Milestones

### Births/Adoptions

**Andrews**—Zachary Corbin William (b. Feb. 14, 2012), to Elizabeth and Mark Andrews, Toronto United Mennonite.

**Bender**—Benjamin Jacob (b. Feb. 22, 2012), to Dan and Tanya Bender, Tavistock Mennonite, Ont.

**Braun**—Liam Daniel (b. Jan. 17, 2012), to Lyndon and Erin Braun, Emmanuel Mennonite, Abbotsford, B.C.

**Bruinooge**—Isaiah Nicholas (b. Feb. 24, 2012), to Foort and Ruth Bruinooge, Douglas Mennonite, Winnipeg.

**Cornelsen**—Elliot Arthur (b. Feb. 23, 2012), to Andrew and Rachel Cornelsen, Sherbrooke Mennonite, Vancouver.

**Doepker-Neufeldt**—Macy Ann (b. Feb. 16, 2012), to Lisa Doepker and Andrew Neufeldt, Nutana Park Mennonite, Saskatoon.

**Eldridge**—Lily Teresa (b. Oct. 18, 2011), to Patrick and Julie Eldridge, First Mennonite, Calgary.

**Kresta**—Miriam Anne Therese (b. Feb. 8, 2012), to Sandra Friesen and Gerald Kresta, Toronto United Mennonite, in Singapore.

**Lee**—Justin Grant (b. Feb. 15, 2012), to Grant and Gloria Lee, Waterloo-Kitchener United Mennonite, Waterloo, Ont.

**Lizotte**—Kellen Evan (b. Feb. 25, 2012), to Gabrielle and Rob Lizotte, First Mennonite, Edmonton.

**Schmidt**—Ethan Gary (b. Feb. 11, 2012), to Peter and Arla Schmidt, Laird Mennonite, Sask.

**Wideman**—Kurtis Jonathan (b. Nov. 15, 2011), to Andrea Jenney and Peter Wideman, Waters Mennonite, Lively, Ont.

### Baptisms

**Mary Bundor**—Holyrood Mennonite, Edmonton, Jan. 8, 2012.

### Deaths

**Albrecht**—Susan (nee Rempel), 93 (b. March 11, 1918; d. Jan. 15, 2012), Whitewater Mennonite, Boissevain, Man.

**Bergen**—Peter, 88 (b. July 30, 1923; d. Feb. 9, 2012), Bethany Mennonite, Virgil, Ont.

**Brubacher**—Ada, 104 (b. July 18, 1907; d. Feb. 15, 2012), St. Jacobs Mennonite, Ont.

**Cressman**—Grace, 77 (d. Feb. 9, 2012), Nith Valley Mennonite, New Hamburg, Ont.

**Friesen**—Arthur R. (Tim), 89 (b. July 24, 1922; d. Oct. 17, 2011), Tiefengrund Rosenort Mennonite, Laird, Sask.

**Funk**—John T., 90 (b. Sept. 1, 1921; d. Nov. 29, 2011), Coaldale Mennonite, Alta.

**Hamm**—Helen, 72 (b. Jan. 6, 1940; d. Jan. 27, 2012), Bergthaler Mennonite, Altona, Man.

**Harder**—Julie Ann Wieler, 52 (b. June 8, 1959; d. Sept. 8, 2011), Windsor Mennonite, Ont.

**Hildebrand**—Dora (Dorothy), 86 (b. Nov. 7, 1925; d. Jan. 28, 2012), Bergthaler Mennonite, Altona, Man.

**Ilg**—Kathy, 51 (b. April 26, 1960; d. Feb. 17, 2012), Douglas Mennonite, Winnipeg.

**Klassen**—Diedrich B. (Dick), 69 (d. Jan. 26, 2012), Rosenfeld Bergthaler Mennonite, Man.

**Leis**—Erin Michelle, 29 (d. Feb. 28, 2012), Toronto United Mennonite.

**Lizotte**—Kellen Evan, 1 day (b. Feb. 25, 2012; d. Feb. 25, 2012), First Mennonite, Edmonton.

**Martin**—Lyle, 67 (b. Jan. 20, 1945; d. Feb. 5, 2012), Listowel Mennonite, Ont.

**Penner**—Susanna (Susie) (nee Peters), 96 (b. May 24, 1915; d. Feb. 5, 2012), First Mennonite, Calgary, Alta.

**Plenert**—George Donald, 88 (b. Sept. 21, 1923; d. Feb. 2, 2012), Emmanuel Mennonite, Abbotsford, B.C.



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**Regier**—Carol (nee Schellenberg), 56 (b. July 18, 1955; d. Feb. 6, 2012), Tiefengrund Rosenort Mennonite, Laird, Sask.

**Thiessen**—Peter Jacob, 69 (b. March 15, 1942; d. Feb. 14, 2012), North Leamington United Mennonite, Leamington, Ont.

**Unrau**—Erna, 69 (b. Dec. 8, 1942; d. Feb. 19, 2012), Waterloo-Kitchener United Mennonite, Waterloo, Ont.

**Zehr**—Edna (nee Nafziger), 96 (b. Aug. 22, 1915; d. Feb. 16, 2012), 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](mailto:milestones@canadianmennonite.org), including the congregation name and location. When sending death notices, please include birth date and last name at birth if available.**

## LENTEN MEDITATION

# Where do I sign?

### For Sunday, March 25 (Lent 5)

*Texts: Jeremiah 31:31; Psalm 51:1-12; Hebrews 5:5-10; John 12:20-33*

**FOCUS STATEMENT:** God promises to write a new covenant with us, and the Spirit has chosen our hearts as the parchment on which to sign God's name. Like Jesus, we can surrender ourselves so that our lives might be signs pointing to God through the fruit that we bear.

### For Passion/Palm Sunday, April 1 (Lent 6)

*Texts: Mark 11:1-11; Psalm 118:1-2, 19-29; Isaiah 50:4-9a; Psalm 31:9-16; Philippians 2:5-11.*

**FOCUS STATEMENT:** With the psalmist and the prophet Isaiah, we give thanks for God's goodness and trust in God to save us, as Jesus did. Jesus' mindset or servanthood led to a ride down into Jerusalem, towards scorn and suffering, an authentic sign of God's steadfast love. Even when we break the covenant, its initiator is willing to pay the price to keep it.

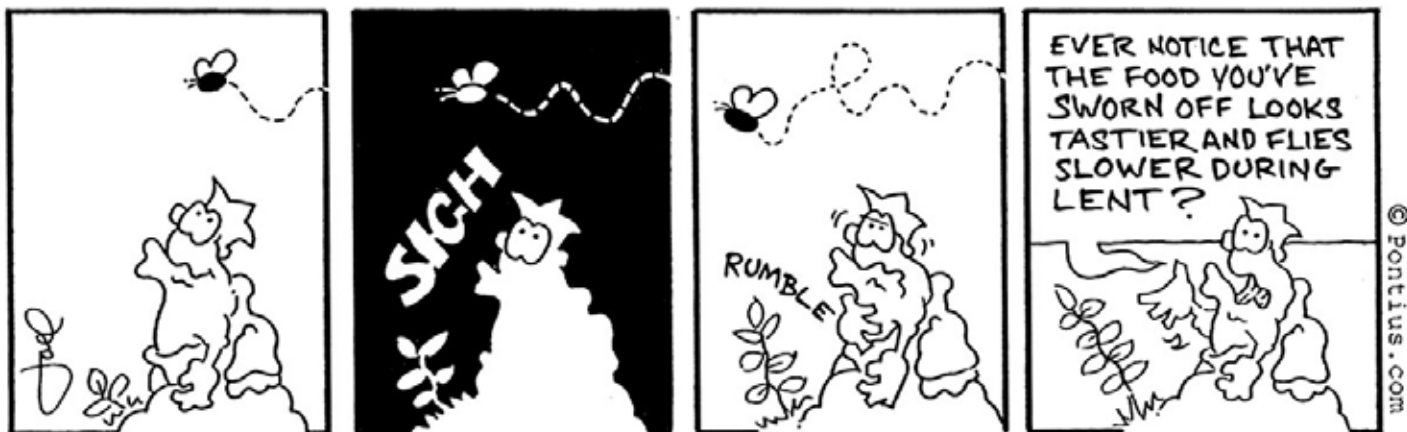
### For Easter Sunday, April 8

*Texts: Acts 10:34-43; Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24; I Corinthians 15:1-11; John 20:1-18.*

**FOCUS STATEMENT:** God said "yes" to the world's "no," putting a stamp of approval on Jesus' commitment to God's way of life. We rejoice in the sign of the empty tomb. By the same power that raised Jesus from the dead, we are commissioned to witness to the new covenant. Will we, like the disciples and apostles, fully sign on and commit ourselves to proclaim and embody this good news to all nations?

*Reprinted with permission from the 2011/12 issue of Leader magazine, published by MennoMedia for Mennonite Church Canada and MC U.S.A. congregations. Leader magazine can be accessed online at [www.leaderonline.org](http://www.leaderonline.org).*

## Pontius' Puddle





## WOMEN WALKING TOGETHER IN FAITH

# Wake up, women! Let our lights shine!

BY EV BUHR

It's time to throw down the gauntlet and say, "Wake up, women!" Our mothers and grandmothers left us a wonderful legacy of working together, and we need to pick up the slack in our own generation by participating in the work of Mennonite Women Canada (MW Canada).

We're all busy, but it comes down to a matter of choice. For instance, my husband and I choose to have our children involved in only one or two extra-curricular events each week, and we choose to eat supper together every evening as a family. Personally I choose to be involved in our local women's group at Edmonton's First Mennonite Church, in the provincial body as president of Alberta Women in Mission (WIM), and in the national body as a member of the MW Canada executive.

My local group meets once a month and is an intergenerational group of wonderful women. I know these women as well as I do because I've attended this group since moving to Edmonton in 1989. Over the years I have seen many friends my age drop out of the group as their families got busier. Sadly I haven't seen them come back once that busyness relaxes.

So what is my motivation in going and why do others attend? Here are a few responses:

• "I have been attending the women's group at First Mennonite Church since its beginning in the late 1950s," says Irene Baergen, 75. "I attended because it was an opportunity to get to know the small group of women from the church. I've continued to attend because I liked the projects we've been involved in, and I've found this to be a good support group, and a way to stay connected and have good times together. When I began attending I was definitely one of the youngest women and now am one of the oldest. It continues to be an important monthly event for me."

• "Belonging to our women's group has been the strongest connection to the church for me," states Kim Epp, 45. "There are so many hard-working and gifted women in our church. I'm so thankful to spend time in the company of this group. I am afforded the opportunity to connect with women on a personal level as we share our joys and concerns during the meeting and then fellowship over coffee. I love being a part of the work we do to help others."



Mennonite  
Women  
Canada

And what about me? Can't I find similar connections with my other friends? I guess so, but not in the midst of such diversity. The friends I "hang" with at church are people close to my age with children my kids' ages. But being a part of this intergenerational group of women gives me the opportunity to listen and learn from their quite different perspectives, and in the process to give and receive support. It's a connection that builds me up, rather than an obligation.

For our mothers and grandmothers, WIM offered a place for women to be empowered within the church. That has changed. Now there are some Sundays when we have only women involved in the leading of the worship service. Even so, not everyone is a Sunday-morning-involvement kind of person. So we need to find new ways for them to be engaged in church, says Pastor Donita Wiebe-Neufeld.

That rings true. But perhaps it needn't be so very "new." Maybe it's more a matter of rediscovering or resurrecting what already exists for women like Epp, who found her "strongest" church connection through the women's group. The same can be said for others within that small circle who took on leadership roles they wouldn't have chosen within the larger church structure because they didn't feel called to that.

Thankfully, MW Canada still offers a place for women to shine: a place where we can laugh, cry and work together; a place where we can support each other in hard times and rejoice in good times; a place where we can make a small difference in the lives of others as we support ministries abroad and closer to home.

So wake up, women! It's almost Easter! A good time to let your lights shine. ✎

PHOTO COURTESY OF EV BUHR



*Ev Buhr, left, Kim Epp and Irene Baergen—members of the Women in Mission group at Edmonton's First Mennonite Church—participate in a Lenten program at the city's St. Joseph's Auxiliary Hospital.*

## MC MANITOBA ANNUAL DELEGATE SESSIONS

GOD AT WORK IN THE CHURCH

# Seeking to be a 'faithful church'

STORY AND PHOTO BY EVELYN REMPEL PETKAU

Manitoba Correspondent  
WINNIPEG

“Church life as we know it is changing,” Willard Metzger, executive director of Mennonite Church Canada, told delegates at the annual MC Manitoba meetings in Winnipeg last month. “Indicators suggest that the structures that served us so well in the past can no longer be sustained.”

Metzger provided a post-Christendom context for the 130 delegates representing 35 churches as they met to discern how to be a faithful church in the face of financial and structural uncertainties. “We are in a time of significant change,” he said, adding, “But this is not the time to express a grand new vision. This is the time for experimentation and giving ourselves some grace to keep trying.”

Serious financial questions face the delegate body. “What does it mean to be a faithful church when congregational giving to MC Manitoba is down 11.5 percent and MC Manitoba is left with a deficit of \$32,299 in 2011?” asked board chair Hans Werner. “What does it mean when there is a growing trend in Mennonite churches that sees increased giving to individual congregations and specific projects, but less to area and national churches? . . . Our people are more generous than ever, and at a faster rate than the rate of inflation in the amount of giving to their own congregations and related organizations,” he noted, “but there is a steady decline in giving to area churches.”

At last fall’s MC Manitoba meeting, delegates approved a church giving budget of \$670,000, which is nearly \$22,000 less than the previous year, which had a shortfall of nearly \$80,000.

### Constitutional changes pass

Two constitutional changes were approved by the delegates, who acknowledged the

need for some structural change and greater flexibility. Reducing the quorum requirement at MC Manitoba meetings and giving the board power to appoint committees for specific purposes give room for the board to respond with greater flexibility to needs as they arise.

Realizing that its camps are currently underutilized, changes are being considered to expand the scope of Camps with Meaning’s three facilities. Justin Zacharias, director of camping ministries, shared dreams of developing the camps into significant learning, teaching and training centres, as well as creating a mobile camp program and improving communication. “We need to do a better job of talking about our camps and inviting people in,” he said.

“The board has endorsed the proposal prepared by the Camp Planning Committee, which proposes significant change in setting the course for the future,” Werner told delegates. A package of information will be sent to each congregation. This will be followed by regional meetings in which the board will listen for feedback and concerns. The board will then make a decision as to whether the proposal can be brought to the delegate body or whether it requires more work.

### Delegates express concerns

At a well-attended workshop the board listened to delegates’ concerns. “What is unique to us, to our camps?” one asked. “What are the things that we can do by working together that we can’t do alone?” asked another.

“The time for tweaking is past,” said one delegate. “We need to make substantial changes in terms of the role for the area church.”

Important functions or roles of MC



MC Manitoba board member Dave Regehr, standing, circulates among the delegates to listen and respond to questions at last month’s annual area church meeting.

Manitoba were highlighted by delegates:

- **PROVIDING RESOURCES FOR** congregations;
- **OFFERING CLUSTER GROUPS** that provide pastoral encouragement and support;
- **RUNNING CAMPS THAT** offer leadership training; and
- **LINKING CHURCHES TOGETHER** by sharing information and needs.

“There is a widening disparity between fairly large institutional-type churches and small organic groups who don’t have a lot of extra resources,” noted Werner.

### Concluding address

“As we move into the context of the unknown, we can be confident in the presence and activity of God,” Metzger said in his concluding address. “This is a time of great transition and it requires an openness and willingness to hear the voice of the Spirit come from unexpected and surprising sources.”

“We are at the cusp of another Reformation-like shift,” Metzger said, noting similarities in today’s post-Christendom world to the situation 16th-century Anabaptists faced. “There is a growing call



for change. There is a spiritual restlessness, political dissatisfaction, increasing demand for just distribution of wealth.”

Metzger sees an increasing attraction to Anabaptism across the country, with its focus on the life of Jesus and the call to radical discipleship. “Let’s live up to our historical responsibilities,” he urged delegates.

“We need audacious Mennonite communities to forge a bold new direction.”

“This is an opportunity to disentangle the church,” he said. “Throw off that which has encumbered us. Maybe it will be easier to discern ‘Being the Faithful Church’ in this time of exile than being in the context of affluence and ease.” ❧

## Being a Faithful Church process avoids sexuality issue

STORY AND PHOTO BY DICK BENNER

Editor/Publisher  
WINNIPEG

While the conversation and participation were good at Sargent Avenue Mennonite Church on a Saturday morning to discuss the Being a Faithful Church (BFC) document, Pastor Marla Langelotz told a Mennonite Church Manitoba leadership seminar on Feb. 24 that she was frustrated that participants didn’t engage the sexuality issue.

She had hoped that the process would take seriously the suggestion by Robert J. Suderman, former general secretary of Mennonite Church Canada, that, “as the Holy Spirit guides us ‘into all truth,’ the church may want to repeat its understandings, modify them or change them,” regarding the sexuality issue. Langelotz, along with John Klassen, pastor of Emmanuel Mennonite Church, Winkler, Man., were asked to report on how the BFC process went in their congregations.

Langelotz said that 54 congregations—about a third of her congregation—came to the BFC meeting and brought their own questions, rather than process the ones proposed by MC Canada. No analysis was attempted. There was some suspicion, she said, that MC Canada “had already decided on the outcomes,” and was only going through the motions of discernment as a strategy of congregational participation.

This was true, she said, for both those pushing for change and those wanting to “repeat its understandings” of scriptural interpretation. But both Suderman and his successor, Willard Metzger, the

keynote speaker at the seminar, as well as MC Canada moderator Andrew Reesor-McDowell, have insisted that the process is more important than the outcome. Langelotz also said there was an attempt to hear all the voices in her congregation, not just a dominant few.

Klassen, who said his congregation has been involved in the BFC process for two years, also said congregants intentionally avoided the sexuality component because they didn’t want that to “bog down” the conversation at the outset. Before launching into the questions posed by the BFC process, he spent time in preparation, preaching a sermon on considering the Bible as the “best path in discerning God’s will” and looking at “binding and loosing” as an instrument of discernment.

As with Sargent, about a third of the church—between 60 and 70 congregants—took part in the discussions in a specially set-aside time. In addition to the BFC questions, they added three more to the discussion from one congregant: What happens when we discern differently, implying, “Is one interpretation more correct than the other?,” “How is our discernment more correct than others, let’s say than the Anglicans?,” and, “What do we do with our decision or consensus?”

The congregational questions proposed by MC Canada for the process are:

• **TELL US WHAT** you have learned about the use of the Bible in your Christian life



Marla Langelotz, pastor of Sargent Avenue Mennonite Church, Winnipeg, participates in a table discussion at last month’s Mennonite Church Manitoba leadership seminar.

and what you think others might learn from your experience. You may want to share something that has come to you slowly through a lengthy time of reflection, prayer and interaction. Or you may want to share some experience that has dawned on you more suddenly—perhaps a new insight or perspective that has clarified things for you. Are there any particular passages, stories or images from the Bible that help you in a special way? Please explain.

• **WHAT ARE THE** underlying and overriding assumptions, principles and guidelines that you believe are helpful in the interpretation of the Bible and its use in your faith and life? Are there elements identified in the document from II Timothy and from the *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective* that are helpful to you? Are there additional elements that should be considered? Are there some characteristics of the Bible—how it came to be, how it is organized, or dynamics within Scripture itself—that are helpful to you and that you think would be helpful to others?

Both pastors felt good about their process meetings, saying that participants wanted to continue the conversation.

Sargent and Emmanuel are among 12 congregations, one youth group and four individuals who have undertaken the BFC process thus far, according to MC Canada. Some 56 leaders and pastors attended the seminar, representing 25 of MC Manitoba’s 49 congregations. ❧

## MC BRITISH COLUMBIA ANNUAL DELEGATE SESSIONS



*Indigenous carver Isadore Charters, left, directs Don Klaassen, an MC B.C. delegate in the fine art of wood carving. The totem pole will be exhibited at the B.C. Truth and Reconciliation Commission meetings in Vancouver in September 2013, in recognition of the Canadian government's role in perpetrating harm upon First Nations peoples through residential schools.*

# Looking back, looking forward

*MC B.C. marks milestone anniversary*

STORY AND PHOTO BY AMY DUECKMAN

B.C. Correspondent  
ABBOTSFORD, B.C.

Celebrating 75 years together as a church in British Columbia, Mennonite Church B.C. came together to celebrate God's presence with the theme, "Yesterday, today, forever," on March 3 at its annual general meeting.

This year's business sessions, held at Emmanuel Mennonite Church, Abbotsford, were reduced to one afternoon, rather than the usual whole day, due to the evening anniversary celebration. Most reporting time was abbreviated, but nonetheless delegates got a taste of how God is continuing to work through the various ministries of MC B.C.

MC Canada executive director Willard Metzger encouraged the group to keep the vision of a vital, growing church going, noting that, in Britain, both Methodist and Presbyterian denominations expect to die out in the next 25 years. "Our task . . . will be to think creatively and courageously, that we become better equipped to discern what God is already doing all around us," he said.

### **Delegates pass three resolutions**

Several resolutions were brought before the delegate body. A motion to spend a portion of the principal of the Mountainview Fund

for new missional initiatives was passed; the fund was created following the dissolution of the Vancouver congregation in 1996. Thus far, MC B.C. has used only the interest from the sale of that church property, but now the Leadership Board feels that using part of the principal is necessary to pay for new missional initiatives.

A motion to extend the position of the indigenous relations coordinator to the end of 2013 was also passed.

The most discussion came on the motion to offer "missional coaching" to MC B.C. congregations, with 20 percent of the cost covered by each participating congregation, and 80 percent by drawing \$50,000 from the Mountainview Fund.

The Leadership Board is exploring working with Forge Canada, an interdenominational missional training network of leaders and churches in Canada that bills itself as "committed to training leaders and churches to transform their neighbourhoods."

One delegate opposed to the motion wondered if a centralized, coordinated effort by MC B.C. leadership was too much of a "top-down" approach.

"Isn't this what we're doing anyway?" asked another.

Speaking in favour of the motion, one pastor said, "I welcome coaches in my life. This is not a punishment; it's an invitation."

MC B.C. executive minister Garry Janzen asked, "How do we be missional? This is to help us be what we want to be."

According to Janzen, Forge Canada works through a group dynamic, offering resources to congregations and leaders to develop a missional capacity in the context of the participating congregation or congregations.

Living Hope Christian Fellowship of Surrey engaged the services of Cam Roxburgh, executive director of Forge Canada, when starting its Sullivan extension campus, and, according to Pastor Lorin Bergen, was pleased with the results of an outside resource coming in to help the church leadership get a sense of God's calling for the new congregation.

In the end, a ballot vote was taken; 73 voted in favour of the motion and 50 against it.

**Indigenous presence at sessions**

The presence of indigenous peoples was very much a part of the sessions. Brander McDonald, MC B.C.'s indigenous relations coordinator, began by reminding everyone of the history of the local land, saying, "Thank you to the Matsqui people for letting us be on their territory." McDonald asked for continuing dialogue between the Mennonite community and indigenous people, saying, "We don't want to be talked about. We want to have a conversation with you."

A healing pole in the foyer outside the meeting hall was available for anyone to help carve. This pole is travelling to various Christian churches as a reminder of the trauma resulting from forced integration in Indian residential schools of generations past. Indigenous carver Isadore Charters guided those who wished to try their hand at carving the pole, which will be exhibited at the B.C. Truth and Reconciliation Commission meetings in Vancouver in September 2013, in recognition of the Canadian government's role in perpetrating harm upon First Nations peoples through residential schools.

**Worship celebrates God's abiding blessings**


The evening worship service recognized the beginnings of Mennonite Church B.C.—formerly the Conference of Mennonites in B.C.—starting in 1936, but through singing and Scripture centred more on the continuing presence and blessing of God. From a beginning of a few churches worshipping in German, MC B.C. now has 31 congregations holding worship services in 11 languages.

Special speaker for the evening was Stuart Murray, author of *The Naked Anabaptist*, speaking on "Singing the Lord's song in a strange land." Noting that in the post-Christendom era, in which the church is no longer central and dominant, Anabaptist Christians, with a history of being a minority, should be particularly equipped to adjust to the changes. "Embrace a vision of social and cultural transformation, rather than our own interests," Murray said. "There is great opportunity when there is interest in an unknown story." ❧

Join us for our 48th Annual General Meeting

# Stories of PEACE



**Featuring**  
2011 Peace in Action Essay Award recipient  
**Rebekah Winter**



**Tuesday, April 10th, 2012**  
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## MC SASKATCHEWAN ANNUAL DELEGATE SESSIONS

PHOTOS COURTESY OF MENNONITE CHURCH SASKATCHEWAN



Velma Harder, left, and Craig Neufeld share communion.



The CMU Male Octet performs at the MC Saskatchewan delegate sessions.

# Prairie church looks to further relations with aboriginal neighbours

*New cultural groups welcomed, too*

BY KARIN FEHDERAU

Saskatchewan Correspondent

For the 200 or so delegates who crowded into the Shekinah Retreat Centre for the Mennonite Church Saskatchewan annual delegate sessions at the end of February, it was a time of looking beyond borders.

Although the theme for the weekend was centred on connections with God and aboriginal issues, delegates also voted to move forward by supporting a new and struggling Vietnamese Mennonite congregation and by beginning a journey with a Burmese tribal group in Regina.

One of the goals of MC Saskatchewan leadership during the consultations that were held in various churches over the past year was to get feedback on how to move the area church forward. One idea proposed was to reach out to immigrants in surrounding neighbourhoods.

Rose Graber, pastor of Grace Mennonite Church, Regina, came with two representatives from the Chin faith group meeting at her church. The Burmese group has been in Regina since 2007.

"Delegates passed a motion to accept them into an informal associate relationship," said Renata Klassen, former MC Saskatchewan moderator.

Graber referred to it as "a contract of

intent . . . so they get to know us and we get to know them."

A connection with a Calgary pastor led to a second ethnic group being embraced by MC Saskatchewan and a partnership to share the support.

Chow Deng, a Vietnamese Mennonite pastor from Calgary, had been working to establish a congregation in Saskatoon. There is presently a small group meeting at Pleasant Hill Mennonite Church and MC Saskatchewan has agreed to be one of four groups to commit up to \$10,000 a year to support a full-time church planter. The other groups involved are Pleasant Hill, Calgary Vietnamese Mennonite Church and the small Vietnamese group beginning in Saskatoon.

That the motion was passed was significant in light of the fact that MC Saskatchewan's financial picture is not rosy.

"Giving is down. That's not good," said Klassen, adding that support was cut to three area church programs. "That was painful for the board," she said.

After hearing the results of the budget, which showed that churches aren't meeting obligations to the conference, Ben Pauls, pastor of Carrot River Mennonite

Church, was left to wonder why. "What is that saying about the congregations?" he asked. "Is it recession-related . . . or is it priorities?"

Gerhard Luitjens, pastor of Hope Mennonite Fellowship, North Battleford, commented, "Overall, the [congregation] needs to keep a balance between where you're serving yourself and what is outreach."

### **Aboriginal-Mennonite relations**

Support for better Mennonite relationships with aboriginals continues. To that end, one session featured an account by a residential school survivor, Howard Cameron. Wendy Peterson from Manitoba was the featured speaker. Having grown up on land owned by her Métis great-grandfather, Peterson has long been involved with aboriginal people, especially in the area of missions.

Klassen said that Peterson brought a bigger picture to the Saskatchewan story. "She is very involved in aboriginal missions worldwide, not just Canadian missions [and] she brought that perspective," said Klassen.

Graber also gained much from the keynote address. "I wished I had copies of all her PowerPoints," she said. ☺

# Leaders counselled to be emotionally smart

STORY AND PHOTO BY DAVE ROGALSKY

Eastern Canada Correspondent  
WATERLOO, ONT.

The 1994 book, *Descartes' Error* by Antonio R. Damasio, explores how rational process alone—popularized by Descartes' maxim, "I think, therefore I am," since the 17th century as central to human existence—was an unhelpful separation of mind and body, thinking and feeling.

This is the basic theory of Daniel Goleman's 1996 book, *Emotional Intelligence*, and others that Wanda Wagler-Martin, executive director of Shalom Counselling, Waterloo, taught at "Being emotionally smart: The importance of emotional intelligence in pastoring." The Feb. 3 event was co-sponsored by Associates Resourcing the Church, Conrad Grebel University College's Peace and Conflict Studies Department, and Mennonite Church Eastern Canada.

Wagler-Martin retold a story by Goleman, who noted that chief executive officers and pastors are hired for their IQ, but are fired for their EQ (emotional quotient). They are smart, but somehow don't relate well to others. The journey from birth in a family of origin, often full of immature emotional relationships, conflicts and reactions, to being able to know and manage oneself emotionally, is a long and incremental one, she said. But this is necessary for pastors and other leaders to function within the intertwined families and power relationships in institutions like the church.

Pastors need both personal competence, made up of accurate self-awareness, healthy self-management and social competence, in turn made up of empathy, organizational awareness, service and relational management.

They also need places with "low maintenance friends," where their needs are processed so that they will not see work relationships, or those whom they serve, as "there for them," Wagler-Martin said.

She ended the seminar with a quick look at Goleman's Five Discoveries:

- **MY IDEAL SELF;**
- **MY REAL SELF;**
- **MY LEARNING AGENDA;**
- **EXPERIMENTING WITH NEW** behaviours, thoughts and feelings; and
- **DEVELOPING SUPPORTIVE TRUSTING** relationships that make change possible. These last relationships will probably be intentional relationships, including counsellors, spiritual directors or support groups.

Finding and developing emotional



Wanda Wagler-Martin, left, executive director of Shalom Counselling, Waterloo, Ont., discusses her presentation on Emotional Intelligence with Jim Brown, pastor of Riverdale Mennonite Church, Millbank.

intelligence is the journey of a lifetime, Wagler-Martin concluded, full of experimenting, reflection, self-care and fruitful service. ☞

## Mennonite Story incorporates

BY DAVE ROGALSKY

Eastern Canada Correspondent  
ST. JACOBS, ONT.

The Mennonite Story, a visitors' centre, began in 1979 to interpret the local and worldwide Mennonite story for tourists coming to the St. Jacobs area. Since its beginning it has hosted more than a million visitors from more than 160 countries. With a renewed video, self-guided interpretive display, knowledgeable volunteers and \$250,000 in renovations, the centre re-launched itself in the fall of 2011 as an independent corporation. Formerly tied to St. Jacobs Mennonite Church, the centre is now run under a six-member board and has its own charitable number.

An appeal letter reads, "Many visitors experience the Mennonite Story as a gateway to gaining an appreciation and understanding of the Anabaptist faith for the first time. Others find a reintroduction to a faith tradition of their past. In addition, the Mennonite Story is regularly utilized by local congregations for their Faith Exploration groups, by local Mennonite families, churches and organizations hosting foreign visitors, as well as institutions

who wish to orient new employees to the Anabaptist history and faith of the area." It adds, "The genius of the Mennonite Story is that, instead of the incredible cost of sending people to the mission field to share our faith story, the world comes to St. Jacobs, eager and ready to hear our story."

The board is inviting local individuals, companies and congregations to contribute towards the annual \$40,000 operating budget. Through generous gifts it is currently debt-free.

One visiting group of more than a hundred Muslims arranged to tour the centre on Easter Sunday morning. Their imam had told them it was important to learn about another group that desired peace in the global village and that lived "modest and disciplined lives." The visit ended with a request from them to give greetings to the Mennonite community. The staff reported that the Muslim women felt a kinship with the women of the Old Order community, as both groups strive to dress modestly and wear head coverings. ☞

# Church's job is to find out what God is doing

*Stuart Murray says Christendom is finished, but not the church itself*

STORY AND PHOTO BY DAVE ROGALSKY

Eastern Canada Correspondent  
WATERLOO, ONT.

To a round of laughter Stuart Murray, author of *The Naked Anabaptist*, assured the gathered pastors and laypeople at the 2012 Mennonite Church Eastern Canada School for Ministers that he would keep his clothes on.

But his presentations stripped away any pretensions of Christianity being dominant or in control in Europe or Canada. Worship one morning included a Seuss-like poem in which the congregation's refrain, written by Kevin Peters Unrau of Hillcrest Mennonite Church, New Hamburg, read, "We're pushed to the edges / we're lost and

perplexed / we're waiting for you, God / to tell us what's next!"

This refrain summed up much of what Murray had to say. In the aftermath of the fall of Christendom—the political-religious-cultural alliance that ruled the West from the time of Constantine—Christians find themselves in a minority position in society, pushed to the edges of culture. Accustomed to feeling like they were in the centre of society, Christians, churches and denominations now feel lost and perplexed.

While Murray said that Christendom



*Mark Diller Harder, right, co-pastor at St. Jacobs Mennonite Church, Ont., imposes ashes on the forehead of Don Penner, pastor of Wanmer Mennonite Church, Cambridge, during Ash Wednesday worship at MC Eastern Canada's 2012 School for Ministers.*

has fallen, Christianity has not. He holds out hope in the *Missio Dei*, the mission of God. He repeatedly said, "The church does not have a mission. God's mission has a church." He taught that the church is the primary way in which God is at work in the world. The church's job is to find out what God is doing and join God in that work. The sense of the church being the primary way—but not the only way—was small comfort to some more evangelically minded pastors, as Murray encouraged Christians to work together with other religions to bring about a more just and righteous society.

David Martin, executive minister for MC Eastern Canada, spoke up during one response session to say that these are the very issues that make up much of the conversations around the staff table. This was offered after Murray had noted that many congregations have ceased to exist and more will follow, and that denominations need to prepare for smaller budgets and to re-apportion what does come in in new ways.

Besides Murray's presentations, morning worship and ample time for fellowship, a number of workshops attracted participants. "Emerging churches in post-Christendom" focussed on two emerging postmodern, post-Christendom congregations, their ministry and vision. These two congregations focused on the need to teach spiritual disciplines in order to see God at work and to become missional congregations. ☿

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God at work  
in the Church  
**snapshots**

PHOTO BY RICHARD ALBRECHT



*Ruth and Jim Martin, co-chairs of the Marriage Encounter board of directors for Ontario Mennonite and Brethren churches, stand under an archway, the entrance to the fundraising banquet held Feb. 11 at Kitchener Mennonite Brethren Church, Ont. The event, which featured a dessert auction and a performance by cellist Ben Bolt-Martin, raised \$3,684 after expenses. The funds will be used for the weekend sessions, as the registration fees do not cover all the expenses, despite being run entirely by volunteers. Mennonite and Brethren Marriage Encounter is part of an international organization that holds weekend events designed to enhance marriage relationships by improving communication between spouses.*

CANADIAN MENNONITE UNIVERSITY PHOTO



*The Canadian Mennonite University women's volleyball team repeated as Western Canadian College volleyball champions, bettering 12 other teams from British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba. The Blazers cruised through their pool matches, defeating Palliser College, Sask.; Ambrose University College, Alta.; St. Mary's University College, Alta.; and Selkirk College, B.C. In the playoffs, CMU downed Assiniboine Community College, Man., and Prairie Bible Institute, Alta., to advance to the final against King's University College of Edmonton. With the gold medal on the line, CMU won in straight sets (25:22 and 25:18).*

MENNONITE CHURCH CANADA WEB PAGE



*Since its launch on Dec. 12, 2007, videos on Mennonite Church Canada's YouTube channel have been viewed more than 32,000 times. The site currently offers 55 uploaded videos covering topics that range from educational and worship themes and interviews with people and pastors, to various ministry projects and church gatherings. The screen grab above is taken from MC Canada interviews with young people at the 2011 youth assembly in Waterloo, Ont. To learn more or subscribe, visit, [mennonitechurch.ca/tiny/1734](http://mennonitechurch.ca/tiny/1734).*

## GOD AT WORK IN THE WORLD

# Building a lasting peace

*Project Ploughshares praised for persistent efforts at disarmament*

STORY AND PHOTO BY DICK BENNER

Editor/Publisher  
WATERLOO, ONT.

The greatest threat to world peace today is the Kalashnikov AK-47 rifle, Samantha Nutt told an engaged audience who had come out on Feb. 27 to celebrate 35 years of Project Ploughshares' work at building lasting peace.

But the co-founder of War Child, an international agency assisting war-affected children and women, had high praise for Project Ploughshares because of its persistent efforts at educating the public on the arms trade and working through research and negotiations with the UN and the Canadian government, a major buyer of small weapons, along with Germany and "five members of the Security Council. These countries represent 70 percent of the sales," she said.

It is organizations like Project Ploughshares that will bring new awareness to the public mind, she said, with "an uncompromising and commanding voice on nuclear disarmament and arms control for 35 years, that rightly measures success in terms of policy impact. The organization assesses its progress in relation to its overall goal of disarmament, rather than to an arbitrary cost-per-capita metric."

Nutt praised Project Ploughshares, co-founded by Ernie Regehr as a part of Conrad Grebel University College's peace program, for "not ceding to political interests and able to sustain itself without government funding."

The 42-year-old humanitarian activist,

slight of build but packing a rhetorical punch, spoke of her experience working in and out of war-ravaged countries like Somalia and the eastern region of the Democratic Republic of Congo, the latter of which she described as the "most dangerous place on the globe for a woman to live."

She rattled off the alarming statistics from the World Bank that lists the worldwide number of AK-47s, including those with grenade launchers, at some one billion. The lightweight rifle is easy to use and capable of firing 600 rounds of ammunition a minute. The tragedy is that many of these are put into the hands of child soldiers who perpetrate violence on a grand scale.

"Globally we spend more than twice as much on these weapons as on all the humanitarian and health aid combined," she lamented. "Sales are at \$400 billion a year, a 60 percent increase since 9/11." The pathos is that, combined with raping and killing by teenage members of gangs, these weapons of war are more readily available in these African countries than "pure drinking water."

She told a gut-wrenching story of a 13-year-old on her way out of a village to buy food being gang-raped and then disfigured by a roving band of three teenage boys, who left her bleeding by the side of the road. Rape, which ruins the chance of marriage for young women in that culture, is pandemic despite the presence of some 5,000 UN peacekeepers and the fact that



*Samantha Nutt signs copies of her book **Damned Nations: Greed, Guns, Armies & Aid** at the Project Ploughshares 35th-anniversary celebration in Waterloo, Ont., last month.*

rape as a weapon of war is a crime under international law.

These tactics are so entrenched, she said, because of centuries of exploitation, beginning with the slave trade and continuing on through colonization, the ethnic division and the influx of millions of refugees from Rwanda and elsewhere. Right now, she said, the conflict is centred on who will control Congo's natural resources, especially coltan, a black tar-like mineral that is a vital component used in a vast array of small electronic devices, especially in mobile phones, laptop computers and pagers.

Congo possesses 80 percent of the world's coltan. In her studies, Nutt has found a direct link between sexual abuse and mining operations, saying the lawlessness is much more prevalent in the vicinity of the mines than in other parts of the country.

All of this points to the fact that the western world is largely unaware of these causes of deep-seated and ongoing conflicts because of its sanitized view of global conflicts. Critical of volunteer tours mass-marketed to the more exotic places in Africa, she bluntly calls many westerners in her book *Damned Nations: Greed, Guns, Armies & Aid*, an "odd combination of gawkers and do-gooders, proselytizers and community groups, who'd been unable to resist the urge to do something." ❧

*[Samantha Nutt] bluntly calls many westerners in her book **Damned Nations: Greed, Guns, Armies & Aid**, an 'odd combination of gawkers and do-gooders, proselytizers and community groups, who'd been unable to resist the urge to do something.'*



# The landscape of occupation

*Landscape architect reports on Israel and Palestinian land conflicts*

BY DAVE ROGALSKY

Eastern Canada Correspondent  
WATERLOO, ONT.

Larry Harder, a self-identified “cultural Mennonite,” presented “The landscape of occupation: Contemporary Israel and Palestine” at Renison University College, a technology-focused Anglican school on the grounds of the University of Waterloo, recently.

Loosely quoting Edward Said, a 20th-century Palestinian advocate for post-colonialism, Harder said, “Palestinians and Israelis have a connection to the landscape: different stories, two narratives being written on one place.”

Both Israelis and Palestinians believe they have an inherited right to the land, but only one people has enough power to keep control of it, he said. Showing maps of the West Bank area of Palestine—captured by the Israelis in the 1967 Six Days War, but ostensibly under the control of the Palestinian authority—Harder explained that less than 50 percent of the land is actually under Palestinian control.

Harder’s story was one of imbalance, inequality and injustice. “Architecture is about buildings and interior design about the inside of buildings, and landscape architecture is about changing the land for the better,” he said. The Palestinians, long-term practitioners of dry-land agriculture, are systematically being pushed into ever-smaller corners, their lands taken away or access to them denied.

Many Palestinians fled the land during conflicts over the years. Many have not been allowed to return. The Israeli Yad Vashem Museum, commemorating the injustice of the Holocaust, is built on a village abandoned by Palestinians in 1948 who have not been allowed to return to the land.

Harder’s interest in Israel/Palestine

grows from several sources: his grandparents’ experiences of the loss of land in Russia after the Bolshevik Revolution, his work with student groups in the 1960s and ’70s, and his travels to the land itself beginning in 1998.

After being shown the disparity between Israel and Palestine on that trip, he was asked, “What will you do about this?”

Since 2006, he has been a member of an ecumenical accompaniment program in Israel mandated by the World Council of Churches at the request of patriarchs of churches in Palestine and under the auspices of the United Church of Canada.

Showing his pictures and telling the story is his response to what he has seen. His hope comes from statements like that of Jamal Ju-maa, part of the Palestinian Stop the Wall campaign, who wrote, “Seventeen empires have come and gone in Palestine, but the Palestinians are still here.”

Idrisa Pandit, director of Renison’s Islamic Studies Department, spoke of worries in the school administration based on the use of the word ‘occupation’ in Harder’s title. Although there were a few detractors present, Harder said most of the attendees were absorbed by the story he told of the two peoples on the land and their conflicting mythologies. ❧

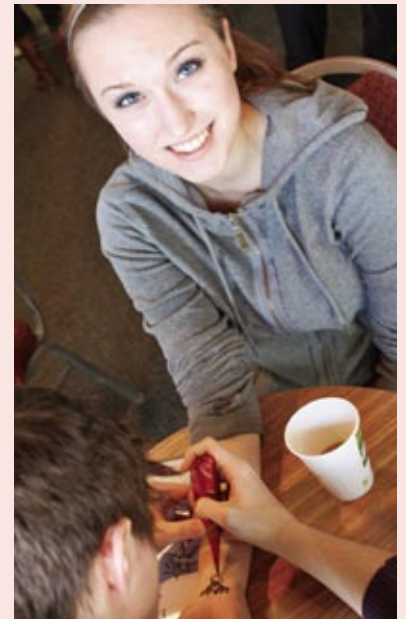
## /// Briefly noted

### Henna, Coffee for Peace and cookies engage students

WINNIPEG—Students at Canadian Mennonite University (CMU) came out in strong numbers to sample Coffee for Peace beverages, henna body art and cookies on Feb. 7—all supplied by Mennonite Church Canada. The glass door that separates the CMU campus from the offices of MC Canada and MC Manitoba is nonetheless perceived as a barrier, students said, so staff went to the student side of the campus this year. Approximately 150 students engaged with the event in some way during the day. Most students were unaware that MC Canada’s Resource Centre offers students help as a complement to CMU’s extensive library resources. “I’ve been looking all over the city for this DVD!” exclaimed student Jami Reimer when she found the *Mother Teresa* movie at the resource table. Students also perused information on numerous international service opportunities available to them through MC Canada. Staff members have challenged themselves to figure out how to reach more students on Mennonite school campuses across Canada.

—Mennonite Church Canada

PHOTO BY DAN DYCK



*CMU student Katie Bashak is the first student to receive a henna tattoo from Mennonite Church Canada graphic designer Megan Kamei.*



# Iraq's civil society needs brought to Washington

BY RACHELLE LYNDAKER SCHLABACH

Mennonite Central Committee

Iraq's citizens will be the key to whether their country moves toward greater democracy and freedom in the coming years. This is the message that a delegation of four prominent civil society leaders from Iraq brought to Washington, D.C., in early February.

It was part of a larger project to articulate a message from Iraq's civil society to the U.S., as Iraq transitions to a new phase with the withdrawal of U.S. troops last December. The project was jointly sponsored by Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) and 3P Human Security, based in Washington, D.C., a program of Eastern Mennonite University's Center for Justice and Peacebuilding in Harrisonburg, Va.

The project included a survey conducted by MCC Iraq and 3P Human Security in the fall of 2011, to see what Iraqis identified as their current priorities. More than 100 nongovernmental organization leaders from across the country responded.

The survey revealed strong interest in U.S. support for human rights and freedom of expression. It also highlighted the ongoing need for Iraq's government to provide basic services, such as water and electricity, as well as the need for improved security.

Hanaa Edwar, a prominent lawyer and activist who heads one of Iraq's largest and oldest nongovernmental organizations, the Iraqi Al-Amal Association, was one of the delegates. Edwar told U.S. officials of the key role of civil society groups in pressuring Iraq's parliament to resume its work in the fall of 2010. She also said that Iraqi organizations have declared 2012 to be a year of civic peace.

"There are huge challenges facing us as a country, and the civil society is working to safeguard democratic space and create a better future," said Hashim Al-Assaf, the coordinator of an umbrella organization for both Iraqi and international nongovernmental organizations working in the country.

Other delegates included Abdulsatar Younis, who leads a network of civil society organizations in Iraqi Kurdistan, and Noof Assi, an activist who last year monitored and reported on the Arab Spring

demonstrations in Baghdad.

The delegates recommended that the U.S. support a focus on women and young people. They called for similar U.S. attention to victims of war crimes and vulnerable populations, such as minorities, detainees and those who have been displaced from their homes due to the sectarian conflict.

"We believe that Iraq is for all," said Edwar. But she said the U.S. needs to support those who are working to make this vision possible. ☸

## Dept. of Peace gathering packs Sam's Place

*MP creates 'a platform for politicians to do the right thing'*

BY DAN DYCK

Mennonite Church Canada  
WINNIPEG

Alex Atamanenko may not be a pacifist, but he still supports Bill C-373, which would create a Department of Peace within Canada's federal government.

Atamanenko, MP for the riding of British Columbia Southern Interior, spoke on the Bill C-373 at Sam's Place, Winnipeg, on Feb. 17, as a petition supporting the bill was passed around. Eighty people of all ages packed the room that evening.

"Canada is the world's 12th-biggest arms dealer," said Atamanenko, a former military officer and teacher. He observed that his support of Bill C-373 is connected in part to his pacifist Doukhobor heritage. The 18th-century Doukhobor movement rebelled against the opulent and ritualistic authority of the Russian Orthodox Church of the time, echoing the Mennonite experience with the state Catholic church during the 16th century.

"It's not an either/or situation," said Atamanenko. "Having a military and a Department of Peace can be a both/and."

Bill C-373 does not involve new taxpayer dollars, he said, but would consolidate money from a variety of sources that the government currently spends on peace

initiatives. A Department of Peace would add an official, influential and recognized voice within government structures. He said the best way to draw attention to the bill is for citizens to raise the awareness and support of their MPs. The bill presently has five seconders, and can have up to 20.

Atamanenko himself acknowledged the need for a military force, but that Canada "shouldn't use it unless absolutely necessary."

One audience member asked how war advocates and peace proponents would agree on criteria for circumstances that would necessitate force.

"It has to be part of an entire analysis of the situation," Atamanenko said. "A Department of Peace would at least be in a position to provide input."

Willard Metzger, executive director of Mennonite Church Canada, thanked Atamanenko for "creating a platform for politicians to do the right thing."

Atamanenko also supports Bill C-363, which would allow Canadian citizens to conscientiously object to paying the portion of their taxes directed to military purposes. ☸

MCC PHOTO BY BEN YOUNAN



*In a more peaceful time, orphans Alla and Marah look out over the city of Homs, Syria. Their orphanage, a ministry of the Syrian Orthodox Church that is supported by MCC's Global Family program, has now moved to a safer location.*

## Humanitarian crisis looming in the Middle East

By GLADYS TERICHOW  
Mennonite Central Committee

**A**larmed by the continuing violence in Syria, and consistent reports that unrest is likely to escalate and spread to neighbouring countries in the coming months, Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) has begun preparing for a humanitarian crisis in the region.

About 20,000 Syrians have already fled to Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan, and the flow of

people is increasing, says Rick Janzen, director of MCC's programs in the Middle East.

MCC has launched a \$500,000 Middle East crisis appeal to assist partner organizations as they provide humanitarian aid and build peace. At this point, MCC's response includes:

• **EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE:** food,

medicine and non-food items for Syrians affected by violence and in need of basic supplies.

• **RELIEF KITS.** People in Canada and the U.S. are encouraged to assemble kits and drop them off at their nearest MCC office or warehouse.

• **BUILDING PEACE** through grassroots, community efforts that encourage conflict prevention.

Janzen, who visited Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq and Palestine in early February, says he was startled by the heightened fears of sectarian violence and political unrest across the Middle East. "Everywhere we went, we heard outlooks for the future that were devastating and ominous," says Janzen. "Our partners are calling on us to support their efforts at conflict prevention and peacebuilding. . . . One of our partners from Lebanon looked us squarely in the eye and asked, 'Are you peace ambassadors or not? If you are, this is the time to act.'"

A significant part of MCC's response will assist partner organizations in Lebanon to expand efforts that strengthen conflict-prevention strategies and disaster preparedness. This includes training women peacebuilders, media training, encouraging dialogue among young leaders, trauma training and more.

To hear a podcast of MCC staff reflecting on what they are hearing from their partners, visit [mcc.org/middleeastcrisis](http://mcc.org/middleeastcrisis). ❧

## With one heart: A prayer

**A**lmighty God, we pray today for all people of the Middle East, who face a time of change and uncertainty. With one mouth and one heart, together with our brothers and sisters there, we pray that God would console those who have lost loved ones.

We pray for strength for the church in the Middle East, that they might not give up hope in spite of all the challenges that lie ahead, but would instead hold steadfast to the faith of their ancestors and remain rooted in their homes and homelands. Safeguard their presence and invigorate their witness there.

We ask that people who have been driven apart by violence may come back to each other in love, tolerance, cooperation

and wisdom. We pray that changes in the region respect principles of justice, freedom and human dignity.

Thank you for the challenges before us, Lord, as they present us with new opportunities to serve our neighbours. Give us each the courage to work for reconciliation and peace, and to advocate all just causes.

Our faith gives us a living hope ever incarnate in the Lord Jesus Christ. Let us be witnesses to that faith, here and throughout the world. Amen.

*This prayer was compiled by Sarah Adams, MCC representative for Lebanon and Syria, from recent prayers offered by church leaders in the two countries.*

# 'At this moment I do not have hunger'

*Canadian Foodgrains Bank project helps African farmers produce more food*

BY EMILY CAIN

Canadian Foodgrains Bank

**F**or Maria Djohane, a farmer in Mozambique, this past harvest was the best she has ever had. "I produced food to eat, to sell, and to share with my daughter who lives with her husband and four children," she says.

But abundant harvests are not something the widow and mother of three grown children has always known. For many years she struggled to produce enough food for her family. "I farmed a small amount of land and harvested very little," she says.

But things changed in 2007 when a Canadian Foodgrains Bank-supported food security project began operating in the area. The aim of the project, operated by Mennonite Central Committee Canada

together with the Christian Council of Mozambique (CCM), is to help people produce more food for themselves and their communities.

At first, Djohane was sceptical. Rain had been scarce in the area and production was poor. But she agreed to participate, receiving peanut, maize and sorghum seeds, as well as training in improved agricultural techniques.

It paid off. Even with little rain in the area, Djohane's harvest was the best she had ever seen. She also began growing orange, tangerine and banana trees, something which had never been done in her community.

"I wanted to see better production from

my toil, so I put my strength into learning and applying what they were teaching," she says, noting, "One of the things I learned was that I often left too much space between planting holes."

The crops were so good that buyers came from neighbouring districts to purchase vegetables. "This is good," says Djohane, "because we will no longer be a forgotten area. People know we are producing food."

She was also excited to receive a goat through the program. "CCM fulfilled a dream of mine by giving me a goat," she says. "I never thought this would be possible because I did not have means to purchase one."

Of the project, she says, "At this moment I do not have hunger. This project helped me to change my life." ❧

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE  
CANADIAN FOODGRAINS BANK



*Women from the Nhambisse area of Mozambique, where the project is taking place, pose for a photograph.*

## Sahel area of Africa threatened by looming food crisis

BY EMILY CAIN

Canadian Foodgrains Bank

**I**n January, the United Nations declared the famine in Somalia over, but the region is still in a precarious situation. And while food needs in East Africa persist, another food crisis is looming in West Africa's Sahel region.

According to the UN World Food Programme, millions of people in countries such as Niger, Mauritania, Mali, Chad, Senegal, Gambia, Burkina Faso and Nigeria are at risk of hunger in the coming months. According to the UN agency, the crisis is the result of a severe drought that destroyed the majority of the harvest in the region last year.

For organizations like the Canadian Foodgrains Bank, which responded to the crisis in East Africa last year, the coming crisis is an opportunity to be proactive in responding to food needs in those countries.

"There was a general sense among the humanitarian community that we could have responded more quickly

in East Africa," says Grant Hillier, who directs international programs at the Foodgrains Bank. For Hillier, it is crucial "to get food to people who need it, so that they don't use coping mechanisms, such as selling their livestock. That only drives them deeper into debt or poverty."

The Sahel region is no stranger to drought or to food insecurity. Over the last decade at least three droughts have hit the area, but this time around the food crisis is expected to be more serious and affect many more people.

Adding to the stress are high food prices, partly the result of scarcity in the affected countries. The government of Niger, for example, has reported a harvest deficit for 2011 of 519,600 tonnes of cereals. Other countries in the area are also projecting decreases in agricultural production. Low yields means more farmers will have to purchase more food, driving food prices up even higher.



## GOD AT WORK IN US

# Making room for faith in the corporate world

CEO of the Winnipeg Airport Authority draws from his Mennonite heritage

BY EVELYN REMPEL PETKAU

Manitoba Correspondent

*“Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth” (II Timothy 2:15).*

These are words that Barry Rempel’s grandfather instilled in him as a child and words that he carries with him in his job as chief executive officer of the Winnipeg Airport Authority. For more than 10 years Rempel has been overseeing a burgeoning aviation corporation that employs more than 24,000 people. Most recently, he oversaw the completion of the new airport terminal, “the largest construction project that has ever happened in Manitoba, at \$600 million,” he says.

Rempel is unabashedly Christian, acknowledging that unless he maintains a close relationship with Christ, “the spokes of my wheel, no matter how strong they individually are,” are insufficient to carry him. Nurturing the “hub,” that relationship to Christ, is central to him.

Growing up in a Mennonite family, Rempel has roots in Mennonite Church Manitoba. In 1969, the family moved to Vancouver, where his father was the director of maintenance for Air Canada.

Rempel started out in maintenance and eventually took time off to get a business degree. He feels very fortunate to be one of the few who brings a well-rounded background of aviation experience to his position, having spent 27 years with an airline before switching to the airport side of the business. “I got to do almost everything except be a pilot,” he says, including working as a flight attendant.

The lessons of servant leadership that he learned from his grandfather and the Mennonite church are central to his understanding of his role and the vision he



brings to the aviation industry. “They are biblical principles that have stuck with me throughout my career,” Rempel says. “Our values of respect, integrity and service are consistent with the ministry that Jesus extended to people.”

At times the business of faith has not intersected easily with the business of the world. It is “difficult in this day and age in Canada because you cannot be seen as being the preacher or be seen to be leading for the purpose of converting people to your way of thinking,” he says. “The only way allowed in today’s environment is to inspire people to a vision of common good. I hope to lead by example and then hope people ask me about my faith.”

One resource that Rempel says has been helpful in dealing with these challenges is “a group of people in similar positions like myself—presidents of companies, people that hold positions with a fair significance on others. Originally we were a group of eight, six of whom were Mennonites.” This

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE WINNIPEG AIRPORT AUTHORITY



Barry Rempel is pictured in the new terminal building at Winnipeg’s Richardson International Airport on the day of its opening, Oct. 30, 2011.

group meets together regularly to share experiences, learn from each other and bring their faith perspective to the challenges they face.

Presently Rempel attends Grant Memorial Baptist Church. “At Grant I realized there was a connectivity with a broader cross-section of the Christian family,” he says. “I started to learn things there that I didn’t appreciate until I went there.”

One of those things was the question of military involvement. Because of his community service, Rempel was asked to be honorary colonel for the 17 Wing of the air force several years ago. “Before I could answer that, I really really struggled with the pacifism position I had been brought up with,” he says. “I knew what I had been taught, but never understood how it works in the real world.”

After sharing his struggle with his support group and Mennonite businessman Art DeFehr, Rempel decided to accept the position. “I’ve learned there isn’t one of the senior officers in the military that wants war,” he says. “They believe their role is to maintain peace and this is where my thinking was simplistic, I think. At what stage do we allow evil to continue unchallenged and how do we best challenge it?” ❧

# Providing a place to call home

STORY AND PHOTO BY ANGELIKA DAWSON

Mennonite Central Committee B.C.  
VANCOUVER

**G**errardo Munarriz has a simultaneously heartbreaking and heart-lifting job in his work for the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Refugee Assistance Program in Vancouver. Munarriz came to Canada from Peru as a refugee claimant himself, so he knows first-hand what it feels like to come to a new country with a hope to build a new life in a safe place.

"I was sponsored by the Mennonite community in Cambridge, Ont.," he says quietly. "I tell my clients that I have walked this path and that we have to be grateful for what the Mennonites have done—and are doing—for refugees coming to Canada."

His work with refugees feels overwhelming at times. He says that he could use three or four more people in his tiny office to deal with the number of cases that come across his desk every day. And while that can be discouraging, his favourite part of the job is to listen to the incredible stories of the people he serves.

Maria (a pseudonym) came to Canada as a single mother after fleeing her homeland of Guatemala. Travelling with her 10-month old daughter, she crossed four borders by car, bus and foot in six months. She fled because she feared for her life and that of her child.

The lowest point in her journey came when she had to be separated from her daughter as they crossed the Mexican-American border.

"I thought that God had forgotten me," she says quietly of their time apart.

The man who was to take her across the border chose, instead, to keep her with him, raping her for three days while telling her that her daughter was going to be sold and she was going to stay with him forever.

The man eventually relented and she was able to cross the border with several others who were going by foot. For five days they walked in the desert with no food. It got so cold at night that Maria thought she would freeze to death. Finally they made it and she was reunited with her baby.

"Even in that time, God was with me," Maria says. "If he hadn't been with me, that man might have killed me or I might have died in the desert. But the prayers of my parents and my sisters helped. It was only God."

Her initial refugee claim in Canada was rejected and, with no money and fearing deportation, she came to the MCC Refugee Assistance office in Vancouver and spoke to Munarriz.

"It was clear that she could not go back to Guatemala, where her life and her daughter's life were in real danger, but no one had told her that she could apply on humanitarian and compassionate grounds," he says, adding that Maria's support network and the fact that she is working and contributing to Canadian society already makes her an ideal candidate for landed-immigrant status.

Together, they worked first on her pre-removal risk assessment application and on her humanitarian and compassionate application for permanent residence, which has been accepted. Maria has a few more steps to complete, but she hopes that sometime this year the process will be finished.

"MCC gave me so much help," she says. "I had no money to pay lawyers. I prayed that God would lead me to someone who would not take advantage of me. God led me to MCC."

For Munarriz, Maria's story is an example of the heart-lifting experiences that make his long hours all worthwhile. ❧



*Gerrardo Munarriz works in the Mennonite Central Committee Refugee Assistance Program in Vancouver. His clients come from all over the world.*

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# MC Canada rep 'protected' by God

BY DEBORAH FROESE  
Mennonite Church Canada

A traffic accident in Choma, Zambia, on the morning of Feb. 10 left Elsie Rempel with a hairline fracture of her left ankle and a gash on her right ankle. She is recovering well and said that she is grateful for the good care she has received.

"It's quite a cultural experience," she wrote in her journal, "one that is connecting me much more deeply with the people I came to serve, but not one I was expecting."

Rempel, a Mennonite Church Canada Christian Formation consultant, is in Zambia for a three-month service leave. She is there to mentor teachers through a program supervised by Eric and Kathy Fast, Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Zambia directors.

Rempel was travelling to a workshop with two other women when the accident occurred. She was immediately taken for medical attention at a nearby private clinic used by the MCC team.

Rempel was held in the clinic overnight for observation due to a possible concussion. Kathy remained with her.

Eric said that the MCC vehicle would likely be a "write-off," as both vehicles apparently rolled after the collision.

The news was relayed to Rempel's friends, family and peers in an e-mail from her husband Peter Rempel. "I am deeply grateful to God that Elsie, nor any of the others involved, have been seriously injured or worse," he wrote. "My main apprehension about her sojourn in Zambia had been about a traffic accident, and now it has happened, but God has protected her and the others."

Since the accident, Rempel has had to postpone a workshop so that she can keep her feet up for healing. She has kept busy by creating hand-drawn primary readers for the teachers she is mentoring for use in their classrooms. ❧

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- ISRAEL/PALESTINE with PASTOR KEITH BLANK (November 7-16)
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- MUSIC and MARKETS: DANUBE CHRISTMAS CRUISE (December 1-9)

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## ARTBEAT



*'The Last Walk' by Odia Derksen (series of photographs, detail). A patron of the Mennonite Heritage Centre Gallery views the collection of photos Derksen took as she walked her murdered sister Candace's route from school to where she was abducted and then to where her body was eventually found.*

## COVER STORY

# Beauty from loss

*Pain of a murdered family member 'indescribable'*

STORY AND PHOTOS BY RACHEL BERGEN

National Correspondent  
WINNIPEG

It is indescribable, the feeling of losing a loved one, especially when that person is lost as the result of a murder.

Cliff, Wilma and Odia Derksen have experienced this firsthand, having lost Candace, their daughter and sister, in 1985, when she was grabbed off the street, bound and left to freeze in an industrial shed in the Elmwood area of Winnipeg.

The Derksen family recently came together with Kelsie Trudeau, a student at Winnipeg's Shaftesbury High School, whose brother Morgan was murdered in 2003, in order to put together the exhibit "Indescribable" at the Mennonite Heritage Centre Gallery, Winnipeg, which ran from Jan. 27 until March 10.

It featured art that Cliff and Odia had

worked on long after Candace died and while Mark Edward Grant was being tried for first-degree murder. He was found guilty last spring, 26 years after Candace's body was found.

The artists shared their experience with art as therapy and a way of healing on Feb. 23 at an artist talk and tour event. For the Derksens, the exhibit was a chance to steward their story, because, according to Wilma, "we are all given a story to steward."

After their daughter was murdered, a person the Derksens call their "angel" came to their house with a similar story of loss. He told them that their future would be filled with bitterness and anger if they were to harbour vengeance against their

daughter's killer. "I'm glad we chose forgiveness," Wilma said. "We kept away from the seductive victim-offender bond."

"Forgiveness was something we just did," Odia said, recalling her childhood and adolescent years. "Of course, there was anger and pain, but the element of hatred . . . we didn't let it creep in."

"The thing that surprised me in the 23 years after Candace's death [until the time an arrest was made] was that we were watching TV and [Grant's] face came on the screen," Cliff said. "I didn't feel rage. I realized we had been working on this. It changed my thinking more than I had expected. It was a 'God moment.'"

One thing that made the time during and after Candace's murder so difficult was that this very artistic family didn't have an outlet for its grief.

"During the time we were traumatized by the murder, the joy of creativity wasn't there," Wilma said. "We sort of gave up on the art."

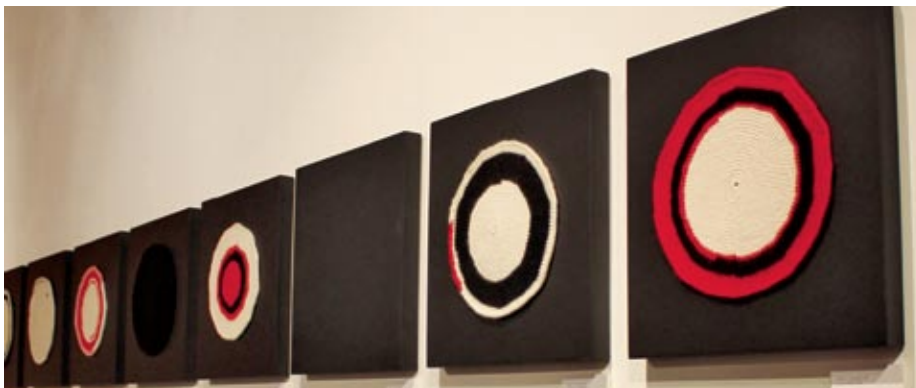
Their creativity finally came out years later, when the trial began. "To see it coming out during the trial, it was providing therapy," Wilma said. The courtroom during the trial also became a safe place for the



*Wilma Derksen poses beside husband Cliff Derksen's sculpture, 'Escape: Jonah' (clay with a patina finish). While the artist was unhappy with life, wishing to escape just like Jonah, he felt peace knowing that he has a patient, understanding and forgiving God.*

*'Evidence of a trial' by Odia Derksen (100 percent felted wool, detail). Derksen crocheted nearly every day of the trial.*

*Every time she felt a new emotion, she would change colours. Cream represents feeling neutral or doing fine. Red represents pain and black represents anger.*



*One thing that made the time during and after Candace's murder so difficult was that this very artistic family didn't have an outlet for their grief.*

family to go, calling it "holy ground," because they believed that God was there.

"This changed everything for us," Wilma said. "We weren't walking into a place of danger, but where someone was caring for us. We slipped off our shoes at various points in the trial because God asked the people in these situations to take off their shoes because God was there."

The art helps the Derksens feel encouraged and they hope others will be also be encouraged in knowing "that there is an amazing God who desires to walk with us in love, no matter what the circumstances," Cliff is quoted as saying in the January 2012 issue of *Canvass*, the heritage centre gallery's newsletter.

Other artists in the "Indescribable" exhibit included Steve Penner and Angela Lillico. Alexa Dirks, of the band Chic Gamine, and Ariel Posen, a well-known local musician, performed at the artist talk and tour. "Indescribable" is the second exhibit of art created by victims of violence that gallery curator Ray Dirks has displayed. ❧



*'70 x 7' by Odia Derksen (100 percent felted wool, detail). The hanging represents tears and giving up hatred.*



## BOOK REVIEW

## ‘A person of practice’

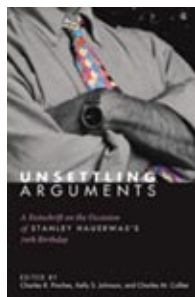
*Unsettling Arguments: A Festschrift on the Occasion of Stanley Hauerwas's 70th Birthday.*

Edited by Charles R. Pinches, Kelly S. Johnson and Charles M. Collier.

Cascade Books (Wipf and Stock) 2010, 374 pages.

REVIEWED BY DAVID DRIEDGER

**U***nsettling Arguments* is a collection of essays honouring the life and work of Stanley Hauerwas on the occasion of his 70th birthday. A potential reader might assume that some familiarity with Hauerwas would be in order to appreciate these contributions; however, I found that working through the book not only served as an overview of his thinking, but it read almost like a primer in theological ethics, considering the extent of his career. The range of topics sprawls from medical ethics to political theory and hermeneutics (biblical



interpretation), and beyond. There is even a chapter on racism, a topic that Hauerwas has not written extensively on, asking whether his silence tells us something.

What holds these chapters together is that Hauerwas is a person of practice. The church cannot speak to the dignity of the human body without also walking alongside those cast off as undignified. Each chapter explores how Hauerwas has—and at times has not—pushed the church to reconsider its practices.

As the title suggests, this collection

is not simply a chorus of praise for Hauerwas. In each chapter, authors read against the grain of Hauerwas's contributions to various fields of study, looking for gaps, inconsistencies or counter-arguments.

J. Alexander Sider's chapter on the question of personal happiness in

*The church cannot speak to the dignity of the human body without also walking alongside those cast off as undignified.*

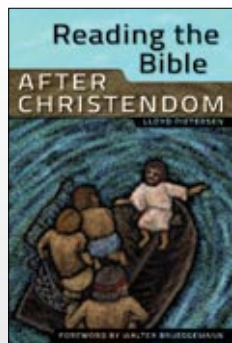
Hauerwas's social ethics may stand as the best approach to this critical engagement. Hauerwas, influenced heavily by Mennonite theologian John Howard Yoder, consistently downplays the role of personal happiness, subjecting it to the life and activity of the church in which true love and fulfillment are understood and entered into.

Sider observes that in this area Hauerwas does not always preach what he practises, revealing Hauerwas, the person, who does indeed care deeply about individual health and happiness. The chapter ends with a standing challenge for Hauerwas to further integrate his practice and theory.

Hauerwas is not only one of the most influential public theologians writing in English, but, through his significant relationship with Yoder, is also a person who has accomplished as much as any to put Anabaptist thought and practice on a larger stage. For better or worse, we in the Mennonite church are associated with Hauerwas and we would do well to continue to learn from him, so that we could continue the conversation on what it means to practise being the church faithfully. ☸

*David Driedger is associate pastor of First Mennonite Church, Winnipeg, and a Canadian Mennonite blogger.*

## New from Herald Press



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by Lloyd Pietersen

The author, an Anabaptist from Britain, examines what reading the Bible might look like in the current period when the church is no longer dominant in Western society and the Christian story is not well known. He argues that, after Christendom, Jesus should be central to any Christian biblical interpretation.

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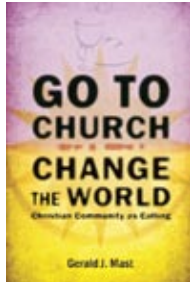
Herald Press



# Life decisions rooted in church

By STEVE SHENK  
MennoMedia

For years, Gerald Mast, a communications professor at Bluffton University, Ohio, has been teaching that a Christian's life decisions should be made in consultation with other members in the church.



People don't go it alone, he says, when "choosing a college major, finding that first job, facing a mid-life crisis or heading into retirement."

Mast began sharing his thoughts and then book manuscript pages with his students, inviting responses from them. Eventually, his book was accepted by Herald Press and was released in early January. Entitled *Go to Church, Change the World: Christian Community as Calling*, each chapter ends with discussion questions for Sunday school classes, small groups, university classrooms and other settings.


In a time when many are questioning the relevance of the church to their spiritual journeys, this book asserts that "going to church"—not just personal virtue or ethics—is at the heart of Christian vocation. Drawing on Anabaptist life and conviction, Mast presents Christ's call to all believers to be the church, whether gathered for worship or scattered for service.

By exploring such practices as baptism, communion, singing and group discernment, he asks readers to consider how participation in the life of the church shapes their daily witness, how "going to church" transforms "going to work" in the world that God loves.

"I love this book!" writes John Stahl-Wert in the foreword. "To the modern and post-modern mind alike, Mast's beautiful treatise is close to nonsensical, and so desperately needed. Going to church matters, he shows us, both to the working out of our salvation and to the transformation of the world." ❧

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## Thrifting teens more world-aware

*MCC thrift store holds shopping night dedicated to teens*

STORY AND PHOTOS BY BRANDI J. THORPE

Special to Young Voices

ELMIRA, ONT.



*Volunteer Haley Bauman holds one of the surprise discount coupons.*



*Thrift store manager Betty Marshall, left, and Sarah Long, a Grade 11 thrift store volunteer, stand ready to serve their young customers.*

Just before 6 p.m. at the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Thrift and Gift in Elmira, an hour of chaos ensues. Outside, teens line up, ready for the moment the doors open for the very popular Teen Shopping Night, a recent Elmira tradition that embraces the growing world-awareness of young people in the area.

Inside the store, a small army of staff and volunteers have only an hour to transform the thrift store into a teen shopping cen-

tre, complete with some loud Christian rock music. The staff hurriedly empty 29 Rubbermaid containers of teen-focused clothing onto racks, as the aisles are a flurry of activity. With a teen-targeted stockpile months in the making, the anticipation is felt by all waiting for the moment the doors open and the people outside pour in.

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*‘We want them to shop their way, with their prices.’  
(Betty Marshall, Thrift and Gift manager)*

event raises \$2,600 for these efforts.

Nicole Sero, a youth pastor at nearby Drayton Community Mennonite Church, has been a volunteer for more than 10 years. She, too, speaks of how youths are more globally aware, and are more and more willing to engage in thrift because of it. “It’s a great way to help themselves and help the world at the same time”, says Sero, smiling as she leans on a newly placed rack of teen jeans.

Sero’s own volunteer experience began when she was in Grade 9, fulfilling her high-school volunteer-hour requirements. Since then, it has carried over into adulthood, where she now encourages the youths in her church to participate in thrift and global awareness. Many youths who volunteer at the store have now begun to walk the same path. They all smile, joy evident in their involvement in this MCC

tre, complete with some loud Christian rock music. The staff hurriedly empty 29 Rubbermaid containers of teen-focused clothing onto racks, as the aisles are a flurry of activity. With a teen-targeted stockpile months in the making, the anticipation is felt by all waiting for the moment the doors open and the people outside pour in.

The night’s event, the third of its kind in Elmira, has become a regular occurrence, widely advertised and attended by the surrounding community. Its aim is to target the local youth population in the thrift world and engage them in their growing interest in being more globally aware.

Betty Marshall, manager of the store for the past decade, dons a shiny brown wig, ready to jump into the youth-focused evening. “It is a great way for teens to be made aware of thrift shopping and volunteer opportunities,” she says. “Teens are so



thrifting community.

An added attraction to the event are special store discounts for the young shoppers.

"We want them to shop their way, with their prices," says Marshall as she dashes from place to place, pointing out the surprise discount stickers customers can peel at the cash counter as they go to pay for their purchases.

Youth volunteer Haley Bauman beams as she shows the discount stickers. Bauman is one of many youth volunteers who has come to help with the event, serving as cashier while proudly wearing her MCC Ontario shirt. Other opportunities for youth involvement include hanging clothing, sorting and pricing items, and helping run the dressing rooms.

The Elmira Thrift and Gift boasts an impressive 200 volunteers, ranging from young to old. Other events of note in this location include December Moonlight Madness, August sidewalk sales, an Earth Day awareness event, and a highly popular Customer Appreciation Day.

The Elmira store will be celebrating its 35th year of operation in 2013, and hopes to continue the involvement youths have in its operations. ❧

*Brandi Thorpe's Mennonite roots were grown in Saskatchewan, flourished in Manitoba, and have sprouted wings as she explored the global church in South America and Europe. Newly married and deeply joyful, she resides for a season in Kitchener, Ont.*



*Rachel Kalap, 17, is happy with her new-found purchases.*

## 'Why I hate religion, but love Jesus'

BY RACHEL BERGEN  
Young Voices Co-Editor

"I hate religion, but love Jesus." These words come from Jefferson Bethke, a YouTube video speaker and not-for-profit worker living in Tacoma, Wash. His "Why I hate religion, but love Jesus" video has gone viral, attracting the attention of many youths and young adults, Christian and otherwise. Many young people are attracted to the idea of being spiritual, rather than religious; of being autonomous, rather than connected to a specific denomination.

At the very least, some aspects of the video are appealing to Mennonite youths and young adults, although not without some reservations.

For Tamara Dueckman, 23, who attends First United Mennonite Church, Vancouver, the political aspects of the video, including the part where Bethke says, "What if I told you Republican doesn't automatically mean Christian?", is disturbing. "It greatly saddens me that right-wing politics has claimed Christianity for their own, because so many things that they represent are directly contrary to Jesus'

message of love, peace and radical equality," she says.

Bethke goes on to ask, "If Jesus came to your church, would they actually let him in?"

Dueckman believes that not many churches would welcome some of the things she believes are in line with Jesus' teachings. "For example, I believe in gay marriage, I drink alcohol, I do not think that patriotism is a necessary factor in being a Christian, and I think it is crucial that we love and accept other faiths," she says, adding, "I probably would be judged quite harshly for some of my beliefs."

Matthew Wiens, an English student at the University of Saskatchewan who attends both Nutana Park Mennonite Church and Mount Royal Mennonite Church in Saskatoon, agrees with the core message of the video that focuses on love and acceptance, rather than judgment and hate. "That's a powerful message at its core," he says. "But I'm not sure about some of the trappings."

He believes even the title is over-



*Screen grabs of Jefferson Bethke's YouTube video, 'Why I hate religion, but love Jesus.'*





*'I believe in gay marriage, I drink alcohol, I do not think that patriotism is a necessary factor in being a Christian, and I think it is crucial that we love and accept other faiths.'*

*(Tamara Dueckman)*



generalizing. "I think his criticisms of organized religion are valid," Wiens says. "Sometimes people do get caught up in the specifics and miss the point, but I don't think he can say every organized religion is missing the point."

Dueckman agrees, saying, "It's absolutely true that religion has caused so much hurt and pain in the world. However, good has come of it as well. And religion is really about people, so by saying that you hate religion, I am fearful that it could easily lead to a hatred of people."

These young Mennonites are noticing a trend among youths and young adults to be more spiritual than religious.

Landon Falconer, a Grade 11 student at Saskatchewan's Rosthern Junior College, says, "More and more I can see a trend that [my peers] are trying not to be classified as religious. They might say that they're Christian, but they're not very religious. It's not the parents necessarily who chose their religion, they want to do their own thing."

Wiens believes that some people distance themselves from religion, claiming to be "spiritual" as an excuse for a fear of commitment.

According to Dueckman, these definitions of spirituality are often empty and

self-centred. "I've heard spirituality defined as 'self-awareness' and 'groundedness,' and to me those are all about the self, and that's dangerous," she says. "One of the benefits of religion is that it connects you to a community, something bigger than yourself"

"Community can accomplish so much more beauty than individual thoughts or actions," Dueckman says. "Of course, it can cause more harm, too, so there needs to be a great deal of reflection and thoughtfulness."

Kathy Giesbrecht, associate director of Leadership Ministries at Mennonite Church Manitoba and associate pastor at Home Street Mennonite Church, Winnipeg, has seen a trend among youths and young adults she engages with where they value the community the most. "They highly value shared experience, faith lived within community," she says. "They are just less aware of denominations."

To that end, she thinks that the church as a whole can integrate youths and young adults better into the whole life of the church. The church can allow these young people to invigorate it. "When we invite them to also shape us, that will feel like a more authentic and relevant place for them," she concludes. ☞

## ***No religion superior to another***

*Shared values, struggles and hopes of six faith groups highlighted at interfaith youth conference*

**STORY AND PHOTOS BY AARON EPP**

Special to Young Voices

WINNIPEG

**T**he formation of an interfaith youth council is one of the results of a day-long conference that brought together young people from a variety of faiths to talk about their shared values, including

their concern for social justice.

The interfaith youth conference was presented by the Islamic Social Services Association in conjunction with Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) on Feb. 26 at

Canadian Mennonite University (CMU). The day-long event brought together youths and speakers from Muslim, Jewish, Hindu, Sikh, First Nations and Christian backgrounds for a series of keynote addresses and group discussions.

Sixty-five young people between the ages of 16 and 26 attended, and at the end of the day at least 15 expressed interest in forming an interfaith youth council that will work towards holding more interfaith gatherings to dialogue about the shared values, struggles and hopes of the various groups.

“There was no sense that one of these religions or faiths is superior or better,” said Steve Plenert, peace coordinator for MCC Manitoba, who helped organize the event. “There are reasons that [each] exist and it’s very good and important to listen to each other and understand each other. That was the lesson from everyone, it seemed.”

Keynote addresses from Obby Khan, an offensive lineman for the Winnipeg Blue Bombers who is Muslim, and Michael Champagne, an inner-city activist who is aboriginal, were followed by a panel discussion that included six people from different faiths.

They each gave a brief description of the faith tradition they represented and highlighted its most important aspects. The goal of the presentation was to expose the shared values of each faith tradition.

A concern for social justice shone through each presentation.

“We have to understand that the project of any faith tradition . . . is to make the world a better place,” said Omar Siddiqui, a lawyer who represented the Muslim faith on the panel. The only way to do that is to do it together, he added, noting that in today’s world there is a culture of politics that is divisive. “We have to . . . work to dismantle that,” he said, since it is the antithesis of what the Muslim, Jewish, Hindu, Sikh, First Nations and Christian faiths are trying to do.

The afternoon also included a panel discussion on gender politics and faith. Three women discussed the roles of females in their respective faiths and explored ways that women are empowered in their faith communities.

After each panel, conference attendees

broke into discussion groups to reflect on what they had heard. The conference concluded with each group discussing a different question related to what it might look like if young people were to form an interfaith youth council in Manitoba. Each group then reported back to the larger group.

Questions the groups discussed included:

- **HOW DO YOUTHS** of faith/spirituality build community?
- **ARE YOUTHS OF** faith ready for community leadership?
- **WHAT ROLE SHOULD** the media play in interfaith dialogue?
- **DOES RELIGION DIVIDE** or unite faith communities?
- **WHAT RESPONSIBILITY DO** youths have in combating discrimination?

The groups needed to come up with three concrete steps or ways to address each issue.

Melanie Kampen, a CMU student who help organize the conference, was encouraged by what she heard in the discussion group she led. “I was really impressed with their creativity and passion,” she said. “[They were] basically already doing the work of an interfaith youth council.”

Kampen believes that interfaith conferences like this one are important because the divisions between religious groups are widening. “One way to address this very specifically is to come together and talk about this with young people, not just adults,” she said. “We wanted to see what kind of challenges youth of faith in Winnipeg are facing and what kind of imagination and visions they had for how they could address some of these problems themselves.”

For MCC’s Plenert, interfaith gatherings are important because Canada is a multicultural society. “Christianity is no longer the only faith group with a voice in Canadian culture,” he said. “MCC certainly affirms the centrality of faith in Jesus Christ in the work that we do, [but] we are also committed to learning to know our neighbours and to show love and respect to them.” ❧



*Panelists from a variety of faith groups speak at an interfaith youth conference held at CMU on Feb. 26.*



*Steve Plenert, peace coordinator for MCC Manitoba, right, addresses the 65 attendees at the end of the interfaith youth conference.*



*Melanie Kampen, left, and Janna Wiebe, both of Springfield Heights Mennonite Church, Winnipeg, participate in the interfaith youth conference. Kampen helped organize the event, while Wiebe, a youth pastor, was a panellist on gender politics and faith.*

## UpComing

### Cornies to speak at *Canadian Mennonite* annual meeting and fundraiser

TORONTO—Larry Cornies, professor of journalism at Conestoga College Institute of Technology and Advanced Learning, Kitchener, Ont., and a former page editor for *The Globe and Mail*, will address a fundraising banquet and the annual meeting of *Canadian Mennonite* at Toronto United Mennonite Church on March 24. He will speak on “Mennonites and the new media: Rediscovering our radical roots.” Cornies also served as chair of the 12-member Canadian Mennonite Publishing Service board of directors, which represents all of the area churches across four provinces and eastern Canada. Beginning at 6 p.m., an evening of good food and entertainment will celebrate our national church magazine, according to the planners. Evening highlights include musical performances by young jazz singer Elise Epp and innovative composer/performer Ryan Janzen, as well as a dance performance by members of Toronto’s Lao Mennonite community. There will also be presentations by Emily Loewen, Young Voices co-editor, and Dick Benner, editor/publisher. Tickets are free. A call for donations will be made at the end of the night. Space is limited; to reserve a seat, e-mail [secretary@tumc.ca](mailto:secretary@tumc.ca) or call 416-699-6631. Visit [tumc.ca](http://tumc.ca) for information and directions.

—*Canadian Mennonite*

### Good Friday the perfect day to sing the blues

ABBOTSFORD, B.C.—“We should be singing the blues on Good Friday.” This simple statement made on a drive home from a traditional Good Friday service was the beginning of a new band, a blog and a unique worship service that will incorporate blues music with image, action and spoken word. Angelika and Aaron Dawson gathered together some of their favourite musicians to form the Good Friday Blues Band and began looking for a venue where all would feel welcome and accepted. They found a home at House of James in Abbotsford. “I was drawn to the idea of a Good Friday blues event because the blues style of music originally came out of a lot of hardship, struggles and sorrow, which certainly parallels Jesus’ followers in regards to the death of their Saviour, their leader, and their hope,” says Lando Klassen, owner of the House of James. “Good Friday is really a very dark day, a day on which blues music is very appropriate. I hope that this event will help folks remember anew the ultimate sacrifice on their behalf.” The Good Friday Blues Service will be held on Good Friday, April 6, at 7 p.m. For more information, visit [goodfridayblues.wordpress.com](http://goodfridayblues.wordpress.com).

—Good Friday Blues Band



Cornies

## Calendar

### British Columbia

**April 6:** The Good Friday Blues Band featuring Angelika and Aaron Dawson performs a Good Friday service at 7 p.m. at the House of James, Abbotsford. For more information, visit [goodfridayblues.wordpress.com](http://goodfridayblues.wordpress.com).  
**April 27-29:** Junior youth Impact retreat at Camp Squeah.

### Saskatchewan

**April 24:** RJC/CMU choir concert at Osler Mennonite, at 7 p.m.  
**April 28:** Saskatchewan Women in Mission Enrichment Day at Rosthern Mennonite Church,

### Manitoba

**April 4:** Jazz at CMU.  
**April 6:** Winnipeg First Mennonite Church Choir presents Mozart’s Requiem on Good Friday, April 6, at 7 p.m.  
**April 12:** Winnipeg and area celebration banquet for CMU.  
**April 21:** MCI, Gretna, fundraising supper, “God’s kingdom: Here and abroad,” 6 p.m.

### Ontario

**March 30-April 1:** Marriage Encounter weekend at Jericho House, Port Colborne. Contact Marjorie Roth at 519-669-8667 or [wmoth@rogers.com](mailto:wmoth@rogers.com).  
**March 31:** The Wayne Gilpin Singers present “Lamb of God,” a concert of Easter music, at St. John the Evangelist Church, Kitchener, at 8 p.m. Tickets available at the door or by calling 1-800-867-3281.  
**April 1:** St. Catharines United Mennonite Church Choir presents “From Darkness to Light,” the story of Holy Week and Easter in Scripture and hymn, at 7 p.m.  
**April 14:** MC Eastern Canada youth Bible quizzing; at East Zorra Mennonite Church, Tavistock.  
**April 10:** MSCU 48th annual general meeting, “Stories of Peace,” at Steinmann Mennonite Church, Baden. Registration begins at 6:30 p.m.; meeting starts at 7. Featuring 2011 Peace in Action Essay Award recipient, Rebekah Winter, along with stories from PeaceWorks and Healing Streams.

**April 16:** New Hamburg Mennonite Relief Sale promotion dinner at Bingeman’s, Kitchener, 6:30 p.m. Guest speaker: Phil Enns, returned MCC worker, Indonesia. For tickets call 519-745-8458.

**April 20:** Menno Youth Singers present a concert and coffeehouse at Waterloo-Kitchener United Mennonite Church, Waterloo, at 7 p.m.

**April 20:** Meat canner fundraising ham dinner at Hamilton Mennonite Church, from 5 to 7 p.m. Vegetarian alternative available. Entertainment by Hope Rising. For tickets, call 905-528-3607 or e-mail [hmc@coegec.net](mailto:hmc@coegec.net).

**April 21:** Women of Mennonite Church Eastern Canada Spring Enrichment Day, at Zurich Mennonite Church, from 10:15 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Theme: “God’s extravagant grace.” Speaker: Janine Schultz. To register, call Florence Jantzi at 519-669-4356 by April 10.

**April 21:** Mennonite Coalition of Refugee Support is celebrating 25 years of service to refugee claimants in Waterloo Region with a fundraising banquet, at Knox Presbyterian Church, Waterloo, at 6 p.m. For more information, call 519-571-1912 or visit [www.mcrs.ca/25years](http://www.mcrs.ca/25years).

**April 27-28:** Engaged workshop (affiliated with the Mennonite and Brethren Marriage Encounter), at Riverdale Mennonite Church, Millbank. For more information, or to register, contact Denise Bender at 519-656-2005. Advance registration is required.

**April 27-28:** MC Eastern Canada annual church gathering; Leamington.

### United States

**May 7-June 15:** Eastern Mennonite University, Harrisonburg, Va., hosts its Summer Peacebuilding Institute, specializing in intensive short-term courses for training or master’s-level credit in humanitarian action, development, restorative justice, psychosocial trauma and organizational leadership. For more information, or to register, visit [emu.edu/spi](http://emu.edu/spi) or call 540-432-4295.

**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](mailto:calendar@canadianmennonite.org).**



## Classifieds

### Travel

**Visit Europe the Mennonite Way!** Mennonite Heritage Tours 2012: 10-18 day Hotel Tours focussing on Mennonite heritage in Holland, Germany, Poland, Belgium and Switzerland. [www.mennoniteheritagetours.eu](http://www.mennoniteheritagetours.eu)

### Hot off the Press

**New Book:** If you enjoyed *Katelyn's Affection* by Kirsten L. Klassen (Herald Press, 2004), check out the sequel – *Katelyn's Friendship*. In this contemporary novel, Katelyn's best friend makes a decision Katelyn struggles to accept. Available at Amazon.com.

## Employment Opportunities

### ASSOCIATE PASTOR

PEACE MENNONITE CHURCH  
RICHMOND, BC

Peace Mennonite Church invites applications for the full-time position of **Associate Pastor**.

This position places major focus on youth ministry and family ministries, along with a minor focus on general congregational ministry.

Applicants should have a relevant degree in Christian ministry, an understanding of contemporary Anabaptist theology, and an interest and ability to relate to young people.

Please send resumes either by mail to: The Search Committee, Peace Mennonite Church, 11571 Daniels Rd., Richmond, BC V6X 1M7, or by e-mail to [office@peacemennonite.ca](mailto:office@peacemennonite.ca).

### Maple View Mennonite Church LEAD/SENIOR PASTOR

Time Frame: Position open now, flexible start time targeting July 1, 2012.

We are a predominantly rural, large congregation located just outside the town of Wellesley, Ont. and close to the cities of Kitchener-Waterloo and Stratford. The congregation is of Swiss Anabaptist / Amish Mennonite heritage and in their 153rd year of representing Christ to the local community. Theologically we are fairly conservative members of MCEC and MC Canada.

The pastor is assisted by, and is team leader of, 5 volunteer elders including one elder for youth. Church administration is primarily accomplished with the able assistance of a 20 percent time office administrative assistant.

We are open to God's leading with respect to team ministry from within and/or without, full- and/or part-time. We hope for a ministry team that fulfills the diverse and complementary gifts required for an effective wholesome ministry meeting the needs of our 300 congregants and the community. Key qualities we are seeking in a leader are: being a Holy-Spirit-filled, sincere, spiritual servant/leader.

If you feel called to minister with us at Maple View, and are available to do so, please submit application or enquiries in confidence to:

E-mail: [search@mvmchurch.ca](mailto:search@mvmchurch.ca) or [mbechtel@mcec.ca](mailto:mbechtel@mcec.ca)

Post: Maple View Mennonite Church  
Attn: Search Committee  
5074 Deborah Glaister Line,  
Wellesley, ON, Canada  
N0B 2T0

Phone: 519-275-3095 x23 or 1-888-212-5060 x23  
(Search Committee Secretary @ work)

Please visit [www.mvmchurch.ca/search](http://www.mvmchurch.ca/search) for additional information and job description.



## Administrative Assistant

Mennonite Foundation of Canada is a donor-advised charitable foundation that serves the Christian community in the areas of gift planning, charitable estate planning and biblical stewardship.

MFC has an opening for a self-motivated, organized, and capable individual to work as a full-time Administrative Assistant in its Winnipeg office.

For information about this opportunity visit:

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

Or contact: Corinne Klassen, Administrative Coordinator  
12-1325 Markham Road, Winnipeg, MB R3T 4J6

Phone 204.488.1985 email [crklassen@mennofoundation.ca](mailto:crklassen@mennofoundation.ca)



## Mennonite Central Committee

Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Manitoba is seeking to fill the position of **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**. This full-time, salaried position provides overall leadership to the work of MCC in Manitoba, and bears responsibility for upholding and implementing vision, purpose and values of MCC as set by the MCC Manitoba Board of Directors. A detailed job description is available at <http://mcc.org/serve>.

Application deadline is Monday, April 30. Please send Resume and Cover Letter to Ilda da Silva Storie at [ildadasilvastorie@mennonitecc.ca](mailto:ildadasilvastorie@mennonitecc.ca).

*MCC is a relief, service and peace agency of the North American Mennonite and Brethren in Christ churches.*

### Assembly Mennonite Church ANNOUNCEMENT OF PASTORAL SEARCH

Assembly Mennonite Church, a congregation in Goshen, Indiana, that is part of both Indiana Michigan and Central District conferences, seeks a pastor (.65 FTE) to serve with two other pastors in a team ministry.

We are seeking a pastor and spiritual leader who has a strong interest in collaborative ministry, calling forth the gifts of others, the gospel work of reconciliation/peace/justice, and community building. We are looking for someone with the heart and skills for pastoral care, as well as a passion for worship, willing to preach eight to 12 times a year.

We value adaptability and are especially interested in someone with a minimum of five years of experience in pastoral leadership. Commitment to Anabaptist theology is important and we prefer candidates with an M.Div. degree and expect a completed Ministerial Leadership Information Form.

Interested candidates may contact the chair of the Search Committee at [maryyoderholsopple@gmail.com](mailto:maryyoderholsopple@gmail.com) or 574-875-6831.

PHOTO BY JOHN ALBRECHT



*This year's House of Friendship potato blitz throughout the month of February brought in nearly 93,000 kilograms of spuds (or the cash equivalent). Most of the potatoes collected during the blitz are used by the social service agency's Emergency Food Hamper Program, which distributed 3,491 hampers in January alone. Pictured at the wrap-up community potato luncheon food line at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Kitchener, Ont., are John Neufeld, House of Friendship's executive director, and Ms. Sweet Potato.*

## God at work in the World **Snapshots**

MCC PHOTO BY DAN DRIEDGER



*Auctioneers accept bids for a heifer at the 31st annual heifer sale sponsored by Ontario Mennonite Relief Sale Inc. in Listowel, Ont., on Feb. 17. The sale raised more than \$220,000 for Mennonite Central Committee's relief, development and peace initiatives around the world. The sale consisted of 126 donated heifers (27 of which were purchased by Laverne Martin), a number of lots of bull semen, embryos and a few other miscellaneous items.*