

CANADIAN MENNONITE

April 16, 2012
Volume 16 Number 8

'Bathed' in his art

Performance/installation artist
explores faith and life issues

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EDITORIAL

Still strangers among us?

DICK BENNER
EDITOR/PUBLISHER

“And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the day approaching” (Hebrews 10:24-25 NIV).

The caller’s voice sounded familiar. We had talked before, over the phone and in his home territory. Things hadn’t changed in two-and-a-half years. He was still a stranger in a large Mennonite congregation, a place to which he had come to retire and where he expected to find friends with whom he could share faith and life with some intimacy.

It hasn’t happened. His wife had surgery with no one knowing about it, or seeming to care. Now he had a stent inserted into his heart—a journey he took alone. I really had nothing to offer, only a listening ear and a bit of identification for similar moments in my own life. Not a fellow-member in his congregation, I couldn’t give him any handles to grab onto.

Hearing only his side of the story, I pondered the possibility of his taking more responsibility for his own dilemma. “Are there no designated caregivers in your church?” I asked. “A parish nurse, perhaps? Are you part of a small care group or Sunday school class who takes responsibility for members in the group?” No to all the above.



I was dumbfounded. This is not a small congregation; certainly it would have the resources, staff and infrastructure to address this issue.

This should not be. Besides, our theology, informed by our spiritual origins, is clear: we are a priesthood, ministering to each other because of God reaching out to us in love. We do not subcontract our “care” to professionals or rely on some sophisticated social network to do this at arm’s length.

We are the network. We distinguish ourselves as a unique “faith community.” We are accepting of strangers. Look at where our church is growing—at the multi-cultural edges. We are delighted, almost proud, when Stuart Murray tells us postmodern Anabaptists that we are the right fit for other Christians and seekers scattered by the post-Christendom diaspora. As Anabaptists, we had it right all along, no?

Not so fast. If that is the case, why are there strangers among us? Why am I getting anguished calls from readers lost in a large congregation, travelling alone on a scary medical journey, wanting not so much a pastoral prayer as a simple call of support from a fellow congregant

who has gotten to know them personally, offering to bring in a meal and dine together, promising to “go fishing” after the ordeal is over.

It isn’t that we haven’t talked about this before. In perusing the pages of *Canadian Mennonite*, I see stories of similar anguish—such as from Arthur Boers, who wrote about visiting churches in the Toronto area (June 28, 2010), where he asked an usher about the use of hymnals and the order of service, and got no response. “I was left to interpret her silence: ‘What are you doing here, anyway? Who wants to know? What, really, is your problem?’”

Hmm. Welcoming strangers? Priests ministering to priests?

In that same edition, J. Laurence Martin wrote of returning to a “new” local congregation after a time of travel and voluntary service. “There we were, standing in line to get our coffee in a church where we knew no one. Everyone was chatting with friends and family; no one made eye contact with us.”

He went on to explain that, after a meaningful worship service and a welcome by the worship leader to coffee hour and a time of fellowship, “my wife and I drifted to the outside of the circle with our coffee and watched fellowship happen, but we were definitely not a welcomed part of it.”

If the Apostle Paul was to return to Mennonite Church Canada congregations, would he be as gentle as he supposedly was in his sermon to the Hebrews? Would he come down hard on “spurring each other to love and good works?” Would we pass the test of “encouraging each other?”

After all, we’ve had nearly 500 years to get it right. How are we doing?

ABOUT THE COVER:

Seth Woodyard, front, is pictured in a video of a performance art piece created for his upcoming exhibition, ‘Good Work,’ in Winnipeg this summer. The performance consists of Woodyard taking a bath in a wooden tub while Alanadale, a Winnipeg band, and a male choir perform a song commissioned specifically for the performance. See story on page 33.

PHOTO: BRUCE HILDEBRAND

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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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Join the discussion!

at canadianmennonite.org

Join the discussion
triggered by Project
Ploughshares'
Ken Epp's blog,
'I told you so.'



A FICTIONAL DEBATE

Should taxes fund

BY MARY GROH

CONSCIENCE CANADA



If Canada would spend even a small portion of its 'security' tax money on going into these trouble spots and getting involved in making peace and security for them, instead of making war on them, the picture would change.

• **RESOLUTION:** Be it resolved that Canada would be more secure if funding were re-allocated from the military to development at home and abroad.

• **SPEAKER FOR THE RESOLUTION:**

Professor Constance Candida

• **SPEAKER AGAINST THE RESOLUTION:**

Retired General Warren Shuter

Candida: All Canadians want to live in peace, and without fear of having our homes and families destroyed by hostile forces. That goes without saying. So our government naturally feels justified in allocating huge amounts of tax money, in the name of security, to the Department of National Defence and other programs. For 2011-12, Canada is planning to spend more than \$34 billion on its national security establishment.

I say that this is not only extravagant and wasteful, but counter-productive. Even if we left the public safety program—like the Correctional Service of Canada, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, the Canada Border Services Agency and the Canadian Security Intelligence Service—out of the reckoning, we are still left with \$21 billion plus for national defence.

But Canadians could be more secure without this huge military structure than we are with it, were those \$21 billion spent on making our people and country stronger and proactive against real threats, and were we engaged in activities abroad that would create friends, rather than enemies.

Shuter: The government of any democratic nation is committed to the well-being of its citizens and that includes doing its utmost to defend its home territory and its foreign interests. It is unthinkable that we would be able to do that without a strong military.

Look around you, Professor, at the world the rest of us live in, and see that military preparedness is an accepted fact of life. Our armed forces must not only be strong, but must be seen to

Canada's military?



Join the discussion on this topic triggered by Project Ploughshares' Ken Epp's blog, 'I told you so,' at canadianmennonite.org.

be strong. If we were to fall behind the capabilities of our allies, we would lose the respect of our friends and go down in the world's opinion as a people who rely on others to look after us in the event of war.

Predators and terrorists are out there looking for weak spots, which will allow them in with their dirty tricks. And we have our vast coastlines to protect. A strong military is an absolute necessity and it doesn't come cheap. In fact, Canada's has been under-funded for years. If we had had more helicopters in Afghanistan, we would not have lost so many brave men to improvised explosive devices on the roads there.

Candida: We need not have lost any soldiers in Afghanistan, in my opinion, General. Was Afghanistan a threat to our security?

And as for a country needing a military to be successful, just take a look back at Japan. In the first half of the 20th century, Japan subscribed to your ideology of military strength, and look where that got it, and the rest of us, too.

And after World War II, when it abandoned its military ambitions, foreswore an army and put its energy into productive uses, Japan became a super industrial power and a great modern democracy. And it is completely surrounded by

coastline, and next door to a not very friendly giant.

If our government would call a halt to war preparedness and make a true assessment of Canada's risks, it could come up with a list of immediate close-to-home weaknesses, which the Defence Department's billions could begin to address.

More brave Canadians have been lost and injured in the past 10 years due to poorly maintained buildings and roads, bridges and ferries, leaking oil pipelines and polluted water supplies, homelessness, poor housing, under-funded health care—and the list goes on—than ever would have been saved from improvised explosive devices by helicopters in Afghanistan.

And if the government really cared about Canada being respected by the rest of the world, it would clean up the living conditions of the First Nations in northern settlements, and the exploitive practices of our many mining and fossil-fuel companies on our own and foreign soils.

Any fair-minded government would not need to have its arm twisted to get its support for international agreements like the Kyoto Protocol and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Not only the global community is losing its admiration for Canada, but some of our own are losing their ready patriotism which

you people so much depend upon.

Shuter: And we have it, too. It is plainly to be seen at every Remembrance Day ceremony at every cenotaph across the country, and in the first of July events in Ottawa and nationwide. People's hearts swell with pride and many eyes fill with tears when they see the vets marching by and the air force flying over in formation. The Snow Birds are admired worldwide.

And the newcomers to our country can hardly wait to become citizens of Canada. Those delegated from the Defence Department to swearing-in ceremonies see the pride and joy in the faces of people from all parts of the world. They are not dwelling on our country's shortcomings, as you love to do, Professor. They are thinking of the great future they and their children will have, and the guarantee of that future is the military establishment.

True patriotism is being ready to make sacrifices for one's country. Are you ranking roads and bridges ahead of peace and freedom? A strong military keeps war from our homes and airspace so that we can continue to enjoy the way of life our heroes in the past have fought and died to preserve.

We have a lot to fear from bad actors who hate the West and our values. We have to get rid of these threats. That's what the Department of National Defence is for.

But you don't want to support it!

Candida: The statement that we face threats from under-developed countries is certainly debatable. They have their own problems of bad government, corruption, civil unrest and poverty to focus on.

How long are we Canadians going to allow ourselves to be held hostage by the Al Qaeda attacks on New York City? As for the terrorists those countries you speak of may harbour, the military might get the ringleaders, or not, but you can be sure that bringing overpowering military might down on a country, with all the terror and destruction that ensues, will create and grow the hostility of the population, and produce more bad actors and threats.

If Canada would spend even a small portion of its "security" tax money on going into these trouble spots and getting involved in making peace and security for them, instead of making war on them, the picture would change. I'm talking about funding grassroots development, and sending civilians to partner with them in building up their country economically and improving their justice and governance systems, their education and health-care systems. If this scenario were to be played out, General, your club would soon fill up with new retirees and even younger officers out of a job.

While due domestic diligence is in order, along with smart vigilance, our government should lay off its consuming obsession with Islamic terrorists and face squarely the certain threat that is advancing inexorably upon us. I am speaking of climate change.

The extreme weather-related disasters that the world has suffered recently were predicted by science, and Canada has had a foretaste also of extreme flooding, drought, wind storms and forest fires. But like an ostrich, we keep our heads buried in our tar sands.

The polar ice melting so fast should convince us to take global warming seriously. When our prairie breadbasket turns into a dust bin, will our new F-35 fighter jets be good for fighting hunger? When the climate-change refugees from the world's tropical coast lands head for our shores,

are we going to use our nuclear subs to turn them back or blow them up?

How can we respect a government that makes security such a large part of our tax burden, but encourages the very industries that spoil our land, our water and our air? Instead of being asked to help fund renewable energy enterprises, we Canadians are being asked to throw our money away into the mega-military-fossil-fuel-industrial corporations. They produce products that are useless to our security, while delivering insecurity, destruction and death to the "enemies" that this profiteering juggernaut fabricates to keep itself in business. I totally reject paying for this folly with my taxes!

Shuter: Your red face does not become you, Professor. Also, you are short-sighted. If Canada would shut down the industries you happen to object to, think of the thousands of Canadian jobs that would be lost. Not only do the tar sands and the oil pipeline projects provide huge amounts of wealth for our country, but they also produce the fuel we and our American friends rely on.

Lockheed Martin and other corporations that make state-of-the-art military hardware also contribute greatly to our gross domestic product. Without them, Canada, in the foreseeable future, would

be a poorer country, less powerful, more vulnerable.

It is a simple fact, and I don't know anybody who does not agree with me, that Canada must have the latest military vehicles on land, sea and in the air. And, furthermore, we must have the fuel it takes to operate them.

When you and your fellow citizens pay your taxes, you are keeping our brave men and women in uniform equipped in a way that will show to the world we are ready to play our part in the defence of democracy and human rights around the globe. Taxpayers can be proud Canadians. ❧



Readers who side with the professor are encouraged to find out how to re-direct their military taxes at consciencecanada.ca. A peace tax return there will assist you to make a declaration of conscience to the government or, as a self-employed person, withhold the 7.9 percent of your federal income taxes that would go to the military, and put that amount into a peace tax trust fund.

/// For discussion

1. What is your emotional response to Canada's national anthem or to a Remembrance Day celebration? Do Mennonites have the same sense of patriotism as other Canadians? Do we see ourselves as separate and different from Canadian society (II Corinthians 6:14-18)?
2. Professor Candida argues that climate change is a bigger threat to Canada than Islamic terrorists. Do you agree? Do you think the military industry exaggerates the dangers of foreign aggression to increase its sales? Would Canada be better off without the military industry?
3. How do you respond to Professor Candida's suggestion that making friends with countries abroad makes more sense than taking a defensive militaristic stance? Is this true of personal relationships as well? Is love truly stronger than hate?
4. Is it appropriate for Mennonites to tell the government how to allocate money raised from taxes? How do you interpret Romans 13:1-6 or I Peter 2:13-17? Should all Mennonites be encouraged to redirect a percentage of their taxes to the peace tax trust fund?

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 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.

✉ Pointless to teach anything other than Jesus and him crucified

RE: "NO RELIGION superior to another," March 19, page 36.

I am very concerned after reading this article in *Canadian Mennonite*. While I agree that all religions are equal, they are equally lost. Christianity is a personal relationship with our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, who said, "I am the way, the truth and the life."

Why would Mennonite Central Committee and Canadian Mennonite University even attempt to promote anything else, especially something as contrary to Scripture as an event like this? The central mission of the church and, by extension, its related arms, is to teach Jesus and him crucified. Anything else is pointless.

Jesus wasn't kidding when he said it would be better for a millstone to be tied to our necks and us thrown into the deep, than to lead any of his little ones astray.

ERNIE REESOR, LISTOWEL, ONT.

FROM OUR LEADERS

Be prepared!

DAN GRABER

Recently there has been more sharing via Facebook by people who grew up at Morrison Academy in Taiwan. This has brought back to life a number of memories. One of these was a picture of me and some friends at a Boy's Brigade event in our school gym. Like the well-known Boy Scout motto, we were often reminded to "Be prepared," including in our Bible lessons.

But so often in church life we aren't prepared. We are so focused on church programs, maintenance and being in survival mode, that we don't see the opportunities around us. At times we see possibilities, but we're just simply lazy or fearful. Of course, we say we are too busy, but we get done what we really want to do.

Most of us know the Pareto Principle, more commonly known as the 80-20 rule. So we know who it's best to ask to get church work done—those who are already busy. Many congregational leaders

of all denominations complain about the high number of congregants who simply warm the pews, some for very good reasons, but many because they have other priorities.

So I'd encourage us to develop the attitude of being prepared as Jesus followers and church members. Often God simply plops opportunities right into our laps: to disciple others, to be disciplined and to grow the kingdom of God.

In Mennonite Church Alberta, we have the opportunity to have two new congregations. South Sudanese and Chin groups have come to us, asking to join us in the last months.

Are we prepared? Are there individuals and congregations prepared to step up and help "shepherd—mentor—disciple" these individuals? Are we willing to open our doors and take the time and effort to develop relationships and share our Anabaptist theology and explain our area church culture? Are we able to cross the



language bridges and learn from these two people groups, which have much to teach us? I'm happy to say that individuals and one congregation are in the process of answering these two calls.

For a number of years I've encouraged congregations to add an extra line to their budget. I title it "God Opportunities." I think to have such a line in every budget is a missional statement. It's an attitude of "Be prepared." God is going to bless us with an opportunity or two or three that we can't imagine when we vote on the budget. So in MC Alberta's budget for 2012, we have \$2,500 budgeted for new ministries in the missions category. We don't have a clue at this time how this money will actually be used. But we're expectant!

A benefit of such a line item is that, when opportunity strikes, we don't have to fundraise for seed money. We already expect God to give us ministry opportunities to explore and we're prepared! But most of all, we have a congregational culture of expectation that God will use us for kingdom work.

Dan Graber is MC Alberta's area church minister.

✉ Reader saddened that young believer doesn't feel welcome in church

RE: "WHY I hate religion, but love Jesus," March 19, page 35.

I was saddened when I read that Tamara Dueckman "believes that not many congregations would welcome some of the things she believes are in line with Jesus' teachings," including accepting other faiths, drinking alcohol and gay marriage. It is unfortunate that, just as

she reaches the age of serious discernment, she feels that she is at least somewhat an enemy of her church, or perhaps she sees her church as her enemy.

But what does this being religious mean? Being Christian, of course, is being a follower of Christ. Being religious is participating in the behaviours common within your own faith community; different denominations have different ways of being religious. So being religious does not consist of divinely commanded behaviour, but of practising one's

DEFINING OUR BELIEFS

Behind Anglican lines

ANTHONY G. SIEGRIST

I have a hard time not thinking of myself as a Mennonite. I grew up in a Mennonite community, attended a Mennonite seminary and have worshipped predominantly in Mennonite churches. Yet it's now been almost five years that my family and I have been camped out in evangelical territory. I teach at an evangelical college, and there is no Mennonite church in our town so we now worship with Anglicans.

Maybe this is the bias of a theology professor, but I feel a sense of gratitude towards communities that value the life of the intellect. I've come to admire the rigour of the Anglican theological tradition. Although it might not run as deep in Canada as in other parts of the Anglican Communion, there is generally a current of expectation that Anglican leaders ought to be able theologians. The boundary between the pragmatics of "running the church" and reflecting on it theologically is harder to find here than it sometimes is in Mennonite circles.

A bit harder for me to observe have been the benefits of traditional Anglican worship. Growing up in a Mennonite church I would stand silently, starting off into some empty corner of the meetinghouse when we recited responsive readings from the back of the blue hymnal. These seemed mindless, like the

"incantations of robots," I complained to my parents. I've come at last to see the value in traditional liturgy: phrases that aren't new and prayers based on more than a momentary whim.

When it's rightly approached, liturgy can teach. It can soak us in Scripture and banish notions of performance from our worship. Good liturgy lets us turn off the pyrotechnics, cover the spotlights and immerse our souls in ancient words, pictures, tastes and smells. Good liturgy helps us learn the grace of thinking and speaking like Christians. The small Anglican church where my family now worships probably reads more Scripture



[Liturgy] can soak us in Scripture and banish notions of performance from our worship.

on any given Sunday than the rest of the churches in our town combined.

A second way that my ecclesial displacement has been fruitful is that it has helped me grasp more surely what it can mean to carry Anabaptist convictions beyond Mennonite denominational lines. I've begun to see myself as an ecclesial nomad, not a Mennonite as such, since my formal ties to those denominations have atrophied, but as an Anabaptist on a sojourn.

There seems to be a growing number

of individuals with deep Anabaptist sympathies, yet who find little ongoing nurture in this form of Christian faithfulness. A logical question, then, is how Mennonites—important stewards of the Anabaptist tradition—might make Anabaptist beliefs and practices more accessible to other Christians.

The opportunity I see is for Mennonites to more clearly appreciate the idea that cultivating an Anabaptist presence in new communities might mean finding ways to nurture and support Anabaptist forms of faith in those of us who do not, for one reason or another, participate in a Mennonite congregation.

Maybe Anabaptist insights can even be part of the revitalization of non-Mennonite churches. This would not add numbers to the Mennonite roll, but could make the treasures of the Anabaptist tradition more widely available across denominational lines. There is prece-

dent I think. The original Anabaptist impulse was not necessarily denominational, although it was missional. Maybe Anabaptism can again be part of a renewal movement in the church catholic.

Anthony Siegrist is assistant professor of Bible and theology at Prairie Bible College, Three Hills, Alta. Along with his work at Prairie, he is completing doctoral studies in systematic theology at Wycliffe College, University of Toronto (Toronto School of Theology).

denominational religio-cultural behaviour. Or, to put it slightly differently, religious behaviour comes from our church's culture. It is historical, not divine.

Within Canadian society, which experiences many cultures on a daily basis, it is reasonable that our young people, who were born into this new multicultural culture, would question faith cultures as well as societal cultures in search of their own answers.

And it behoves us all to honour and respect those

who explore their personal faith in this manner.

Troubling though we may find their answers, they are their answers and they are not being imposed upon us, so let's not inflict our answers on them. Let's welcome them into our worship life, hopeful that their new yeast may leaven anew our old dough of faith.

BILL BRYSON, TORONTO

OUTSIDE THE BOX

Show and tell a different world

PHIL WAGLER

The gospel is good news. It is not therapy, opium or merely a good idea among many good ideas. The gospel is a journey into a foreign land. It is power. It is surprise.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer once reflected, "I have noticed that the most effective sermons were those in which I spoke enticingly of the gospel, like someone telling children a story of a strange country." I have noticed this same wonderful dynamic. Those sermons where I have pontificated brilliantly and expounded exceptionally are generally received with the same interest as a fascinat-

ing documentary: intriguing, stimulating and generally forgettable. On the other hand, where I have wised up and simply let the foolishness of the cross and the wonder of grace permeate, the result is transformation.

The gospel is to be proclaimed and lived. It is show and tell. The Lausanne Movement for world evangelization says, "[T]here is no biblical dichotomy between the word spoken and the word made visible in the lives of God's people. People will look as they listen and what

they see must be at one with what they hear." This resonates with the infamous words of Menno Simons, that true evangelical faith cannot lie sleeping. The gospel is the story of heaven performed on the stage of earth, and the actors must act but they must also know their lines.

And herein lies the lesson: Where we become a people who preach, but without a life of obedience to Christ, the gospel is set up for ridicule; and where our exemplary lives are not partnered with proclamation of Jesus Christ and the

kingdom of God, our goodness is nothing but moralistic idolatry.

The eye-rolling butchery of St. Francis of Assisi's infamous, "Preach the gospel and, if necessary, use words," has got to end. The notion is thoroughly unbiblical and, since it didn't appear until two centuries after Francis lived, is most likely not even something he preached. It is unfortunate, really, that the words pinned to St. Francis have been adhered to more feverishly than the words of Scripture, and are even used as an excuse to wiggle

out from the discomfort of proclaiming the uniqueness of Jesus, his cross and resurrection.

But that's like saying I don't need to tell my wife I love her because a commercial tells me all she needs is flowers. Eventually, she needs to hear why it is I have been smitten by floral generosity.

All that brings me to a moment one Sunday morning in the middle of a sermon. I had just finished showing a video clip of Steve Saint's remarkable act of not only forgiving, but adopting into his own family as "grandfather," the man who had speared his father to death in 1956. Saint returned to live with the murderous Auca tribe that stole his dad away to show and tell the gospel. In the clip—available on YouTube—Saint and the aged Auca warrior sit together and reflect on what the gospel brought them both. It is stunning to hear, other-worldly to behold. It is audacious.



The gospel is the story of heaven performed on the stage of earth, and the actors must act but they must also know their lines.

And then it happened. As the clip came to a close, one of the men from a local recovery centre shockingly blurted out, "They live in a completely different world." He's right. The gospel preached and lived out is a surprise, a foreign land. And those rescued by it have the honour of shocking the world with it.

Phil Wagler (phil_wagler@yahoo.ca) lives in the diversity of Surrey, B.C., where he seeks to preach and live out the surprise of the gospel.

✉ MCC Canada should seek independence from government funding

RE: "ON SHAKY ground," March 5, page 20.

This article, which describes the "hardship" imposed on Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) and other non-governmental organizations (NGOs) by the recent treatment of them by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), makes a lot of sense of the concept of "separation of church and state."

CIDA is an instrument of the state and, therefore, can be expected to behave according to the whims—wise or otherwise—of those empowered at any particular point in time to direct the affairs of state, including CIDA's priorities.

While it may be tempting for NGOs like MCC, Kairos and others to seek funding from the state, in order to increase their influence or good works, total independence from any political impact on what they do seems to me a worthwhile goal. So instead of asking the government for funding for their worthwhile causes, why not ask government to "get out of the way" and reduce taxes so that genuine supporters can afford to contribute more? Just wondering.

JOHN HILDEBRAND, MISSISSAUGA, ONT.

/// Milestones

Births/Adoptions

Chathi—Karina Rose Tien-Mei (b. March 16, 2012), to Amanda and Hubert Chathi, Erb Street Mennonite, Waterloo, Ont.

Peters—Maddox Edward Ryan (b. Feb. 12, 2012), to Jonathan and Asley Peters, Rosenfeld Bergthaler Mennonite, Man.

Ponsen—Caleb Anthony (b. March 14, 2012), to Annette McDowell and Jordan Ponsen, Community Mennonite, Stouffville, Ont.

Siemens—Emrie Adele (b. March 22, 2012), to Larry and Eva Siemens, Plum Coulee Bergthaler Mennonite, Man.

Marriages

Bartsch/Paetkau—Lisa Bartsch (Rosenfeld Bergthaler Mennonite, Man.) and Randy Paetkau, at Altona Mennonite, Man., March 10, 2012.

Bergman/Kroeker—Karl Bergman (Plum Coulee Bergthaler Mennonite, Man.) and Angela Kroeker, in Morden, Man., March 24, 2012.

Deaths

Albrecht—Sam, 80 (b. Nov. 22, 1931; d. March 24, 2012), Riverdale Mennonite, Millbank, Ont.

Funk—Elizabeth, 97 (b. June 18, 1914; d. Feb. 18, 2012), Plum Coulee Bergthaler Mennonite, Man.

Hayes—Warren, 64 (b. Feb. 4, 1948; d. March 26, 2012), Brussels Mennonite, Ont.

Heintz—Sidney (Sid), 86 (b. Nov. 6, 1925; d. March 13, 2012), First Mennonite, Kitchener, Ont.

Neufeldt—Bruno, 83 (b. Dec. 11, 1928; Feb. 24, 2012), Nutana Park Mennonite, Saskatoon.

Penner—Louise (nee Lehn), 99 (b. March 14, 1913; d. March 29, 2012), First Mennonite, Saskatoon.

Quiring—Mary (nee Friesen), 88 (April 5, 1923; d. March 7, 2012), First Mennonite, Calgary.

Regehr—Marvin, 55 (b. May 9, 1956; d. March 17, 2012), Rosthern Mennonite, Sask., in Victoria, B.C.

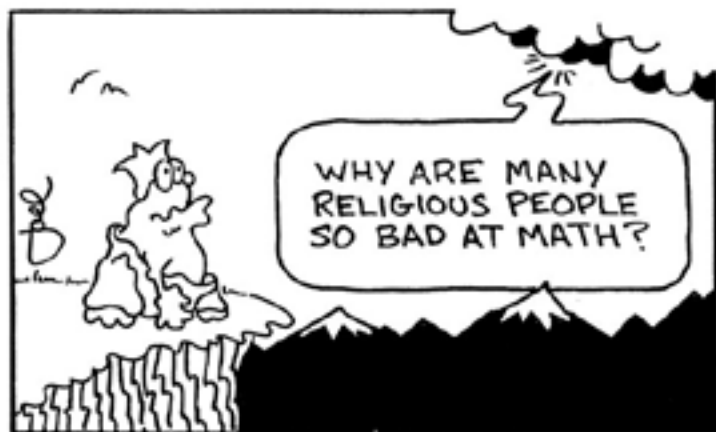
Shantz—Etta, 91 (b. June 22, 1920; d. March 16, 2012), Breslau Mennonite, Ont.

Thiessen—Juanita (nee Goerzen), 54 (b. Sept. 9, 1957; d. March 12, 2012), Level Ground Mennonite, Abbotsford, B.C.

Canadian Mennonite welcomes Milestones

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

Pontius' Puddle



VIEWPOINT

Mennonite and Mennist

BY JONATHAN JANZEN

"I saw a vast crowd too great to count, from every nation and tribe, people and language, standing in front of the throne and before the Lamb" Revelation 7:9 (NIV).

Mennonite congregations across Canada are becoming more and more diverse. Mennonite church communities that historically worshipped in their traditional languages have been moving towards English services as they integrate into English-speaking society.

Sharing a common worship language ushers in a new time of greater cultural and ethnic richness in English-speaking congregations. Once Spanish, Korean, Chinese, Vietnamese, German and other linguistic churches begin the shift to full English services, others outside that ethnicity are then able to attend, learn and worship together.

Yet this ethnic diversity seems not to be as celebrated by the descendants of German-speaking congregations. There appears to be great discomfort for Russian and Swiss-German Mennonites in juggling their ethnicity and faith with other Mennonites. This need not be so, and the answer, as always, is in our faith in God.

There is a sense of loss and confusion among the descendants of German-speaking Mennonites. In "Mennonite not eaten here," Jan. 24, 2011, David Martin, executive minister of Mennonite Church Eastern Canada, claimed that the German Mennonite church of close-knit communities, shared ancestry and cultural experience is dying. Yet he also reacted to the fact that German-speaking Mennonites were too ready to link their ethnicity to their faith, especially when sharing their faith with those of other ethnic origins. Confusingly, he grieves the coupling of our heritage with our

faith, and the death of it.

As a Russian Mennonite, I believe that God has been at work in every culture since the beginning of time, including ours. To disregard a culture is to fight against God's work in that people. I do not mean to promote cultural relativism or the idea that all aspects of culture are God-ordained. Rather, I argue that all peoples have a right to express God in the way God intended: through their culture. That includes language, food, art and all other aspects that make an ethnicity beautiful. This includes us Russian and Swiss-German Mennonites.

As Martin argues, stories of persecution in the shared Mennonite church history need to include the flight from oppression in Colombia, Laos or Sri Lanka, and not just from Russia or Switzerland. In fact, sharing these stories draws us together as one in Christ through faith. It creates an environment in which we are able to share God in our lives and histories with each other.

But sharing goes both ways. It is just as absurd to claim that Russian Mennonites must "downplay the culture of our founders in order to make space for the new cultures that are beginning to embrace the Mennonite faith," as it is to demand that Colombians, Laotians or Sri Lankans do the same for us.

By inviting all peoples to celebrate our ethnicity as Russian or Swiss-German Mennonites, opens the way for them to invite us to celebrate the beauties of their culture that God crafted and blessed. The key is not to demand cultural abandonment from ourselves or from anyone else.

Martin is right when he says that being

Mennonite is about embracing a theological and biblical identity, not a cultural one. That does not entail that culture must displace the heart of what it means to be an Anabaptist-Mennonite. The path towards cultural inclusion in congregations is not in setting aside the family histories and the ethnic associations, but, rather, in embracing a shared identity as Mennonites rooted in Scripture and theology. The solution to joining as Mennonites of faith, without intrinsically bringing in the association of culture and history from Russia or Switzerland, lies in the name: "Mennonite."

Wikipedia says that Mennonite theology emphasizes the primacy of the teachings of Jesus as recorded in the New Testament, and that we hold in common the ideal of a religious community based on New Testament models and imbued with the spirit of the Sermon on the Mount.

I don't think anyone wishing to attend a Mennonite church can argue with that. That leaves the distinct community of traditionally German-speaking Mennonite believers who have always been calling themselves Mennonites. I propose that we do away with referring to our cultural heritage as Mennonite, and adopt the *Plautdietsch* word for Mennonite: *Mennist*.

Culturally diverse Mennonite congregations are becoming the norm as language barriers are coming down. Ethnicity is beautiful and should be celebrated as God's beauty to his peoples.

With cultural pluralism comes a need to be able to share our faith story with other Mennonites without cultural reformation on either side. The word "Mennonite" is something already shared by all of us through faith in Jesus and should be left without the attachment of any one culture. Referring to the Russian and Swiss-German Mennonite culture as *Mennist* would do well in removing the ambiguous nature of our ethnicity from our faith. Then all that is left is to actively worship the Lord through cultural celebration with our brothers and sisters in Christ. ❧

GOD AT WORK IN THE WORLD

PHOTO BY BRAD LANGENDOEN

Marg Rempel of RempelCo Acres Ltd. illustrates with a brown egg and white egg how consumer assumptions and labelling are sometimes frustrating to farmers. The white egg, which someone once suggested to her was a bleached egg, is higher in Omega-3 because of what has been fed to the chickens.



Germinating conversations

Farmers speak out on food, faith and the land

BY EVELYN REMPEL PETKAU

Manitoba Correspondent
WINKLER, MAN.

Doug Dyck operates an 850-hectare mixed-grain farm near Plum Coulee with his brother-in-law and nephew, where he faces two realities: that of the wonderful, intergenerational, diverse nature of farming life, and that of rising fuel and machinery costs, which have increased tenfold while the price of wheat has barely doubled since 1972.

"I am concerned about the viability of this farming method for my nephew into the future," Dyck told more than 100 people gathered at Winkler Bergthaler Church on March 21 to hear what he and four other Manitoba Mennonite farmers had to say about food, faith and the land. "I have heard the phrase 'fair trade' or 'fair price' frequently in the past 10 years . . . but I have never heard it being discussed as it relates to the North American producer."

"Germinating Conversations" was the first of two listening events planned by Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Manitoba, A Rocha Prairie Canada and Canadian Mennonite University (CMU), at

which farmers were given the opportunity to explain their practices and their challenges to urban eaters. Kenton Lobe, one of the event organizers and an instructor in international development and environmental studies at CMU, said the goal of the meeting was "to help residents in town and

'If there was a close relationship between producer and consumer, they would produce and eat differently.'
(Conrad Zacharias)

urban settings understand better the range of issues and concerns confronting those who grow food for a living. True understanding starts with good listening."

Marg Rempel, who owns a mixed livestock and crop farm near Steinbach, believes that consumer assumptions are frustrating to farmers and labels are not always helpful. "It's very popular to label things in terms of confinement versus free range, or corporate farm versus family farm," she said, "but small is not always beautiful and

large is not always destructive. The availability of water, the location of the farm, among other things, influence what farming system is optimal."

Dean Hildebrand and his wife Tina have transformed a 260-hectare traditional grain farm into a cow/calf and grass-finishing beef ranch south of Morden. Hildebrand spoke out against the controversial issue of transgenic engineering and seed manipulation. Guided by Genesis 1:11, he said, "I strongly believe that companies should not own seeds. They should not be patented or genetically manipulated."

Ron Krahn works in partnership with his father and brother and their families to manage a 1,824-hectare grain farm near Rivers. They struggle with how to be faithful stewards. "We don't like to spray, but tillage seems to be the greater evil, and so we practise zero tillage to eliminate top soil erosion," he explained. "But then we need to spray." There are no easy answers, he concluded.

Conrad Zacharias and his wife Valerie own a certified organic dairy farm in the village of Reinland. "I can't sell to you directly," he told the audience. "Six different parties need a cut. Regulations attempt to compensate for lack of relationships. Absence of relationships has created a vast disconnect between farmer and eater. If there was a close relationship between producer and consumer, they would produce and eat differently."

Laura Rance, an award-winning journalist and editor of the *Manitoba Co-operator*, commended the organizers for the "unique

and unusual effort." This conversation "is very badly needed in our society, where 80 percent of Canadians live in urban areas and are distanced from the land that roots us."

"Farmers have embraced the challenge to feed the world," she said, asking, then, "Is it their burden alone to carry? Can we replace the word 'production,' which puts responsibility on one sector, with 'availability'? Then all of us own that challenge."

To watch a video of the event, visit youtube.com/watch?v=4f9aPY2_d2I. ❧

Opening our eyes to what we don't want to see

Author Rudy Wiebe speaks of Mennonite interaction with indigenous populations over the centuries

STORY AND PHOTO BY KARIN FEHDERAU

Saskatchewan Correspondent
SASKATOON

Fifty years before anyone was able to see it, or even willing to look at it, author Rudy Wiebe was exploring the issue of racism between Mennonites and aboriginals in his first book, *Peace Shall Destroy Many*. Most Mennonites, however, were so focussed on the sexual sin in the book that they missed the point about the racism that Wiebe was trying to get across.

"I don't remember very much discussion about the racial issues," mused Wiebe in reflecting on the furore initially caused by the book at a recent meeting of the Mennonite Historical Society of Saskatchewan.

But things have changed, and now building good relationships with aboriginal neighbours is gaining momentum. Saskatchewan Mennonites have been preparing for the upcoming Truth and Reconciliation Commission hearings being held in June. Inviting this particular author in the framework of this particular theme was a nod in that direction, said organizer Jake Buhler, referring to Wiebe's presence as "historical and educational attempts to

raise the level of consciousness among the Mennonite community."

In his opening remarks, however, Buhler made subtle reference to the kind of writer Wiebe has been in the past, saying, "Good writers open our eyes to what we don't want to see."

If there was a general lack of interest on the part of Mennonites earlier on, Wiebe attributes it to the fact that new immigrants to Canada were too busy just trying to survive. They believed that the government had given the land to them and didn't notice anything amiss.

Subsequent generations of Mennonites have been able to look beyond that.

"It's the next generation—me—that doesn't have this survival mentality, that realizes there's all kinds of problems with our relationship to the land," Wiebe said. "I don't think Mennonites know very much about [the injustice], or they haven't in the past," he said, adding that "the problem has not been resolved with the First Nations people."

Wiebe has spent half a lifetime thinking on, and writing about, Chief Big Bear after being gripped by the pacifist stance of this relatively unknown Plains Cree leader. And it was this wealth of knowledge and storytelling skills that he brought to the historical society meeting.

The now septuagenarian, his voice at times cracking with emotion, spoke passionately about the life of Big Bear, not to confront racism, but to show how First Nations people have suffered under colonization, and how, using the story of Big Bear's descendent Yvonne Johnson, they still suffer today. "When you destroy whole communities, what do you expect?" he asked rhetorically.

Wiebe believes that Mennonites who have been displaced can relate to the stories of First Nations people. But they have also contributed to their dislocation. "Maybe we are part of the problem, that we haven't recognized that these issues were there and work on it to help our neighbours," he said.

"We should recognize that we took advantage of them when we came here," Wiebe said, pointing to the example of Mennonites in Russia who were given land that had once belonged to the natives there. "This has happened again and again in our history," he stressed, "so we ought to recognize this pattern and at least discuss it."

He was quick to commend the efforts being done to help the Young Chippewyan First Nation gain compensation for its land. "What Leonard Doell [a Mennonite Central Committee Saskatchewan staff member] is doing is pretty unique in Mennonite circles," he said. "I don't know of anything like that happening in Alberta or Manitoba."

In reflecting on the goal of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Wiebe enthusiastically supports the concept of residential school survivors sharing their stories with other Canadians. "If they can [tell] their stories, then people are rid of their stories in a certain kind of psychological way," he said. "They're never gone, but then [other Canadians] can know about them and it's a great, great comfort to them." ▮



Author Rudy Wiebe, left, chats with Ted Janzen during a break at a meeting of the Mennonite Historical Society of Saskatchewan, held at Bethany Manor, Saskatoon.

PHOTO BY DAVE ROGALSKY



A mixed group of Mennonite (some Conrad Grebel University College students) and Syrian volunteers got together on April 5 at the MCC warehouse in Kitchener, Ont., to load a container with 3,230 comforters, 4,200 hygiene kits, 288 infant care kits, 560 relief kits and 3,080 school kits in an effort to contribute to a lasting peace in Syria, Lebanon, Jordan and the Middle East. As an MCC partner said, 'There are no winners [in war]. The end is just a point where we have to count the losses and the victims.'

'Please do not forget the Syrian people'

BY GLADYS TERICHOW
Mennonite Central Committee

Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) is supporting the efforts of local organizations in Syria and Jordan that are helping people affected by the ongoing conflict in Syria. As the violence in Syria continues, many people who have been injured, displaced or are grieving the loss of family members are seeking support for food, medicine and other basic needs.

"MCC is in a unique position to respond to the humanitarian needs in the region due to our long history and strong relationships in the Middle East," says Bruce Guenther, director of MCC disaster response.

MCC is appealing for \$500,000 and relief kits to assist partner organizations in the Middle East as they provide humanitarian aid and build peace at the community level. A significant part of MCC's response will help partners in Lebanon strengthen conflict-prevention efforts and disaster preparedness. This includes media training, encouraging dialogue among young leaders, trauma training and more.

In Syria, MCC is providing approximately

\$100,500 to help a local organization provide food baskets to 500 families for six months and small monthly cash allotments to pay for daily bread, medical costs, utilities and other basic needs. Because of safety concerns, the organization MCC is working with in Syria cannot be named.

"Families receiving this assistance in Syria have fled the city of Homs and are staying in rural areas," says Guenther. "Many have left everything behind—their belongings, homes and livelihoods—to escape to safety. Many have been injured."

Some reports estimate that up to 80,000 Syrians had fled to Jordan by late February. Some of these families are receiving support from Caritas Jordan, an MCC partner agency that has set up distribution operations in Mafraq and Ramtha, two cities near the Jordanian-Syrian border.

In early March, MCC sent two shipping containers of 5,830 school kits, 6,900 hygiene kits, 7,350 blankets and 1,229 relief kits to Jordan, where supplies will be distributed by Caritas. MCC is also providing

Caritas with financial assistance for local purchases of milk powder and diapers.

"Families have been traumatized by the violence they have witnessed," says Daryl Byler, an MCC representative based in Jordan who talked with several families during a recent visit to the Caritas distribution operations in Mafraq. "There is this incredible sense of vulnerability that refugees face. We are talking about people who have left their homes and don't know what to expect in a foreign country, or if and when they eventually return home. Many families have four to eight young children."

Caritas has significant experience working with refugees and the host communities through its work of supporting families from Iraq. As in the past, Caritas is also assisting vulnerable families in the host community.

One of the women receiving support, who identified herself only as Salwa, said she, along with her husband and four children, fled the city of Homs after two neighbours were killed and her husband's grocery store was taken over by Syrian security forces. They fled to Jordan with only the clothes they were wearing.

Byler asked Salwa what message she would want to share with people in the West, and she responded, "Please do not forget the Syrian people." ❧

Capital campaign seeks to boost thrift shopping revenue

By ANGELIKA DAWSON
Mennonite Central Committee B.C.
ABBOTSFORD, B.C.

In order to provide space for the continued growth of thrift shops in Abbotsford, Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) B.C. has purchased land and is planning a major expansion. The Gladys Avenue location will be the site of a new MCC B.C. ministry centre that will accommodate thrift shops, the material resource centre, a quilting centre, administration and program offices, as well as a café.

"Just as MCC leaders had a bold vision when they built the MCC Plaza two decades ago, we have a bold vision for a new ministry centre that will be a major volunteer hub where people of all ages can contribute to the local community and to the worldwide work of MCC," says executive director Wayne Bremner.

In 1989, the MCC Plaza was built with 2,300 square metres for thrift shops, the Plaza Café, offices and Ten Thousand Villages. At the time, concern was expressed that the facility would be too large, but within 10 years the building and parking lot were too small, stunting the growth of thrift sales.

Since then, MCC offices and Ten Thousand Villages moved to other locations to create more room for thrift. In 2003, MCC opened a new thrift shop in East Abbotsford, and two years ago the Furniture and More Thrift Shop expanded into 1,850 square metres of leased space across the street from the MCC Plaza, and sales grew immediately. All three Abbotsford thrift shops together grew by 16 percent in 2011 after expanding into more leased space.

The concern now is that both the Abby East Thrift Shop and the Furniture and More Thrift Shop spend thousands of dollars on leasing costs that will increase from year to year. By owning a building, MCC B.C. will have a secure long-term location and the money spent on current lease payments can go towards MCC ministry. By

consolidating two thrift shops, offices and material resources operations into one location with a purpose-built building, the organization will create efficiency and reduce staffing costs. With more parking and retail space, combined with a highly visible and accessible location, sales and net income are expected to increase.

"With this new centre we project an increase of over \$29 million for the ministry of MCC over the next 20 years, and an additional \$3 million and more each year thereafter, as sales grow," Bremner says. "A donation toward this project will multiply and grow for years to come, leaving a legacy of compassion that will assist people in need for decades."

MCC B.C. has launched a capital



MCC B.C. PHOTO

Mennonite Central Committee B.C.'s capital fundraising campaign asks donors to "help us plant a seed and build a legacy."

fundraising campaign to offset the \$10 million cost of the land and \$6 million for the building. With \$3 million available from the building fund and the sale of MCC property, the MCC B.C. board approved a \$13 million capital campaign, with the goal of being debt-free in five years. The initial goal is to raise \$5 million by the summer of 2013 so construction can begin. ☘

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Vietnamese pastor sentenced to prison

By LUKE S. MARTIN

Mennonite World Conference

A former independent Mennonite pastor in Vietnam was sentenced to 11 years in prison on March 26 after being convicted of “undermining national solidarity” by the Gia Lai Provincial People’s Court in Pleiku.

Forty-three-year-old Nguyen Cong Chinh, also known as Nguyen Thanh Long, has long been harassed by the security police in Kon Tum and Gia Lai provinces in the Central Highlands of Vietnam.

Chinh was arrested on April 28, 2011,

and detained until trial. According to the Saigon *Giai Phong* (Liberation) newspaper, at his trial Chinh confessed to the crime of propaganda against the State of Vietnam, proclaiming himself “pastor in charge of the highlands Mennonite Protestants,” and, “engaging in tactics to entice ethnic minorities into wrongdoing.” The official Vietnamese News Agency reported that he continued these activities even though he was repeatedly warned. His sentence will be reviewed by a higher court within a few weeks.

In July 2003, Chinh attended a Mennonite conference in Ho Chi Minh City along with Christians from the Jarai ethnic minority. When the Mennonite church divided into two groups in late 2004, Chinh related closely with the Vietnam Evangelical Mennonite Church, then under the leadership of Nguyen Hong Quang. When Chinh built an unauthorized place of meeting for his church in Kon Tum, it was soon destroyed by the authorities.


Over the next few years, Chinh attempted to bring Christians from several ethnic minorities into a broad fellowship. When disciplined by the church in 2008 for inappropriate conduct and stripped of his leadership role, Chinh announced that he was resigning from the Mennonite church, and reported that he was leader of the United Montagnard Christian Church, headquartered in Pleiku.

Chinh has been frequently harassed, beaten and detained by security police, and regularly reported this harassment to the press. He was detained and held incommunicado for a few months in 2009; after being released from custody, he reported that he was leading an independent Mennonite fellowship.

It is not clear when he affiliated with the Lutheran Church Fellowship in Vietnam, which condemned his most recent trial as “unjust” and called his sentence heavy, declaring that Chinh committed no crime against the communist state.

Although religious groups, including many evangelical Christian congregations, have been granted greater freedom—and even full legal status—by Vietnamese authorities in recent years, the government has implemented stricter policies among ethnic minorities it fears might threaten political solidarity. ☸





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'You call that justice?'

STORY AND PHOTO BY DAVE ROGALSKY

Eastern Canada Correspondent
WATERLOO, ONT.

The list of sponsors for the latest presentation of *Tough Case*, a play about restorative justice commissioned by Jennifer Llewellyn, a law professor at Dalhousie (N.S.) University in 2009, included Correctional Services Canada. Some might consider this ironic, considering the play was presented at Conrad Grebel University College the same week that the Conservative government pushed through its omnibus crime bill, which moves away from restoration towards punishment, according to news reports.

Tough Case describes the transformational process experienced by Dane Timberell, a young offender, his mother Marjorie, and the victims Tom Ross and his mother Grace.

Grace is afraid to return to her home after it was broken into and vandalized. Through a restorative justice process overseen by Nessa MacCallum, self-described as "addicted to making a difference," Grace is freed from her fear and Dane learns a trade. The play delves into the psychological make-up of Dane, describing how he came to be involved in crime.

During a question-and-answer period that followed the presentation on March 14 at Grebel, a volunteer at Community Justice Initiatives (CJI), Kitchener, that helped sponsor the play, explained that the significant transformations that happen in the play are normal for the processes in which he has been involved. He called

restorative justice a "magical, mystical" process.

Chris Cowie, CJI's executive director, explained that the organization successfully processes more than 100 cases per year on a budget of \$80,000, less than it costs to keep one inmate in prison for a year. He also noted that, while 90 percent of victim participants do not expect a successful or satisfactory outcome, 90 percent report being satisfied afterwards.

During its local run of educational institutions and churches in March, *Tough Case* played at the Grand Valley Institute, a women's prison in Kitchener. ☘



Chris Cowie, foreground, executive director of Community Justice Initiatives, Kitchener, Ont., answers questions after a presentation of Tough Case, a play about restorative justice, at Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo, last month.

Urban Missionary / Church Planter

Trinity Mennonite Church in Calgary has identified an opportunity to make (new) disciples of non-churched people in the Southeast area of Calgary. This area consists of several rapidly growing communities – and attracts primarily urban young professional families.

This lifetime opportunity is for someone who loves to minister to people -- to introduce them to Jesus, to baptize them, and to teach them to obey Jesus' teachings. In essence, to make disciples.

It is recommended that interested candidates read *The Purpose Driven Church* by Rick Warren, *The End of Religion* by Bruxy Cavey, and *The Naked Anabaptist* by Stuart Murray before considering this position.

Christian Theological Studies at a Bachelor or Masters level would be an asset.

If you feel the Holy Spirit leading you towards this challenging opportunity, please e-mail indication of your interest along with details about yourself to: missionary@trinitymennonitechurch.ab.ca

GOD AT WORK IN THE CHURCH

MENNONITE CHURCH CANADA PHOTO BY DAN DYCK



Liz Koop, left, president of Mennonite Women Canada, presents her report at the plenary session of Mennonite Church Canada's spring leadership assembly at First Mennonite Church, Winnipeg, on March 9.

MC Canada leaders revisit priorities, refocus efforts

BY DEBORAH FROESE

Mennonite Church Canada
WINNIPEG

Taking a hard look at how to prioritize activities in the face of change proved central to council discussions at Mennonite Church Canada's spring leadership assembly at First Mennonite Church, Winnipeg, last month.

Christian Witness Council

At a plenary session following council meetings on March 9, Christian Witness Council chair Rudy Dirks noted that the council is still recovering from the loss of Witness staff last year resulting from retirement and budget cuts. In addition, a decline in funding to MC Canada has resulted in a reduced focus for Witness over the last several years.

"What do we do about that?" Dirks asked. "Keep things on paper and say, 'Someday maybe,' or is there another option?"

While MC Canada is still able to staff International Ministries and Native Ministry, programs for evangelism and church planting, multicultural ministries, peace and justice advocacy and education, are no longer funded.

Dirks recognized their continuing importance and noted that council members

are still committed to them. "We have strong convictions that we are the keepers of the flame," he said. "We can't fund and staff the other programs, but we want to think outside the box and do something with them."

He said that Witness Council and staff will continue to think creatively about how to participate and network with area churches and ministry partners that may already have inroads in those areas.

Christian Formation Council

Formation executive minister Dave Bergen shared highlights of Christian Formation Council discussions with staff following the assembly, listing the primary issues that the council will tackle in the coming year: nurturing a culture for "thick faith," leadership development and worship.

Worship was a new addition to the list of priorities. "It's one of the key ways in which our congregations and members are shaped in their understanding of faith," Bergen said. "Worship is the vehicle by which some of these other priorities are expressed."

The council devoted significant energy to exploring ways that Canadian Mennonite

University's book store could work more closely with MC Canada's Resource Centre. The two entities have been exploring possibilities for providing a more integrated approach to serving congregations and individuals. "There is excitement for this endeavour, but there are also many practical implications that need close attention," he said.

Church Engagement Council

This year's assembly was only the second time the relatively new Church Engagement Council, established in 2010, met together as a complete entity with resource development staff in place.

Daniel Horne, director of partnership development, and Brent Charette, who serves both MC Canada and MC Eastern Canada as church engagement minister in a jointly funded position, joined Church Engagement ministries last year.

The council reviewed a fundraising strategy in addition to other agenda items.

"We have developed a conservative development strategy with a \$150,000 increase in our fundraising target over last year," Horne said. "Fundraising should be something we all take part in. We're planning to develop funds with Witness and Formation, fundraising that is specific to their ministries."

He reported that he is also working with the Mennonite Foundation of Canada, Mennonite Church Canada's partner in estate planning, to strengthen legacy giving. A large wealth transfer from the current generation to the next is anticipated

in the next couple of decades, said Horne, who hopes that this generosity can build a financially healthier church in the future.

Several members of the council noted that the highlight of their meetings was a presentation by communications staff of the work undertaken over the past six months, and a glimpse of what is yet to come, including a preview of the first in a series of planned “Mennonites Everywhere” videos (*see story on back page*). The series, intended for distribution via YouTube, will challenge Mennonite stereotypes by

depicting “non-cradle” Mennonites who have chosen a Mennonite church.

“The objective is to show that you don’t need to have a certain kind of surname or enjoy certain cultural foods to be part of a Mennonite church,” communications director Dan Dyck told council members. “We have diversity in our congregations across Canada, but we could be doing much better,” he said, adding that in many regions being Mennonite still has strong cultural associations. ☞

budget. Accordingly, the expenditure budget for the fiscal year ending in 2013 should have been reduced by approximately \$75,000.



Peters

But to help the relatively new Church Engagement Council and fundraising staff strengthen their capacity, senior staff made a proposal to the Financial Planning and Audit

Committee to cover the shortfalls in the 2011-12 budget with a draw from its council reserves. Executive staff requested that the policy be overridden for one year to allow an increased donation target for the fiscal year ending in 2013, rather than cut an already tight budget further. Gordon Peters, committee chair and treasurer, deemed the request reasonable and recommended it to the General Board. After careful consideration, the General Board gave its approval.

“Now that we are fully staffed, we can really work at this,” Metzger said.

Fiscal-year-end date changed

Randy Wiebe, chief financial officer, said that just over 40 percent of annual donations typically arrive in the final quarter of the fiscal year, which presently ends on Jan. 31. For the second time in recent years, giving was on target as of Dec. 31, 2011, but fell off considerably in January of this year, which contributed to the unmet income target.

“By then, it is too late to make any adjustments in expenses or generate an appeal that will substantially change the picture before the end of the fiscal year,” said Metzger.

To provide a more stable outlook on income flow, the General Board has approved a shift in the fiscal-year-end date from Jan. 31 to Sept. 30. Once the new date becomes effective in 2013, the bulk of donations will arrive at the beginning of the fiscal year, rather than at the end.

The fiscal-year-end date change will not mean additional revenue, Metzger cautioned, but will make planning easier. “We will start the fiscal year on a more predictable footing, rather than ending the year on our most unpredictable quarter,” he said. ☞

Modest fundraising plan, fiscal year date change approved

BY DEBORAH FROESE

Mennonite Church Canada
WINNIPEG

After an unsettling year of cuts to ministry and staff, financial news from Mennonite Church Canada’s spring leadership assembly is cautiously hopeful.

“Individuals and corporate donors have increased their giving compared to last year,” executive director Willard Metzger reported, adding that congregational giving remained nearly flat. Preliminary signs for next year are encouraging, but it’s a constantly moving target, he said.

Although overall donation income rose by approximately \$75,000 over the previous year, it met only half of the intended goal. Additionally, a slower economy led to an investment income loss of \$23,000—when a gain of \$70,000 had been anticipated.

those vacancies were filled:

- Daniel Horne is now MC Canada’s director of partnership development.
- Brent Charette is church engagement minister, filling a role jointly funded by MC Canada and MC Eastern Canada. Charette’s appointment is a demonstration of the relationship between the national and area church as they partner together for resource development to facilitate ministry in both.

Metzger and Horne have created a resource development plan to raise \$150,000 more in donations for the fiscal year ending in 2013.

“It’s a reasonable plan. It’s a fairly modest

‘It’s a reasonable plan. It’s a fairly modest plan,’ Metzger said. However, he cautioned that not meeting the overall income target will mean further cuts to ministry next year.

While the numbers are sobering, the stage has been set for a stronger upcoming year. Until September 2011, fundraising staff were not all in place, limiting the national church’s ability to develop partnerships and inspire generosity. By September,

plan,” Metzger said. However, he cautioned that not meeting the overall income target will mean further cuts to ministry next year.

Financial policy states that MC Canada must use the actual income of the previous year to determine the following year’s

Between culture and faith

Although Jesus is clearly central to the Christian faith, no one people or culture can claim the absolute truth: Father Paradis

STORY AND PHOTO BY DEBORAH FROESE

Mennonite Church Canada
WINNIPEG

The relationship between culture and faith is intimate and difficult to describe. But understanding that relationship is the first step towards building bridges

between culture and faith traditions.

At the annual Building Bridges event on March 16, 150 people gathered to hear Sister Eva Solomon, Father Francois Paradis and Brander “Standing Bear” McDonald reflect with word and song upon their experiences with that relationship. The event, hosted by Mennonite Church Canada and MC Manitoba at Thunderbird House, Winnipeg, launched the annual Spring Partnership Circle meetings between aboriginal and non-

Manitoba churches experience smudging ceremony

BY EVELYN REMPEL PETKAU

Manitoba Correspondent

Northern Manitoba aboriginal churches that met with Mennonite Church Manitoba congregations in the southern part of the province last month for their semi-annual Partnership Circle meetings continued the work of building understanding and breaking down cultural barriers.

One of the guests, Eva Solomon, whose work focuses on the enculturation of faith, led a smudging ceremony as part of the March 17 morning worship service.

“This was a new experience for many—challenging for some, welcome to most,” said Steve Heinrichs, director of Native Ministry for Mennonite Church Canada.

“You may be uncomfortable or disagree with certain things that are being said, certain practices like the smudge . . . and that’s okay,” said Brander ‘Standing Bear’ McDonald, indigenous relations coordinator for MC B.C. “What matters for us is that you are in the circle. That’s the big thing.”

Father Francois Paradis, who served for many years as a Catholic priest in the Ojibwa First Nations of southern Manitoba, shared how he struggled when he was invited to participate in aboriginal culture.

“Once he did become involved, it opened all kinds of doors into the community and the Christian church,” said Neil von Gunten, former co-director of Native Ministry who attended the Partnership Circles meeting. “That is the same struggle we are engaged in: What does it all mean and how should we be involved?”

The challenges facing northern churches are not entirely unlike those of rural Manitoba congregations, Heinrichs suggested. “Northern churches are aging and their numbers are dwindling,” he said. “There is a need for younger folks to be in the mix. Also there is a need for leadership within some of these communities.”

Riverton Fellowship is facing dwindling numbers and leadership issues. Its partnership circle, which includes Bethel, Sargent Avenue, Home Street and Douglas Mennonite churches in Winnipeg, decided to increase the number of Sundays that it brings worship services to the community to twice a month, explained Martin Penner, a member of the circle. “We want to walk alongside of them as they try to determine their path,” he said.

Although Living Word Church in Cross Lake has a large and vibrant Sunday school that the community supports, it is an aging congregation and leadership resources are stretched, Florence Benson Umperville reported. “Everyone seems to be getting older, and younger ones have other plans or do things differently,” she said.

Charleswood Mennonite, a partner church—along with Sterling Mennonite from Winnipeg, and Lowe Farm Bergthaler—is relatively new to the circle and is working at building relationships with the community located 10 hours north of Winnipeg by car. “We have made a few visits,” said Neil Funk Unrau of Charleswood.

Sterling Mennonite has led the summer Vacation Bible School program and Lowe Farm has sent materials and resources to the northern church.

Pauingassi, Steinbach’s Grace Mennonite and Winkler’s Emmanuel Mennonite churches are involved in a partnership that includes “hosting a family camp during the summer, sending young adults to live and work in Pauingassi for the summer and hosting a delegation from Pauingassi in the fall,” said Kyle Penner, associate pastor at Grace Mennonite.

Other partnerships exist between Matheson Island, Grace Mennonite, Winkler, and Springfield Heights, Winnipeg; between Manigotagan and Steinbach Mennonite; and between Little Grand Rapids and Winkler Bergthaler.

aboriginal church communities.

McDonald, a singer/songwriter of Cree and Scottish descent, grew up in British Columbia feeling conflicted about his mixed background. For a number of years, the current indigenous relations coordinator for MC B.C. worked with Sto:lo First Nations people who had survived residential school experiences. He heard a great deal about Christianity from survivors and discovered something important about their faith. “They [already] had a spiritual system that was forced underground,” he said. “That was a lot like the early church.”

As an institution working with First Nations communities, McDonald said the church “went sideways.” He has since developed his own approach to thinking about culture and faith. “How does my native worldview fit with Christ?” he asked.

Eva Solomon, an Ojibwa and a member of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Sault Ste. Marie, Ont., also pointed to the early church for examples of the struggle between culture and faith. “Jesus grew up within a Jewish culture,” she said. “He saw economic, political and religious wrongs and challenged them. The first conflict that came [to the early church] had to do with conflict of culture.” She noted Peter’s struggle with foods that were considered unclean in the Jewish tradition—but not from a Christian perspective—and the argument about whether or not gentiles in the church should be circumcised as Jews were.

Solomon’s father struggled for years with the differences between Western European church culture and his Anishnabe understanding of the Creator and worship. She said that he left the church and eventually began to share the story of Jesus through the lens of his own culture.

As a child going to school in her village, Solomon said she was called a “dirty Indian” by a classmate. She asked her mother why someone would say that. Her mother’s response was simple: They did it because they had not yet had the opportunity to learn otherwise.

For people of different cultures and faiths to truly recognize and appreciate one another, they must be willing to learn from each other. “That makes us brothers and sisters,” Solomon said.



Partnership Circles draw together the faithful from different cultural groups, recognizing the centrality of Christ but also the importance of sacred symbols of indigenous peoples, such as the eagle feather that symbolizes truth and an awareness of the sacred.

As a missionary oblate of Mary Immaculate and an ordained pastor, Paradis faced his own inner conflict. He left seminary studies full of knowledge and religious rules—only to arrive in the community he was to pastor and discover a sweat lodge. He said he knew it was his

calling to find a bridge between culture and faith, but it wasn’t an easy calling. “There was a deep fear,” he recalled. “Am I being unfaithful to what the church is teaching, and even more important, as a pastor am I leading people astray?”

Paradis, like McDonald and Solomon, determined that there was a necessary process to an encounter between cultures. “I have to bring me,” he said. “I have to bring my faith. . . . As you encounter [another culture or faith], you must allow yourself to be open and learn from the other party.”

Paradis encourages that kind of learning between First Nations and the non-aboriginal church through Returning to Spirit, his full-time ministry in Winnipeg that focuses on reconciling the Indian residential school legacy in Canada.

Although Jesus is clearly central to the Christian faith, no one people or culture can claim the absolute truth, Paradis said, explaining, “We each have one vision of it, but it isn’t the whole truth. I believe that God has spoken to all nations from the beginning.” ❧

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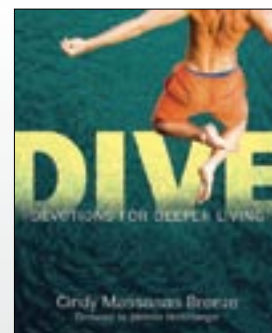
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MC ALBERTA ANNUAL DELEGATE SESSIONS

Auto accidents mar beginning of area church gathering

STORY AND PHOTOS BY DONITA WIEBE-NEUFELD

Alberta Correspondent
CALGARY

Collisions at this year's Mennonite Church Alberta delegate sessions happened on city roads, not on the assembly floor, as two Edmonton pastors escaped injury in separate accidents on March 23.

That evening Dan Graber was installed as area church minister and Calgary Chin Christian Church was introduced to the delegates. The church of approximately 60 congregants is made up of people who left Myanmar because of political instability. The congregation is currently in the process of joining MC Alberta.



Graber

The March 24 business meeting progressed smoothly, with concise reports and few questions from the floor.

Camp Valaqua numbers dip

While the MC Alberta budget ended 2011 slightly in the black, Camp Valaqua added a splash of red. Brian Hildebrandt, the camp's board chair, explained that, by drawing

\$25,721 on reserves from previous years, Valaqua was able to keep support from MC Alberta to \$79,845, within normal levels. Nothing, however, was added to reserves in 2011, so the same solution will not be possible if there is a similar shortfall this year.

Director Jon Olfert noted that reduced camper numbers and strong designated giving that was unavailable for general operations contributed significantly to the camp's shortfall.

"We have struggled with camper numbers," he said. "There were only 271 last year, a hard thing to hear. We run an amazingly strong program and I'm excited by what happens there, but we are judged by our numbers."

Rental use remains strong and the camp looks forward to increasing programming for school groups.

Efforts to keep youth/young adults engaged

The Congregational Leadership Committee highlighted efforts made in response to a

2011 resolution to work at identifying a way that the Youth Leadership Team and the ministry to youth within MC Alberta can be clearly linked to, and supported by, the area church.

During the year, the committee sponsored a ministry workshop in conjunction with the annual Junior High Snow Camp, as well as met with the Youth Leadership Team to set goals for 2012, including exploration of the creation of a youth delegate category for future area church assemblies.

Steve Jorritsma, a delegate from Edmonton First Mennonite, commented, "I've been vocal about [youth ministry]. I affirm the work that [the committee] is doing. If you need help, I'll be the first to step to the plate."

The Missions and Service Committee reported on Ana Loewen's research regarding the feasibility of a Calgary young adult Christian community to involve young adults who are currently not actively attending churches. Loewen determined there is currently not enough interest and the target group is too diverse. Suggestions to focus on youth ministry and explore the idea of a Mennonite community centre in an existing facility are now under consideration.

Sale of Edmonton church approved

A resolution that delegates authorize General Council to negotiate and complete the sale of the Edmonton Mennonite Worship Centre was the last item of business. MC Alberta has held title since 2000 and the building has long been home to both Chinese and Vietnamese Mennonite churches.

In the last several years, difficulties arose, as the larger Vietnamese congregation proposed to buy it. When the resolution came up for discussion, Ken Tse, pastor of Edmonton Chinese Mennonite Church, immediately took the mike. "This issue has been a heartache and headache for two years," he said. "There have been many misunderstandings and miscommunications because of it. . . . I am here to support the sale of the building. We [the Chinese church] want the flexibility to use the money for ministry, and to further the kingdom of God . . . and heal relationships."

The vote passed resoundingly. ❧



Members of Calgary Chin Christian Church were introduced during the Mennonite Church Alberta annual delegate sessions last month. The church, made up of people from Myanmar, is in the process of joining the area church.

Laity, pastors learn skills in leading

STORY AND PHOTO BY DAVE ROGALSKY

Eastern Canada Correspondent
WATERLOO, ONT.

Two meetings, same congregation, two leaders, two different outcomes.

In the first meeting, the leader was prepared, had clear goals, an agenda and the skills to draw out the members. In the second, the leader had a laissez-faire attitude towards questions and statements, and the members wondered where they were going, what they were doing there and whether it was worth their time and energy.

According to Betty Pries of Associates Resourcing the Church (ARC), the second meeting resulted in confusion and conflict, failing to build on the strong foundation laid in the first meeting, and losing the momentum the congregation had felt.

Pries began the March 24 seminar, sponsored by ARC and Conrad Grebel University College, which acted as host, by putting an agenda on the overhead, reviewing the purpose of the meeting, and discussing the guidelines of the time the group would follow in conversation with each other.

Then she turned to the biblical story from

Acts 15, where the early church decided to accept non-Jews as full members into the formerly exclusively Jewish church.

In this process, Pries was modelling to those in attendance how to lead a meeting. She suggested that the focus on community and faith-building should take between a third and a half of a meeting's time, and that a meeting should not exceed two-and-a-half hours.

The suggestion of a three-part meeting on a topic—with reporting, discussion and decision-making spread over consecutive meetings, and established limits on how long any one item can take—caught many participants' imagination.

A key skill from the day was to help people move from positions to interests. A position is often a declarative statement of opinion on the topic or process underway. An interest is a deeper idea, such as being recognized or respected, or feeling secure.

Pries suggested that, like an iceberg, interests are the underlying 90 percent of

what people say in meetings. It is the leader's job to help the group find common interests and to build a congregational future on those interests, rather than engaging in often divisive positions.

The key tool in this is paraphrasing the positional statement someone has made and checking if the paraphrase is accurate, and moving on from a position to an interest. For example, if someone says, "Until the worship music changes, I will not donate to this congregation," the leader can respond, "Would it be correct to say that it is an important part of church for you to be able to worship?"; then follow that with, "What are other important aspects of church for you?" At this point, others can be invited to join in the conversation, while moving from a position on music to an interest in the importance of the body of Christ. ❧

/// Briefly noted

B.C. pastors in transition

Two long-time pastors in Mennonite Church B.C. congregations have left their positions and are moving on to other ministry opportunities:

- Ingrid Schultz, who has pastored First United Mennonite Church, Vancouver, for 13 years, begins a new position as chaplain at Menno Home in Abbotsford starting April 16. Schultz says, "I have been grateful to be a part of the MC B.C. Vancouver pastors. I'm thankful for the diversity around the table and the good support that MC B.C. provides through our pastor reps."

- Lorin Bergen, who has pastored Living Hope Christian Fellowship, Surrey, for 18 years, ended his service there April 1 and will begin as lead pastor of Fort Langley Evangelical Free Church on May 1. A highlight of his time at Living Hope, says Bergen, has been "having God develop an international community" where worship takes place weekly in several different languages. "I will miss the relationships [in MC B.C.], but look forward to a new chapter," he says.

— BY AMY DUECKMAN



Jeanette Seiling of Bethel Mennonite Church, Ont., left, discusses the ideas presented at a seminar on leading congregational and committee meetings with her pastor, Linda Brnjas.

PERSONAL REFLECTION

'Give it all away'

BY BRENT HORST

ST. JACOBS MENNONITE CHURCH

Due to record offering receipts and under-spending of some internal costs, the St. Jacobs (Ont.) Mennonite congregation had to decide what to do with a good-sized surplus this spring.

Finance committee and church council meetings brought forth a number of suggestions on what to do with the money, including tithing to another charity and putting the rest of the surplus into the church's capital fund. Then suggestions started popping up to give more of the money to other charities and missions until one person finally declared, "We should give it all away."

As we discerned this further, we thought about the baskets of leftovers after Jesus fed the five thousand. There was a miracle in the feeding, but also significance in the leftovers. Why not treat this surplus as leftovers and use it to further help ministries that we support? We also thought it would be great to involve the congregation in a financial decision in a very tangible way.

On March 4, during the regular Sunday morning sharing time, each family unit was invited to come forward, pick up its symbolic \$100 worth of Monopoly money and distribute the bills between one or more of 15 baskets. These baskets included the church's capital and reserve funds, and ministries we support in some way, including Mennonite Church Canada; the Benin Bible Institute; Grace Lao Mennonite Church, Kitchener, Ont.; Mennonite Central Committee; Mennonite Disaster Service and eight other local ministries.

The allocations to the various ministries was something nobody could have predicted and everyone felt it was God's will, directed by the Holy Spirit. After the service people talked positively about the experience and one even asked if the

practice could become an annual event.

The congregation feels that its vision to

"seek to celebrate and listen to the Living God; empowered by the Holy Spirit to be a welcoming, caring community of faith centered in Jesus Christ; and to demonstrate God's love in our neighbourhoods and the world" was lived out in a very obvious way in this "leftovers" experience. ☸

PHOTO BY LARRY SHANTZ



Congregants at St. Jacobs Mennonite Church, Ont., were invited to help decide how the church's surplus should be given away on March 4 by placing Monopoly money into one or more of 15 baskets representing local, national and international ministries.

Canadians named to new MWC operations team

Mennonite World Conference
BOGOTÁ, COLOMBIA

Two Canadians have been named to the new Mennonite World Conference (MWC) operations team by general secretary César García.

Len Rempel of New Hamburg, Ont., was named as chief operating officer responsible for finances and budget; and maintaining and monitoring staffing, policies and job descriptions. Rempel, a certified management accountant, began working for MWC a year ago.

Ron Rempel of Waterloo, Ont., was named as part-time chief communications officer responsible for managing and planning the global communications strategy, and overseeing the communication program that currently includes MWC's news service, *Courier* magazine and the website. Rempel began as news editor last fall.

Also named to the operations team were Anna Sorgius of France as chief

administrative officer responsible for managing the general secretariat office, membership, database, archiving and translators; and Liesa Unger of Germany as part-time chief international events officer responsible for the executive committee and general council meetings and global assemblies.

Still to be appointed is a chief development officer responsible for managing and planning a global strategy for fundraising and capacity building.

Also envisioned in the new structure are several coordinator positions reporting to the general secretary. These include a coordinator of commissions—Faith & Life, Deacons, Mission and Peace—and a coordinator of regional offices. The goal, according to García, is to have an MWC office in each of the five continental regions of Latin America, Africa, Asia and Pacific, Europe and North America. ☸

God at work in the Church

Snapshots

PHOTO BY WOLFGANG DRESCHKE



For four Thursday evenings in March, two Lutheran and two Mennonite congregations in Waterloo Region gathered in each other's church buildings to study 'Healing Memories, Reconciling in Christ: A Lutheran-Mennonite Study Guide for Congregations.' About 40 people attended each meeting. One observation was that, as the weeks went by, the fellowship time after the meeting got longer as relationships were forged between the participants. Pictured from left to right: Dave Rogalsky, Wilmot Mennonite, Baden, Ont.; Olavi Hepomäki, St. James Lutheran, Baden; Joanna Miller, Zion Lutheran, Philipsburg; and Ilene Bergen, Steinmann Mennonite, Baden.

CANADIAN MENNONITE UNIVERSITY PHOTO



Canadian Mennonite University recently recognized its 2011-12 Top Scholar-Athletes with 4.0 grade point averages. Pictured from left to right, front row: Nina Schroeder (also MVP, women's basketball) and Laura Tait; and back row: Jacob Miller, Christina Janzen, Vanessa Kornelson, Simon Dueck (also rookie of the year, men's soccer), Lindsay Braul, Rodger Toews and Josh Ewert.

GOD AT WORK IN US

Learn, serve, play

*Energy and enthusiasm for the church—
and for life—keep Gerd Bartel busy*

BY DEBORAH FROESE

Mennonite Church Canada
WINNIPEG

Gerd Bartel retired from his position as Mennonite Church Canada's western director of resource development late last year, a job he describes as primarily visiting and saying "thank you" to the generous donors who support national church ministries. Bartel officially served in the position since 2000, but he fundraised for the church and its institutions on and off for 30 years.

In a post-retirement *Church Matters* podcast interview with Dan Dyck, Mennonite Church Canada's director of communications, Bartel said, "I don't visit wealthy people, I visit generous people." He noted that among the generous people he connected with were some of the less wealthy members of our congregations." He described a few faithful donors as "reverse tithers," people who "basically lived on 10 percent and gave everything else away."

He went on to say that he hasn't lived up to that kind of dedication: "The rest of us have to deal with the temptations and struggles of affluence in our society. [Reverse tithers] have been released of that struggle, it seems. They have said that everything is God's, and for themselves they've kept only minimal amounts."

For more than three decades, Bartel travelled extensively to fundraise for various parts of the church and church-related projects. He credits his wife Regina with making sacrifices so that he could engage in the work he loved. "My wife gave me a lot of grace," he said. "For her, my leaving regularly for a week here or a week there was a little more challenging."

It was especially demanding a couple decades ago, when the three Bartel children were young and he was busy raising

funds for the building that now houses the Mennonite Church Canada office in Winnipeg. "That was a big deal for the whole family," he said.

Retirement from MC Canada doesn't mean Bartel will be any less busy. He has since assumed another role closer to home in Abbotsford, B.C., as the legacy development director for Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) B.C.; the position puts him in charge of a \$13 million fundraising project that will result in the construction of a new building to house Abbotsford operations in one location (*see story on page 15*).

In addition to his new role, Bartel manages real estate holdings for a relative and serves as the volunteer vice-chair of Menno Place, a full-range housing service for seniors.

Bartel is physically active, too; he enjoys golf and is training for the Delta Triathlon on April 21. "It's a mini-triathlon," he said, "with a 700-metre swim, 20-kilometre bike ride and a five-kilometre run. I'm actually ready to do it right now." He also skis with his grandkids and enjoys his motorcycle.

"Life is good," Bartel said. "I like to learn, serve and play."

Daniel Horne, Mennonite Church Canada's director of partnership development, noted that Bartel is a humble man who did not want to have a banquet recognizing his years of service. "Instead, we chose to honour him by holding a fundraising event for a cause he is very passionate about: our ongoing ministry in the Philippines."

The fundraiser took place on March 5 at Peace Mennonite Church, Richmond. Close to 50 people and four generations of the Bartel family attended, including

PHOTO BY DANIEL HORNE



Gerd Bartel thanks guests at a special fundraiser held on March 5 in Richmond, B.C., to honour his years of service as Mennonite Church Canada's western director of resource development.

Bartel's 97-year-old father, Siegfried; and his daughter and son-in-law, Christina and Darnell Barkman, and their young son. More than \$3,600 was raised.

Dann Pantoja, Mennonite Church Canada Witness worker in the Philippines, was home to visit his ailing mother at the time of the event. In his fundraiser address, he credited Bartel with instrumental contributions to the development of the Philippines ministry, Peacebuilders Community Inc. According to Pantoja, Bartel supplied a number of ideas for ministry programs and church partnerships.

The fundraiser also served as a celebration for an upcoming church plant in the Philippines, where Bartel's daughter and son-in-law begin an assignment as Mennonite Church Canada Witness workers in May with their son and an infant whose arrival is anticipated shortly. The Barkmans will work with the Integrated Mennonite Churches of the Philippines to plant an Anabaptist-oriented church in Metro, Manila.

Bartel said he considered his job with MC Canada the best job he ever had. "The opportunity to visit people has been part of it and it's been an honour and a privilege to say thank you to donors. It's been a wonderful experience."

To hear the *Church Matters* interview with Bartel, visit mennonitechurch.ca/tiny/1742. ❧

ARTBEAT

FILM REVIEW

Exposing society's appetite for violence

The Hunger Games.

Directed by Gary Ross. Written by Gary Ross, Suzanne Collins and Billy Ray (screenplay); Suzanne Collins (novel). Starring Jennifer Lawrence, Wes Bentley and Donald Sutherland. A Lionsgate release, 2012. Rated 14A for violence and disturbing themes.

REVIEWED BY VIC THIESSEN

The *Hunger Games* is on its way to becoming one of the biggest blockbuster films of all time. Two sequels are assured. Since it is aimed at a teenage/young adult demographic—in spite of its 14A rating—it is important to take note of what our young people are watching.

The film is based on the bestselling young adult novel by Suzanne Collins. It stars Jennifer Lawrence, who is perfectly cast as Katniss Everdeen, a 16-year-old from District 12.

The story is set in a post-apocalyptic North America, which has a governing Capitol surrounded by 12 districts. To

virtually everyone.

This description hints at the potential for thoughtful political and social commentary; clearly *The Hunger Games* is meant to be an allegory. Unfortunately, the film largely wastes this potential. To begin with, the background information we need to understand how this dystopian society functions is barely touched on, making the Capitol look ridiculous rather than like a place that could represent our western nations. As a result, the subtle attempts to expose the corrupt political and economic systems, and the oppression of the poor, fizzle quickly.

I am told the book has Katniss reflect-

Were the filmmakers afraid of boring younger viewers?

one extent or another, these districts struggle daily to survive while the Capitol is a place of leisure and wealth acquired at the expense of the poorer districts.

Every year, the districts are reminded of their attempt at revolution against the Capitol by annual games that require a teenage girl and boy chosen randomly from each district to fight until there is only one survivor. Katniss and Peeta, the District 12 representatives at the current year's games, are the focus of the film.

The first half of *The Hunger Games* sets up this background for the games and introduces us to the participants. The last half is the games themselves, with 24 teenagers fighting to the death in a huge outdoor arena full of hidden cameras. The cameras are there because the games are the big TV event of the year, watched by

ing at length about the injustices and madness around her. The film, on the other hand, provides very little opportunity for characters to discuss what is happening to them. Were the filmmakers afraid of boring younger viewers?

A slightly better attempt is made at exposing the insanity of our entertainment industry and its desire to give people what they want in order to bring in the highest profits. Given the success of *The Hunger Games*, is there some irony here in the way the film dumbs down the book? Reality TV (think *Survivor*) and the way TV news broadcasts focus on violence are particularly well targeted. How insatiable is our society's appetite for voyeurism and violence? Is it possible people could become so desensitized to violence that they would enjoy watching



children kill each other?

The violence is one thing *The Hunger Games* handles very well, for it is ugly and deeply disturbing, as it should be. I watched the film on opening day with hundreds of teenagers and young adults. Not once did I detect a positive response to the violence, even when Katniss felt forced to kill one of the “baddies” in self-defence. Instead, I heard numerous groans, as if my fellow viewers were appalled at this necessity. I was very impressed. While the myth of redemptive violence rears its ugly head at the end of the film, even then there is an attempt to say this violence must stop.

Those who take time to discuss *The Hunger Games* should be asking about the parallels between the way the Capitol treats the districts and the way our rich nations treat the developing ones:

- Do the oppressed people in our world feel compelled to make compromises to survive, as Katniss does, keeping them from standing up to the rich?
- Do the oppressors use distractions like the “war on terrorism” to prevent citizens of all ages from opposing their government’s policies? For example, does *Kony 2012* obscure the U.S. support for an oppressive and deadly regime in Uganda by creating a scapegoat “monster”?
- And where is God in this post-apocalyptic world? ☼

Vic Thiessen is Mennonite Church Canada's chief administrative officer and Canadian Mennonite's regular film reviewer.

From print to podcasts

Media at the crossroads, former chair tells Canadian Mennonite board

Canadian Mennonite
TORONTO

Canadian Mennonite is at an exciting place in its history, Larry Cornies told board members of the Canadian Mennonite Publishing Service (CMPS) at their annual meeting and fundraiser on March 24 at Toronto United Mennonite Church. “We’ve come to the intersection of Christendom’s decline, the rise of new communication tools and a new paradigm in leadership,” he said.

Cornies, former board chair of the publishing service and now a college professor of journalism, cited Stuart Murray, author of *The Naked Anabaptist*, in describing the Christian church as moving from the centre of society to its margins, from a majority to a minority, from a place of privilege to a pluralistic society. Likewise, the old media model of one-to-many has given way to many-to-many.

And in leadership, he compared the new model transforming from the old model of a maestro leading an orchestra to a jazz ensemble—from top down to shared leadership. But “Anabaptists, from the beginning,

were playing jazz,” Cornies said. “It is the priesthood of all believers.” Over time, though, he observed, “we have become hierarchical—at least administratively, if not ecclesiastically.”

Might these new realities suggest new programming models and a different type of partnership between regional/national churches and the national publication of Mennonite Church Canada, he asked. “Might our publishing partners continue to invest in CMPS, but broaden its mandate to truly become a robust, multi-platform communications portal that facilitates discussion, learning, newsgathering and spiritual expression among Anabaptists across Canada?”

Cornies’ speech capped two days of board discussion that focused on exploration of new methods that expand its well-established print product to online delivery of the news, using social media to attract readers and expanding the national church conversation beyond letters through means of podcasts, video clips and other rapidly



Harder



Epp

developing communication tools.

Some of those new media tools were showcased by several presenters at the fundraising dinner when co-editor Emily Loewen spoke and showed a videocast on *Canadian Mennonite’s* Young Voices website and musical selections were rendered by young jazz singer Elise Epp and innovator/composer Ryan Janzen.

In their deliberations during the two-day meeting, the board welcomed Marianne Harder of Carlton, Sask., to fill the unexpired term of Joe Neufeld, who has moved from Regina to Winnipeg, as the board’s representative for MC Saskatchewan. It also appointed Roger Epp of Edmonton to succeed Margaret Ewen-Peters of Hanley, Sask., as one of three representatives appointed to the 12-member board. Ewen-Peters served for six years on the board, many of them as vice-chair.

An executive committee was also re-elected for 2012, including Tobi Thiessen of Toronto as chair; Carl DeGurse of Winnipeg as vice-chair; Ed Janzen of Abbotsford, B.C., as secretary; Les Klassen Hamm of Saskatoon as treasurer; and James Moyer of Lethbridge, Alta., as member-at-large.

In his report to the board, editor/publisher Dick Benner said total circulation declined slightly under the Every Home Plan, to 14,133; financial contributions from the five area churches and MC Canada totalled \$301,651 towards a \$659,694 budget; and individual donations from a traditional spring and fall fundraising drive were up by \$2,649, for a total of \$80,371.

A Young Voices section was added to the publication last June that features articles and news about and by the younger demographic of the Mennonite church, co-edited by Emily Loewen, a journalism graduate student at Ryerson University, Toronto, and Rachel Bergen, now of Abbotsford, B.C., who has transitioned to this new role from her former position as national correspondent out of Winnipeg. ❧

Might these new realities suggest new programming models and a different type of partnership between regional/national churches and the national publication of Mennonite Church Canada?



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as a School of
Love

Youth Ministry
Conference with
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Spring 2012
Volume 22 Issue 2


AMBS
w i n d o w

Valuing the tradition and reshaping Anabaptism

Jesus-centered discipleship. Community. Mutuality. Loving enemies. Justice. Simplicity.

In the Mennonite church, we may take these traditional marks of Anabaptism for granted. But they are finding fresh and radical expressions among a growing number of believers. Discipleship communities, embodying these values in a variety of ways, are already part of Mennonite Church Canada and Mennonite Church USA, and emerging communities are seeking links to the two denominations.

Joanna Shenk, associate for inter-church relations for Mennonite Church USA, has been building relationships with these groups over the last two years. *Widening the Circle: Experiments in Christian Discipleship* (Herald Press, 2011), which she edited, gives voice to representatives of 19 of these communities.

Anton Flores-Maisonet of Alterna, a community based in Georgia that comprises U.S. citizens and undocumented recent immigrants, writes, "Unaware of Mennonite core values, I had forming within me a growing desire to have

Christ as the center of my faith, community as the center of my life, and reconciliation as the center of my work."

Jamie Arpin-Ricci of Little Flowers Community in Winnipeg, Man., says, "We have discovered a notable increase of interest in Anabaptism among people with no cultural heritage in the tradition. ... They have found great resonance and wisdom borne in the Anabaptist tradition."

Joanna, a 2009 graduate of AMBS with a Master of Arts: Theological Studies degree, writes, "I meet many people who are deeply committed to the way of Jesus and to Anabaptist values of community, peacemaking, simplicity and discomfort with the status quo. ... They embody what the future of the church can look like and, indeed, what it already looks like in some ways."

However, what Joanna encounters has another side. "At our best, people will be attracted to our tradition," she said. "But what I always want to add to the conversation is that this isn't just about the Mennonite church welcoming people, but also saying, 'We want you to

be part of the continual shaping of this church and this tradition.'

"Given our history and institutional stability, the Mennonite church can provide roots for these newer groups that need support and encouragement. At the same time we can grow in wisdom as these groups speak prophetically to us," Joanna wrote in *Mennonite Weekly Review* in May 2010. "Our relationship with this emerging movement can be one of learning as well as sharing."

New themes are emerging among those who live Anabaptist values in radical ways: awareness of racism, countering the American dream, economic justice, valuing women's experience, addressing immigration with hospitality, solidarity with the oppressed, intentionally sharing daily life. Joanna prompts us to look at our own formative experiences, then to be challenged by groups who are inspired by Anabaptism. "Are we willing to ask difficult questions about what is dying and what might be reborn among us?" — *Mary E. Klassen, editor*

Photo: Joanna Shenk holds a copy of *Widening the Circle* in the bookstore at AMBS.

Sharing a distinctly Christian peace witness



Humphrey Akogyeram Master of Arts: Theological Studies 2000

Humphrey Akogyeram has thirty years of experience of serving the African Initiated Churches (AIC) in Ghana. He has found that conflict has negatively affected most AIC members through bitterness, hatred, disunity, tension, fear, enmity, anger, verbal and physical abuse, and secessions.

Humphrey said, "For me, the Anabaptist themes that are relevant to the AICs are Accommodation and Reconciliation. Thus accommodating the 'enemy' is an important part of the

process of reconciliation. Reconciliation is a significant aspect of peacemaking. In a church where conflict is common, reconciliation is a theme that needs constant consideration in ways that are appropriate to the context of the AICs. Reconciliation is also a subject at the center of Christianity. For 'the gospel is about overcoming alienation and estrangement between God and ourselves, between us and others, and between all of us and creation.'" [John W. De Gruchy, *Reconciliation: Restoring Justice*]

To read the full text of Humphrey Akogyeram's reflections on what Anabaptism means in his context, visit www.ambsedu/news-and-publications/publications/alumni-news and follow the link to his reflections.

Marty Troyer Master of Divinity 2008

In a city of six million people, how does a congregation of 60 have an effective witness to the Gospel?

What does it mean to have a distinctly Christian peace witness as Mennonites in the midst of massive city? Those are questions that Houston Mennonite Church, Houston, Texas, has asked itself.

Marty Troyer, the pastor and 2008 graduate of AMBS, is working on creating a witness with the blog he writes for the Belief section of the *Houston Chronicle* online edition. There are 30 bloggers for the site, but "I'm the only distinctive Christian peace presence," Marty said.

His topics circle around the overall theme of Shalom, defined as wholeness and welfare of the community. So he has written about the death penalty, economic justice, the practice of peacemaking (not simply nonviolence), racism, parenting, discipleship and civil disobedience.

Marty has been writing the Peace Pastor blog for a year and has about 100 posts. One posting had 17,000 readers, and the blog has had about a quarter of a million visits in total.

While online comments on the blog tend to be very critical, the email messages, phone calls and face-to-face comments have been "shockingly positive," Marty said. Some readers who were critical at first have come to respect his faith. They still don't agree with Marty's positions, but now they comment in ways that show they consider him a Christian brother.

Since moving to Houston, "I've become so much more Mennonite," Marty said. And through the voice that the blog gives the congregation, members are discovering that they are not alone. They are finding others who hold values similar to those of the Mennonite-Anabaptist faith. This gives them opportunities to connect with people doing the kind of things that they also believe are important. "We are becoming more of who we are called to be," Marty believes.

Marty Troyer's Peace Pastor blog can be found at <http://blog.chron.com/thepeacepastor>.

alumni news

Alan Stucky (Master of Divinity 2010)

was ordained December 4 at Pleasant Valley Mennonite Church, Harper, Kan.

Melissa Miller (Master of Divinity 2007)

is chair of the binational board of MennoMedia. She is pastor of Springstein Mennonite Church, Winnipeg, Man.

Fernando Enns (former student) is the first to occupy the Chair of Peace Theology and Ethics at the Free University of Amsterdam.

Virginia Gerbrandt (Master of Divinity 2011)

is assistant pastor of Altona Bergthaler Mennonite Church, Altona, Man.

Fridbert August (Master of Divinity 2011)

is teaching at the Mennonite University Fidelis in Curitiba, Brazil, and in October he was elected president of AIMB, the association of the Mennonite churches in Brazil, for 2012–13. This is comparable to a conference minister in the U.S., he writes. He also is pastor of the local congregation IEMAV.

V. Eugene Kennard (Master of Arts:

Theological Studies 2007) wrote *Telling Their Story*, which has been published by RoseDog Books, Pittsburgh, Pa., employing narrative criticism to help people better understand God's interactions with people in the Bible.

Donald Stoesz (Master of Divinity 1981)

shares essays reporting his experiences as a prison chaplain in *Glimpses of Grace: Reflections of a Prison Chaplain*, published by Friesen Press, Victoria, B.C. ●

A learning community with an Anabaptist vision

AMBS aspires to own its Anabaptist identity with renewed resolve. Inspired by the early Anabaptists, we forthrightly embrace Jesus' call to "follow me" by educating leaders for God's reconciling mission in the world. Emboldened by the Holy Spirit, we seek to move beyond the ethnocentric confines of our recent Mennonite history. As a learning community, we invite followers of Jesus Christ to practice with us as we:

Worship God in community every day—with broad participation of faculty, staff, students and guests to praise God, break bread, hear the Word, intercede in prayer and resolve anew to follow Jesus in the power of the Spirit. Practicing worship, confession of faith and prayer every day is a signature of AMBS.

Serve as leaders with a mission to share the peace of Jesus Christ—becoming ambassadors of peace who model love for enemies, forgiveness and mutual care in congregation, business, social service agency and neighborhoods. Leading as grace-filled, peace loving professionals is a signature of AMBS.

Witness to the reconciling power of the Spirit—to transform conflict, restore justice, care for creation and heal relationships through Jesus Christ who is our peace. Communicating forthrightly with gentleness and reverence in cross-cultural, inter-racial, inter-religious and creation-care contexts is a signature of AMBS.

Immerse ourselves in the Bible—as radical Jesus-centered and Spirit-attuned readers who learn together to interpret, contextualize, preach, pray, sing and dramatically orate the biblical narratives. Reveling in and proclaiming the enduring ability of the Bible to reveal God in Christ to us is a signature of AMBS.

Recover theology as the work of the people—by drawing from the wisdom of faith traditions, Scriptures and current contexts as we discern together how to be present-day disciples amid the dilemmas, tragedies and joys of daily life. Becoming theologically articulate disciples of Jesus who teach others theological praxis is a signature of AMBS.

Nurture relationships of integrity—honoring each other with mutual affection, celebrating the joy of friendship, affirming a vocation of singleness, upholding public covenants of marriage, modeling faithful sexuality, caring for children and welcoming strangers as a missional calling of the church. Being honest and accountable with longings, failures, joys and successes in spiritual friendships is a signature of AMBS.

Form communities of shalom—inviting diverse people to covenant together corporately to proclaim and embody the reconciling and saving reign of God, to be the visible body of Christ, practicing Spirit-led engagement with the world (in creation care, business,



Photo: The Human Development and Christian Formation class, led by Carrie Martens and Andy Brubacher-Kaethler, instructor in Christian formation and culture, meets in small groups in the AMBS Chapel of the Word.

healing and justice) while being different from the world for Christ's sake. Commitment to witness to God's holistic mission through local congregations is a signature of AMBS.

We invite you to think with us about how we can be an Anabaptist learning community. What would you add to this list of practices? What counsel do you have about what to strengthen or perhaps remove?

Please send your counsel, encouragement or critique to *AMBS Window* editor, Mary E. Klassen (mklassen@ambs.edu) or to the address on the back page.



Your gifts at work

Dr. Vincent Harding, a colleague of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., challenged the AMBS community to continue working toward a "multi-racial, beautiful, democratic society." His visit, January 16 and 17, marked Martin Luther King Jr. Day. AMBS was one of several agencies and organizations in Elkhart and Goshen that hosted Dr. Harding. With your gifts to AMBS, you helped to make this visit possible and you support the work of the AMBS's Damascus Road anti-racism team who coordinated the events on campus.

In one presentation, the former Mennonite pastor recounted how King declared that his place was with people who were sacrificing, suffering and dying. Then he asked, "Why have a God who we ask to take care of us and guide us if all we want are places that don't scare us. Going to stand with any deserted, pushed-aside people is a dangerous vocation. It is the only truly Jesus-connected vocation." ●

AMBS Window

Spring 2012
Volume 22 Issue 2

The purpose of *AMBS Window* is to invite readers to call people to leadership ministries, and to provide ways for readers to become involved with AMBS through financial support, prayer support and student recruiting.

Editor: Mary E. Klassen
Designer: Nekeisha Alexis-Baker
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President's Window

Sara Wenger Shenk, President

The downtown Goshen Theater was packed recently for a show by Ted & Co. TheaterWorks called "I'd like to buy an enemy." Gerald and I have known Ted from his early days in seminary. We delight to see how a theologically attuned artist captures the imagination of young and old, in overflowing audiences throughout North America. We're all fascinated—in awe, really—that the biblical stories are about fumbling, frightened, curious human beings a lot like us—real people who wanted more than anything to follow Jesus around.

We love the humor; no doubt about that! But even more, we're intrigued by what it looks like to be a disciple of Jesus, for real. Loving enemies, for example, is hardly your everyday entertainment. It's Jesus' radical invitation to his disciples, to turn the world around. It's one of Jesus' most ignored teachings, but one that the early Anabaptists remembered. And now in our day, many people are newly intrigued with the Anabaptists.

Before heading to the theater, I read the *Mennonite Weekly Review* article on a recent conference of

Southern Baptists on "Anabaptism and Contemporary Baptists." Rick Warren, renowned author and evangelical pastor of a 20,000 member church in Southern California, was a keynote speaker. "For 32 years, we have been building Saddleback Church on the lessons I've learned from the Anabaptists," he said. When AMBS professor John Rempel encouraged Warren to "raise the decibel level that discipleship

is inseparable from love of enemy," Warren responded, "Yes, I will, because I believe the gospel is a gospel of non-retaliation."

Yesterday, our director of enrollment reported to me yet another conversation of many he has with prospective students of varied backgrounds, who discover (often through reading John Howard Yoder) the radical Jesus of the gospels.

AMBS is an Anabaptist seminary renewed in our commitment to educate leaders with a vision for God's shalom, including love for enemies. We are resolved to hold together in a Christ-centered whole what is often pulled apart in an increasingly polarized world. ●



panorama

Upcoming webinar

- **Embodying the story**, with Allan Rudy-Froese, April 19, 2:00–3:30 p.m. Eastern

Listen to AMBS presentations

Visit www.amsb.edu/iTunesU to hear:

- Dr. Vincent Harding's presentations commemorating Martin Luther King Jr. Day
- Pastors Week presentations by Dr. Loren Johns and Dr. Nelson Kraybill on Revelation.

Chapel dedication

The Chapel of the Sermon on the Mount—new annex and renovation—will be dedicated May 4–5. Visit www.amsb.edu/chapel-dedication for details.

AMBS—Great Plains summer courses

Register by May 1 to receive a registration discount on the following classes:

- **John H. Yoder's Theological Legacy**
- **Conflict, Communication and Conciliation**

Summer courses at AMBS in Elkhart

Register by May 1 to receive a registration discount on the following classes:

- **Anabaptist History and Theology**
- **Hebrew Readings: Prophets**
- **Spirituality, Pastoral Care and Healing**
- **Congregational Song**
- **Family Systems and Pastoral Care**
- **Celebrating Christian Ritual in Worship**
- **Religious and Psychological Assessment**

young voices

COVER STORY

'Bathed' in his art

Seth Woodyard explores theological themes through performance, installations

BY RACHEL BERGEN

Young Voices Co-Editor
WINNIPEG

Masculinity, the concept of home, identity, religion, mythology and work are themes that visual artist Seth Woodyard explores in his paintings, sculptures and installation art—including a wooden bathtub from which he performs.

The concepts may seem disconnected, but through his art, Woodyard, 28, who is now a congregant at St. Margaret's Anglican Church, Winnipeg, aims to bring together parts of his life that are often separate.

This stems from his childhood. Woodyard grew up in a very artistic family. His mother and four of five siblings were artistically inclined, but the way the family chose to spend time together seemed rather odd to congregants at Ottawa Mennonite Church. This created a bit of a tension between the family's everyday art-making and the hardworking practical nature of the Mennonites, he says.

"Art has always been a part of everyday life for my family," he says. "I understood that [to others] it was something special, but within our family it was something normal. . . . Mennonites traditionally . . . appreciate work and things for their usefulness. They often mistake visual art as not necessarily being that useful."

This was Woodyard's experience until he began working with MennoFolk Manitoba, an organization showcasing Mennonite artists and musicians. He found a lot of young Mennonites who were interested in learning how to understand visual art, make art themselves and take art beyond

the traditional conceptions. Woodyard participated in the yearly MennoFolk art exhibit and music performance for four years, from 2005-08.

Prior to his participation in MennoFolk, the importance of art in his life became more and more evident after graduating from a fine arts high school and attending Canadian Mennonite University (CMU) for a year in 2004. He studied history and English literature, which left him with little free time to make art.

"I realized that art was more important to me than I thought," he says of his time at CMU. "I missed it and found that it was necessary for me to make time in my life for art."

Woodyard then went on to graduate with a bachelor of fine arts degree from the University of Manitoba. He has since pursued a career in visual art, seeing it as an important part of his life and, indeed, very useful.

Woodyard has created art for the covers of local newspapers and magazines, including *Geez* and *The Uniter*; for the cover of local Winnipeg band Flying Fox and the Hunter Gatherers' *Hans My Lion* CD; and for websites. He has also worked as an instructor and mentor at the Winnipeg Art Gallery and a curator of MennoFolk Manitoba, among other things.

Currently, Woodyard is working on an interdisciplinary installation for an upcoming exhibition. He is transforming the gallery space at Ace Art Inc. studio in Winnipeg into a hybrid sacred space and

PHOTOS COURTESY OF SETH WOODYARD



Installation and performance artist Seth Woodyard strikes a 'reflective' pose.



A scale model of Seth Woodyard's upcoming exhibition, 'Good Work' (mixed media, 2012).



'And as David gazed upon Bathsheba, Actaeon too became Deer' by Seth Woodyard (acrylic, oil, pencil and hand-sewn beads on cotton, 91cm x 152cm, 2010. 'I am bringing into dialogue the Old Testament story of David and Bathsheba and the classical Greek myth of Acteon, who was turned into a deer by the goddess Artemis as punishment for him seeing her naked as she bathed with her nymphs,' Woodyard explains. 'In this way I am trying to shed new light on old stories, allowing a variety of narratives to inform and ultimately reinforce each other.'

He found a lot of young Mennonites who were interested in learning how to understand visual art, make art themselves and take art beyond the traditional conceptions.

workshop.

The exhibition, entitled "Good Work" includes large architectural structures with videos projected on to them and on televisions within the structures. The workshop component will feature Woodyard working on sculptures during the actual exhibition.

"The exhibit is my first really big gig," Woodyard says. "It is an attempt to bring together three parts of my life that are often separate: my art, my daily labour and my spirituality. . . . By spending my life making art, dedicated to engaging in the creative act, I am using my God-given talents to continually work towards a clearer understanding of who I am, where I come from

and how I might make a positive contribution to God's creation."

The idea traces back to his childhood, when art was a part of his everyday life with his family and he was discovering a personal faith and making it a part of his everyday life. "Making art and looking at art are a part of my everyday life in the same way that my religion and faith are a part of my everyday life," he says. "I can't really separate them. . . ."

At the same time, Mennonites and their ideas of work helped him process the upcoming exhibit.

Woodyard has been working on "Good Works" for two years. The exhibition runs from June 8 to July 13. ☘

VIEWPOINT

A Christian life is a call to service

BY VINCENT RODRIGUE

SPECIAL TO YOUNG VOICES



As Christians, we are not called to be consumers or profiteers. We have been chosen to be servants of Jesus Christ called to serve others. It's one thing to read and understand this, but to live it out and put it into practice is another matter altogether.

Jesus did not come to this earth as a king or a noble, as a rich man or a renowned CEO, as a hockey star or as a physically impressive man, or as the most popular boy at school. He came to us as a human being, fragile, poor and unknown.

Jesus, with his revolutionary command for masters to serve their slaves and for all people to love each other, provided us with a perfect example of service, serving

as he did with humility, respect and joy. He served the weak as well as the strong, the unjust along with the just, the good and the wicked, all with love. He never let himself be overcome by pride, prejudice or fear; filled with the Holy Spirit, he simply served.

But what does it mean to serve? It means giving our time, energy, goods and our love to others. Service enables us to share a tiny fraction of God's love, since to serve is to love, and to love is in the nature of God.

So let us not serve in the hope of being served. Let us not forget that there is more joy in giving than in receiving, and that this joy comes from our communion

with God through service.

Today, wealth makes people forget that they are weak. I am not referring only to those with millions of dollars to their name, but also to those who have access to a roof, clothing, food and water. These things that are unimaginably valuable to some, but for others they have lost all value and may be summed up in one word: consumption.

But the security of the wealthy is illusory, and the rich and the poor each need help in their own way. For this reason, it is encouraging to note that there are Christians who serve Jesus Christ wholeheartedly, undeterred by time, obstacles or misfortune.

I myself have had the great privilege to serve in various ways by offering my time and energy to help others carry out their tasks.

The best part has been the opportunity to serve with my friends and family. This was the case during the 50th anniversary of the Mennonite Brethren Churches of Québec, when I worked with a devoted group of 13 youths from the Khmer church and Église évangélique de Saint-Eustache. Even our modest participation, consisting of simply pouring water at tables with a smile, was undeniably valuable to the event organizers.

Serving doesn't have to mean working all day every day at a seniors centre, although should you be moved to do so, you would certainly be most welcome. Serving can be something as simple as listening to someone; calling a loved one; playing with your little brother; emptying the dishwasher for your mother;

sweeping for your wife; spending time with your children; participating in church activities such as the offering, communion, the worship group, the youth group or the welcoming committee; or simply praying for one another.

It is worth mentioning, however, that there are some risks to service. These include the danger of being exploited by others and the temptation to over-exert ourselves. We all have our limits, both physical and spiritual.

Saying yes to everything is not the best way to serve. We all have the right to rest, just as God rested on the Sabbath. We must not allow others to abuse our generosity. Some will want to take advantage of our marketable skills even if they have the means to pay full price for these services. Others will use pious rhetoric to make those who do not wish to be involved in service feel guilty.

Let us, therefore, pray for the Holy Spirit to enlighten these people, and to open our hearts so that we may be in the right place at the right time, prepared to serve with love.

God has given each of us unique and formidable gifts. Let us use them for the betterment of his kingdom. Let us pray for God to guide us in our service to all, so that through us all may see the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ, whose love for us led him to serve. ✎

Vincent Rodrigue is a young adult member of Église évangélique de Saint-Eustache, Que., and a participant in the Mennonite Central Committee Summerbridge program.

CANADIAN MENNONITE

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Experimenting with music . . . and peace

Finding similarities between the experimental music of John Cage and the work of Mennonite Central Committee

BY AARON EPP

Special to Young Voices
WINNIPEG



Becky Reesor and Scott Bergen presented an evening of music by experimental composer John Cage at Sam's Place, Winnipeg, last month. Bergen sees similarities between Cage's approach to music and the approach to development taken by Mennonite Central Committee (MCC). 'In music, in relationship, in global development, Cage and MCC say it's a matter of releasing control of ourselves and cultivating a spirit of care,' Bergen says.

Are there similarities between the work of Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) and the musical approach of experimental American composer John Cage?

Scott Bergen thinks so. Last month, the Canadian Mennonite University (CMU) music student and a group of friends presented "Experimentations in Music, Explorations in Peace," a concert at Sam's Place, Winnipeg, featuring Cage's compositions. Before the concert, Bergen gave a 40-minute talk in which he drew parallels between Cage's work and MCC.

"In music, in relationship, in global development, Cage and MCC say it's a matter of releasing control of ourselves and cultivating a spirit of care," said Bergen, 24. "Cage and MCC invite us to listen to that which is around us . . . to co-exist with those around us, to be shaped by what is already there, as opposed to shaping it with our own agendas."

Lauded as one of the most influential composers of the 20th century, Cage was born in 1912 and died just over 20 years ago. He is perhaps best known for the 1952 composition, "4'33," which is performed in the absence of deliberate sound; musicians simply sit on stage for four minutes and 33 seconds, and the piece consists of whatever sounds the listeners hear in that time, be it a person coughing or someone shifting a chair.

"While other composers intended to create a certain effect, or paint a certain picture, or push a certain idea, or inspire people to do a certain thing, Cage tried to create music of non-intention," Bergen said. "He was much more interested in letting sounds be themselves, leaving room for the unintended [and] not imposing [his] own

will on what was being [played]."

Bergen added that MCC's approach to international development is similar, in that the organization aims not to force action, but rather it is interested in fostering dialogue. "[MCC is] not interested in saying, 'You need a school over here in Haiti, so we're going to build you one, and this is what it's going to look like,'" he said. "Very rarely have I seen them work in that manner. It's more about them entering into these . . . long-term relationships with communities that want MCC's presence, [with MCC] saying, 'We don't know what's going to come of this, [but] we'll engage with you.'"

Bergen cited the example of MCC's response to the 2002 earthquake in Iran. MCC approached the Iranian Red Crescent, a Muslim aid organization similar to MCC, and offered to partner with it in relief work. The Red Crescent declined the invitation, but the offer intrigued it, eventually leading to dialogue between Mennonite and Muslim scholars debating theology.

"Not debating in terms of trying to convince or convert," Bergen said, "but simply as a means of discussion leading to understanding of the other. What's fascinating for me is that MCC operates primarily out of North America, a place where the governments in power [in] Canada and the U.S. have declared Iran to be our enemy to various extents. Yet MCC forges ahead and forms these relationships, and offers aid where many other organizations [do] not."

MCC views its mission to exist beyond the government structures and national lines that North Americans typically live their lives by, Bergen added. That MCC is

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not bound by those lines is similar to the way Cage's music is not bound by typical musical tradition.

After his talk, Bergen and his friend Becky Reesor led a group of musicians in a performance of various works by Cage. Songs performed included "4'33'" as well as "Three Dances," a piece which makes use of a piano that has had its sound altered by placing objects between or on the strings, or on the hammers or dampers.

"I was very pleased with how it went," said Reesor, 23, an accomplished pianist who graduated last year from CMU with a bachelor of music degree. "You never know how on-board the audience is going to be [and] pretty much nothing went as planned," she said. "But in the end, people said they were very interested, and they were able to experience the music and find it interesting and enjoy it." ❧

❧ **Calendar**

British Columbia

May 5: MC B.C. Women's Inspirational Day at Bethel Mennonite Church, Langley.

Alberta

May 5: Camp Valaqua work day. Help the camp get ready for the summer. For more information, call 403-637-2510.


May 9-12: Theological studies at Foothills Mennonite Church, Calgary. Speaker: Perry Yoder, professor emeritus of Old Testament studies at AMBS. For more information, contact Tim Wiebe-Neufeld at 780-436-3431 or twimmer@aol.com.

May 26-27: Mennonite Women Alberta spring retreat at Sunny Side Retreat Centre, Sylvan Lake, from noon till noon. Speaker: Lee Klaassen. Theme: "Balancing our lives." For more information, call Ev Buhr, First Mennonite Church, Edmonton, at 780-436-3431.

June 6: Heritage retreat at Camp Valaqua, from 10 a.m. to 8:30 p.m. Speaker: Mary Ann Kirby, author of *I Am Hutterite*. Topic: "Understanding and respecting people with different practices in faith and life." For more information, or to register, call Kurt Janz at 403-271-7477 or Jake Wiebe at 403-242-7370.

June 8-9: Mennonite Central Committee annual Relief Sale, in Didsbury.

June 16: Camp Valaqua hike-a-thon. For more information, call 403-637-2510.



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Saskatchewan

April 28: Saskatchewan Women in Mission Enrichment Day at Rosthern Mennonite Church.

May 16: RJC choir spring concert, at 7:30 p.m.

May 22-25: MC Saskatchewan continuing education course at Wildwood Mennonite Church, Saskatoon.

May 26: RJC fundraising golf tournament, at Valley Regional Park.

June 8-9: MCC Relief Sale and annual general meeting in Saskatoon.

June 21-24: Saskatchewan Truth and Reconciliation event at Prairieland Park, Saskatoon.

June 22,23: RJC year-end musical performances.

Manitoba

April 29: Eden Foundation fundraising concert, "Harmony for Hope," with the Eastman Male Choir and the Winkler Community Male Choir, at Winkler Bergthaler Mennonite Church, at 7:30 p.m.

May 1: Westgate Mennonite Collegiate fundraising banquet, at the Marlborough Hotel, Winnipeg, at 6 p.m.

May 12, 13: Faith and Life Male Choir and Faith and Life Women's Chorus spring concerts; (12) Sargent Avenue Mennonite Church, Winnipeg; (13) Altona Bergthaler Mennonite Church. Both concert begin at 7 p.m.

May 30: Westgate Mennonite Collegiate Grade 7 to 9 spring concert, at Bethel Mennonite Church, Winnipeg, at 7 p.m.

May 31: Westgate Mennonite Collegiate Grade 10-12 spring concert, at Bethel Mennonite Church, Winnipeg, at 7 p.m.

June 1-2: "Youth Ministry as School of Love," an Institute for Theology and Church conference at CMU.

June 18-29: Canadian School of Peacebuilding at CMU. For more information, visit csop.cmu.ca.

June 23: CMU hosts a retirement event for Gerald Gerbrandt, at the Loewen Athletic Centre, at 7 p.m.

Ontario

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.

May 5: Hidden Acres Mennonite Camp hosts its 17th annual road hockey tournament. Puck drops at 7:30 a.m. Teams of four to six players are welcome. For more information, call Jeff at 519-272-2261 or e-mail roadhockey@gmail.com.

May 5: Shalom Counselling Services annual fundraising breakfast, at St. Jacobs Mennonite Church, at 8:30 a.m. Speaker: Michael Wilson, mental health advocate, and former MP and federal finance minister. Topic: "Mental illness: The cost of doing nothing."

May 5,6: Soli Deo Gloria Singers present their annual spring concert, "Peace in our Time"; (5) at Leamington United Mennonite Church, at 8 p.m.; (6) at UMEI in Leamington, at 3 p.m. Tickets are available in advance from choir members, Mennonite Savings

and Credit Union, or UMEI by calling 519-326-7448.

May 6: Inter-Mennonite Children's Choir presents its 45th-anniversary concert, "United in Song," at Floradale Mennonite Church, at 3 p.m. For more information, e-mail imcc.conductor@rogers.com

May 6: Pax Christi Chorale's 25th anniversary gala concert featuring Elgar's *The Kingdom*, at Koerner Hall, Toronto; pre-concert chat at 2 p.m., concert at 3 p.m. With the Youth Choir, full orchestra and soloists. For tickets, visit paxchristichorale.org/tickets.

May 7: Spring seniors retreat at Hidden Acres Mennonite Camp. For more information, call 519-625-8602 or e-mail info@hiddenacres.ca.

May 12: "Spring Fling" with Menno Youth Singers, at Waterloo North Mennonite Church, Waterloo, at 8 p.m.

May 29: Hidden Acres Mennonite Camp, New Hamburg, is hosting a retreat for retired ministers.

June 24: Poetry and music with poet Cheryl Denise (author of *What's in the Blood*) and No Discernable Key, at the Detweiler Meetinghouse, Roseville, at 3 p.m. For more information, call 519-669-5775.

United States

May 7-June 15: Eastern Mennonite University, Harrisonburg, Va., hosts its Summer Peacebuilding Institute. For more information, or to register, visit 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.

Prayer request

Church called to respond to drought in Zimbabwe

BULAWAYO, ZIMBABWE—"On March 10, I met the deputy minister of agriculture, who made a passionate plea that the church must do something to source food for Matabeleland South province; otherwise people might starve." Danisa Ndlovu, president of Mennonite World Conference (MWC), sent this note in mid-March, requesting prayer from the MWC family around the world. Ndlovu is from Bulawayo, just north of the affected province. "We are also calling for prayers for rain," he added. "We have not had any significant inflows to dams that supply our city of Bulawayo. It is worrying, as it might mean decommissioning of some of the dams in the next few months." When asked how the church can help in this situation, Ndlovu commented, "The church calls upon those who can partner with us in purchasing food that can be distributed to needy communities. We think people can initiate projects within their communities that they can work on in exchange of food rations. However, those who are elderly and the sick will obviously not participate in the food-for-work projects, but will, out of compassion, be provided with food." —Mennonite World Conference



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Employment Opportunities



HEAD COOK - CAMP VALAQUA

Camp Valaqua, 1 hour northwest of Calgary, is seeking a head cook for our summer camping season. June 25-Aug 24, with one week off mid-summer. Private housing provided. \$650/week. Contact us for more details: 403-637-2510; manager@campvalaqua.com.



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.

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

HAGERMAN MENNONITE CHURCH PASTOR (PART-TIME)

This congregation has experienced massive change in its 75 years of ministry in Markham (bordering Toronto.) Once serving in a small hamlet, Hagerman is now surrounded by urban development and has welcomed multi-cultural neighbours. Space sharing with Chinese and Tamil Mennonite congregations has led to rich and fruitful partnerships.

Hagerman's mission: "As followers of Jesus, we encourage people to receive God's transforming love and become God's servants in the world."

More information and a detailed job description can be obtained from:

Muriel Bechtel
Mennonite Church Eastern Canada
4489 King St. E

Kitchener ON N2P 2G2
Tel: 519.650.3806 / 800.206.9356
Fax: 519.650.3947 / E-mail: mbechtel@mcec.ca.



Waterloo-Kitchener United Mennonite Church
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- Parish Nurse is a member of the WKUM Church Pastoral Team
- Works closely with the WKUM Health and Wellness Committee
- 30 hours per week: 20 hours per week with WKUM Church and 10 hours per week at Waterloo Mennonite Homes – operated by a board of members from WKUM Church and located next door to the church.

(* NOTE: subject to final confirmation on financing)

- For a detailed job description or further information, please contact: wkumparishnursesearch@gmail.com

Essential Personal Qualifications:

- A vibrant faith, spiritual maturity and a compassionate nature
- Excellent communication and assessment skills; ability to promote wellness through the integration of faith and health – Body, Mind and Spirit!
- Strong counseling, organizational, problem-solving and interpersonal skills
- A demonstrated ability to work in a team situation
- Agreement with the mission of WKUM Church. See: www.wkumchurch.ca

Professional credentials of the successful applicant at beginning of contract (Jan. 1, 2013):

- An experienced Registered Nurse
- Registration with the College of Nurses of Ontario
- Registration with Registered Nurses Association of Ontario (RNAO)
- Member of the Parish Nurses Interest Group of the RNAO
- Post-Graduate Education in Parish Nursing.

Note: The otherwise qualified successful candidate may also attain the requisite Parish Nursing Certificate at a course available July 13-19, 2012. See:

- http://www.stpetersseminary.ca/institute/parish_nursing/
- Membership with Canadian Association of Parish Nursing Ministry (CAPNM)

*Please forward applications by May 15, 2012 to WKUM Church Health and Wellness Committee:
wkumparishnursesearch@gmail.com*

Upcoming Advertising Dates

Issue Date	Ads Due
May 28	May 15
<i>Focus on Seniors</i>	
June 11	May 29
<i>Focus on Creation Care</i>	
Oct. 1	Sept. 18
<i>Focus on Education</i>	
Oct. 15	Oct. 2
<i>Focus on Travel</i>	

PHOTO BY ROSCOE FILMS



Mennonite Church Canada executive director Willard Metzger, back row left, and Nick Spaling, a left winger with the Nashville Predators, to his left, pose with children from Drayton Heights Public School, Ont., who participated in the first 'Mennonites Everywhere' video. View it online at mennonitechurch.ca/tiny/1.

'Mennonites Everywhere'

Video series to challenge Mennonite ethnic and cultural stereotypes

BY DEBORAH FROESE
Mennonite Church Canada

You don't need to have a certain kind of ethnic surname or eat culturally specific foods to attend a Mennonite congregation.

That's the message a new video series from Mennonite Church Canada is promoting. The first video features Nick Spaling of Community Mennonite Fellowship enjoying a game of ball hockey with children from his hometown of Drayton, Ont. Spaling is not a "cradle" Mennonite, but relies on his church family to ground him in the midst of an exciting and very public career as a left winger with the NHL's Nashville Predators.

"I try to keep my faith front and centre in both my life and in playing hockey," says Spaling in a short interview that accompanies the one-minute video. The 22-year-old acknowledges that it is a challenge to spend most of his year on a grueling schedule of training, games and travel that severely limits contact with his

family and church.

The Spaling video—which can be found online at mennonitechurch.ca/tiny/1—is the first in a series designed to include people from many walks of life and cultural backgrounds, explains Willard Metzger, executive director of MC Canada and a member of the Drayton congregation. "Whether you have a public profile or not, doesn't matter. What's important is that we want to profile people who have found a spiritual home in a Mennonite congregation, but have not necessarily been born into it."

The video will rely on YouTube and other social media to create a hoped-for "buzz," says Dan Dyck, MC Canada's director of communications. "We don't have the dollars to put it on broadcast television despite the continued popularity of that medium."

Production of the Spaling video was funded by a donor with a special interest in the project. ☞

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