

# CANADIAN MENNONITE

April 30, 2012  
Volume 16 Number 9

## Paddling for dollars

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## EDITORIAL

# Big box churches

DICK BENNER  
EDITOR/PUBLISHER

Springtime was in full theatre as we travelled back from Virginia on a Sunday morning recently after a week's break. Viewing the redbud, dogwood and lilacs providing the backdrop for lush green meadows was as much worship as meeting with the saints in song, scripture and sermon. We turned off the radio and drove in silence, soaking in all the beauty.

Inspirational as it was, something else about the landscape struck me on another level as we traversed through the rolling hills of Virginia and Pennsylvania before crossing the border into southern Ontario. It was the parking lots of the various churches in which worshippers were gathered.

Small Presbyterian, Baptist and United Methodist churches, neatly tucked into the foothills, had half-filled parking lots, while the large mega-churches, such as Fellowship Bible Church just outside of Winchester, Va., had every parking space filled, some with motorcycles and RVs. A sprawling complex of buildings, including a family life centre and a fully equipped children's outdoor gym, filled several hectares of land. It had a striking resemblance to a shopping mall.

A quick data check on this religious enterprise showed a paid staff of 40 and an annual budget of \$5 million. The reviews detailed a warm welcome to visitors under the auspices of an "assimilation committee" that saw to it that each new person went away with a full

"information packet" and a loaf of freshly baked homemade bread.

Distracted from my mesmerization with the splendour of nature momentarily, my mind wandered to the wonder of religious commercialism in the 21st century, symbolized by the big box churches such as Fellowship Bible. I wondered what it was that drew the faithful away from those small, struggling churches to the dazzling sanctuaries. Was it the sounding of a prosperity gospel interspersed

with nationalism, the elaborate praise bands, or the multiple offerings of "ministries," such as financial planning and parenting support groups?

As my friend Dave cynically commented when hearing my ruminations, "Go to Row 7 for forgiveness, take a number and proceed to the end of the line for a premium package of apocalyptic end time scenarios."

With declining attendance in some of our own Mennonite Church Canada congregations, it is easy to have mega-church envy. In some cases, we are borrowing what we perceive are the healing remedies of this model to stop the bleeding. Our cousins, the Mennonite Brethren, have successfully adopted the Willow Creek prototype and built a huge facility called Willingdon Church in Vancouver, attracting 5,000 congregants weekly.

Is this what it takes to grow our churches? Are these the new Great Commission tools with which to take the gospel "to every tribe and nation"

in our multicultural society? Are we hopelessly stuck in an outdated notion of smaller communities of faith, holding to a standard of adult conversion, the "cost" of discipleship, and the sharing of bread and wine with each other throughout the week, while being change agents for peace and justice in a world torn apart with violence and greed?

When did the paradigm shift from spiritual "commitment" to spiritual "consumerism" occur? From going to church to give something of myself, rather than going to get my personal needs filled—in effect, purchasing my well-being (shalom) from a full inventory of self-help goodies rather than getting the same by being part of an intimate group of Christ-followers?

After three decades of selling the mega-church model around the world, Bill Hybels, the founder and promoter of Willow Creek Community Church, outside of Chicago, is not so sure it is a spiritual success. In a recent public apology to a leadership summit, he said: "We made a mistake. What we should have done when people crossed the line of faith and become Christians, we should have started telling people and teaching people that they have to take responsibility to become 'self feeders.' We should have gotten people—taught people—how to read their Bible between service, how to do the spiritual practices much more aggressively on their own."

After doing a survey of his flock, Hybels admitted that the data suggested "they weren't helped [spiritually] all that much." These age-old spiritual practices of prayer, Bible reading and relationships, he said, ironically, do not require multi-million dollar facilities and hundreds of staff to manage.



## ABOUT THE COVER:

In this wrap-around photo, Scott Alexander (front cover) gets a free ride from Camp Squeah program director Tim Larson (back cover) after the canoe Alexander and Colin Charron were paddling tipped in a whirlpool during the camp's annual fundraising paddle-a-thon. The event raised more than \$45,000 for student staffing bursaries.

PHOTO: BARB BRUCE

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*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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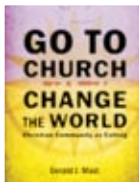
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on the northward shift of MCC's programming control

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# Take care

*How safety policies impact church ministry*

BY DONITA WIEBE-NEUFELD

ALBERTA CORRESPONDENT

*'We had to take extra care to be above reproach. The safety thing just forced us to be more healthy.'*  
(Rob Brown,  
Eden Mennonite Church pastor)

Ontario pastor Kevin Peters-Unrau tells a Kafkaesque story of what happened when he volunteered to work with children in his community.

"I had difficulty getting a police check because last July they changed the laws . . . so if you have the same birthday as a registered sex offender, you have to now be fingerprinted," he says. "The earliest appointment was for six weeks later. So then I show up there, I have questions: 'Does this mean I'm now in the RCMP database?' 'Who has access to this biometric information now for all time?'"

He was told his fingerprints would be compared with those in the registry and returned to him with no copy kept. "Now it's all digital, so it's not like I can prove that they haven't kept a copy, but presumably this is the case," he says. "So if I trust the system, I trust that I won't be in it."

A month or so after the fingerprinting, which he understood was a free police service, he got a call saying, "You need to come in and bring a certified cheque to pay for them." By this point we're so far along in the [church] program . . . I never went in and paid for it or picked it up."

Despite his experience with police bureaucracy, Peters-Unrau is firmly supportive of church safety policies—even ones that require fingerprinting. "A good safety policy helps point the direction for people who are wondering what they can and can't do. There should be information [in the policy] that helps people do their job better," he says.

PHOTOS BY TIM WIEBE-NEUFELD



*Windows in doors and walls between offices are a requirement in most church safety policies, according to Donita Wiebe-Neufeld, co-pastor at First Mennonite Church, Edmonton.*

### **Frustrations with safety policies**

In 2012, safety policies are commonplace in churches, and so are the accompanying frustrations: increased administration, volunteers reluctant to “jump through the hoops” for proper approval, false positives with police checks, extra expenses, and a limiting of spontaneity, especially in programs dealing with youths.

Cheryl Dyck, office administrator at Cedar Valley Mennonite Church, a Mennonite Church B.C. congregation, knows the difficulties of implementing a safety policy. “It’s been a mixed response, due to the fact that it’s one more thing they have to do in order to volunteer,” she says. “Others think that it’s a wonderful thing for the safety of our children. Of course, you get both sides always.”

Safety policies are meant to help the church consciously and consistently be a place where people are physically, emotionally and spiritually safe. On its website, MC Saskatchewan states that, “In addition to spiritual commitment, the church has moral, legal and societal obligations to ensure a safe environment for children, youth and vulnerable adults participating in church programs.”

The implementation of new policies, however, can leave long-time church members resentful and feeling they are

not trusted the way they used to be.

Larry Jantzi has served with Mennonite Mutual Insurance (MMI) in Alberta for 30 years, and has witnessed the changing attitudes. “The shift I see is that, historically, Mennonite congregations have been fairly rural based,” he says. “You didn’t see a lot of change in the people. You kind of knew them from way back when and knew who their parents were. Nowadays, church membership is not as prevalent. You’ve got a lot more people church shopping. . . . There’s a lot more changeover in the composition of congregations, and that leads to some additional challenges when it comes to at what point they can be involved in certain ministries in the church.”

### **An opportunity for outreach**

While the high mobility of church members may be a cause for lament, it can also be viewed as an opportunity for outreach. In 2003, MC B.C. mandated its congregations to adopt a “take care” policy, a policy that area church minister Garry Janzen sees as helping to welcome strangers to church.

“If we want to invite the children from the neighbourhood, the people in the neighbourhood don’t know that we have this long history, they don’t know what

faithfulness to Jesus really looks like,” he says. “They don’t know that we can be trusted. If we care about our neighbourhood and want to reach our neighbourhood, we’re doing it [creating a safety policy] for them, so that they can look at us and . . . know that if they bring their children, they bring them to a safe place. . . . It’s not about your church family or the people who know you trusting you, it’s about people who don’t know you trusting you.”

Increased awareness of incidents of abuse in recent media coverage and encouragement for victims to speak out are pushing churches to consider that there may be both victims and abusers in their pews and among their leadership. Even if this is not the case, congregations have a responsibility to both prevent abuse and to be ready to minister to hurting people who may attend their programs in the future.

Ten years ago, Mennonite Central Committee compiled a resource packet called “Making Your Sanctuary Safe,” which acknowledges that “incidents of molestation can occur in any church—including yours. . . . Churches are by nature trusting and unsuspecting institutions. . . . These qualities can make a church susceptible to incidents of child

molestation.”

Good safety policies demonstrate trustworthiness, instead of assuming it.

### **Safe policies protect everyone, not only children**

Kirsten Schroeder, MC Canada’s director of human resources, says that safe policies are important “because we are the church. . . . We’re a model to the rest of the world about how community could look. And so, of course, we want our vulnerable people to be safe, but we also want to provide safety for those people who have encountered problems with these kinds of issues.”

While safety policies often focus on protecting children, Schroeder points out that they also function in the process of redemption. Firm boundaries and clear

procedures may allow former perpetrators to experience healing as part of a faith community.

A congregation working with a past offender displays its safety policies along with committee member names on a bulletin board. There are agreements between this individual and the committee about where he may go and several people are assigned to befriend and observe him while he is at church. He regularly attends a circle of support and accountability outside of the church and is doing well. “Often people who are offenders are isolated,” the church pastor says. “This gives them a chance to belong and be accountable.”

Good policies can also function to help pastors and lay leaders set visitation practices, minimizing risk to themselves

and congregants. Pastoral work involves being with people in crisis, and because pastors often find themselves alone with vulnerable people, the possibility of boundary-crossing in relationships—or of being misunderstood or falsely accused—is high.

Karen Martens Zimmerly is MC Canada’s denominational minister. “As pastors, we don’t always see ourselves as in a position of power, particularly in the Mennonite church,” she says. “In the intensity of helping the person, we are not always necessarily thinking about that difference in power and how our help will be perceived. Yet the onus is on us, in that leadership as the pastor, to not only care for the crisis, but take care for the relationship in that crisis, and that we provide the healthiest leadership and boundaries.”

## **Food safety bureaucracy proves a minefield for MCC Relief Sale**

BY DONITA WIEBE-NEUFELD

Alberta Correspondent

**A**nne Wiens is determined to avoid food safety inspection hassles like those experienced the last time the annual Mennonite Central Committee Relief Sale was hosted in Didsbury, Alta., in 2009.

Even though regulations were complied with according to information the sale committee had received, a zealous inspector made things difficult. The inspector focused on the Lao church booth, which had made its spring rolls at a Calgary restaurant and froze them for transport to the sale. The inspector demanded to see the restaurant owner’s licence and health certificate. He shut the booth down while the church volunteers sent to Calgary for the paperwork.

“We took two hours to acquire it on a Saturday, and they lost at least 50 percent of their potential sales,” Wiens says.

The inspector also demanded that food temperatures be monitored hourly with a probe, whereas Wiens had documentation asking for this every two hours with a digital thermometer. Hand-wash stations were accessible—one station per every two booths—but the inspector said there should be one in every booth, even though space constraints made this awkward.

Demands that everything be cooked onsite were also

made. “The ladies at the bake table were just waiting for him to come by and give them a hard time,” Wiens says.

The inspector also wanted everything ready first thing in the morning, even though food for the noon meal would not be started until later.

After the 2009 sale, Wiens made a call. “It seems the Calgary inspection process may have been due to a high-handed inspector who took himself very seriously, and will not be involved this year,” Wiens says, adding that the inspector’s superior promised to call her back, but never did.

This year, Wiens has proactively requested a meeting with the Calgary inspection office, but she was told to just submit the paperwork. “Now when I try to call a meeting, they don’t have staff,” she laments. “So I wonder why I’m beating my head against a wall to volunteer!”

“We are aware of the fact that we are feeding a large number of people and do not want anyone to become ill, so careful procedures are good and we want to comply with that thinking,” Wiens affirms, but ever-changing standards, increasingly stringent requirements and overly zealous application of rules all make it more difficult to run the food portion of the sale. ▮



### **Policy roadblocks in youth ministry**

It is in youth ministry that safety policies are in the most danger of becoming roadblocks to ministry. Providing full details of events, requiring parents to sign permission forms, finding enough approved youth sponsors and drivers, and assuring teenagers are not inappropriately alone with an adult or each other are daunting tasks and can raise the ire of parents, youths and youth workers.

Such hallmarks of youth as spontaneity and creativity can be severely limited by safety policies, according to Anna Rehan, MC Saskatchewan youth minister, who notes that youths often show up at the last minute for events, making it difficult to ensure all the permission and supervision requirements are met.

The thing that most frustrates Rehan, however, is how policies can inhibit one-on-one conversations between adults and teens. "Policy says you can't be alone with someone," she says. "When it starts inhibiting ministry, there's a problem."

Rehan has found that young people are more likely to open up about important issues when they are with a trusted adult and peer pressure is not at play. Mentorship programs and pairing adults and teens are valuable as places where youths can speak to adults other than their parents about faith and life issues. These programs are especially problematic for safety policies and difficult for Rehan, as she tries to help congregations set them up.

There are ways to ensure safety and still have one-on-one encounters, but extra thought and preparation are necessary. When Rehan is alone with a young person, she tries to meet in a public place, such as a coffee shop, but transportation for youths who do not drive complicates matters. Rehan checks with parents to make sure they agree with her driving or meeting with their child. "It becomes so cumbersome, even with people driving kids," she says. "You always have to have two adults. It just gets to be so cumbersome that you can't do ministry, and then it's not helpful."

Rob Brown was a youth pastor for 13 years, and has been lead pastor for four years at Eden Mennonite Church,

Chilliwack, B.C. When the "take care" program came into effect, he saw the awkwardness of implementation and acknowledged the vast amount of work churches had to do. In spite of the hassle, Brown says, "I don't think it ever blocked [ministry to youth]. It's being very proactive about having it become a safe place and being a good steward of your commission, your ministry. You have to be a good steward of providing that as a safe place. It's very necessary."

Like Rehan, Brown notes that transportation for youths is a complication. "We had to take extra care to be above reproach," he says. "The safety thing just forced us to be more healthy."

### **Safety policies are here to stay**

That safety policies are critically important is widely acknowledged among church leadership, and the policies are here to stay. "They are quite important because of the increased litigation so prevalent in our society, and the higher responsibility and duty of care that institutions like a church owes to minors in particular," Larry Jantzi of MMI says.

While fulfilling insurance requirements is not the foremost reason for the adoption of safe policies, it is an important consideration. Peters-Unrau says

it's about more than "butt-covering," that adequate coverage is part of responsible ministry. If someone was seriously harmed during a church event, "I want to make sure that money is there to help them out," he says.

While they may cause significant hassles that have to be worked out, safety policies also have the potential to be powerful enablers of ministry. They can help welcome and witness to strangers by clearly demonstrating a church's desire to be a safe place for the vulnerable and those in search of redemption. They can be a catalyst to conversation on difficult topics. And they support leaders as they strive to model healthy relationship boundaries and protect them from false accusations.

"They are a very good thing," Schroeder concludes. "It was one of the things that used to keep me up at night when I started working here and knowing that we had created the perfect storm for potential misuses of power. I am so grateful to churches for picking up on this topic and overcoming their uncomfortableness with it. . . . We encourage those churches who don't yet have a policy, to undertake this task because it really is a very good thing to have in place for all members." ❧

### **❧ For discussion**

1. Does your congregation have a safe church policy? Whose responsibility is it to implement and review the policy? What has been the effect of the policy? How does it relate to Jesus' words in Matthew 18:5-7?
2. How important are safe church policies? Do they hinder volunteers from getting involved? Do they hamper youth programming? Do they help neighbours feel comfortable that their children are safe? Do they remind church leaders of the implications of abusing the trust of others?
3. Have you personally encountered the Canadian Food Inspection Agency? How important is the work that it does? In what situations do food safety inspection laws apply to churches? How concerned should we be about food safety? How much of our safety is ultimately dependent on God (Psalm 4:8)?
4. Is the push for safety/food policies and laws primarily driven by fear of lawsuits? What changes in society have led to an increase of such regulations? How effective are policies and laws in bringing about desired behaviour? Are there other things our churches could be doing to improve safety?

## VIEWPOINTS

## /// Readers write

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## ✉ Aid funding redirected to international trade

**THE HAMMER THAT** had earlier fallen on faith-based organizations such as Kairos and Mennonite Central Committee ("On shaky ground," March 6, page 20) has now fallen on the Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace (D&P), which heard recently that the funding proposal made to the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) back in July 2010 for funding projects over the next five years had been cut by two-thirds.

For D&P, which had been running 186 projects in 30 of the world's poorest countries, the cut from \$44.6 million to \$14.5 million over five years is devastating.

This reflects the government's intention to refocus its aid budget on trade, rather than aid to the poorest of the poor. And it's not like there is no money left in the development envelope; it's just that the government is seeking new partners.

Last fall, while D&P and other agencies were anxiously awaiting their fate, CIDA minister Bev Oda was signing contracts worth \$26 million with Canadian mining companies to undertake a number of "corporate responsibility" projects. In Burkina Faso, IAmGold's project is said to offer skills training to young people working in the mining industry. One wonders why mining companies need money from the Canadian government to provide job training. The CEO of Barrick Gold, which will also receive CIDA money, took home \$9.9 million in pay in 2010.

The policy of our federal government in the area of human rights and international aid is becoming clearer if we follow where the money will be spent. In the federal budget the Harper government proposed a 7.5 percent cut in foreign aid. Oxfam Canada called the move a sign that "the Harper government is turning its back on the world's poor." However, there are still billions available for building prisons and buying fighter jets.

If you are like me and feel that this is not the direction we want our country to go, mention it to your MP the next time you speak with him or her.

**LOUIS BALCAEN, LA BROQUERIE, MAN.**

## ✉ Disturbing implications to CIDA cuts for MCC

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

The denial of Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) funding for Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) has disturbing implications. It might include a reduction of MCC programs due to a funding shortage.



MCC's application did not meet government criteria, which might well be code for "don't be critical of this government."

A further concern is the impact of the CIDA decision on MCC staff: it silences them. MCC staffers working in areas of peace, refugees, justice or aboriginal affairs will need to be careful about what, if anything, they say about government policies. Speaking out could result in MCC administrators reprimanding or dismissing staff, all because staff comments might jeopardize the possibility of future government funding.

When this happens, the prophetic insight of MCC is diminished or lost completely if the soul has been compromised in the hope of pleasing the government and getting money. This is sad. Very sad.

HENRY NEUFELD, DELTA B.C.

## ✉ MCC 'affirms the centrality of faith in Jesus Christ'

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

It is unfortunate that the "No religion superior to another" headline was used to describe the interfaith youth event held in Winnipeg and supported by Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Manitoba.

MCC Manitoba peace coordinator Steve Plenert is accurately quoted as saying, "There was no sense that one of these religions or faiths is superior or better." But the statement was intended to show the attitude of respect which prevailed among conference participants as they talked about faith. It was not a statement about the equality or inequality of religions.

## FROM OUR LEADERS

# Worship as drama

ARLYN FRIESEN EPP

Occasionally, because of my background in dramatic arts and pastoral ministry, I have been asked how well worship and drama mix. The query often assumes a disconnect between the two, or, at best, a sense that if the "dramatic element" is missing, it can simply be added to an existent worship outline with a skit, reading or other piece.

I prefer to see the discussion differently and encourage churches to understand their entire worship experience as drama. Imagine the following scenario:

The first chords of the worship band or the piano prelude ring through the sanctuary, evoking the same anticipation that accompanies the dimming of houselights in a theatre. Well chosen and meaningful, the music sets the stage for what follows. A call to worship, possibly a psalm, and a prayer of invocation wrestle us to our knees before the Creator. There's no mistaking who we have come to worship! The emotive power of song draws us to our feet, joining the congregation



in one voice. "When in our music God is glorified," hymn writer Fred Pratt Green acknowledges, "it is as though the whole creation cried." And the transformation, the dramatic metamorphosis of worship, unfolds. And that's only Act I.

In the compelling rhythm of a sacred dance, the "arc" of the service continues to grow and develop, from confession to praise, from lament to joy. We engage

*We engage our primal selves—emotion, intellect and soul—with the movement of God's Spirit.*

our primal selves—emotion, intellect and soul—with the movement of God's Spirit.

And we have yet to reach the pinnacle moment of worship: the focused hearing of God's Word. Do we not almost tremble when Scripture is sung, spoken and proclaimed? "*Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are the merciful . . . , the pure in heart . . . , the peacemakers . . .*"

At that moment, the flow of communication reverses and God speaks to us. Do not our ears almost burn!

We almost need a dramatic pause after the telling of Scripture, an intermission to transition ourselves back to "horizontal speech" again. As the preacher humbly embraces the mood and tempo of the service, and engages the text, the sermon extends God's unfolding story of grace, compassion and hope, that we might all beg to become actors in the narrative.

After moments for silence, song, prayer, movement and offering, our participation here has ended, and we hear the final benedictory address. The music subsides and we leave the sanctuary filled, whole, to step again onto the stage of life.

Wow! Is this your experience? Has the

flare of God's Spirit dramatically moved in your midst? Have you embraced the drama of worship? I pray that the next time you receive your Sunday morning bulletin, the order of worship will send a tingle of anticipation down your spine!

Mennonite Church Canada Resource Centre has a large collection of worship resources available online at [mennonitechurch.ca/tiny/187](http://mennonitechurch.ca/tiny/187).

Arlyn Friesen Epp is Mennonite Church Canada's Resource Centre director.

Canada is a multicultural, multi-faith country. MCC participated in the conference to encourage respectful conversation about faith among Canadian youth from various religions. It was an opportunity for Mennonite youth to hear other youth describe their faith and to articulate their Christian faith to peers from five other religions. Overall, we believe it was a good event and that MCC's participation was consistent with its beliefs and values.

Plenert is also quoted as saying, "MCC certainly

affirms the centrality of faith in Jesus Christ in the work that we do . . ." This statement is in accord with the shared convictions of global Anabaptists, which MCC accepted in 2010, that states, "Jesus is the Son of God. Through his life and teachings, his cross and resurrection, he showed us how to be faithful disciples, redeemed the world and offers eternal life."

ERNIE WIENS, WINNIPEG

*Ernie Wiens is the MCC Manitoba board chair.*

## GOD, MONEY AND ME

# Learning generosity

DORI ZERBE CORNELSEN

**G**enerosity doesn't just happen. It can be learned.

ZenithOptimedia projects that advertisers in Canada will spend \$11.3 billion in 2012, hoping that consumers will learn to spend money on their products. Rather than just succumbing to this tide, why not commit to engaging with at least one generosity resource this year?

Devotional guides can help explore the spiritual significance of our relationships with God and money. "Generosity: Moving toward life that is truly life" is a four-week guide by Gordon MacDonald. "There's No ATM in the Wilderness" by various United Church of Canada writers is set up as a series of daily reflections for Lent, but can be used year-round.

Authors use various helpful metaphors to describe the generous life. Christine Roush personally reflects on lifestyle choices in her book *Swimming Upstream: Reflections on Consumerism and Culture*. Randy Alcorn suggests that giving unlocks the treasure box of joy in his book *The Treasure Principle*.

With new technology, we can take in events we are not able to attend, such as Walter Brueggemann's 2012 lectures at Eastern Mennonite University's School for Leadership Training on podcast. (Visit [emu.edu](http://emu.edu) and search for "Sabbath

as a means of transition from anxious scarcity to grateful abundance.") Brueggemann's call is for Christians to best practise faith by living gratefully, rather than anxiously.

There are resources that describe options for integrating biblical principles with economy. The Sabbath Economics Collaborative uses Sabbath-keeping as a core ethic, weaving this together with current economic investment possibilities ([sabbatheconomics.org](http://sabbatheconomics.org)). Using stories from intentional community life, Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove envisions an economy in which the poor find bread, the rich find healing, and both rediscover the other as friends in *God's Economy*.

Especially set up for families who want to counteract the crush of advertising culture, *Money Sanity Solutions: Linking Money & Meaning* by Nathan Dungan of-



*Devotional guides can help explore the spiritual significance of our relationships with God and money.*

fers many conversation starters. Couples who are either starting out or wanting to have a conversation about faith and money in their relationship can use the "First Things First" workbook from the Mennonite Foundation of Canada (MFC).

Because we can make more significant

spiritual changes in solidarity with others, MFC offers the study guide "God, Money and Me." For small groups desiring to make concrete lifestyle changes in order to increase the potential for generosity, a guide is available from Simple Living for Just Giving at [economicdiscipleship.wordpress.com/resources](http://economicdiscipleship.wordpress.com/resources).

For church leaders, J. Clif Christopher has written two provocative books, *Not Your Parents' Offering Plate* and *Whose Offering Plate Is It?* Rather than simply hope for the best in the face of declining donations to churches, Christopher advocates that churches need to be clear about their vision to change the world, not just raise more money.

Check your church library or area church office for what generosity resources are available. The Mennonite Church Canada Resource Centre at [mennonitechurch.ca](http://mennonitechurch.ca) is a great place to start. MFC staff are eager to assist in the process of learning generosity; our own print resources are free and are available online at [MennoFoundation.ca](http://MennoFoundation.ca). Let the learning continue!

*Dori Zerbe Cornelsen is a stewardship consultant at the Winnipeg office of the Mennonite Foundation of Canada (MFC). For stewardship education and estate and charitable gift planning, contact your nearest MFC office or visit [MennoFoundation.ca](http://MennoFoundation.ca).*

## ✉ Compelling story of loss prompts tough question

RE: "BEAUTY FROM loss," March 19, page 30.

I thank you for sharing with us this update concerning the Derksen family. The death of their daughter Candace in 1984, the many years of unanswered questions, and the eventual arrest, trial and conviction of the offender make for a very compelling story. Their testimony compels us to evaluate how we understand the topics of suffering, crime, revenge, grace, guilt,

anger, healing, unanswered questions, the justice system and forgiveness.

In her writings Wilma Derksen shares with us about the times when she went to a federal prison to talk with offenders, especially those who are in for murder. She shared with us how much it was beneficial for both her as a victim and the offender. I realize that my question may be rather direct and may be painful, but I wonder if she or anyone else has visited the man who is responsible for the murder of Candace.

DAVID SHANTZ, MONTREAL QUE.

## FAMILY TIES

# Our mothers' wombs

MELISSA MILLER

Recently, I watched a young mother and her family seated nearby in an airport restaurant. The mother was calmly multi-tasking: feeding her son small bites of food, wiping her daughter's face and carrying on a conversation with her husband. Just before the kids ran off to play at the toy structure, they raised their faces for Mommy kisses. The daughter skipped away a few steps, and then returned for another kiss. Delightful. A pleasure to behold. The mother's wheelchair, which appeared to be normal for her, added to my admiration of her smoothly skilled caregiving.

We're approaching the season when we traditionally remember our mothers. Pretty flowers, pleasant dinners and thoughtful cards are given as expressions of appreciation for the nurture that Mother provided. Might our remembrances be deepened by considering God's mothering qualities? The prophet Isaiah turns to such images by asking, "Can a woman forget her nursing child, or show no compassion for the child of her womb?" (49:15). In doing so, he calls people to remember what they have seen in the love of a mother to help them hold onto a comforting vision of God.

In fact, Isaiah uses word play to deepen

the female imagery. The Hebrew word for compassion is *rehemel*, which sounds similar to *rehem*, the word for womb. Isaiah's question, "Does a woman show no compassion for the child of her womb?", would have sounded more like, "Does a woman show no *rehemel* for the child of her *rehem*?" Likely the two words share a common root. It is easy to see links between the compassion a woman feels and the physical sensations of compassion that may register in her body, in her womb. Isaiah invokes these very powerful, basic life experiences and mother-child bonds to describe God's never-



[A]nytime we see a mother 'in action,' we see a little piece of God's love.

ending steadfast love.

Perhaps these thoughts that offer images of God as a woman make you a bit nervous. We are more familiar with male language to describe God and many of our songs reflect that imagery. The rhetorical God-descriptive question that Job asks, "From whose womb did the ice come forth and who has given birth to the hoarfrost of heaven?" (38:29), can sound quite strange to our ears. Perhaps the strangeness can be an invitation to open ourselves to experiencing new, expansive

understandings of God, who is ultimately unknowable and more mysterious than anything we can imagine.

In the video *She* Rob Bell offers the opinion that anytime we see a mother "in action" we see a little piece of God's love. Says Bell, "When you see a mother doing her mother thing, when a mother's heart breaks for her children, she is tapping into the very nature of who God is, and what God is like, and that is a gift. That is grace. That is divine."

On this Mother's Day, is it too much of a stretch for us to remember and give thanks for the wombs that gave us birth? What is more basic—more primal—to mothering than the strong, tough, marvellous shelters of muscle and blood that held us in our beginning days? How might Mother's Day reflections on our mothers' wombs lead us to appreci-

ate God's compassion and mother-like qualities? Let's remember the wombs of our mothers—all of our mothers—those who gave birth to us, those who raised us, those who brought us along the path of faith and those who blessed us with their wisdom along the way.

*Melissa Miller (familyties@mts.net) lives in Winnipeg, where she works as a pastor and counsellor. Her family ties include that of daughter, sister, wife, mother and friend.*



## /// Milestones

### Births/Adoptions

**Barkman**—Makai Siegfried (b. April 3, 2012), to Darnell and Christina Barkman, Emmanuel Mennonite, Abbotsford, B.C.

**Bergman**—Rafael Jack (b. April 9, 2012), to Donovan and Andrea Bergman, Seeds of Life, Altona, Man.

**Derksen**—Maranda Ruth (b. March 13, 2012), to Andrew and Mary Derksen, North Leamington United Mennonite, Leamington, Ont.

**Driedger**—Dallas Ann (b. March 6, 2012), to Greg Driedger and Maida Tiessen, North Leamington United Mennonite, Leamington, Ont.

**Funk**—Sophya Isabelle (b. Jan. 27, 2012), to Herb and Nicoley Funk, Springfield Heights Mennonite, Winnipeg.

**Green**—Anna Margaret (b. March 23, 2012), to Gloria and Justin Green, East Zorra Mennonite, Tavistock, Ont.

**Kehler**—Tristen Ray (b. March 1, 2012), to Randolph and Fanny Kehler, Springfield Heights Mennonite, Winnipeg.

**Marcovecchio**—Hailey Frances (b. March 2, 2012), to Jason and Melissa Marcovecchio, North Leamington United Mennonite, Leamington, Ont.

**Morris**—Emily Catherine (b. March 15, 2012), to Keith and Amanda Morris, First Mennonite, Edmonton, in Winnipeg.

**Peters**—Hazel Lynn (b. Feb. 29, 2012), to Roderick and Amy Peters, Hamilton Mennonite, Ont.

**Wagler**—Norah Kathryn (b. April 4, 2012), to Katie and Ryan Wagler, East Zorra Mennonite, Tavistock, Ont.

### Baptisms

**Eric Hansplant, Christine Hansplant (nee Fiss)**—First Mennonite, Calgary, April 8, 2012.

**Heather Epp**—Zoar Mennonite, Langham, Sask., April 8, 2012.

### Marriages

**Dyck/Giannakouras**—Carrie Dyck and Nikolaos Giannakouras, Leamington United Mennonite, Ont., Dec. 3, 2011.

**McCutcheon/Smythe**—John McCutcheon and Carlee Smythe (Tavistock Mennonite, Ont.), in Runaway Bay, Jamaica, Feb. 22, 2012.

### Deaths

**Balzer**—Peter, 85 (b. June 23, 1926; d. Jan. 17, 2012), Leamington United Mennonite, Ont.

**Fast**—Henry, 92 (d. Jan. 17, 2012), Springfield Heights Mennonite, Winnipeg.

**Frey**—Murray, 65 (b. Dec. 12, 1946; d. April 3, 2012), Steinmann Mennonite, Baden, Ont.

**Lebold**—Elsie (nee Lichti), 84 (b. March 17, 1928; d. April 1, 2012), Wellesley Mennonite, Ont.

**Neufeld**—Irma Susan, 80 (b. July 21, 1931; d. March 13, 2012), Emmanuel Mennonite, Abbotsford, B.C.

**Rempel**—Ernest, 79 (b. Dec. 21, 1932; d. Feb. 15, 2012), Leamington United Mennonite, Ont.

**Walter**—Anna, 92 (d. April 3, 2012), Springfield Heights Mennonite, Winnipeg.

**Wiebe**—Maria (nee Berg), 93 (b. Feb. 12, 1919; d. April 5, 2012), Leamington United Mennonite, Ont.

**Wiens**—Anna (nee Loepp), 85 (b. Aug. 25, 1926; d. March 31, 2012), Sargent Avenue Mennonite, Winnipeg.

**Woelk**—Irene, 72 (b. Aug. 1, 1939; d. Dec. 22, 2011), Leamington United Mennonite, Ont.

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

## Pontius' Puddle



## LIFE IN THE POSTMODERN SHIFT

Embracing  
the absurdity

BY TROY WATSON

“How can so much evil and suffering exist in a world created by an all loving, all knowing, all-powerful God?”

This question is often cited as the Achilles heel of Christian theology and the reason many ex-Christians no longer believe. I, too, have found no resolution to this haunting riddle, yet explaining the existence of so much goodness, beauty and love in this world without the existence of some kind of benevolent Creator is just as problematic.

I agree with atheists that my belief that God, existing outside time and space, created the universe, sounds like a fairy tale. Yet the notion that some sort of primordial soup or dense bundle of energy gave birth to everything in existence is just as absurd. Where did this pre-elemental concoction come from? Aliens? Where did they come from? It seems any attempt to explain the origin of the universe is ostensibly laughable. To quote singer/songwriter Bruce Cockburn, “You can’t tell me there is no mystery!”

What drew me to existentialist philosophy in my early 20s was that it acknowledged and embraced the absurdity of existence. French philosopher Albert Camus compared our attempts to make sense of the world to the mythological Greek figure Sisyphus, who was eternally condemned by the gods to the endless task of pushing a huge boulder up a hill, only to watch it tumble back down as he was about to reach the top. Over and over, Sisyphus returns to the bottom of the hill to start again. This is our lot in



life, according to Camus.

This sounds similar to the first chapter of Ecclesiastes: “*Meaningless! Meaningless! . . . Utterly meaningless! Everything is meaningless. . . . All things are wearisome, more than one can say. . . . There is nothing new under the sun. . . . What a heavy burden God has laid on humanity! I have seen all the things*

*that are done under the sun; all of them are meaningless, a chasing after the wind.*”

Danish philosopher Soren Kierkegaard believed that the only way to find meaning in life is by saying yes to the absurdity of the world. What could be more absurd, he writes, than “that the eternal truth

*What drew me to existentialist philosophy in my early 20s was that it acknowledged and embraced the absurdity of existence.*

has come into existence in time, that God has come into existence, has been born, has grown up . . . indistinguishable from any other human being”? Faith, to Kierkegaard, is a leap into the absurd that transforms the absurd.

For German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche, the only meaningful response to the absurdity of the universe is to say “yes and amen to all things,” and hope the world in all of its absurdity might forever repeat itself.

I realize many people might view this existentialist perspective as overly pessimistic and dark, but darkness is essential to life. Seeds, for instance, require darkness to germinate and grow, and an

Arabian proverb reminds us, “Sunshine all the time makes a desert.”

The truth is that much of life doesn’t make sense. Much of what happens on this planet is terribly horrible and dark. Is saying “yes and amen to all things” the answer? The same question could be directed at Paul’s command: “*In everything give thanks, for this is the will of God.*” Could there be anything more absurd?

Sufi mystic Rumi brings some clarity to the preposterous gratitude Paul and Nietzsche propose: “If God said, ‘Rumi, pay homage to everything that has helped you enter my arms,’ there would not be one experience of my life, not one thought, not one feeling, not any act, I would not bow to.”

One evening last fall I realized for the umpteenth time that all my attempts to understand God, life and ultimate reality were all meaningless, a “*chasing after the wind.*” As I embraced the absurdity of existence, something profound happened. All my worries, expectations, fear, doubt and desires were stripped away. In the abyss of absurdity I had nothing left to prove, figure out or accomplish, to feel adequate, worthy and whole. I was fully present, truly still . . . and I knew God. As divine grace and peace permeated

my mind, heart and soul, everything in the universe made sense—until I tried to rationalize it and put it into language.

The Bible informs us that divine wisdom is absurdity or foolishness to natural human ways of thinking. God’s thoughts are not our thoughts. God’s ways are higher than our ways.

Although I continue to theologize and place great value on intellectual pursuits, I’ve learned faith—leaping into the absurdity with humility and *gelassenheit* (yieldedness to God’s will)—is the only key to some doors. ✎

*Troy Watson is pastor of Quest Christian Community, St. Catharines, Ont.*

## GOD AT WORK IN THE CHURCH

## PERSONAL REFLECTION

## ‘We want to be Anabaptist’

BY BRIAN BAUMAN

*Brian Bauman, Mennonite Church Eastern Canada mission minister, and his wife Nancy Brubaker, interim pastor at Shantz Mennonite Church, Baden, Ont., travelled to Myanmar earlier this year at the invitation of Truth Biblical College and Seminary to speak at its 13th convocation service in Kalay. This grew into a week of teaching an Anabaptist understanding of the Bible and faith to 60 students and faculty, and preaching during evening services.*

**T**he Chin are an unknown people in a forgotten land. Burma, renamed Myanmar by the hard-line military regime, has been driven to the edge of poverty and ruin despite the nation's vast resources. My journey with the Chin began when this oppressed minority began arriving as refugees in Canada near the beginning of this century. Pastor Jehu Lian was my introduction to this quiet, industrious and unassuming people. He was one of the first to arrive after spending 10 years in India eking out an existence and starting a new church that now has more than a thousand members.

Jehu's passion for his newly discovered Mennonite theology, history and practical faith prompted an invitation from the Chin-run college and seminary for someone to come and give the convocation address to the graduating class of 2012. After much deliberation, it was decided that I and my wife would be sent to teach and preach the Anabaptist understanding of the gospel.

It is difficult to convey to Mennonites in Canada who have been Mennonite forever the power and appeal of the Mennonite faith. The Burmese student body, faculty and supporting community want to know more about Mennonites. They can't get enough. They are fascinated with a theology that places Jesus Christ at the centre of everyday life for a

Christian. Peace, servanthood, discipleship, justice and community are biblical concepts that they want to understand and practise.

The students kept pushing, "Tell us how to be an every-day disciple. What does it look like?"

I responded with the example that, as a Mennonite, I'm a man of peace and because of this I would never hit my wife. Nancy chimed in that, as a woman of peace, she would never hit her husband. During a question period at the end of the lecture one of the female faculty members stood up and said for all of her students to hear, "If being Mennonite means that a husband does not hit his wife, then all Chin women want to be Mennonite."

I didn't know how to respond. I had to trust that our silent recognition in the face of such a powerful declaration regarding the unspoken abuse in too many homes was enough.

On another occasion, their fervour provided us with a glimpse into the passion of the first Anabaptists. After four days of interacting with the stories of the "re-baptizers" from the 1500s, the school's vice-president came to us and proclaimed, "I and 20 others want to be re-baptized by your hands. We want to be Anabaptist."

The story had caught their

PHOTO COURTESY OF MC EASTERN CANADA



*Brian Bauman and Nancy Brubaker re-baptize Jordan Rochullova, vice-president of the Chin-run Truth Biblical College and Seminary in Burma during their visit earlier this year.*

imaginations and would not let go. No amount of caution or hesitancy on our part was going to deter them. So later that day 23 adults were immersed in the cement laundry tub outside the rustic kitchen at the school proclaiming their commitment to follow Jesus Christ every day of the week. It was a humbling and overwhelming experience.

The Chin refugees in Canada, the United States, India, Malaysia, Australia and Denmark, as well as the Chin in Burma, want to hear and understand the Mennonite faith. The school's president declared that the 140,000 members who support this school want to be Mennonite.

What do we do with this passionate invitation from an oppressed people in a forgotten land? I've come to unabashedly believe that, as a church, it is our privilege and responsibility to share the Mennonite beliefs and history with others. The things that God has taught and entrusted to his Mennonite people over the past 500 years are to be shared. No doubt it will be an exhausting and exhilarating journey. ❧



# Making up with cousins more difficult than with strangers

*Bechtel Lecturer focuses on Mennonite identity in North America and beyond*

STORY AND PHOTO BY DAVE ROGALSKY

Eastern Canada Correspondent  
WATERLOO, ONT.

Under the overarching title, “Blest be the ties that bind: In search of the global Anabaptist church,” John Roth, this year’s Bechtel Lecturer, provocatively suggested the need for significant work by Mennonites of European origin to his listeners at Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo, over two days in March.

In his first lecture, “The challenge of church unity in the Anabaptist tradition,” the Goshen (Ind.) College history professor made the point over and over again that, although the work of reconciliation with other Christian groups is important and essential, Mennonites really have a larger task in making peace with their fellow Anabaptists of many kinds.

Making peace with a stranger on a plane is much easier than making peace with a cousin down the street who worships at a church that, although having “Mennonite” in its name, espouses a political view of society that we cannot support. He believes this to be an essential part of the Mennonite peace witness in the 21st century.

In the question and answer session afterward, Roth was challenged by speaker after speaker on what he admits is a new perspective for him as well, that Mennonite divisiveness is not a good witness of the gospel of peace.

In his second lecture, “What hath Zurich to do with Addis Ababa? Ecclesial identity in the Global Anabaptist church,” Roth used the image of rhizomic plants that grow by pushing roots through the soil and then pushing up a new, connected plant, as a model for the global church. Instead of a hierarchy or visible structure connecting and supporting the various Mennonite groups around the world, a decentralized and living set of connections—nation to nation, congregation

to congregation—would be the form of Mennonite interconnectedness.

In this way, resources and information can flow back and forth between the parts of the plant that have varying resources and needs. He suggested that the DNA of such a plant would include Psalms 24:1: “*The earth is the Lord’s.*” This verse has been used by Anabaptists from the beginning to suggest that governments and nationalities do not have a prior “political claim regarding sovereignty and authority.”

To say with the Psalmist that “*the earth is the Lord’s,*” is not only an affirmation about political sovereignty or economic stewardship; it is ultimately a recognition that God has entered history in the person of Jesus Christ, that Jesus rose victorious from the grave in victory over the forces of sin and death, and that the outcome of history has already been settled, so it is “a statement of praise and worship,” according to Roth.



*Bert Lobe of Mennonite World Conference, left, discusses the 2012 Bechtel Lecture at Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo, Ont., with lecturer John Roth of Goshen College, Ind., on March 16.*

These are aspects of Anabaptist Mennonite identity that are shared around the world, and that need to be strengthened and balanced through the world fellowship, he concluded, as each part of the larger whole does this in connection with the other parts. ❧

## /// Briefly noted

### Anglicans, Mennonites learn more about each other

EDMONTON—Throughout the season of Lent, a small group of Anglicans and Mennonites met in Edmonton to learn about each other’s faith traditions. The Edmonton Anglican-Mennonite Dialogue was first conceived by members of the Edmonton Ecumenical Peace Network, including Art Dyck (a Mennonite who became an Anglican) and Werner De Jong, pastor of Holyrood Mennonite Church, which hosted some of the gatherings along with Holy Trinity Anglican Church in Old Strathcona. “We opened ourselves to examine and learn from each other’s history and traditions, and in the process were reminded of our common calling in the teachings of Jesus, a unifying calling that precedes and overrides our separate histories and accumulated traditions,” says Ike Glick of the experience. Participants in the dialogue are now prayerfully considering what the next step might be as they seek to walk more closely together as disciples of Jesus and participants in his mission to the world.

—BY TIM CHESTERTON

# Langham church visits sister congregation in Brazil

BY KARIN FEHDERAU  
Saskatchewan Correspondent

Last October, a group of eight congregants from Zoar Mennonite Church, Langham, Sask., left the looming cold of a prairie winter and headed south to Recife, Brazil, on a learning tour.

Visiting Lagoa Encantada Mennonite, Zoar's sister church, was their top priority, but the trip also included stops at various destinations to learn about the Brazilian people and culture.

Abe Buhler, pastor of Zoar, acted as tour guide since he had ministered in Brazil in the 1990s and knew the local language well. Many of the people the tour group met were friends of Buhler from his time in Brazil.

About a year-and-a-half ago, Zoar Mennonite started the sister church relationship with a church plant started in 1989 during Buhler's years in Brazil with the former General Conference's Commission of Overseas Mission.

"Our visit focused on this congregation, along with visiting two other Mennonite congregations and a new church plant in Caruaru, an hour-and-a-half into the interior from Recife," Buhler says. "We also stayed at the [Mennonite Central Committee] unit house and learned about MCC's work in Brazil," where one of the church buildings had recently been

PHOTOS COURTESY OF ABE BUHLER



*Elaine Nemanishen of Zoar Mennonite Church, Langham, Sask., tries to learn some new words from girls at a children's program sponsored by the Junga Mennonite Church in Recife, Brazil.*



*Abe Buhler, left, pastor of Zoar Mennonite Church, Langham, Sask., speaks with a local man in the neighbourhood surrounding a new church in Recife, Brazil.*

destroyed by a mudslide.

Doreen Nickel loves to travel and was part of the learning tour. "You go down there expecting them to live differently than us, but they live the same lives we do," she says. "They have cell phones and access to computers, but in other areas [they have] a lot less than we do."

Of a tour to a poor neighbourhood, Nickel says, "It's sad the way some people have to live." However, she was surprised at how content a family they visited there seemed to be.

Carrol Epp, who had several personal connections to the area, agrees. "What I noticed was how friendly and open people were," she says. "You see how people live in the slums, yet they were happy."

One of the highlights of the trip was a visit to Iguassu Falls, a tourist destination that surpasses Niagara Falls.

Krishna Bueckert, 21, who kept a blog for friends back home during the trip, was the youngest member of the group. The two-week tour made a deep impression on her. "We were inspired, moved and encouraged by the amazing people," she says. "Being able to connect with each church, hear their stories, and help them purchase building supplies is truly a blessing. Their devotion to God, even after all that they've been through, is the greatest inspiration. . . . I know that each and every one of us felt closer to God, to one another, and even to ourselves." ❧

## ❧ Staff changes

### Rockway grad, teacher to assume principal's role

KITCHENER, ONT.—Ann L. Schultz has been chosen to assume the role of principal of Rockway Mennonite Collegiate commencing January 2013. Schultz will replace outgoing principal Betsy Petker, who is retiring this June. Currently head of the music department at Rockway, Schultz is a graduate of the school and she has been teaching there for 21 years. She will leave a lasting legacy in the music department, as she has worked to establish a widely acclaimed music program, led award-winning choirs, produced a music CD, and travelled to performances around the world with generations of music students. Schultz is passionate about Christian education and is committed to "forming faith and building character" in Rockway students. A Waterloo, Ont., native, Schultz also fills a pivotal leadership role in the area of recruitment at the school. She will conclude her role as a teacher and department head in July 2012, and then take a leave of absence before assuming her role as principal next January.

—Rockway Mennonite Collegiate

### Columbia Bible College hires new director of development

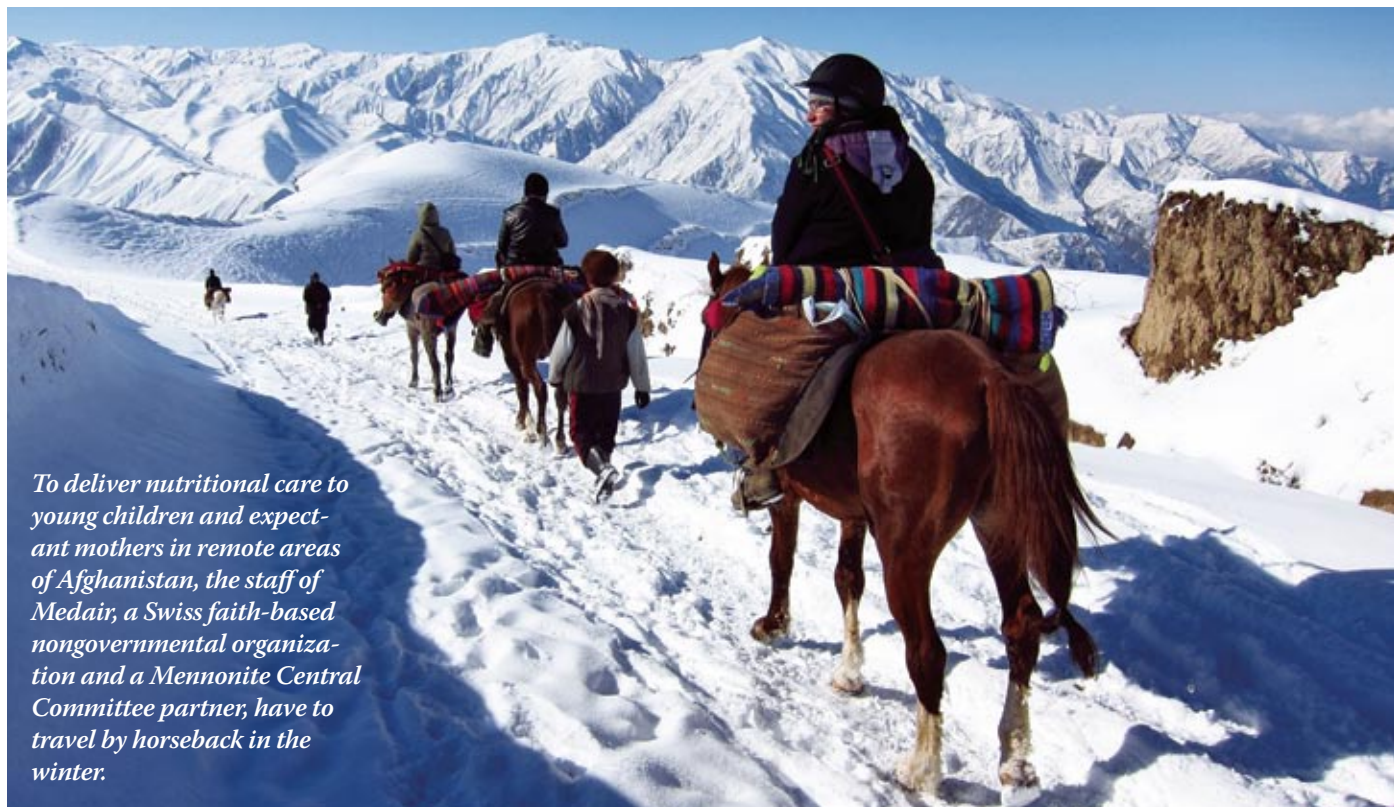
ABBOTSFORD, B.C.—Blaine Maryniuk has been hired as the new director of development by Columbia Bible College. He comes to Columbia from the Canadian Cancer Society, where he served as manager of revenue development for the Fraser Valley Region for four-and-a-half years. Included in his experience is senior management in both the transportation and Internet technology software industries. Maryniuk has also volunteered for his local church and the non-profit organization Samaritan's Purse; for many years he was a board member and chair at Langley Christian School.

—Columbia Bible College



## GOD AT WORK IN THE WORLD

PHOTO COURTESY OF MEDAIR



*To deliver nutritional care to young children and expectant mothers in remote areas of Afghanistan, the staff of Medair, a Swiss faith-based nongovernmental organization and a Mennonite Central Committee partner, have to travel by horseback in the winter.*

## MCC partners aid Afghans suffering from war, poverty

BY EMILY WILL

Mennonite Central Committee

Despite war's obstacles and disruptions, Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) partners in Afghanistan continue to provide life-enhancing and empowering services to Afghans.

Traumatized women receive counseling. Students learn skills to constructively deal with conflict among their extended families. Malnourished children are fed, and their mothers are offered health, nutrition and childcare information.

John and Lynn Williamson, MCC representatives for India, Nepal and Afghanistan, visited Afghan partner agencies late last year and reported on the work they observed.

"Afghanistan must be one of the most

challenging countries in which MCC has program," the Williamsons wrote from Kathmandu, Nepal, where they are based. "Land degradation, poor governance, poverty, malnutrition, war, gender inequality—in any category of human development, Afghanistan is struggling. God's love and compassion is sorely needed here."

### **Peace education for children**

In eight middle schools in Paghman District, an outlying area of Kabul, classes of seventh- and eighth-graders role-play or use puppets to enact common daily conflicts, which they discuss afterwards. Sixteen role-plays are contained in a peace education curriculum developed by Help the Afghan Children,

an MCC partner. Through the lessons, students learn how to apply the principles of listening, understanding, mediation, and respect for elders and for one another in their own conflict management.

MCC's Global Family education sponsorship program supports Help the Afghan Children's peace programs and computer and environmental education. These eight schools were chosen because they encourage the attendance of girls.

Global Family also supports the effort of another partner, Le Pelican, which provides schooling for children who would otherwise be working, literacy classes for older girls and women, education for people who are deaf and mute, and vocational trade classes.

### **Supporting mothers and children**

Under tents in the remote, deforested Badakhshan province, Ruhulla and his wife Gul (pseudonyms) work together to conduct a nutrition clinic. Ruhulla assesses malnourished infants, measuring weights,



heights and arm circumferences. In a near-by tent, Gul checks and counsels pregnant and lactating women.

The couple has been working for nine years with MCC partner Medair, a Swiss faith-based nongovernmental organization. The love and care they demonstrate while working with mothers and children is evident, the Williamsons said.

The need, too, is obvious: “We were told that this area has the highest maternal mortality rates in the world and that 60 percent of babies under one year are malnourished,” they reported.

MCC’s work with Medair is supported by MCC’s account with the Canadian Foodgrains Bank.

### **Trauma healing for women**

Afsana (pseudonym) was forced to separate from her husband, and she and her children had to move out of her in-laws’ home.

Instead of having an extended family to rely on, she needed to find food for herself and her children. She told the Williamsons that she became so stressed that she beat her children and forgot that she put food on the stove to cook.

The Women’s Activities and Social Services Association chose Afsana as one of 45 women in five districts to participate in a trial women’s trauma-healing project. As a result of counselling and medication she received at a different clinic, Afsana told the Williamsons that she no longer beats her children and she remembers what she’s doing. She reaches out to other women to share what she is learning, despite community leaders who discourage women from meeting together.

The association was founded in 2002 by a graduate of Eastern Mennonite University’s Center for Justice and Peacebuilding, Harrisonburg, Va. ❧

minutes to participate in a celebration dinner put on by several members of the church for the women and their children who live at the residence. Church members prepared several lasagnas, loaves of garlic bread, salads, desserts, appetizers and beverages for the residents.

These women all have struggled—or are currently struggling—with homelessness, poverty, reintegrating into society after being incarcerated, drug addiction or abuse. They receive around-the-clock support at the residence.

*Yamasaki regularly saw the progress being made and was reminded of those who are seeking healing and peace.*

“I want you all to know that there is a whole community of people out there who are rooting for you,” executive director Dorothy Heneveld told those who sat down to dinner. “This place was built with love and you live here in love.”

At the dinner Yamasaki said that Emmanuel Mennonite “is more than a building. We are happy to be the church here,” explaining that the dinner was an intentional first step in a relationship with the residence and those who live there. “We hope that there will be a longer-term relationship between our church and the people at the residence,” she said. ❧

## **A welcome meal**

*Emmanuel Mennonite Church invites low-income housing unit into the community, prepares meal for residents*

**STORY AND PHOTO BY RACHEL BERGEN**

Young Voices Co-editor and Reporter-at-large  
ABBOTSFORD, B.C.

**F**or April Yamasaki, lead pastor of Emmanuel Mennonite Church, it is a mere eight-minute walk from the church to the Christine Lamb Residence, a supportive care, low-income housing unit on Clearbrook Road in Abbotsford.

Until she read about the building of the residence in an issue of the *Abbotsford Times*, she had no idea that such a place existed or that more than 40 women and their children moved in on March 1. As construction began, Yamasaki regularly saw the progress being made and was reminded of those who are seeking healing and peace.

The residence is named after Christine Lamb, who was a victim of spousal abuse and had to take her children and run away to Vancouver; there, she managed to get work as a bookkeeper and worked her way up to become the first female city councillor in Abbotsford. The residence is a part of

the Women’s Resource Society of the Fraser Valley.

On April 12, Yamasaki walked the eight



*Dorothy Heneveld, left, executive director of the Christine Lamb Residence, chats with April Yamasaki, lead pastor at Emmanuel Mennonite Church, Abbotsford, B.C., after a dinner women from the church put on for the women and children who live at the new residence, located a few minutes’ walk from the church.*

## NEWS ANALYSIS

# MCC programming control shifts north

BY WILL BRAUN  
SENIOR WRITER



The four-year, \$2.5-million Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) review process is over, and the single most significant outcome is a power shift from MCC's Akron, Pa., office to its office in Winnipeg.

MCC Binational, the arm of MCC that administered international programming out of Akron, was dissolved on March 30, and its work handed to MCC U.S. (also in Akron) and MCC Canada, which had long wanted a role in overseas programs.

These two bodies will jointly own and administer international programming, while continuing their own work at home. MCC spokespeople say the changes are internal; neither donors nor recipients of programming should notice a difference.

A recent MCC news release about the New Wine/New Wineskins review, as it was called, acknowledges that cross-border conflict over control of programming was one issue behind the process. It says the restructuring has "equalized the decision-making power" between MCC Canada and MCC U.S.

Tension had been simmering for years. In May 2007—13 months before Wineskins was launched—senior MCC leaders from Winnipeg and Akron met to explore ways to address various stresses among the 12 regional, provincial, national and binational MCC bodies. Among those tensions was a Canadian desire to have a more active role in the administration of international programs.

In a 2011 interview, Arli Klassen—then head of MCC Binational—told me that, prior to Wineskins, MCC was "being pulled apart" by internal tensions that could eventually "have had a very

negative impact." She provided few details and did not mention the May 2007 meeting.

That meeting was intended to avert an outcome like the current one, in which MCC Binational was disbanded with a clearer line drawn between

MCC on either side of the 49th Parallel. No such breakthrough occurred. The next year, as Wineskins began, MCC Canada board chair Neil Janzen noted that two-thirds of the money raised by MCC offices in Canada was handed over to Akron. Janzen told me that MCC Canada wanted "a more direct say in how those resources [were] used."

In fact, the MCC Binational board approved an MCC Canada request to administer programming in Cuba, North Korea and Afghanistan. But a meaningful transfer never happened, and Canadian aspirations and grievances carried over into the Wineskins process.

Now MCC Canada has gained significant new control. It will no longer forward money to Akron for others to spend, although the two MCCs will cooperate closely. An eight-page covenant sets out the new relationship.

Thirty-one MCC Binational staff lost jobs, mostly in Akron. Nine positions were created in Winnipeg and several positions were transferred overseas.

Of the cost of Wineskins, \$1.4 million was spent on severance packages and the other \$1.1 million on travel, facilitation consultants and meeting costs.

Other changes to come out of the process include more control for church bodies over board appointments. Two-thirds of the MCC Canada and MCC U.S. boards must be "Anabaptist church body

representatives." All MCC bodies agreed to joint new vision and purpose statements, although they contain no notable shifts in emphasis.

Another focus of the process was a push to make MCC more accountable to its global partners. The only significant outcome in this area is a consultation process among global Anabaptist service agencies initiated by Mennonite World Conference.

I have spoken with many people close to the Wineskins process, both on the record and off. Accounts vary. A tangle of factors and agendas were at play. Few say the process went well. MCC spokespeople say that most of the 2,000 people consulted had no interest in MCC restructuring, and yet that was the main outcome.

Some people are surely pleased that MCC Canada got a bigger role. Others say the family of faith should rise above administrative jostling based on national identities. Still others are baffled by a process that created commotion within MCC, but did not ignite a broader debate about MCC's evolving role in an increasingly unequal, polarized and warming world. One MCC staff person said the process should have focused on "how to best respond to the needs of the world," not on "which powerful North American country gets to have control."

Despite the differences, and despite the defects in the process, everyone seems to hold a common, ongoing commitment to the work of MCC.

Oddly, in legal terms there is no such entity as MCC, only MCC Canada, MCC U.S. and the regional MCC bodies. That is fitting, for MCC itself is something broader. It is an ethos, a web of relationships. It is donors, staff, volunteers, partner organizations, recipients of programming and, in it all, the Spirit of God.

MCC is something beyond organizational structures or national borders. It is something beyond the control of boards or staff, however they are configured. The people and relationships that make up MCC are imperfect, like the Wineskins process, which means that MCC is, among other things, an ongoing struggle of imperfect people to follow God in an imperfect world. ☸

# Christ at the checkpoint

*Hope is found in the midst of Middle Eastern conflict: Palmer Becker*

BY DEBORAH FROESE  
Mennonite Church Canada

At a time when conflict and injustice continue to plague the Holy Land, more than 600 people from around the world gathered to focus on hope and options in Bethlehem from March 5-9 at the “Christ at the Checkpoint” conference.

Palmer Becker, on special assignment for Mennonite Church Canada with Bethlehem Bible College, was among them. “[It] exceeded all expectations!” he said in an e-mail update. “The presence of numerous Messianic Jews brought new hope and possibilities to the gathering. . . . [This conference] was a profound attempt to help evangelical, Palestinian and Messianic Christians explore nonviolent options for understanding and reconciliation.”

The conference manifesto clearly outlined a theology of peace and reconciliation, and called for people to recognize God’s image in each other. It denounced any form of racial superiority or exclusive claims to biblical land, cautioned against religious stereotyping, and stated that the “suffering of the Palestinian people can no longer be ignored. Any solution must respect the equity and rights of Israel and Palestinian communities.”

Becker’s report reflected the successful adoption of those policies throughout the event. He noted that, although the pain of the Israeli occupation was clearly recognized, a sense of compassion was also extended to the Israelis. “Both Palestinians and Israelis are suffering from post traumatic stress syndrome,” he said. “They need to be listened to, counselled and helped to a new future.”

Additionally, he noted that, while some Christians tend to look at the Middle East through the lens of end-time prophecy, this conference focused on the gospel that Jesus proclaimed: that the kingdom of God is here. “We can live in it today,” Becker said. “We were challenged to be prophets that call for justice with love, rather than merely people who dwell on end-time prophecy”

The conference included a broad spectrum of evangelical believers who met literally at the “checkpoint.” They engaged biblically on issues that have historically divided them, such as Christian Zionism, Islamism, justice, nonviolence and reconciliation.

“The practice of nonviolence was affirmed again and again,” Becker said. “Ron Sider, Sami Awad, Jonathan Kuttab and others spoke like Anabaptists, inviting us to love our enemies and to overcome evil with good.”

Hope, Becker said, was highlighted throughout the conference: “New relationships are being established between Messianic Jews and Christian Palestinians, and in the growing unity of the church and in the willingness of the church to address injustice in a direct but loving way.” ❧

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PHOTO COURTESY OF PALMER BECKER



*The 2012 Christ at the Checkpoint conference brought together 30 speakers from around the world to address more than 600 participants. ‘Ron Sider, Sami Awad, Jonathan Kuttab and others spoke like Anabaptists, inviting us to love our enemies and to overcome evil with good,’ reports Palmer Becker, who attended the conference while on special assignment with Mennonite Church Canada.*



## GOD AT WORK IN US

# From tragedy to triumph

*Mennonite takes on activist role in fight with province over health and safety issue*

BY KARIN FEHDERAU  
Saskatchewan Correspondent  
SASKATOON

More than a year after being diagnosed with lung cancer, Howard Willems is in the mood to fight. He's not fighting the disease as much as the cause of his cancer, an illness that he believes could have been prevented.



Willems

In the course of a 30-year career as a Canadian Food Inspections worker with the federal government, the member of Nutana Park Mennonite Church, Saskatoon, came in contact with asbestos spores while inspecting food processing plants or supervising their repairs. And that exposure led to contracting mesothelioma, a lung cancer caused by inhaling asbestos fibres.

Having lost one lung already, the 59-year-old is using his acquired knowledge of the disease and its causes to help others avoid the same fate. "It has been a learning, healing journey," he says, admitting that he has struggled with a sense of frustration. "It would have been simple to prevent with a face mask or respirator. Had I been informed, I would have avoided it."

All of that is little consolation now. But Willems is turning the tragedy into a triumph. As a leader of the Saskatchewan Asbestos Disease Awareness Organization ([www.sadao.ca](http://www.sadao.ca)), he is lobbying for a provincial registry for buildings containing asbestos. As well, he wants those same buildings to be clearly labelled for people, who, in the course of their duties, might easily come in contact with asbestos fibres, people like contractors, boiler operators and even first responders like firefighters and emergency medical technicians.

"You should know, according to the Health and Safety Act, what hazards

there are in the workplace," he says. "We're taking the existing regulations and pushing it one step further." Willems and his organization are not alone; the Canadian Cancer Society also wants a registry established.

## The politics of asbestos production

Willems suspects that politics is playing a role in the attempted re-opening of an asbestos mine in Quebec at a time when the European Union has banned asbestos.

Willems believes Canada has been dragging its heels on the matter by claiming, along with the asbestos industry, that the product is safe when used properly.

"Canada didn't sign on to the Rotterdam Accord [in 2011]," he notes. The United Nations accord has created a global hazardous-chemicals blacklist that Willems would like to see include asbestos. If asbestos was on the list, it would mean that all products containing asbestos would be marked with a warning label that the product is hazardous to a person's health, he

explains.

A very telling statistic is the number of asbestos-related deaths in Quebec, which, Willems says, has the highest rate in Canada. Other areas, like Sarnia and Windsor, Ont., have high rates in part because of the amount of asbestos products used there.

## The activist emerges

Willems doesn't just want the federal and provincial governments to care. He also wants the broader church community, including Mennonites, to bring their presence to bear on the issue.

"The faith community can have a huge impact on the government," he says, noting that governments aren't motivated to change until there is public pressure. But churches don't usually come to the table with political agendas.

There is another reason that Mennonites should care, he says. And that reason lies closer to home. Many worship in older buildings that may have asbestos in them. The future health of members could be compromised because many Mennonite churches are older, Willems says.

In his own quiet way, Willems is walking the path seemingly set out for him. And he is doing it with the same patience and endurance that he has brought to bear in finding God through this faith-strengthening journey of endurance.

Willem's efforts to have a registry established were profiled on CBC's *The National* newscast back in February. To view, visit [www.cbc.ca/video/watch/Shows/ID=2203668746](http://www.cbc.ca/video/watch/Shows/ID=2203668746). ☞

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ARTBEAT

PHOTO BY RACHEL BERGEN



**Soprano Becky Hill**, left, is the winner of the 2012 Verna Mae Janzen Music Competition, held on March 29 at Canadian Mennonite University, Winnipeg. She is pictured with sponsor Peter Janzen. Pianist Rebecca Klassen-Wiebe came second, while third place was awarded to soprano Anna Bigland-Pritchard.

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## FOCUS ON BOOKS &amp; RESOURCES

## PERSONAL REFLECTION

## 'Self in Mennonite garb'

BY SUE CLEMMER STEINER

**W**e Mennonites are not going to run out of stories anytime soon!

How could we, after the resplendent feast of Mennonite creative writing enjoyed by 170 of us in Virginia's Shenandoah Valley over Palm Sunday weekend at the "Mennonite/s Writing VI: Solos and harmonies" event hosted by Eastern Mennonite University.

Best described as a festival, organizer Kirsten Eve Beachey called these periodic conferences "the gathering place for the virtual community of Mennonite writers" who identify by birth or choice. The Canadian presence and influence "on stage" was huge. One American hinted at an "occupation by Canada."

The first "Mennonite/s Writing" conference came into being in 1990 as the brain child of Hildi Froese Tiessen of Conrad Grebel University College, and her passionate influence continues.

I basked in the wonderful writing that continues to emerge, with stories and poetic reflections from so many kernels of experience. In "People Who Understand," Kristen Mathies, a writer from Kitchener, Ont., delicately explored intercultural relationships in a story set in New York City and Swaziland, both places where she has lived. Rudy Wiebe overwhelmed us with passion as he read "Broken Arrow," his story about a 19th-century peacemaking Cree leader (*Collected Stories, 1955-2010*, University of Alberta, 2011). In contrast, Dora Dueck read gently from her novel *This Hidden Thing* (CMU Press, 2010), the story of a Mennonite domestic in Winnipeg in the 1920s.

It was a special treat for me to hear Cheryl Denise, who grew up Swiss Mennonite in Elmira, Ont., read from her new poetry collection, *What's in the Blood* (Cascadia, 2012). The values and



choices of her Old Order great-grandparents continue to spark her poetic reflection, as do her childhood experiences at Elmira Mennonite Church.

It would have been more than enough to see Vern Thiessen, one of Canada's most prolific playwrights, perform his own one-person play, *Back to Berlin*. "Every play," said Thiessen post-performance, "should pose a good question." He based his play in the story of accompanying his elderly father, a post-World War II immigrant, back to Berlin, where he spent the war years as a courier. The play poses the questions: What did the father actually do during the war? How much did he know? The son both wants to find out, and doesn't. Thiessen masterfully plays father, son and narrator in this gripping exploration lightened by humour.

It would have been enough to think about new dimensions of novels I've read through academic papers, such as Daniel Shank Cruz's study of Miriam Toews' comic novel, *Summer of My Amazing Luck* (Turnstone Press, 1996). Cruz referred to this novel as "narrative ethics," a more "cheerful" way of teaching ethics than the *Martyrs Mirror* of his youth. The novel draws much better attention to the difficulties of being a welfare mother than a CBC documentary. Mennonites can read an "extra layer" into it about how to live, how to be compassionate. Texts like this can provide safe ground for secular and religious Mennonites to dialogue, Cruz said.

Ah yes . . . secular and religious Mennonites. In her state of the art address concerning Canadian Mennonite literature, Froese Tiessen asked, "Who is

the self in Mennonite garb? And to whom or where does the writing go?"

She noted that Mennonite literature is prominent in the Canadian writing scene, and that it has been produced and received as ethnic writing, part of the Canadian government's multiculturalism emphasis of the 1970s and '80s. Now, Froese Tiessen posited, "Mennonite writers" locate themselves in the worldly present and most of their Mennonite readers are in the same place. So we are left with "tracings . . . what remains of what doesn't remain . . . the absent present," as Mennonite writing becomes more mainstream.

The familiar conversation popped up at various points about there being writers who self-identify as "cultural Mennonites," those who are "religious Mennonites," and those who are both. Winnipeg writer David Elias danced around these themes playfully and provocatively in his reflection, "If I am a Mennonite writer." When being part of a collective consciousness, said Elias, one can't always easily decide whether to swim upstream or down.

I would love to see Canadian Mennonite creative writing blossom in the many ethnicities that now make up Mennonite Church Canada. Yet at the same time I celebrate the 50 years of Canadian Mennonite writing so evident at this conference.

Froese Tiessen noted, "Each of the six conferences since 1990 has had a distinctive feeling. This one . . . offered an unusually rich and invigorating range of new and old voices, visions, and sensibilities among writers and literary critics alike. While recognizing substantial diversities, everyone involved [expressed] a common urgency to support creative writing among Mennonites."

I took home with me not only the formal presentations, but also the joy of connections made with former professors, distant cousins who write or publish books, memoir writers I'd like to emulate, and other appreciative readers. ❧

*Sue Clemmer Steiner, Waterloo, Ont., is an appreciative reader of Mennonite creative writing.*



## BOOK REVIEW

# Too busy for life's priorities

*Living into Focus: Choosing What Matters in an Age of Distraction.*

By Arthur Boers. Brazos Press, 2012.

REVIEWED BY WILL BRAUN

I wish e-mail took up less of my life. I wish I could remember the last time I savoured a sunset. I wish I prayed more.

"I do not understand my own actions," wrote the Apostle Paul, "for I do not do what I want." Arthur Boers explores this conundrum in his new book, *Living Into Focus: Choosing What Matters in an Age of Distraction*.

"I keep running into people who sense something awry with life," Boers writes, "yet we rush on," too busy, too inundated, too technologized to live according to our "deepest and highest priorities." Boers, who holds the R.J. Bernardo Family Chair of Leadership at Tyndale Seminary in Toronto, was a Mennonite pastor for more than 20 years.

He shares his own story of emerging from the rhythm of oppressive busyness. But first he confesses his workaholic tendencies, propensity to TV addiction and a history of stress. Then he talks about his discovery of hiking in his early 40s. A casual decision to hike Ontario's Bruce Trail began a slow conversion. Despite an aversion to athletics, he writes that he discovered natural wonder and the satisfaction of "bodily engagement."

He slowed down. "The act of hiking was knitting me together, making me whole," he writes.

Boers has taken up urban hiking as well, regularly walking to work, a 65- to 75-minute iPod-free trip.

Drawing on the thought of Albert Borgmann, an American philosopher, Boers frames his hiking—and the book—in terms of "focal practices." These are practices that "centre, balance, focus and orient one's life"—an antidote to self-preoccupied busyness.

His account of a kitchen renovation proves an oddly instructive example of focal re-orientation. A renovation made the kitchen and eating area in his family's home a place to which the family naturally gravitated. Impromptu conversations between parents at the counter and kids doing homework at the table took place. The kitchen became the "nucleus" of the house, a focal point that often won out over TV and computers.

Other examples of focal practices include gardening, cooking, birding, making music with others, board games, letter writing,

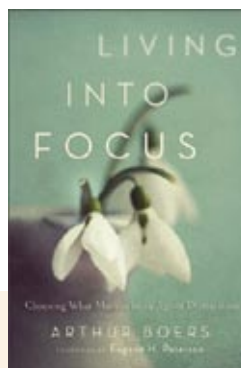
hospitality, crafts and prayer.

Much of the book is about ways in which contemporary technology "draws us away from the things we value most." Not that Boers is a Luddite—he has a computer, car, TV and iPod, but no cell phone—he just thinks we should understand the pros and cons of our plugged-in existence. It's easy to name the benefits of technology, he writes, but how does technology shape our awareness? Where does it attract our attention?

He believes our techno-gadgets, which serve legitimate purposes, also make us "less tolerant of any kind of waiting," encourage us to divide our attention, offer endless distraction, displace human-to-human contact, overwhelm us with stimuli, suck up time and fuel a craving for connectivity, all while addicting us to "the rush of a new e-mail or fresh messages."

Boers calls for collective discernment of the implications of contemporary technology. He encourages readers to set limits that prevent gadgets from occupying the centre of their lives. "Rather than being perpetually available to others far away, let us choose to be present and attentive to the person nearby," he writes. And he invites us all to be drawn by the alternative allure of a life more abundant, more focal.

The book helped me evaluate my own life. I reluctantly concluded that some of my pastimes—like indoor rock climbing and unicycling (a bit wonky, I know)—are more hobby than focal practice. They improve well-being, but don't have much focal value, a distinction that deserves more attention than Boers gives it. (Is golfing in



## On e-prayer

Arthur Boers doesn't like blanket e-mail prayer requests "circulated routinely and casually."

How exactly is one to respond?

"Do I wing or whisper a quick prayer heavenward," he asks, "along with all my other multi-tasking?"

Boers doesn't think prayer should be "mediated through a screen." A prayer request ought to have "a different format than the daily solicitations that invite us to experiment with Viagra," he writes. "If you want me to pray, ask personally, don't spam me."

Arizona a focal practice?)

Other activities, like spending time with my young kids, gardening, canning and cooking for others align with my core values and knit me together much better than my inbox does.

Boers recounts hearing Borgmann ask members of an audience when they were last able to affirm the following statements: “There is no place I would rather be. There is nothing I would rather do.

There is no one I would rather be with. This I will remember well!”

The exercise serves both as critique and invitation. Boers wrote *Living into Focus* out of the belief that, in a world filled with grace, we can indeed choose to live according to our deepest and highest values. ❧

*Will Braun is Canadian Mennonite’s senior writer.*

## BOOK REVIEW

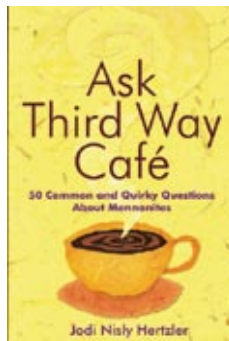
# Why write a book about a website?

*Ask Third Way Café: 50 Common and Quirky Questions about Mennonites.*

By Jodi Nisly Hertzler, Cascadia Publishing House, 2009.

REVIEWED BY DAVE ROGALSKY

Just type “Third Way Café” into your search engine—you don’t even need the accent on the “e”—and you will soon be sipping today’s brew of Mennonite stories; reading blogs; viewing videos; and buying books, CDs and DVDs. There’s even a link to donate for the “brews”



you’ve imbibed.

Run by MennoMedia, Third Way Café is a portal into the Mennonite world for many around the world. As such, it is the recipient of many questions, quirky and otherwise, about Mennonites and Mennonite beliefs, practices and culture.

Jodi Nisly Hertzler is the one

to whom these questions come, and for the sake of the non-Internet audience she has gathered 50 questions that, she says, “provide others with insight to the questions people ask about Mennonites.”

So what are people asking about Mennonites? Besides many questions that confuse Amish and Mennonites, modern and Old Order, are questions about salvation, the nature of God and other beliefs, Anabaptist history, pacifism, and, “Would it be okay if I became a Mennonite?”

Researching her answers from home—she’s a full-time mom—Hertzler quotes from the Bible, the *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective*, and anything else she needs. She is not the first Third Way Café staffer to answer online questions, and for this book she has depended on previous people in her position for information.

Every question sent to the site is answered, even ones that seem sarcastic or purposely pulling someone’s leg.

With its 50 short sections this book would be a fun read on a trip or to give to a high school student in a faith exploration class. Alternatively, it might be a good book for an adult class to dip into with their theological cookies and sip the Anabaptist brew. ❧

*Dave Rogalsky is the Eastern Canada correspondent for Canadian Mennonite and the pastor of Wilmot Mennonite Church, New Hamburg, Ont.*

## Protecting children is critical for churches

By MELODIE DAVIS

Mennonite Church Canada / MennoMedia

As disturbing as sexual misconduct headlines are in the media, the tragic scandals provide a good opportunity to address this critical issue in Christian homes and churches. Mennonite churches have several resources to help in that regard.

Jeanette Harder, author of *Let the Children Come: Preparing Faith Communities to End Child Abuse and Neglect*, says, “Churches need to do everything they can to protect children.” The

book, published in 2010 by Herald Press, can be used as a study guide for adult Sunday school classes and small groups. “This needs to happen within our own families and churches, as well as in the communities in which we live, work, volunteer and play,” says Harder, who is on the faculty of Grace Abbott School of Social Work at the University of Nebraska.



Harder is also one of the founders of Dove’s Nest, a Mennonite-based organization formed for “faith communities to keep children and youth safe,” according to its website (DovesNest.net). Harder encourages churches to draft child-protection policies and enforce them, such as doing background checks on anyone—including pastors, youth ministers, Sunday school

teachers, custodians, bus drivers, and nursery workers—who has access to children.

Dove's Nest offers "Circle of Grace," a Christian safe-environment curriculum that helps to form and educate children about the value of positive relationships with God and others. It teaches children and youths how to identify and maintain appropriate physical, emotional, spiritual and sexual boundaries. It also helps them recognize when boundary violations are about to occur and demonstrates how to take action when boundaries are threatened or violated.

Harder emphasizes, though, that "it is the responsibility of adults to keep children and youth safe, not the responsibility

of the kids."

"The church, unfortunately, in my experience, is in denial about child abuse," Harder says. "They tell me, 'We're good people here, it doesn't happen here.' And yet I'm hearing from so many survivors and victims of abuse saying, 'Yes it does happen here.' In fact, they're saying the church sometimes re-victimizes us by not responding, by not listening."

"So I'm trying to raise awareness in the church to say, 'Hey, child abuse does exist, within your church community as well as in your neighbourhoods,'" says Harder, who feels that churches, of all places, need to be protecting children. ❧

## CMU Press releases new children's books

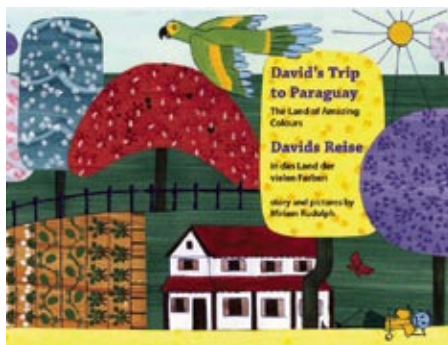
BY NADINE KAMPEN

CMU Press  
WINNIPEG

Two new children's books—*On the Zwieback Trail* by Lisa Weaver, Julie Kauffman and Judith Rempel Smucker, and *David's Trip to Paraguay* by Miriam Rudolph—were released by CMU Press at the end of 2011.

*David's Trip to Paraguay* is written and illustrated by Rudolph, a professional artist and printmaker from Winnipeg who currently resides in Minneapolis, Minn. The book follows the true story of Rudolph's grandfather's immigration from Altona, Man., to Loma Plata, Paraguay, in the 1920s.

Rudolph's illustrations are constructed from acrylic paint and handmade coloured papers that beautifully demonstrate the contrast between the white Manitoba winter and the lively, bright buildings, forests



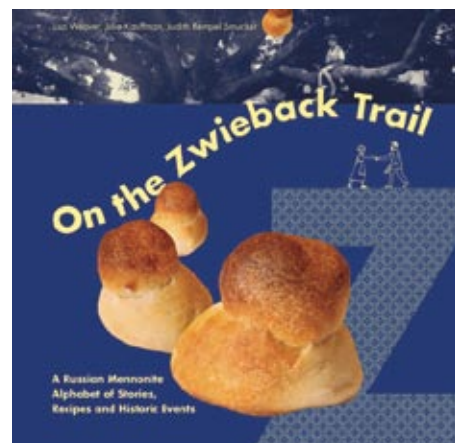
and creatures in Paraguay, where Rudolph was born.

"I put some of my own love for Paraguay in the book, although I must admit that I'm quite at home in Canada now," she says.

The illustrations display Rudolph's unique visual style, a style influenced by maps,

memories and "way-finding"; her work was featured in "Printing places," *Canadian Mennonite*, June 13, 2011, page 35. "I had a lot of fun making all the illustration panels fit together so that the whole long journey became more apparent," she says.

The small South American country of Paraguay—the subject of her book—has played an important part in Mennonite history since the early 20th century.



"Moving around seems to be a common Mennonite theme," says Rudolph. "I hope that the book might put Paraguay on the map for some people, since it is rarely talked about. I often get asked, 'So where exactly is Paraguay and what is it like?' Maybe the book will at least partially answer that question. It is such a beautiful, but also poor, forgotten little country. I wanted to somehow show it to people."

*On the Zwieback Trail* is an alphabet book, with each letter devoted to a different aspect of Russian Mennonite history, including the origin of Mennonite Central Committee, the history of Mennonite people in Russia and the role of nonviolence in the Russian Mennonite tradition. It also includes a number of personal anecdotes, unique historical artefacts, and songs and recipes compiled by the author and designers.

"We hope that this book will spark family conversations about faith and cultural heritage," says Weaver, who authored *On the Zwieback Trail*. "We made the information accessible to children, but inviting to adults as well." ❧

*Rudolph's illustrations are constructed from acrylic paint and handmade coloured papers that beautifully demonstrate the contrast between the white Manitoba winter and the lively, bright buildings, forests and creatures in Paraguay . . . .*



## BOOK REVIEW

# Acknowledging a sinful past

*Ecclesial Repentance: The Churches Confront Their Sinful Pasts.*  
By Jeremy M. Bergen. T&T Clark/Continuum Press, 2011, 338 pages.

REVIEWED BY MAXWELL KENNEL

In the eyes of the watching world the Christian church is often seen for its mistakes, and as the church looks upon itself it must acknowledge this sinful past. While the church is not defined solely by these wrongs, the body of Christ must take responsibility for sinful actions committed in the name of Christ. For a real and robust Christian faith, it is essential that the church repent and turn away from sin, and that this repentance be done through public doctrinal statements as well as concrete redemptive action.

Jeremy Bergen, an associate professor of religious studies and theology at Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo, Ont., communicates this dual need in *Ecclesial Repentance*. As the revised form of his doctoral dissertation, the book is a systematic and meticulous treatment of some major ways in which the church has sinned alongside the equally important ways in which the church has repented, and is still repenting.

The first half of the book offers a detailed account of the historical misdeeds of the church, including an examination of general Christian disunity; offences against Aboriginal Peoples; complicity in the Holocaust; involvement in racism and slavery, including apartheid in South Africa; participation in war; discrimination against women; and the ill-treatment of homosexuals. This section culminates with a positive look at the unprecedented Day of Pardon event, held by the Catholic Church on March 12, 2000.

The second half of the book asks difficult questions about the unity of the church over time, the role of sin in the identity of the church, and how human

and divine forgiveness and reconciliation differ.

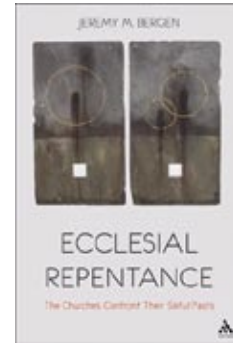
Having been a student of Bergen's, I see the same clarity of thought and written word in *Ecclesial Repentance* as I did in his classroom.

With that said, the book is not for the faint of heart. A reader looking for easy answers about how the church is to repent would be advised to look elsewhere.

In both its content and form, *Ecclesial Repentance* does not shy away from the difficulty of talking about painful

In this wonderfully crafted booklet, the last before his untimely death, A. James Reimer gives his readers a gift with his succinct summary of a topic that has preoccupied much of Christian theology. The genius of *Christians and War* lies in a careful and eminently fair portrayal of how warfare has been understood in church history. He situates each perspective on war—pacifism, just war and crusades—in its social, political and theological setting, showing the many nuanced twists of meaning through time.

Reimer also places his own view on the subject in context. He rejects the



memories, or the difficulty of embodying a repentant spirit. The book itself yields considerable rewards to readers who are able to enter into both the depth of the prose and the spirit of the book's

goal: to examine the church examining itself on matters of past wrongdoings.

For this reason I heartily recommend it to anyone interested in how the church should look upon itself, and how it should progress in the often-accusatory face of the watching world. ❧

*Maxwell Kennel is a student of rhetoric and philosophy at the University of Waterloo and an associate student at Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo, Ont.*

## BOOK REVIEW

# Policing: A form of nonviolence?

*Christians and War: A Brief History of the Church's Teachings and Practices.*  
By A. James Reimer. Fortress Press, Minneapolis, Minn., 2010, 208 pages.

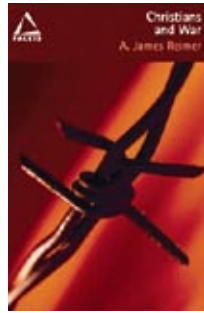
REVIEWED BY HARRY HUEBNER

nonresistance of Guy F. Hershberger and then, with a nervous nod to John H. Yoder's peace theology, he briefly presents his own "pacifism" under the heading, "Policing, human security, and the responsibility to protect." Here he argues for an account of peacemaking that transcends both Hershberger and Yoder. "My position would be that Christians should support policing as an alternative to war, even though the threat of lethal force may occasionally be necessary," he writes.

While I enthusiastically recommend this book, I raise two questions for further reflection.

The first has to do with the distinction between policing and just war. I question whether this distinction is as significant as Reimer proposes. Quite apart from its danger in underwriting the current logic of American international politics, which is premised on the notion of the superpower as international police, I suggest that the distinction is theologically significant only when policing is unpacked as a form of nonviolence.

Given Reimer's rather general description of policing, which includes the threat and possible use of lethal force, one wonders whether this is not merely a refinement of just war logic. I would argue that the promise of policing as an alternative to war, especially in assisting defenceless populations, lies in its ability to be conceived as a pacifist option. So policing as an alternative to war, which carries with it the threat and use of lethal



force, adopts too much of the logic that currently has residence in the house of just war thinking.

The second question has to do with Reimer's language of faithful Christian action. His passion for those who are caught by powers of violence and injustice leads him to the conclusion, unwarranted in

my view, that we must do what is necessary to change their lot.

It is the phrase, "do what is necessary," that leads Reimer to a view of responsibility that I believe is in tension with Christ's call to his disciples to take up the cross. It is certainly true that there are times when we cannot see how policing without the threat and use of lethal force will overcome injustice, as it is equally true that we cannot always see how non-violent strategies will do that.

This then leads to two fundamental options:

- Since we confess that God is in charge, we stand in solidarity with, lament over and agonize with the suffering ones as signs pointing to a hope in God's redemption—as did Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane; or
- We explore the responsible use of violence.

In opting for the second approach, it seems to me that Reimer undervalues the vision of the Christian gospel, which he in so many of his other writings passionately affirms, namely, the mysterious redemptive presence of God in ways beyond the human imagination. In a way, I am asking that the Trinity—the subject of his last chapter—do more work in shaping his view of moral agency, for I wonder whether our mysterious, crucified God looks that kindly on human necessity. ❧

*Harry Huebner is professor emeritus of philosophy and theology at Canadian Mennonite University, Winnipeg.*

## Does the Book of Joshua justify war?

*MennoMedia releases 25th volume in Bible commentary series*

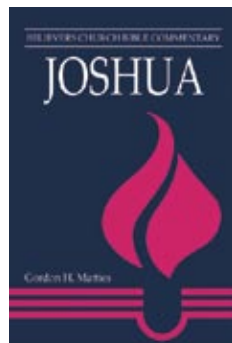
BY STEVE SHENK

MennoMedia

Over the years, Christians have often used the Old Testament Book of Joshua to justify warfare, conquest, colonialism and even ethnic cleansing. So what would a Bible commentary from a publisher in the pacifist tradition have to say about this book?

First of all, there are fresh new ways to look at this age-old and often misunderstood book, says Gordon Matties, the commentary's author. And, second, he says the reader must engage in "a difficult conversation, even an argument, with the text."

MennoMedia is releasing *Joshua* under its Herald Press imprint, making it the 25th volume in the Believers Church Bible Commentary Series.



"This commentary imagines the Book of Joshua as a participant in an intra-biblical conversation in which Joshua interprets other texts, and other texts interpret Joshua," says Matties. "Viewed that way, the Bible itself bears witness to a lively, if painful, debate about the relationship between violence and the identity and mission of God's people."

Matties cautions Christians about hearing what they want to hear when they read Joshua and other difficult sections of the Bible. This includes those who believe Joshua justifies war, as well as those who reject war. "We do well to foster an openness to the unexpected," he says.

Reading *Joshua* carefully will push

Christians to not settle for easy answers or to give up too soon, says Matties. "This commentary is a plea to pay attention to a difficult text, a text we might well call a 'text of terror,'" he says. "In a time of religious justification for terrorism and counterterrorism, *Joshua* may be a book for our time."

Matties is professor of biblical studies at Canadian Mennonite University, Winnipeg, where he has also served a term as the dean of humanities and sciences. He holds a Ph.D. in Old Testament from Vanderbilt University, Nashville, Tenn., and his doctoral dissertation, *Ezekiel 18 and the Rhetoric of Moral Discourse*, was published by the Society of Biblical Literature. He also contributed to Abingdon Press's *The New Interpreter's Study Bible*. ❧

## BOOK REVIEW

# Exploring complexities of peace

*From Nonresistance to Justice: The Transformation of Mennonite Church Peace Rhetoric, 1908-2008.*

By Ervin R. Stutzman. Herald Press, 2011, 424 pages.

REVIEWED BY BARB DRAPER

The way Mennonites talk about peace has changed in the past 100 years. While our grandparents talked about “nonresistance,” today we are apt to relate peace to “justice.” Stutzman, executive-director of Mennonite Church U.S.A., takes a careful look at what was written, especially in church periodicals, to trace how and why these changes happened.

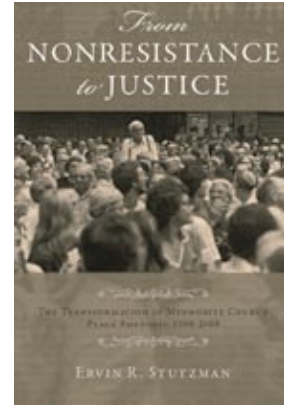
Through the 20th century, the articles written in *Gospel Herald* show many heated debates over the role and meaning of “peace.” In the early part of the century, Mennonites who read *Gospel Herald* generally saw themselves as very separate from the world and their peace theology meant they were conscientious objectors in time of war. In the second half of the century, partly influenced by John Howard Yoder, they came to believe that a more active role in society was important. Mennonite Central Committee established an office in Washington, D.C., and Mennonites began more active peacemaking. Peace became associated with social justice.

As Mennonites became more involved in the broader society, and invited those who were not raised Mennonite to join, the question of Mennonite identity loomed large. The church has struggled with the question of whether or not all members are expected to be pacifists. Can a Mennonite work for the military? At the same time, there were always those who questioned whether an emphasis on justice and peacemaking ignores the importance of evangelism and salvation.

Stutzman focuses his study primarily on the former Mennonite Church (MC), who were descendants of Swiss/

South German Mennonites, but he does include information about the former General Conference (GC), who were predominantly descended from Dutch/North German/Russian Mennonites. His assessment of the differences between these two groups explains some of the challenges in amalgamating to form MC U.S.A. and MC Canada.

He has some good insights into the fact that MCs had been accustomed to a more centralized authority, while GCs expected congregational autonomy. His Appendix 2 provides a concise MC/GC



comparison in chart form.

Although Stutzman focuses primarily on what was happening among MCs in the United States, Mennonites in Canada

have had similar experiences. It is fascinating to see how our church has changed over the years, something we often don't realize until shown by this kind of study.

I found Stutzman's explanation of the Mennonite connection with fundamentalism a bit oversimplified, but very much appreciated his analysis of the last 50 years. He recognizes that beliefs about peacemaking are very complex. ❧

*Barb Draper is Canadian Mennonite's Books & Resources editor.*

## New from MennoMedia

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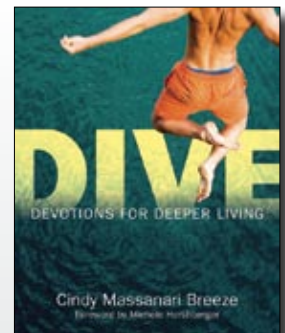
by Cindy Massanari Breeze

This book for youth grew out of the author's experience as a school teacher and pastor to young people. All the topics were suggested by members of her youth Sunday school class and at a Mennonite youth convention. Woven through more than 100 meditations is the guarantee of God's unconditional love and acceptance.

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## BOOK REVIEW

# Uncovering our first roots

*The Mennonites of St. Jacobs and Elmira: Understanding the Variety.*  
By Barb Draper. Pandora Press, 2011, 378 pages.

REVIEWED BY LEVI M. FREY

In order to write this book, Barb Draper did a lot of digging among her roots. She performed an excellent job of searching out the reasons for some of the traditions and practices of the Mennonites of St. Jacobs and Elmira, Ont. Because she is a woman, a Mennonite and locally grown at that, she was able to add a flavour which is different from that of many writers of church history.

Draper uncovers the first roots in the Mennonite story in 16th-century Europe during the Reformation. This is where it all began! She explains why Mennonites

became a separate people group persecuted for its faith. She tells us where we picked up the language that is still used in many homes today. She follows the path through several European countries and explains the split with the Amish. She gives us an idea of what life was like for Mennonites in 17th-century Europe. Then came the migration to Pennsylvania!

We are told who some of the early Pennsylvania settlers were, especially those whose descendants came to Ontario a century later. Those were the days of hauling barrels containing gold

coins across hundreds of miles of wilderness to pay off mortgages on vast tracts of unseen far-away territory. Finally, we come to Ontario and to Woolwich Township.

Draper spends some time exploring the history and progression through most of the 19th century, when the Mennonite church was mostly one entity. She explains faith and community life in those pioneer times, gives us good descriptions of common practices that developed in home and church life, and explains how some of these practices came about.

She is very thorough and sympathetic in explaining some of the more obscure traditions, and obviously spent much time in researching these topics. I find it especially fascinating how she takes certain clothing articles and explains the progression from European peasant garb to present-day Old Order usage.

In further chapters Draper explains how outside pressures changed many things in the Mennonite church, and eventually various factions went their separate ways. She explores the current theology, practices and other factors in Mennonite Church Eastern Canada, the Old Order Mennonites, and a few other more or less conservative groups that co-exist in the St. Jacobs and Elmira area.

Her writing is much more accurate—and less judgmental—than that of most other writers. She has the true inside story.

All in all, Draper has used her unique perspective to compile an accurate, readable, balanced account on a subject that can be very confusing, while proving that history can be interesting. ☺

*Levi M. Frey is an Old Order Mennonite from the Mount Forest community, Ont.*



## CMU PRESS

### Theology and Religion



(l-r) *Desert Spirituality and Cultural Resistance* by Belden C. Lane; *Peace and Justice: Essays from the Fourth Shi'i Muslim Mennonite Christian Dialogue* by Harry Heubner and Muhammed Legenhausen, eds.; *The Gift of Difference* by Chris K. Huebner and Tripp York, eds.; *The Free Church and Israel's Covenant* by Peter Ochs

CMU Press offers academic and general interest titles on theology, religion and biblical studies from a Mennonite perspective, as well as fiction and children's books. Visit our website at [www.cmu.ca/cmupress](http://www.cmu.ca/cmupress) for more information.

# Spring 2012 List of Books & Resources



## Theology, spirituality

**Atonement, Justice and Peace: The Message of the Cross and the Mission of the Church.** Darrin W. Snyder Belousek. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2012, 668 pages.

Belousek explains in great detail why he believes the penal substitution theory of atonement is faulty. He believes that nonviolence is the message of the cross if God's justice and atonement are understood properly.

**Desert Spirituality and Cultural Resistance: From Ancient Monks to Mountain Refugees.** Belden C. Lane. Canadian Mennonite University Press, 2011, 69 pages.

This booklet comprises the three lectures of the J. J. Thiessen Lecture Series held at Canadian Mennonite University, Winnipeg, on Oct. 19-20, 2010.

**The End of Sacrifice: The Capital Punishment Writings of John Howard Yoder.**

John C. Nugent, ed. Herald Press, 2011, 287 pages.

This collection brings together John Howard Yoder's writings about capital punishment, some not previously published. Yoder wrote various articles about the need to end the death penalty from the late 1950s until his death in the 1990s.

**Forming Christian Habits in Post-Christendom: The Legacy of Alan and Eleanor Kreider.** James R. Krabill and Stuart Murray, eds. Herald Press and the Institute of Mennonite Studies, 2011, 234 pages.

As well as some biographical information about the Kreiders, this book includes

short essays by a variety of contributors who comment on things they learned from the Kreiders about what it means to be Christian in the world.

**Go to Church, Change the World: Christian Community as Calling.** Gerald J. Mast. Herald Press, 2012, 190 pages.

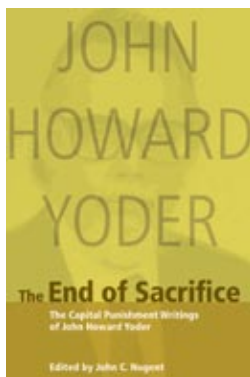
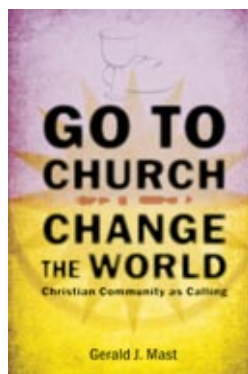
Mast argues that community is an important part of spirituality and explains the importance of the rites and practices of congregational life. The 15 chapters come with questions for reflection and discussion.

**Killing Enmity: Violence and the New Testament.** Thomas R. Yoder Neufeld. Baker Academic, 2011, 192 pages.

Participating in the conversation about whether Christians are called to nonviolence, Yoder Neufeld explores the meaning of various troublesome biblical texts. Among them are Jesus cleansing the temple, Jesus' death and some parables that include coercion.

**The Nonviolent Atonement,** Second Edition. J. Denny Weaver. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2011, 346 pages.

In this expanded and revised second edition, Weaver argues that the satisfaction theory of atonement with its divinely sanctioned, retributive violence is problematic. In its stead, he offers a narrative Christus Victor image of atonement.

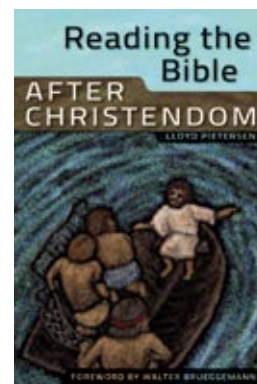


**Present Tense: A Mennonite Spirituality.** Gordon Houser. Cascadia Publishing House, 2011, 174 pages.

Houser explores what spirituality means for his Mennonite community and for himself.

**Reading the Bible after Christendom.** Lloyd Pietersen. Herald Press, 2012, 259 pages.

Pietersen, an Anabaptist living in England, explains how Christianity became a powerful institution in western society. Since it has lost its dominance, Christians should interpret the Bible more like the early church and the 16th-century Anabaptists.



**Widening the Circle: Experiments in Christian Discipleship.** Joanna Shenk, ed. Herald Press, 2011, 246 pages.

In the last 50 years, a variety of Mennonites and other Christians have tried to live out their faith in radical discipleship. Among the individuals and communities featured are Reba Place Fellowship, Christian Peacemaker Teams, Mennonite Voluntary Service, Winnipeg's Little Flowers Community and Hedy Sawadsky.

## History

**Alfalfa to Ivy: Memoir of a Harvard Medical School Dean.** Joseph B. Martin. The University of Alberta Press, 2011, 458 pages.

Joe Martin's memoir gives a brief overview of his Mennonite family and his early years on a farm in southern Alberta. He gives a detailed perspective of the challenges of working in medical research and in the U.S. healthcare system.

**Among the Ashes: In the Stalinkova Kolkhoz (Kontinusfeld) 1930-1935.** Peter J. Rahn. Pandora Press, 2011, 300 pages.

This book contains letters sent by the Rahn family in southern Ukraine to relatives in Canada during five difficult years of the Soviet regime. The letters appear in both German

and English, and have lots of commentary to show what is happening in this village in the Molotschna colony.

**From Nonresistance to Justice: The Transformation of Mennonite Church Peace Rhetoric 1908-2008.** Ervin R. Stutzman. Herald Press, 2011, 424 pages.

Stutzman examines how Mennonite beliefs and vocabulary about peace have changed in North America in the past hundred years. He traces the various influences on the church and how peacemaking was expressed in the 20th century.

**Heirs and Joint Heirs: Mission to Church Among the Mennonite Brethren of Andhra Pradesh.** Paul D. Wiebe. Kindred Productions, 2010, 408 pages.

The author, who was born and raised in India, not only explains the history and setting of Mennonite Brethren mission work there, but also identifies challenges for the future.

**Howard Raid: Man of Faith and Vision.** Elizabeth Raid. Pandora Press, 2011, 266 pages.

Howard Raid was a long-time professor of economics and business at Bluffton College and a founding member of the Mennonite Mutual Aid Association. He served the Mennonite church faithfully over the years, writes his daughter.

**In Another Day of the Lord: The Mission Days of the Mennonite Brethren Church of India in Pictures.** Paul D. Wiebe and David A. Wiebe. Kindred Productions, 2010, 155 pages.

The many photos in this collection tell the story of Mennonite Brethren missionaries working in India between 1899 and the 1970s.

**Just a Kid Without a Computer: Unformatted Adventures.** Hugo Neufeld. Millrise Publishing, 2011, 178 pages.

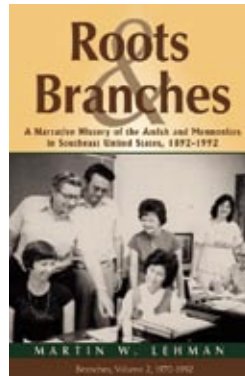
Neufeld tells a variety of stories about himself as an adventuresome child growing up on a farm near



St. Catharines, Ont. Available from Millrise Publishing, 140 Millbank Close, Calgary SW, AB T2Y 2E5, or by e-mailing the author at hdneuf@shaw.ca.

**Roots and Branches: A Narrative History of the Amish and Mennonites in the Southeast United States, 1892-1992,** Volume 2. Martin W. Lehman. Cascadia Publishing House, 2011, 246 pages.

Carrying on the story from Volume 1, Lehman describes the Southeast Mennonite Conference from the 1960s to the 1990s. During these years, many non-traditional Mennonites joined these congregations.



## Children's Books

**David's Trip to Paraguay: The Land of Amazing Colours.** Miriam Rudolph. CMU Press, 2011, 32 pages, hardcover.

The large and colourful pictures in this book tell a story from the author's grandfather in both English and German. The move from Altona, Man., to the Menno Colony in Paraguay is told as a child's adventure using vibrant colours.

**On the Zwieback Trail: A Russian Mennonite Alphabet of Stories, Recipes and Historic Events.** Lisa Weaver, Julie Kauffman and Judith Rempel Smucker. CMU Press, 2011, 72 pages, hardcover.

Using the alphabet, Weaver displays a series of vignettes of Russian Mennonite history. The illustrations and design by Kauffman and Smucker show historical photos in collage format. While many old photos are black and white, the pages also have colour.

**Quills.** Aaron J. Ratzlaff. Herald Press, 2011, 38 pages, hardcover.

This illustrated children's book is about Porcupine, who feels sad and unlovable when her quills begin to fall out, but is reassured by the acceptance of her friends. It is designed

for children aged 4 to 8.

## Resources

**With the Word: Luke.** Faith & Life Resources. 56 pages.

This Bible study and devotional guide based on Luke is designed for groups or individuals. There are suggestions for group leaders, as well as seven daily devotionals for each of the eight sessions.

**With the Word: Psalms.** Faith & Life Resources. 68 pages.

This Bible study and devotional guide based on Psalms has a format similar to Luke, but with 10 sessions.

## CDs/DVDs

**Escape Via Moscow, 1929 and The Women's Burden Under Stalin.** Otto Klassen. 2011, DVD, 45 minutes.

Otto Klassen continues the story of Mennonites in Russia. In 1929, thousands of Mennonites waited near Moscow, hoping to emigrate. Although some escaped, many men were imprisoned, which made life especially difficult for the women. Available from The Text to Terabyte Project online at mbconf.ca/cmbbs.

**Leaving Eden.** Cheryl Denise. 2012, CD, spoken word poetry with music by Ben Regier.

The 13 spoken poems in this collection are from Cheryl Denise's poetry published by Cascadia Publishing House's DreamSeeker Series. The CD is available by e-mail from the poet at cheryldenise@yahoo.com.

**Mysteries of Grace and Judgement.** Jack Dueck. Re-released 2011.

Through music, stories and poetry, various performers tell the story of the Mennonite sojourn in Russia, including storyteller Jack Dueck and the Sojourn Singers led by George Wiebe. The performance was recorded some years ago and is now re-released on DVD or CD. Available online at MysteriesOfGrace.com.

—Compiled by Barb Draper, Books & Resources editor.



## young voices



# Rock band asks fans for help with recording costs

*'Crowdfunding' replaces traditional arts patronage*

BY AARON EPP

Special to Young Voices

**I**t takes a village to make an album. Oh Village, a four-piece rock band from Abbotsford, B.C., is planning to pay for its upcoming EP by “crowdfunding” the project.

Scott Currie, the band’s lead singer and pianist, came up with the idea after seeing one of his favourite bands, popular Christian ska act Five Iron Frenzy, fund one of its albums in a similar way. Over 90 days, Currie and his band mates—guitarist Jake Janzen, bassist David Dueckman and drummer Stephen Dahl—are raising funds via RocketHub.com, a website dedicated to crowdfunding initiatives.

“Crowdfunding [or micro-patronage] is a new way to support creative people and endeavours,” according to RocketHub.com. “In ages past, wealthy patrons would commission works of art, such as symphonies, from the recognizable artists and musi-

“I looked into it and it seemed like a really effective way to fund an album,” Currie says. “It’s a lot of fun to do because the prizes are a lot of fun to put together.”

The band, whose members range in age from 17 to 19 and who all attend Emmanuel Mennonite Church, Abbotsford, is hoping to raise \$7,000 in order to record a six-song EP in July at The Sound Suite, a studio in Abbotsford. RocketHub.com takes 4 per cent of the money raised if the band reaches its goal, and eight per cent if it falls short. The website says it does this to encourage people to set a reasonable financial goal and then work hard to meet it.

Fifteen days into its campaign, the band had already raised \$700. The musicians are confident they will meet their goal by the time their 90-day campaign is over at the end of June, but they are planning to record the EP no matter what.

*The musicians are confident they will meet their goal by the time their 90-day campaign is over at the end of June, but they are planning to record the EP no matter what.*

cians of the day. Crowdfunding is the same idea, but rather than looking for a large contribution from a wealthy patron, artists and entrepreneurs . . . look for small contributions from lots of people.”

Anyone can make a donation, and the band is rewarding different levels of donations with different items in return, from a copy of the EP to an Oh Village T-shirt.

“If our RocketHub numbers and support don’t hit seven grand, we’re going to make something work,” Janzen says, adding that the band is working odd jobs and organizing other fundraisers, like a bake sale, to help cover the costs of recording and manufacturing the disc.

Crowdfunding has become increasingly popular in recent years, with a diverse list

PHOTO BY ABBY DAHL



*Oh Village, a rock band from Abbotsford, B.C., is composed of teenagers Stephen Dahl, left, Scott Currie, David Dueckman and Jake Janzen. The band is ‘crowdfunding’ its next EP, a six-song disc to be recorded in July.*

of musicians, including Juno-nominated Winnipeg singer-songwriter Cara Luft and seminal New York hip-hop group Public Enemy, using it to fund recording projects. The film adaptation of the popular Donald Miller book, *Blue Like Jazz*, was also funded in part by a crowdfunding campaign on Kickstarter.com, a website similar to RocketHub.

A recent op-ed piece published on Vancouver alt-weekly *The Georgia Straight's* website was critical of crowdfunding, with the writer arguing that “notions like suffering for your art and putting your money where your mouth is have been replaced by sickeningly safe-and-easy websites that allow you to turn your band into a charitable cause in five minutes. . . . Instead of panhandling online, here’s a

novel idea: ‘crowdsource’ a little business acumen and produce something people actually want to give you money for.”

Janzen points out that Oh Village isn’t simply asking for a handout, as everyone who makes a donation of at least \$10 will receive something in return.

Dueckman agrees, adding that crowdfunding is a way to involve fans and supporters in a recording project from the ground up. “We’re trying to involve people in something that could be really awesome,” he says. “If people are excited about this and they want to support our music and be a part of it, we’re excited about them being a part of it.”

To watch a video about Oh Village’s fundraising campaign, and read updates, visit [ohvillage.com](http://ohvillage.com). ☘

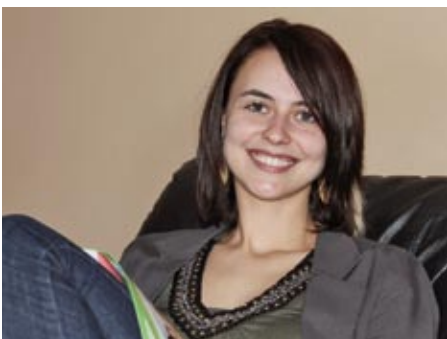
## PERSONAL REFLECTION

# Navigating a complicated world

BY STEPHANIE COUGHLAN ENS

SPECIAL TO YOUNG VOICES

PHOTO COURTESY OF  
STEPHANIE COUGHLAN ENS



**A**s a recent graduate of the University of Manitoba with a degree in social work, I consider myself to be quite lucky with the type of employment I’ve landed. I received a job offer straight from my practicum as a “community development social worker” for a non-profit co-op agency in Winnipeg.

It was everything I could have hoped for: working mostly with youth, but also with families, program development and implementation, individual and group counselling, and consultation with a multidisciplinary team. Plus, the agency stands for much of what I believe in, and my co-workers are friendly, warm, welcoming and funky people.

I never stopped to consider how my upbringing in a small town Manitoba Mennonite church, or how my faith in Jesus, would come into play at my

workplace. Now, after a year of being employed at the same agency, I am starting to realize that my faith has influenced my work and also that my work has influenced my faith.

My faith community has taught me that everyone deserves unconditional love because everyone is created by God. Through my work in running an after-school youth centre, though, I have realized that respect for, and commitment to, other’s safety, and the right to have fun, are conditions that individuals must meet. But I can still show unconditional love to those who are hardest to love.

There is one boy who often attends, who will barge in, take the time to point out who has lice and who has bedbugs, make fun of someone’s flaws, and then usually get into a physical fight with another boy. He is not meeting the conditions of the youth centre and it would

be so easy to ask him not to return, but, instead, we have chosen unconditional regard, recognizing his inherent worth as a human being, and have decided to work on a one-to-one level with him and his family.

your neighbour”—and neglected the “as you love yourself” ending. My work has forced me to realize that if I cannot accept my whole self—my strengths and weaknesses—I can never fully accept others either. I thought that faithful living

*I never stopped to consider how my upbringing in a small town Manitoba Mennonite church, or how my faith in Jesus, would come into play at my workplace. Now, after a year of being employed at the same agency, I am starting to realize that my faith has influenced my work and also that my work has influenced my faith.*

Society screams at me to have a good job, nice clothes, money to spend, and to always upgrade lest I be left behind. I am thankful that my faith has enabled me to dull these messages with reminders to be generous and humble.

In my work, I have seen poor people struggle to keep up with these societal pressures. Some of them are overworked, others are addicted to substances. Others give up, but many of them have hope. Funders want us to respond by teaching them “employable skills” and offering them employment options. I have often learned that the better response is to listen to their story, knowing that money does not equal happiness, and draw out their hopes and dreams.

Jesus taught us to “love your neighbour as you love yourself.” In my own faith journey I have embraced this, but often only focused on the first part—“love

meant sacrificing my own self-care, but now I am starting to understand that having compassion for myself, knowing that God lives in me, is a big part of what Jesus is asking us all to do.

In closing I would like to share I John 4:17 from *The Message*: “God is love. When we take up permanent residence in a life of love, we live in God and God lives in us. This way, love has the run of the house, becomes at home and mature in us, so that we’re free of worry.”

As I navigate this complicated world in a career that is as fulfilling as it is terrifying, I try to keep this in mind for myself and for the people I serve. ❧

*Stephanie Coughlan Ens attends Springstein Mennonite Church, Man. She graduated with a degree in social work from the University of Manitoba in May 2011.*

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# Confessing our fossil fuels sins

BY RACHEL BERGEN

Young Voices Co-Editor



Neufeld

Christians are taught that taking a Sabbath from work is an important spiritual discipline, but some Mennonites in Winnipeg organized a Sabbath from consumption.

Consumption Sabbath, which took place on Earth Day (April 22), included a time for people to “confess” their fossil fuel sins, “testify” to the healing power of living simply, and make pledges for the future.

It was a serious event with a playful twist.

“There’s some principalities and powers, there’s some structures of injustice, there’s some patterns of living that are taking a downward turn, an over-consumptive turn. . . . This is a social sin,” said Aiden Enns, New Order Voice columnist, in a promotional video for Consumption Sabbath.

Enns spoke at the Consumption Sabbath service that also included a march from Omand’s Creek Park to Memorial Park, and a traditional tent service where there was also a gospel choir singing. The focus was on over-consumption.

The concept of taking a Sabbath is a radical concept to grasp, said Maraleigh Short, one of the coordinators of the event. As a fourth-year peace and conflict transformation studies and biblical and theological studies student at Canadian Mennonite University, it’s difficult to take a rest from school work, let alone take a break from entrenched consumption habits. “[Consumption] is something that I myself feel a bit lost in and it’s so easy to not see how damaging it can be to self and community,” she said. “To take a break from it is not an easy thing.”

Because Short is at a point in her life where she feels disconnected from her faith and from the messages at church, she felt it was important to get connected with a message of social justice that is intertwined with her faith. “Maybe [a Consumption Sabbath] is what I need to have a revival of my faith,” Short said.

According to Darren Kropf, a community engagement associate with Mennonite

Central Committee (MCC) Ontario and purveyor of the Creation Care Crossroads blog, Earth Day provides an opportunity for the church to connect with the ideas of creation care. “Earth Day is invaluable,” he said. “It is an annual opportunity to renew our commitment to creation and it connects us with the global movement of seeking sustainability.”

On this Earth Day, Consumption Sabbath hoped to do just that. “Communities around the world combine their voice in creating a future where creation flourishes and all people have access to its life-giving resources,” Kropf said.

That was the point of Consumption Sabbath.

“We want to emphasize that we’re all in this together,” said Josiah Neufeld, who attends Hope Mennonite Church.

The Consumption Sabbath idea was to shake people from their daily living and bring them together in a collective endeavour, to think about their consumption in a new way and to make conscious choices to work together, said Neufeld, 31.

Both Neufeld and Short make daily personal choices on what to consume or not to consume, but they believe that this event existed beyond the level of personal choices.

“With Consumption Sabbath, it becomes what we can do, how are we going to engage with one another, the church and the community of faith, which in some spheres does proclaim that they are concerned with creation care,” Short said.

“Change has to be a collective endeavour, which requires people to come together on a mass level to work together,” Neufeld said. “Our faith communities are essential in bringing about that collective change.”

The coordination of Consumption Sabbath was a collective effort of representatives from Charleswood Mennonite Church, Hope Mennonite Church and St. Benedict’s Table, among others.

For more information, visit [consumptionsabbath.com](http://consumptionsabbath.com). ❧



Short

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someone in your  
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Ask your church administrator to add  
them to the list. It is already paid for.

## Calendar

### British Columbia

**July 21:** Camp Squeah 50th-anniversary event, beginning at the camp at noon. For more information, visit [Squeah.com/50th-celebration](http://Squeah.com/50th-celebration), join the Camp Squeah alumni page on Facebook or call 1-800-380-2267.

### Alberta

**May 26-27:** Mennonite Women Alberta spring retreat at Sunny Side

Retreat Centre, Sylvan Lake, from noon till noon. Speaker: Lee Klaassen, life coach. Theme: "Balancing act." 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 at Cox Hills, Kananaskis. For more information, call 403-637-2510.

### Saskatchewan

**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.

### Manitoba

**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](http://csop.cmu.ca).

### Ontario

**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](mailto: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](mailto:imcc.conductor@rogers.com)

**May 6:** Pax Christi Chorale's 25th anniversary gala concert featuring

## UpComing

### Second annual Wild Goose Festival announced

Returning to Shakori Hills, N.C., this spring, the Wild Goose Festival seeks to inspire conversation and action at the intersection of justice, spirituality and art. Among the many speakers for this year's festival, scheduled for June 21 to 24, are Frank Schaeffer, Phyllis Tickle, Shane Claiborne and Brian McLaren, while music will be provided by the likes of Aradhna, Alexander and the Grapes, Jennifer Knapp and Michelle Shocked. The theme for this year is "Exile and return (exile from, and return to, God; each other; ourselves)." For more information or discounted advance tickets (available until June 20), visit [wildgoosefestival.org](http://wildgoosefestival.org). Last year, about a dozen Canadian Mennonites attended the festival, and organizers hope that more will make the trek south this summer.

—Wild Goose Festival

## 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@trinity.mennonitechurch.ab.ca](mailto:missionary@trinity.mennonitechurch.ab.ca)



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](http://paxchristichorale.org/tickets).

**May 7:** Spring seniors retreat at Hidden Acres Mennonite Camp. Theme: "21st century mission: It's new and different." Speakers: Palmer Becker and Ron Mathies. For more information, call 519-625-8602 or e-mail [info@hiddenacres.ca](mailto:info@hiddenacres.ca).

**May 9:** 37th annual community prayer breakfast sponsored by the KW Council of Churches and Interfaith Grand River, at the Waterloo Inn, Waterloo, at 7 a.m. Speaker: Marlene Epp. Theme: "Are we eating 'just' food? Reflections on food, faith and culture."

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

**May 12:** Greening Sacred Spaces offers a renewable energy trade show and workshops at St. John the Evangelist Anglican Church, Kitchener, from 1 to 5 p.m. For more information, call 519-747-5139. Elmira Mennonite Church will receive a Greening Sacred Spaces Award during the event.

**May 22-25:** Quilts for the World, at

## Classifieds

### For Rent

For Rent: Dunromin cottage.

3 bedroom cottage at Red Bay on Bruce Peninsula, nestled among the maple trees. Short walk to sandy beach and small park. Includes a rear deck. Available June 30 through July 28, and August 11 through September 1. Call Diane at 519-746-4920.

St. Jacobs Mennonite Church; (22-24) 10 a.m. to 7 p.m.; (25) 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Guest artists: Needle Sisters of Elmira. Gift boutique on site. All proceeds to MCC.

**May 29:** Hidden Acres Mennonite Camp, New Hamburg, is hosting a retreat for retired ministers. Speaker: Don Morgenson. Theme: "Wonder, wisdom and spiritual growth."

**June 3:** Sixth annual Harmonia Sacra Sing, at Detweiler Meetinghouse, Roseville, from 2:30 to 4:30 p.m. For more information, call Will Stoltz at 519-696-2805 or Laurence Martin at 519-208-4591.

**June 10:** Hagerman Mennonite Church 75th anniversary. Past and present congregants are invited to a special worship service at 10 a.m., followed by lunch. The celebration will continue with music and storytelling from 1:30 to 3 p.m.

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

### Travel

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

### Announcement

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## Employment Opportunities

Lezha Academic Center in Lezhe, Albania, seeks **MATHEMATICS, SCIENCE, AND ESL TEACHERS**, beginning August 2012. Employment through partnership with Virginia Mennonite Missions. First-year, experienced, and retired educators encouraged to apply as soon as possible. Contact Rita Steiner: [rdsteiner@gmail.com](mailto:rdsteiner@gmail.com) or 540-421-7166.

### PASTOR

*Carrot River Mennonite Church  
Carrot River, Sask.*

We are a healthy congregation of 100+, with a diverse range in ages. We hold to the Anabaptist theology, and are a member of Mennonite Church Saskatchewan and MC Canada. We are located in a stable community of 1100, in the parklands area with mixed farming and many recreation opportunities.

We are seeking a pastor with skills for spiritual leadership and a heart for pastoral care. Ministry education and experience would be an asset. Housing available.

Interested candidates may contact the Search Committee chair, Herman Enns, at 306-768-3146 or [ennsh@sasktel.net](mailto:ennsh@sasktel.net)



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- (\* NOTE: subject to final confirmation on financing)
- For a detailed job description or further information, please contact: [wkumparishnursesearch@gmail.com](mailto:wkumparishnursesearch@gmail.com)

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- 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/](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](mailto:wkumparishnursesearch@gmail.com)

## Annual event raises money for Camp Squeah's summer support staff

By AMY DUECKMAN

B.C. Correspondent  
HOPE, B.C.

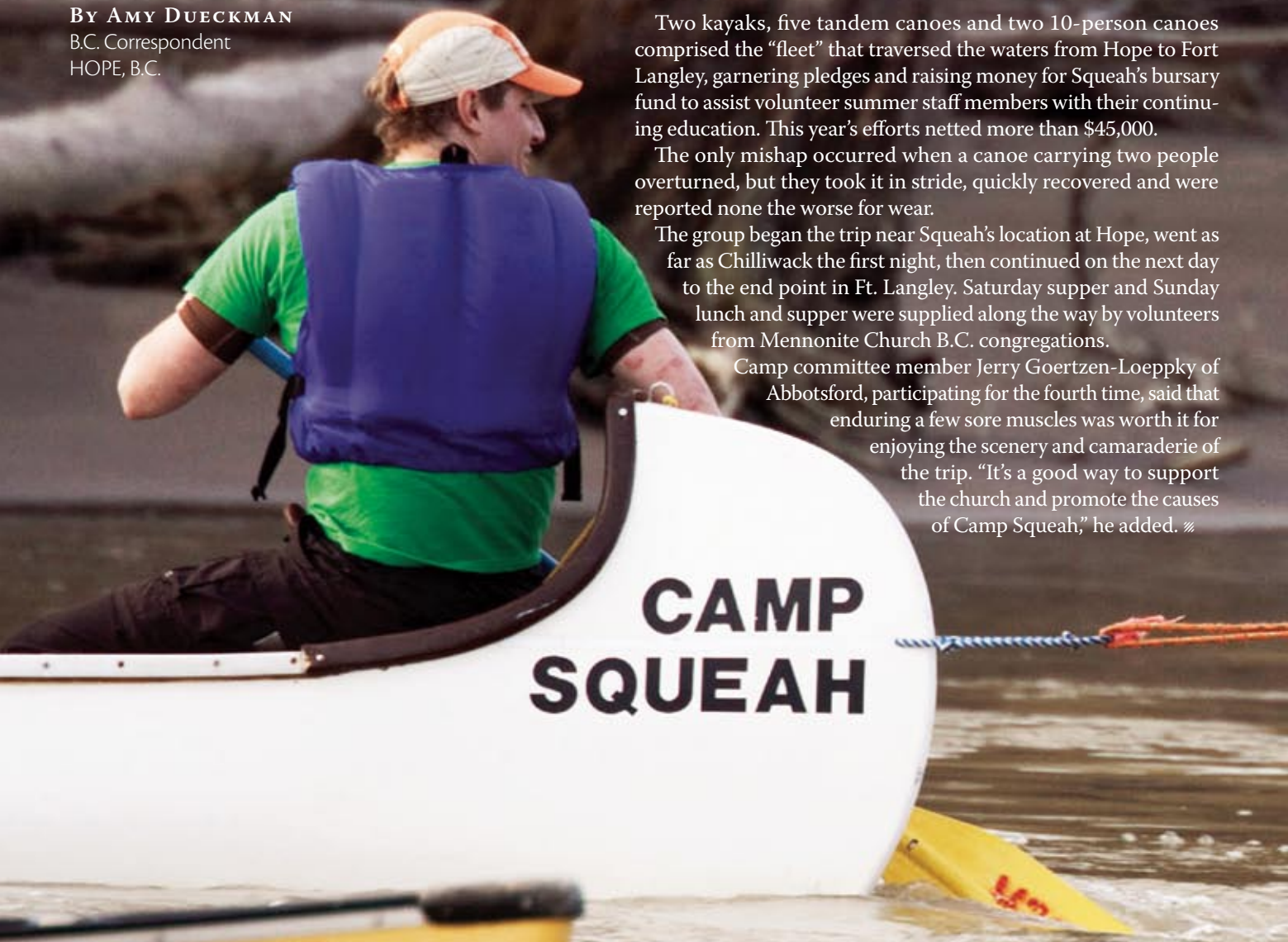
Enduring fatigue, light rain and wind, and even a capsized canoe, 29 people paddled their way down the Fraser River for two days in mid-April in Camp Squeah's annual fundraising paddle-a-thon.

Two kayaks, five tandem canoes and two 10-person canoes comprised the "fleet" that traversed the waters from Hope to Fort Langley, garnering pledges and raising money for Squeah's bursary fund to assist volunteer summer staff members with their continuing education. This year's efforts netted more than \$45,000.

The only mishap occurred when a canoe carrying two people overturned, but they took it in stride, quickly recovered and were reported none the worse for wear.

The group began the trip near Squeah's location at Hope, went as far as Chilliwack the first night, then continued on the next day to the end point in Ft. Langley. Saturday supper and Sunday lunch and supper were supplied along the way by volunteers from Mennonite Church B.C. congregations.

Camp committee member Jerry Goertzen-Loeppky of Abbotsford, participating for the fourth time, said that enduring a few sore muscles was worth it for enjoying the scenery and camaraderie of the trip. "It's a good way to support the church and promote the causes of Camp Squeah," he added. ▮



PHOTOS BY BARB BRUCE



Scott Alexander, left, and Colin Charron recover from the shock of going in the cold river after tipping their canoe in a whirlpool on the first day of the Squeah paddle-a-thon.